

THE EXISTENCE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

by Stephen Charnock

VOLUME 2

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DISCOURSE X - ON THE POWER OF GOD

JOB 26:14.—*Lo! these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?*

BILDAD had, in the foregoing chapter, entertained Job with a discourse of the dominion and power of God, and the purity of his righteousness, whence he argues an impossibility of the justification of man in his presence, who is no better than a worm. Job, in this chapter, acknowledges the greatness of God's power, and descants more largely upon it than Bildad had done; but doth preface it with a kind of ironical speech, as if he had not acted a friendly part, or spake little to the purpose, or the matter in hand: the subject of Job's discourse was the worldly happiness of the wicked, and the calamities of the godly: and Bildad reads him a lecture, of the extent of God's dominion, the number of his armies, and the unspotted rectitude of his nature, in comparison of which the purest creatures are: foul and crooked. Job, therefore, from ver. 1–4, taxeth him in a kind of scoffing manner, that he had not touched the point, but rambled from the subject in hand, and had not applied a salve proper to this sore (ver. 2): "How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm of him that hath no strength?" &c., your discourse is so impertinent, that it will neither strengthen a weak person, nor instruct a simple one. But since Bildad would take up the argument of God's power, and discourse so short of it, Job would show that he wanted not his instructions in that kind, and that he had more distinct conceptions of it than his antagonist had uttered: and therefore from ver. 5 to the end of the chapter, he doth magnificently treat of the power of God in several branches. And (ver. 5) he begins with the lowest. "Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof." You read me a lecture of the power of God in the heavenly host: indeed it is visible there, yet of a larger extent; and monuments of it are found in the lower parts. What do you think of those dead things under the earth and waters, of the corn that dies, and by the moistening influences of the clouds, springs up again with a numerous progeny and increase for the nourishment of man? What do you think of those varieties of metals and minerals conceived in the bowels of the earth; those pearls and riches in the depths of the waters, midwived by this power

of God? Add to these those more prodigious creatures in the sea, the inhabitants of the waters, with their vastness and variety, which are all the births of God's power; both in their first creation by his mighty voice, and their propagation by his cherishing providence. Stop not here, but consider also that his power extends to hell; either the graves the repositories of all the crumbled dust that hath yet been in the world (for so hell is sometimes taken in Scripture: ver. 6, "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.") The several lodgings of deceased men are known to him: no screen can obscure them from his sight, nor their dissolution be any bar to his power, when the time is come to compact those mouldered bodies to entertain again their departed souls, either for weal or woe. The grave, or hell, the place of punishment, is naked before him; as distinctly discerned by him, as a naked body in all its lineaments by us, or a dissected body is in all its parts by a skilful eye.

Destruction hath no covering; none can free himself from the power of his hand. Every person in the bowels of hell; every person punished there is known to him, and feels the power of his wrath. From the lower parts of the world he ascends to the consideration of the power of God in the creation of heaven and earth; "He stretches out the north over the empty places" (ver. 7). The north, or the north pole, over the air, which, by the Greeks, was called void or empty, because of the tenuity and thinness of that element; and he mentions here the north, or north pole, for the whole heaven, because it is more known and apparent than the southern pole. "And hangs the earth upon nothing:" the massy and weighty earth hangs like a thick globe in the midst of a thin air, that there is as much air on the one side of it, as on the other. The heavens have no prop to sustain them in their height, and the earth hath no basis to support it in its place. The heavens are as if you saw a curtain stretched smooth in the air without any hand to hold it; and the earth is as if you saw a ball hanging in the air without any solid body to under-prop it, or any line to hinder it from falling; both standing monuments of the omnipotence of God. He then takes notice of his daily power in the clouds; "He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them" (ver. 8). He compacts the waters together in clouds, and keeps them by his power in the air against the force of their natural gravity and heaviness, till they are fit to flow down upon the earth, and perform his pleasure in the places for which he

designs them. "The cloud is not rent under them;" the thin air is not split asunder by the weight of the waters contained in the cloud above it. He causes them to distil by drops, and strains them, as it were, through a thin lawn, for the refreshment of the earth; and suffers them not to fall in the whole lump, with a violent torrent, to waste the industry of man, and bring famine upon the world, by destroying the fruits of the earth. What a wonder it would be to see but one entire drop of water hang itself but one inch above the ground, unless it be a bubble which is preserved by the air enclosed within it! What a wonder would it be to see a gallon of water contained in a thin cobweb as strongly as in a vessel of brass! Greater is the wonder of Divine power in those thin bottles of heaven, as they are called (Job 38:37); and therefore called his clouds here, as being daily instances of his omnipotence: that the air should sustain those rolling vessels, as it should seem, weightier than itself; that the force of this mass of waters should not break so thin a prison, and hasten to its proper place, which is below the air: that they should be daily confined against their natural inclination, and held by so slight a chain; that there should be such a gradual and successive falling of them, as if the air were pierced with holes like a gardener's watering-pot, and not fall in one entire body to drown or drench some parts of the earth. These are hourly miracles of Divine power, as little regarded as clearly visible. He proceeds (ver. 9), "He holds back the face of his throne, and spreads the clouds upon it." The clouds are designed as curtains to cover the heavens, as well as vessels to water the earth (Psalm 147:8). As a tapestry curtain between the heavens, the throne of God (Isa. 46:1), and the earth his footstool: the heavens are called his throne, because his power doth most shine forth there, and magnificently declare the glory of God; and the clouds are as a screen between the scorching heat of the sun, and the tender plants of the earth, and the weak bodies of men. From hence he descends to the sea, and considers the Divine power apparent in the bounding of it (ver. 10); "He hath compassed the waters with bounds, till the day and night come to an end." This is several times mentioned in Scripture as a signal mark of Divine strength (Job 38:8; Prov. 8:27). He hath measured a place for the sea, and struck the limits of it as with a compass, that it might not mount above the surface of the land, and ruin the ends of the earth's creation; and this, while day and night have their mutual

turns, till he shall make an end of time by removing the measures of it. The bounds of the tumultuous sea are, in many places, as weak as the bottles of the upper waters; the one is contained in thin air, and the other restrained by weak sands, in many places, as well as by stubborn rocks in others; that, though it swells, foams, roars, and the waves, encouraged and egged on by strong winds, come like mountains against the shore; they overflow it not, but humble themselves when they come near to those sands, which are set as their lists and limits, and retire back to the womb that brought them forth, as if they were ashamed and repented of their proud invasion: or else it may be meant of the tides of the sea, and the stated time God hath set it for its ebbing and flowing, till night and day come to an end; both that the fluid waters should contain themselves within due bounds, and keep their perpetually orderly motion, are amazing arguments of Divine power. He passes on to the consideration of the commotions in the air and earth, raised and stilled by the power of God; "The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof." By pillars of heaven are not meant angels, as some think, but either the air, called the pillars of heaven in regard of place, as it continues and knits together the parts of the world, as pillars do the upper and nether parts of a building: as the lowest parts of the earth are called the foundations of the earth, so the lowest parts of the heaven may be called the pillars of heaven: or else by that phrase may be meant mountains, which seem, at a distance, to touch the sky, as pillars do the top of a structure; and so it may be spoken, according to vulgar capacity, which imagines the heavens to be sustained by the two extreme parts of the earth, as a convex body, or to be arched by pillars; whence the Scripture, according to common apprehensions, mentions the ends of the earth, and the utmost parts of the heavens, though they have properly no end, as being round. The power of God is seen in those commotions in the air and earth, by thunders, lightnings, storms, earthquakes, which rack the air, and make the mountains and hills tremble as servants before a frowning and rebuking master. And as he makes motions in the earth and air, so is his power seen in their influences upon the sea; "He judges the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smites through the proud" (ver. 12). At the creation he put the waters into several channels, and caused the dry land to appear barefaced for a habitation for man and beasts; or rather, he splits the sea by storms,

as though he would make the bottom of the deep visible, and rakes up the sands to the surface of the waters, and marshals the waves into mountains and valleys.

After that, “he smites through the proud,” that is, humbles the proud waves, and, by allaying the storm, reduceth them to their former level: the power of God is visible, as well in rebuking, as in awakening the winds; he makes them sensible of his voice, and, according to his pleasure, exasperates or calms them.

The “striking through the proud” here, is not, probably, meant of the destruction of the Egyptian army, for some guess that Job died that year, or about the time of the Israelites coming out of Egypt; so that this discourse here, being in the time of his affliction, could not point at that which was done after his restoration to his temporal prosperity. And now, at last, he sums up the power of God, in the chiefest of his works above, and the greatest wonder of his works below (ver. 13); “By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent,” &c. The greater and lesser lights, sun, moon, and stars, the ornaments and furniture of heaven; and the whale, a prodigious monument of God’s power, often mentioned in Scripture to this purpose, and, in particular, in this book of Job (ch. 41.); and called by the same name of crooked serpent (Isa. 27:1), where it is applied, by way of metaphor, to the king of Assyria or Egypt, or all oppressors of the church. Various interpretations there are of this crooked serpent: some understanding that constellation in heaven which astronomers call the dragon; some that combination of weaker stars, which they call the galaxia, which winds about the heavens: but it is most probable that Job, drawing near to a conclusion of his discourse, joins the two greatest testimonies of God’s power in the world, the highest heavens, and the lowest leviathan, which is here called a bar serpent, in regard of his strength and hardness, as mighty men are called bars in Scripture (Jer. 51:30); “Her bars are broken things.” And in regard of this power of God in the creation of this creature, it is particularly mentioned in the catalogue of God’s works (Gen. 1:21); “And God created great whales;” all the other creatures being put into one sum, and not particularly expressed. And now he makes use of this lecture in the text, “Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?”

This is but a small landscape of some of his works of power; the outsides and extremities of it; more glorious things are within his palaces: though those things argue a stupendous power of the Creator, in his works of creation and providence, yet they are nothing to what may be declared of his power. And what may be declared, is nothing to what may be conceived; and what may be conceived, is nothing to what is above the conceptions of any creature. These are but little crumbs and fragments of that Infinite Power, which is, in his nature, like a drop in comparison of the mighty ocean; a hiss or whisper in comparison of a mighty voice of thunder. This, which I have spoken, is but like a spark to the fiery region, a few lines, by the by, a drop of speech.

The thunder of his power. Some understand it of thunder literally, for material thunder in the air: “The thunder of his power,” that is, according to the Hebrew dialect, “his powerful thunder.” This is not the sense; the nature of thunder in the air doth not so much exceed the capacity of human understanding; it is, therefore, rather to be understood metaphorically, “the thunder of his power,” that is, the greatness and immensity of his power, manifested in the magnificent miracles of nature, in the consideration whereof men are astonished, as if they had heard an unusual clap of thunder. So thunder is used (Job 39:25), “The thunder of the captains;” that is, strength and force of the captains of an army: and (ver. 19), God, speaking to Job of a horse, saith, “Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?” that is, strength: and thunder being a mark of the power of God, some of the heathen have called God by the name of a Thunderer. As thunder pierceth the lowest places, and alters the state of things, so doth the power of God penetrate into all things whatsoever; the thunder of his power, that is, the greatness of his power; as “the strength of salvation” (Psalm 20:6), that is, a mighty salvation.

Who can understand? Who is able to count all the monuments of his power? How doth this little, which I have spoken of, exceed the capacity of our understanding, and is rather the matter of our astonishment, than the object of our comprehensive knowledge. The power of the greatest potentate, or the mightiest creature, is but of small extent: none but have their limits; it may be understood how far they can act, in what sphere their activity is bounded: but when I

have spoken all of Divine power that I can, when you leave thought all that you can think of it, your souls will prompt you to conceive something more beyond what I have spoken, and what you have thought. His power shines in everything, and is beyond everything. There is infinitely more power lodged in his nature, not expressed to the world. The understanding of men and angels, centred in one creature, would fall short of the perception of the infiniteness of it. All that can be comprehended of it, are but little fringes of it, a small portion. No man ever discoursed, or can, of God's power, according to the magnificence of it. No creature can conceive it; God himself only comprehends it; God himself is only able to express it. Man's power being limited, his line is too short to measure the incomprehensible omnipotence of God. "The thunder of his power who can understand?" that is, none can. The text is a lofty declaration of the Divine power, with a particular note of attention, *Lo! I*. In the expressions of it, in the works of creation and providence, *Lo, these are his ways*; ways and works excelling any created strength, referring to the little summary of them he had made before. II. In the insufficiency of these ways to measure his power, *But how little a portion is heard of him*. III. In the incomprehensibility of it, *The thunder of his power, who can understand? Doctrine*. Infinite and incomprehensible power pertains to the nature of God, and is expressed, in part, in his works; or, though there be a mighty expression of Divine power in his works, yet an incomprehensible power pertains to his nature. "The thunder of his power, who can understand?"

His power glitters in all his works, as well as his wisdom (Psalm 62:11): "Twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God." In the law and in the prophets, say some; but why power twice, and not mercy, which he speaks of in the following verse? He had heard of power twice, from the voice of creation, and from the voice of government. Mercy was heard in government after man's fall, not creation; innocent man was an object of God's goodness, not of his mercy, till he made himself miserable; power was expressed in both: or, twice have I heard that power belongs to God, that is, it is a certain and undoubted truth, that power is essential to the Divine nature. It is true, mercy is essential, justice is essential; but power more apparently essential, because no acts of mercy, or justice, or wisdom, can be exercised by him without power; the repetition of a

thing confirms the certainty of it. Some observe, that God is called Almighty seventy times in Scripture. Though his power be evident in all his works, yet he hath a power beyond the expression of it in his works, which, as it is the glory of his nature, so it is the comfort of a believer. To which purpose the apostle expresseth it by an excellent paraphrasis for the honor of the Divine nature (Eph. 3:20): “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, unto him be glory in the churches.” We have reason to acknowledge him Almighty, who hath a power of acting above our power of understanding. Who could have imagined such a powerful operation in the propagation of the gospel, and the conversion of the Gentiles, which the apostle seems to hint at in that place? His power is expressed by “horns in his hands” (Hab. 3:4); because all the works of his hands are wrought with Almighty strength. Power is also used as a name of God (Mark 14:62): “The Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power,” that is, at the right hand of God; God and power are so inseparable, that they are reciprocated. As his essence is immense, not to be confined in place; as it is eternal, not to be measured by time; so it is Almighty, not to be limited in regard of action.

1. It is ingenuously illustrated by some by a unit; all numbers depend upon it; it makes numbers by addition, multiplies them unexpressibly; when one unit is removed from a number, how vastly doth it diminish it! It gives perfection to all other numbers, it receives perfection from none. If you add a unit before 100, how doth it multiply it to 1,100! If you set a unit before 20,000,000, it presently makes the number swell up to 120,000,000; and so powerful is a unit, by adding it to numbers, that it will infinitely enlarge them to such a vastness, that shall transcend the capacity of the best arithmetician to count them.

By such a meditation as this, you may have some prospect of the power of that God who is only unity; the beginning of all things, as a unit is the beginning of all numbers; and can perform as many things really, as a unit can numerically; that is, can do as much in the making of creatures, as a unit can do in the multiplying of numbers. The omnipotence of God was scarce denied by any heathen that did not deny the being of a God; and that was Pliny, and that upon weak arguments.

2. Indeed we cannot have a conception of God, if we conceive him not most powerful, as well as most wise; he is not a God that cannot do what he will, and perform all his pleasure. If we imagine him restrained in his power, we imagine him limited in his essence; as he hath an infinite knowledge to know what is possible, he cannot be without an infinite power to do what is possible; as he hath a will to resolve what he sees good, so he cannot want a power to effect what he sees good to decree; as the essence of a creature cannot be conceived without that activity that belongs to his nature; as when you conceive fire, you cannot conceive it without a power of burning and warming; and when you conceive water, you cannot conceive it without a power of moistening and cleansing: so you cannot conceive an infinite essence without an infinite power of activity; and therefore a heathen could say, "If you know God, you know he can do all things;" and therefore, saith Austin, "Give me not only a Christian, but a Jew; not only a Jew, but a heathen, that will deny God to be Almighty." A Jew, a heathen, may deny Christ to be omnipotent, but no heathen will deny God to be omnipotent, and no devil will deny either to be so: God cannot be conceived without some power, for then he must be conceived without action. Whose, then, are those products and effects of power, which are visible to us in the world? to whom do they belong? who is the Father of them? God cannot be conceived without a power suitable to his nature and essence. If we imagine him to be of an infinite essence, we must imagine him to be of an infinite power and strength.

In particular, I shall show—I. The nature of God's power. II. Reasons to prove that God must needs be powerful. III. How his power appears in creation, in government, in redemption. IV. The Use.

I. What this power is; or the nature of it.

1. Power sometimes signifies authority: and a man is said to be mighty and powerful in regard of his dominion, and the right he hath to command multitudes of other persons to take his part; but power taken for strength, and power taken for authority, are distinct things, and may be separated from one another. Power may be without authority; as in successful invasions, that have no just foundation. Authority may be without power; as in a just prince, expelled by an

unjust rebellion, the authority resides in him, though he be overpowered, and is destitute of strength to support and exercise that authority. The power of God is not to be understood of his authority and dominion, but his strength to act; and the word in the text properly signifies strength.

2. This power is divided ordinarily into absolute and ordinate. Absolute, is that power whereby God is able to do that which he will not do, but is possible to be done; ordinate, is that power whereby God doth that which he hath decreed to do, that is, which he hath ordained or appointed to be exercised; which are not distinct powers, but one and the same power. His ordinate power is a part of his absolute; for if he had not a power to do every thing that he could will, he might not have the power to do everything that he doth will. The object of his absolute power is all things possible; such things that imply not a contradiction, such that are not repugnant in their own nature to be done, and such as are not contrary to the nature and perfections of God to be done. Those things that are repugnant in their own nature to be done are several, as to make a thing which is past not to be past. As, for example, the world is created; God could have chose whether he would create the world, and after it is created he hath power to dissolve it; but after it was created, and when it is dissolved, it will be eternally true, that the world was created, and that it was dissolved; for it is impossible, that that which was once true, should ever be false: if it be true that the world was created, it will forever be true that it was created, and cannot be otherwise. And also, if it be once true that God hath decreed, it is impossible in its own nature to be true that God hath not decreed. Some things are repugnant to the nature and perfections of God; as it is impossible for his nature to die and perish; impossible for him, in regard of truth, to lie and deceive. But of this hereafter; only at present to understand the object of God's absolute power to be things possible, that is, possible in nature; not by any strength in themselves, or of themselves; for nothing hath no strength, and everything is nothing before it comes into being; so God, by his absolute power, might have prevented the sin of the fallen angels, and so have preserved them in their first habitation. He might, by his absolute power, have restrained the devil from tempting of Eve, or restrained her and Adam from swallowing the bait, and joining hands with the temptation. By his absolute power, God might have given the reins

to Peter to betray his Master, as well as to deny him; and employed Judas in the same glorious and successful service, wherein he employed Paul. By his absolute power, he might have created the world millions of years before he did create it, and can reduce it into its empty nothing this moment. This the Baptist affirms, when he tells us, “That God is able of these stones (meaning the stones in the wilderness, and not the people which came out to him out of Judea, which were children of Abraham) to raise up children to Abraham” (Matt. 3:9); that is, there is a possibility of such a thing there is no contradiction in it, but that God is able to do it if he please. But now the object of his ordinate power, is all things ordained by him to be done, all things decreed by him; and because of the Divine ordination of things, this power is called ordinate; and what is thus ordained by him he cannot but do, because of his unchangeableness. Both those powers are expressed (Matt. 26:53, 54), “My Father can send twelve legions of angels,” there is his absolute power; “but how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” there is his ordinate power. As his power is free from any act of his will, it is called absolute; as it is joined with an act of his will, it is called ordinate. His absolute power is necessary, and belongs to his nature; his ordinate power is free, and belongs to his will;—a power guided by his will,—not, as I said before, that they are two distinct powers, both belonging to his nature, but the latter is the same with the former, only it is guided by his will and wisdom.

3. It follows, then, that the power of God is that ability and strength, whereby he can bring to pass whatsoever he please; whatsoever his infinite wisdom can direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of his will can resolve. Power, in the primary notion of it, doth not signify an act, but an ability to bring a thing into act; it is power, as able to act before it doth actually produce a thing: as God had an ability to create before he did create, he had power before he acted that power without. Power notes the principle of the action, and, therefore, is greater than the act itself. Power exercised and diffused, in bringing forth and nursing in its particular objects without, is inconceivably less than that strength which is infinite in himself, the same with his essence, and is indeed himself: by his power exercised he doth whatsoever he actually wills; but by the power in his nature, he is able to do whatsoever he is able to will. The will of creatures may be, and is more extensive than their

power; and their power more contracted and shortened than their will: but, as the prophet saith, “His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure” (Isa. 46:10). His power is as great as his will, that is, whatsoever can fall within the verge of his will, falls within the compass of his power. Though he will never actually will this or that, yet supposing he should will it, he is able to perform it: so that you must, in your notion of Divine power, enlarge it further than to think God can only do what he hath resolved to do; but that he hath as infinite a capacity of power to act, as he hath an infinite capacity of will to resolve. Besides, this power is of that nature, that he can do whatsoever he pleases without difficulty, without resistance; it cannot be checked, restrained, frustrated. As he can do all things possible in regard of the object, he can do all things easily in regard of the manner of acting: what in human artificers is knowledge, labor, industry, that in God is his will; his will works without labor; his works stand forth as he wills them. Hands and arms are ascribed to him for our conceptions, because our power of acting is distinct from our will; but God’s power of acting is not really distinct from his will; it is sufficient to the existence of a thing that God wills it to exist; he can act what he will only by his will, without any instruments. He needs no matter to work upon, because he can make something from nothing; all matter owes itself to his creative power: he needs no time to work in, for he can make time when he pleases to begin to work: he needs no copy to work by; himself is his own pattern and copy in his works: All created agents want matter to work upon, instruments to work with, copies to work by; time to bring either the births of their minds, or the works of their hands, to perfection: but the power of God needs none of these things, but is of a vast and incomprehensible nature, beyond all these. As nothing can be done without the compass of it, so itself is without the compass of every created understanding.

4. This power is of a distinct conception from the wisdom and will of God. They are not really distinct, but according to our conceptions. We cannot discourse of Divine things, without observing some proportion of them with human, ascribing unto God the perfections, sifted from the imperfections of our nature. In us there are three orders of understanding, will, power; and, accordingly, three acts, counsel, resolution, execution; which, though they are distinct in us, are not really distinct in God. In our

conceptions, the apprehension of a thing belongs to the understanding of God; determination, to the will of God; direction, to the wisdom of God; execution, to the power of God. The knowledge of God regards a thing as possible, and as it may be done; the wisdom of God regards a thing as fit, and convenient to be done; the will of God resolves that it shall be done; the power of God is the application of his will to effect what it hath resolved. Wisdom is a fixing the being of things, the measures and perfections of their several beings; power is a conferring those perfections and beings upon them. His power is his ability to act, and his wisdom is the director of his action: his will orders, his wisdom guides, and his power effects. His will as the spring, and his power as the worker, are expressed (Psalm 115:3). "He hath done whatsoever he pleased. He commanded, and they were created" (Psalm 140:5); and all three expressed (Eph. 1:11), "Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will:" so that the power of God is a perfection, as it were, subordinate to his understanding and will, to execute the results of his wisdom, and the orders of his will; to his wisdom as directing, because he works skilfully; to his will as moving and applying, because he works voluntarily and freely. The exercise of his power depends upon his will: His will is the supreme cause of everything that stands up in time, and all things receive a being as he wills them. His power is but will perpetually working, and diffusing itself in the season his will hath fixed from eternity; it is his eternal will in perpetual and successive springs and streams in the creatures; it is nothing else but the constant efficacy of his omnipotent will. This must be understood of his ordinate power; but his absolute power is larger than his resolving will: for though the Scripture tells us, "He hath done whatsoever he will," yet it tells us not, that he hath done whatsoever he could: he can do things that he will never do. Again, his power is distinguished from his will in regard of the exercise of it, which is after the act of his will: his will was conversant about objects, when his power was not exercised about them. Creatures were the objects of his will from eternity, but they were not from eternity the effects of his power. His purpose to create was from eternity, but the execution of his purpose was in time. Now this execution of his will we call his ordinate power: his wisdom and his will are supposed antecedent to his power, as the counsel and resolve; as the cause precedes the performance of the

purpose as the effect.

Some distinguish his power from his understanding and will, in regard that his understanding and will are larger than his absolute power; for God understands sins, and wills to permit them, but he cannot himself do any evil or unjust action, nor have a power of doing it. But this is not to distinguish that Divine power, but impotence; for to be unable to do evil is the perfection of power; and to be able to do things unjust and evil, is a weakness, imperfection, and inability. Man indeed wills many things that he is not able to perform, and understands many things that he is not able to effect; he understands much of the creatures, something of sun, moon, and stars; he can conceive many suns, many moons, yet is not able to create the least atom: but there is nothing that belongs to power but God understands, and is able to effect. To sum this up, the will of God is the root of all, the wisdom of God is the copy of all, and the power of God is the framer of all.

5. The power of God gives activity to all the other perfections of his nature, and is of a larger extent and efficacy, in regard of its objects, than some perfections of his nature. I put them both together.

(1.) It contributes life and activity to all the other perfections of his nature. How vain would be his eternal counsels, if power did not step in to execute them! His mercy would be a feeble pity, if he were destitute of power to relieve; and his justice a slighted scarecrow, without power to punish; his promises an empty sound, without power to accomplish them. As holiness is the beauty, so power is the life of all his attributes in their exercise; and as holiness, so power, is an adjunct belonging to all, a term that may be given to all. God hath a powerful wisdom to attain his ends without interruption: he hath a powerful mercy to remove our misery; a powerful justice to lay all misery upon offenders: he hath a powerful truth to perform his promises; an infinite power to bestow rewards, and inflict penalties. It is to this purpose power is first put in the two things which the Psalmist had heard (Psalm 62:11, 12). "Twice have I heard," or two things have I heard; first power, then mercy and justice, included in that expression, "Thou renderest to every man according to his work:" in every perfection of God he heard of power. This is the arm, the hand of the Deity, which all his other attributes lay hold on,

when they would appear in their glory; this hands them to the world: by this they act, in this they triumph. Power framed every stage for their appearance in creation, providence, redemption.

(2.) It is of a larger extent, in regard of its objects, than some other attributes. Power doth not alway suppose an object, but constitutes an object. It supposeth an object in the act of preservation, but it makes an object in the act of creation; but mercy supposeth an object miserable, yet doth not make it so. Justice supposeth an object criminal, but doth not constitute it so: mercy supposeth him miserable, to relieve him; justice supposeth him criminal, to punish him: but power supposeth not a thing in real existence, but as possible; or rather, it is from power that any thing hath a possibility, if there be no repugnancy in the nature of the thing. Again, power extends further than either mercy or justice. Mercy hath particular objects, which justice shall not at last be willing to punish; and justice hath particular objects, which mercy at last shall not be willing to refresh: but power doth, and alway will, extend to the objects of both mercy and justice. A creature, as a creature, is neither the object of mercy nor justice, nor of rewarding goodness: a creature, as innocent, is the object of rewarding goodness; a creature, as miserable, is the object of compassionate mercy; a creature, as criminal, is the object of revenging justice: but all of them the objects of power, in conjunction with those attributes of goodness, mercy, and justice, to which they belong. All the objects that mercy, and justice, and truth, and wisdom, exercise themselves about, hath a possibility and an actual being from this perfection of Divine power. It is power first frames a creature in a capacity of nature for mercy or justice, though it doth not give an immediate qualification for the exercise of either. Power makes man a rational creature, and so confers upon him a nature mutable, which may be miserable by its own fault, and punishable by God's justice; or pitiable by God's compassion, and relievable by God's mercy but it doth not make him sinful, whereby he becomes miserable and punishable. Again, power runs through all the degrees of the states of a creature. As a thing is possible, or may be made, it is the object of absolute power; as it is factibile, or ordered to be made, it is the object of ordinate power: as a thing is actually made, and brought into being, it is the object of preserving power.

So that power doth stretch out its arms to all the works of God, in all their circumstances, and at all times. When mercy ceaseth to relieve a creature, when justice ceaseth to punish a creature, power ceaseth not to preserve a creature. The blessed in heaven, that are out of the reach of punishing justice, are forever maintained by power in that blessed condition: the damned in hell, that are cast out of the bosom of entreating mercy, are forever sustained in those remediless torments by the Arm of Power.

6. This power is originally and essentially in the nature of God, and not distinct from his essence. It is originally and essentially in God. The strength and power of great kings is originally in their people, and managed and ordered by the authority of the prince for the common good. Though a prince hath authority in his person to command, yet he hath not sufficient strength in his person, without the assistance of others, to make his commands to be obeyed. He hath not a single strength in his own person to conquer countries and kingdoms, and increase the number of his subjects: he must make use of the arms of his own subjects, to overrun other places, and yoke them under his dominion: but the power of all things that ever were, are, or shall be, is originally and essentially in God. It is not derived from any thing without him, as the power of the greatest potentates in the world is: therefore (Psalm 62:11) it is said, "Power belongs unto God," that is, solely and to none else. He hath a power to make his subjects, and as many as he pleases; to create worlds, to enjoin precepts, to execute penalties, without calling in the strength of his creatures to his aid. The strength that the subjects of a mortal prince have, is not derived to them from the prince, though the exercise of it for this or that end, is ordered and directed by the authority of the prince: but what strength soever any thing hath to act as a means, it hath from the power of God as Creator, as well as whatsoever authority it hath to act is from God, as a Rector and Governor of the world. God hath a strength to act without means, and no means can act any thing without his power and strength communicated to them. As the clouds, in ver. 8, before the text, are called God's clouds, "his clouds:" so all the strength of creatures may be called, and truly is, God's strength and power in them: a drop of power shot down from heaven, originally only in God. Creatures have but a little mite of power; somewhat communicated to them, somewhat kept and reserved from them, of what they are

capable to possess. They have limited natures, and therefore a limited sphere of activity. Clothes can warm us, but not feed us; bread can nourish us, but not clothe us. One plant hath a medicinal quality against one disease, another against another; but God is the possessor of universal power, the common exchequer of this mighty treasure. He acts by creatures, as not needing their power, but deriving power to them: what he acts by them, he could act himself without them: and what they act as from themselves, is derived to them from him through invisible channels. And hence it will follow, that because power is essentially in God, more operations of God are possible than are exerted. And as power is essentially in God, so it is not distinct from his essence. It belongs to God in regard of the inconceivable excellency and activity of his essence. And omnipotent is nothing but the Divine essence efficacious *ad extra*. It is his essence as operative, and the immediate principle of operation: as the power of enlightening in the sun, and the power of heating in the fire, are not things distinct from the nature of them; but the nature of the sun bringing forth light, and the nature of the fire bringeth forth heat. The power of acting is the same with the substance of God, though the action from that power be terminated in the creature. If the power of God were distinct from his essence, he were then compounded of substance and power, and would not be the most simple being. As when the understanding is informed in several parts of knowledge, it is skilled in the government of cities and countries, it knows this or that art: it learns mathematics, philosophy; this, or that science. The understanding hath a power to do this; but this power, whereby it learns those excellent things, and brings forth excellent births, is not a thing distinct from the understanding itself; we may rather call it the understanding powerful, than the power of the understanding; and so we may rather say, God powerful, than say, the power of God; because his power is not distinct from his essence. From both these, it will follow, that this omnipotence is incommunicable to any creature; no creature can inherit it, because it is a contradiction for any creature to have the essence of God. This omnipotence is a peculiar right of God, wherein no creature can share with him. To be omnipotent is to be essentially God. And for a creature to be omnipotent, is for a creature to be its own Creator. It being therefore the same with the essence of the Godhead, it cannot be communicated to the humanity

of Christ, as the Lutherans say it is, without the communication of the essence of the Godhead; for then the humanity of Christ would not be humanity, but Deity. If omnipotence were communicated to the humanity of Christ, the essence of God were also communicated to his humanity, and then eternity would be communicated. His humanity then was not given him in time; his humanity would be uncompounded, that is, his body would be no body, his soul no soul. Omnipotence is essentially in God; it is not distinct from the essence of God, it is his essence, omnipotent, able to do all things.

7. Hence it follows, that this power is infinite (Eph. 1:19); “What is the exceeding greatness of his power,” &c. “according to the working of his mighty power.” God were not omnipotent, unless his power were infinite; for a finite power is a limited power, and a limited power cannot effect everything that is possible. Nothing can be too difficult for the Divine power to effect; he hath a fullness of power, an exceeding strength, above all human capacities; it is a “mighty power” (Eph. 1:19), “able to do above all that we can ask or think” (Eph. 3:20): that which he acts, is above the power of any creature to act. Infinite power consists in the bringing things forth from nothing. No creature can imitate God in this prerogative of power. Man indeed can carve various forms, and erect various pieces of art, but from pre-existent matter. Every artificer hath the matter brought to his hand, he only brings it forth in a new figure. Chemists separate one thing from another, but create nothing, but sever those things which were before compacted and cruddled together: but when God speaks a powerful word, nothing begins to be something: things stand forth from the womb of nothing, and obey his mighty command, and take what forms he is pleased to give them. The creating one thing, though never so small and minute, as the least fly, cannot be but by an infinite power; much less can the producing of such variety we see in the world. His power is infinite, in regard it cannot be resisted by anything that he hath made; nor can it be confined by anything he can will to make. “His greatness is unsearchable” (Psalm 145:3). It is a greatness, not of quantity, but quality. The greatness of his power hath no end: it is a vanity to imagine any limits can be affixed to it, or that any creature can say, “Hitherto it can go, and no further.” It is above all conception, all inquisition of any created understanding. No creature ever had, nor ever can have, that strength of wit and understanding,

to conceive the extent of his power, and how magnificently he can work.

First, His essence is infinite. As in a finite subject there is a finite virtue, so in an infinite subject there must be an infinite virtue. Where the essence is limited, the power is so: where the essence is unlimited, the power knows no bounds. Among creatures, the more excellency of being and form anything hath, the more activity, vigor, and power it hath, to work according to its nature. The sun hath a mighty power to warm, enlighten, and fructify, above what the stars have; because it hath a vaster body, more intense degrees of light, heat, and vigor. Now, if you conceive the sun made much greater than it is, it would proportionably have greater degrees of power to heat and enlighten than it hath now: and were it possible to have an infinite heat and light, it would infinitely heat and enlighten other things; for everything is able to act according to the measures of its being: therefore, since the essence of God is unquestionably infinite, his power of acting must be so also. His power (as was said before) is one and the same with his essence: and though the knowledge of God extends to more objects than his power, because he knows all evils of sin, which because of his holiness he cannot commit, yet it is as infinite as his knowledge, because it is as much one with his essence, as his knowledge and wisdom is: for as the wisdom or knowledge of God is nothing but the essence of God, *knowing*, so the power of God is nothing but the essence of God, *able*.

The objects of Divine power are innumerable. The objects of Divine power are not essentially infinite; and therefore we must not measure the infiniteness of Divine power by an ability to make an infinite being; because there is an incapacity in any created thing to be infinite; for to be a creature and to be infinite; to be infinite and yet made, is a contradiction. To be infinite, and to be God, is one and the same thing. Nothing can be infinite but God; nothing but God is infinite. But the power of God is infinite, because it can produce infinite effects, or innumerable things, such as surpass the arithmetic of a creature; nor yet doth the infiniteness consist simply in producing innumerable effects; for that a finite cause can produce. Fire can, by its finite and limited heat, burn numberless combustible things and parcels; and the understanding of man hath an infinite number of thoughts and acts of intellection, and thoughts different

from one another. Who can number the imaginations of his fancy, and thoughts of his mind, the space of one month or year? much less of forty or an hundred years; yet all these thoughts are about things that are in being, or have a foundation in things that are in being. But the infiniteness of God's power consists in an ability to produce infinite effects, formally distinct, and diverse from one another; such as never had being, such as the mind of man cannot conceive: "Able to do above what we can think" (Eph. 3:20). And whatsoever God hath made, or is able to make, he is able to make in an infinite manner, by calling them to stand forth from nothing. To produce innumerable effects of distinct natures, and from so distant a term as nothing, is an argument of infinite power. Now, that the objects of Divine power are innumerable, appears, because God can do infinitely more than he hath done, or will do. Nothing that God hath done can enfeeble or dull his power; there still resides in him an ability beyond all the settled contrivances of his understanding and resolves of his will, which no effects which he hath wrought can drain and put to a stand. As he can raise stones to be children to Abraham (Matt. 3:9); so with the same mighty word, whereby he made one world, he can make infinite numbers of worlds to be the monuments of his glory. After the prophet Jeremiah (ch. 32:17), had spoke of God's power in creation, he adds, "And there is nothing too hard for thee." For one world that he hath made, he can create millions: for one star which he hath beautified the heavens with, he could have garnished it with a thousand, and multiplied, if he had pleased, every one of those into millions, "for he can call things that are not" (Rom. 4:17); not some things, but all things possible. The barren womb of nothing can no more resist his power now to educe a world from it, than it could at first: no doubt, but for one angel which he hath made, he could make many worlds of angels. He that made one with so much ease, as by a word, cannot want power to make many more, till he wants a word. The word that was not too weak to make one, cannot be too weak to make multitudes. If from one man he hath, in a way of nature, multiplied so many in all ages of the world, and covered with them the whole face of the earth; he could, in a supernatural way, by one word, multiply as many more. "It is the breath of the Almighty that gives life" (Job 33:4). He can create infinite species and kinds of creatures more than he hath created, more variety of forms: for since there is no searching of his

greatness, there is no conceiving the numberless possible effects of his power. The understanding of man can conceive numberless things possible to be, more than have been or shall be. And shall we imagine, that a finite understanding of a creature hath a greater omnipotency to conceive things possible, than God hath to produce things possible? When the understanding of man is tired in its conceptions, it must still be concluded, that the power of God extends, not only to what can be conceived, but infinitely beyond the measures of a finite faculty. "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out; he is excellent in power and in judgment" (Job 36:23). For the understanding of man, in its conceptions of more kind of creatures, is limited to those creatures which are: it cannot, in its own imagination; conceive anything but what hath some foundation in and from something already in being. It may frame a new kind of creature, made up of a lion, a horse, an ox; but all those parts whereof its conception is made, have distinct beings in the world, though not in that composition as his mind mixes and joins them; but no question but God can create creatures that have no resemblance with any kind of creatures yet in being. It is certain that if God only knows those things which he hath done, and will do, and not all things possible to be done by him, his knowledge were finite; so if he could do no more than what he hath done, his power would be finite.

(I.) Creatures have a power to act about more objects than they do. The understanding of man can frame from one principle of truth, many conclusions and inferences more than it doth. Why cannot, then, the power of God frame from one first matter, an infinite number of creatures more than have been created? The Almightyness of God in producing real effects, is not inferior to the understanding of man in drawing out real truths. An artificer that makes a watch, supposing his life and health, can make many more of a different form and motion; and a limner can draw many draughts, and frame many pictures with a new variety of colors, according to the richness of his fancy. If these can do so, that require a pre-existent matter framed to their hands, God can much more, who can raise beautiful structures from nothing. As long as men have matter, they can diversify the matter, and make new figures from it; so long as there is nothing, God can produce out of that nothing whatsoever he pleases. We see the same. in inanimate creatures. A spark of fire

hath a vast power in it: it will kindle other things, increase and enlarge itself; nothing can be exempt from the active force of it. It will alter, by consuming or refining, whatsoever you offer to it. It will reach all, and refuse none; and by the efficacious power of it, all those new figures which we see in metals, are brought forth; when you have exposed to it a multitude of things, still add more, it will exert the same strength; yea, the vigor is increased rather than diminished. The more it catcheth, the more fiercely and irresistibly it will act; you cannot suppose an end of its operation, or a decrease of its strength, as long as you can conceive its duration and continuance: this must be but a weak shadow of that infinite power which is in God. Take another instance, in the sun: it hath power every year to produce flowers and plants from the earth; and is as able to produce them now, as it was at the first lighting it and rearing it in that sphere wherein it moves. And if there were no kind of flowers and plants now created, the sun hath a power residing in it, ever since its first creation, to afford the same warmth to them for the nourishing and bringing them forth. Whatsoever you can conceive the sun to be able to do in regard of plants, that can God do in regard of worlds; produce more worlds than the sun doth plants every year, without weariness, without languishment. The sun is able to influence more things than it doth, and produce numberless effects; but it doth not do so much as it is able to do, because it wants matter to work upon. God, therefore, who wants no matter, can do much more than he doth; he can either act by second causes if there were more, or make more second causes if he pleased.

(2.) God is the most free agent. Every free agent can do more than he will do. Man being a free creature, can do more than ordinarily he doth will to do. God is most free, as being the spring of liberty in other creatures; he acts not by a necessity of nature, as the waves of the sea, or the motions of the wind; and, therefore, is not determined to those things which he hath already called forth into the world. If God be infinitely wise in contrivance, he could contrive more than he hath, and therefore, can effect more than he hath effected. He doth not act to the extent of his power upon all occasions. It is according to his will that he works (Eph. 1.). It is not according to his work that he wills; his work is an evidence of his will, but not the rule of his will. His power is not the rule of his will, but his will is the disposer of his power, according to the light of his

infinite wisdom, and other attributes that direct his will; and therefore his power is not to be measured by his actual will. No doubt, but he could in a moment have produced that world which he took six days' time to frame; he could have drowned the old world at once, without prolonging the time till the revolution of forty days; he was not limited to such a term of time by any weakness, but by the determination of his own will. God doth not do the hundred thousandth part of what he is able to do, but what is convenient to do, according to the end which he hath proposed to himself.

Jesus Christ, as man, could have asked legions of angels; and God, as a sovereign, could have sent them (Matt. 26:53). God could raise the dead every day if he pleased, but he doth not: he could heal every diseased person in a moment, but he doth not. As God can will more than he doth actually will, so he can do more than he hath actually done; he can do whatsoever he can will; he can will more worlds, and therefore can create more worlds. If God hath not ability to do more than he will do, he then can do no more than what he actually hath done; and then it will follow, that he is not a free, but a natural and necessary agent, which cannot be supposed of God.

Second. This power is infinite in regard of action. As he can produce numberless objects above what he hath produced, so he could produce them more magnificently than he hath made them. As he never works to the extent of his power in regard of things, so neither in regard of the manner of acting; for he never acts so but he could act in a higher and perfecter manner.

(1.) His power is infinite in regard of the independency of action: he wants no instrument to act. When there was nothing but God, there was no cause of action but God; when there was nothing in being but God, there could be no instrumental cause of the being of anything. God can perfect his action without dependence on any thing; and to be simply independent, is to be simply infinite. In this respect it is a power incommunicable to any creature, though you conceive a creature in higher degrees of perfection than it is. A creature cannot cease to be dependent, but it must cease to be a creature; to be a creature and independent, are terms repugnant to one another.

(2.) But the infiniteness of Divine power consists in an ability to

give higher degrees of perfection to everything which he hath made. As his power is infinite extensive, in regard of the multitude of objects he can bring into being, so it is infinite intensive, in regard of the manner of operation, and the endowments he can bestow upon them. Some things, indeed, God doth so perfect, that higher degrees of perfection cannot be imagined to be added to them. As the humanity of Christ cannot be united more gloriously than to the person of the Son of God, a greater degree of perfection cannot be conferred upon it. Nor can the souls of the blessed have a nobler object of vision and fruition than God himself, the infinite Being: no higher than the enjoyment of himself can be conferred upon a creature, *respectu termini*. This is not want of power; he cannot be greater, because he is greatest; not better, because he is best; nothing can be more than infinite. But as to the things which God hath made in the world, he could have given them other manner of being than they have, A human understanding may improve a thought or conclusion; strengthen it with more and more force of reason; and adorn it with richer and richer elegance of language: why, then, may not the Divine providence produce a world more perfect and excellent than this? He that makes a plain vessel, can embellish it more, engrave more figures upon it, according to the capacity of the subject: and cannot God do so much more with his works. Could not God have made this world of a larger quantity, and the sun of a greater bulk and proportionable strength, to influence a bigger world? so that this world would have been to another that God might have made, as a ball or a mount, this sun as a star to another sun that he might have kindled. He could have made every star a sun, every spire of grass a star, every grain of dust a flower, every soul an angel. And though the angels be perfect creatures, and inexpressibly more glorious than a visible creature, yet who can imagine God so confined, that he cannot create a more excellent kind, and endow those which he hath made with excellency of a higher rank than he invested them with at the first moment of their creation? Without question God might have given the meaner creatures more excellent endowments, put them into another order of nature for their own good and more diffusive usefulness in the world. What is made use of by the prophet (Mal. 2:15) in another case, may be used in this: "Yet had he a residue of Spirit." The capacity of every creature might have been enlarged by God; for no work of his in the world

doth equal his power, as nothing that he hath framed doth equal his wisdom. The same matter which is the matter of the body of a beast, is the matter of a plant and flower; is the matter of the body of a man; and so was capable of a higher form and higher perfections, than God hath been pleased to bestow upon it. And he had power to bestow that perfection on one part of matter which he denied to it, and bestowed on another part. If God cannot make things in a greater perfection, there must be some limitation of him: he cannot be limited by another, because nothing is superior to God. If limited by himself, that limitation is not from a want of power, but a want of will. He can, by his own power, raise stones to be children to Abraham (Matt. 3:9): he could alter the nature of the stones, form them into human bodies, dignify them with rational souls, inspire those souls with such graces that may render them the children of Abraham. But for the more fully understanding the nature of this power, we may observe,

[1.] That though God can make everything with a higher degree of perfection, yet still within the limits of a finite being. No creature can be made infinite, because no creature can be made God. No creature can be so improved as to equal the goodness and perfection of God; yet there is no creature but we may conceive a possibility of its being made more perfect in that rank of a creature than it is: as we may imagine a flower or plant to have greater beauty and richer qualities imparted to it by Divine power, without rearing it so high as to the dignity of a rational or sensitive creature. Whatsoever perfections may be added by God to a creature, are still finite perfections; and a multitude of finite excellences can never amount to the value and honor of infinite: as if you add one number to another as high as you can, as much as a large piece of paper can contain, you can never make the numbers really infinite, though they may be infinite in regard of the inability of any human understanding to count them. The finite condition of the creature suffers it not to be capable of an infinite perfection. God is so great, so excellent, that it is his perfection not to have any equal; the defect is in the creature, which cannot be elevated to such a pitch; as you can never make a gallon measure to hold the quantity of a butt, or a butt the quantity of a river, or a river the fulness of the sea.

[2.] Though God hath a power to furnish every creature with

greater and nobler perfections than he hath bestowed upon it, yet he hath framed all things in the perfectest manner, and most convenient to that end for which he intended them. Everything is endowed with the best nature and quality suitable to God's end in creation, though not in the best manner for itself. In regard of the universal end, there cannot be a better; for God himself is the end of all things, who is the Supreme Goodness. Nothing can be better than God, who could not be God if he were not superlatively best, or *optimus*; and he hath ordered all things for the declaration of his goodness or justice, according to the behaviors of his creatures. Man doth not consider what strength or power he can put forth in the means he useth to attain such an end, but the suitableness of them to his main design, and so fits and marshals them to his grand purpose. Had God only, created things that are most excellent, he had created only angels and men; how, then, would his wisdom have been conspicuous in other works in the subordination and subserviency of them to one another? God therefore determined his power by his wisdom: and though his absolute power could have made every creature better, yet his ordinate power, which in every step was regulated by his wisdom, made everything best for his designed intention. A musician hath a power to wind up a string on a lute to a higher and more perfect note in itself, but in wisdom he will not do it, because the intended melody would be disturbed thereby if it were not suited to the other strings on the instrument; a discord would mar and taint the harmony which the lutenist designed. God, in creation, observed the proportions of nature: he can make a spider as strong as a lion; but according to the order of nature which he hath settled, it is not convenient that a creature of so small a compass should be as strong as one of a greater bulk. The absolute power of God could have prepared a body for Christ as glorious as that he had after his resurrection; but that had not been agreeable to the end designed in his humiliation: and, therefore, God acted most perfectly by his ordinate power, in giving him a body that wore the livery of our infirmities.

God's power is always regulated by his wisdom and will; and though it produceth not what is most perfect in itself, yet what is most perfect and decent in relation to the end he fixed. And so in his providence, though he could rack the whole frame of nature to bring about his ends in a more miraculous way and astonishment to

mortals, yet his power is usually and ordinarily confined by his will to act in concurrence with the nature of the creatures, and direct them according to the laws of their being, to such ends which he aims at in their conduct, without violencing their nature.

[3.] Though God hath an absolute power to make more worlds, and infinite numbers of other creatures, and to render every creature a higher mark of his power, yet in regard of his decree to the contrary, he cannot do it. He hath a physical power, but after his resolve to the contrary, not a moral power: the exercise of his power is subordinate to his decree, but not the essence of his power. The decree of God takes not away any power from God, because the power of God is his own essence, and incapable of change; and is as great physically and essentially after his decree, as it was before; only his will hath put in a bar to the demonstration of all that power which he is able to exercise. As a prince that can raise 100,000 men for an invasion, raises only 20 or 30,000; he here, by his order, limits his power, but doth not divest himself of his authority and power to raise the whole number of the forces of his dominions if he pleases: the power of God hath more objects than his decree hath; but since it is his perfection to be immutable, and not to change his decree, he cannot morally put forth his power upon all those objects, which, as it is essentially in him, he hath ability to do. God hath decreed to save those that believe in Christ, and to judge unbelievers to everlasting perdition: he cannot morally damn the first, or save the latter; yet he hath not divested himself of his absolute power to save all or damn all. Or suppose God hath decreed not to create more worlds than this we are now in, doth his decree weaken his strength to create more if he pleased? His not creating more is not a want of strength, but a want of will: it is an act of liberty, not an act of impotency. As when a man solemnly resolves not to walk in such a way, or come at such a place, his resolution deprives him not of his natural strength to walk thither, but fortifies his will against using his strength in any such motion to that place. The will of God hath set bounds to the exercise of his power, but doth not infringe that absolute power which still resides in his nature: he is girded about with more power than he puts forth (Psalm 65:6).

[4.] As the power of God is infinite in regard of his essence, in regard of the objects, in regard of action, so, fourthly, in regard of

duration. The apostle calls it “an eternal power” (Rom. 1:20). His eternal power is collected and concluded from the things that are made: they must needs be the products of some Being which contains truly in itself all power, who wrought them without engines, without instruments; and, therefore, this power must be infinite, and possessed of an unalterable virtue of acting. If it be eternal, it must be infinite, and hath neither beginning nor end; what is eternal hath no bounds. If it be eternal, and not limited by time, it must be infinite, and not to be restrained by any finite object: his power never begun to be, nor ever ceaseth to be; it cannot languish; men are fain to unbend themselves, and must have some time to recruit their tired spirits: but the power of God is perpetually vigorous, without any interrupting qualm (Isa. 40:28): “Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?” That might which suffered no diminution from eternity, but hatched so great a world by brooding upon nothing, will not suffer any dimness or decrease to eternity. This power being the same with his essence, is as durable as his essence, and resides for ever in his nature.

8. The eighth consideration, for the right understanding of this attribute; the impossibility of God’s doing some things, is no infringing of his almightiness, but rather a strengthening of it. It is granted that some things God cannot do; or, rather, as Aquinas and others, it is better to say, such things cannot be done, than to say that God cannot do them; to remove all kind of imputation or reflection of weakness on God, and because the reason of the impossibility of those things is in the nature of the things themselves.

1. Some things are impossible in their own nature. Such are all those things which imply a contradiction; as for a thing to be, and not to be at the same time; for the sun to shine, and not to shine at the same moment of time; for a creature to act, and not to act at the same instant: one of those parts must be false; for if it be true that the sun shines this moment, it must be false to say it doth not shine. So it is impossible that a rational creature can be without reason: ’Tis a contradiction to be a rational creature, and yet want that which is essential to a rational creature. So it is impossible that the will of man can be compelled, because liberty is the essence of the will;

while it is will it cannot be constrained; and if it be constrained, it ceaseth to be will. God cannot at one time act as the author of the will and the destroyer of the will. It is impossible that vice and virtue, light and darkness, life and death, should be the same thing. Those things admit not of a conception in any understanding. Some things are impossible to be done, because of the incapability of the subject; as for a creature to be made infinite, independent, to preserve itself without the Divine concurrence and assistance. So a brute cannot be taken into communion with God, and to everlasting spiritual blessedness, because the nature of a brute is incapable of such an elevation: a rational creature only can understand and relish spiritual delights, and is capable to enjoy God, and have communion with him. Indeed, God may change the nature of a brute, and bestow such faculties of understanding and will upon it, as to render it capable of such a blessedness; but then it is no more a brute, but a rational creature: but, while it remains a brute, the excellency of the nature of God doth not admit of communion with such a subject; so that this is not for want of power in God, but because of a deficiency in the creature: to suppose that God could make a contradiction true, is to make himself false, and to do just nothing.

2. Some things are impossible to the nature and being of God. As to die, implies a flat repugnance to the nature of God; to be able to die, is to be able to be cashiered out of being. If God were able to deprive himself of life, he might then cease to be: he were not then a necessary, but an uncertain, contingent being, and could not be said only to have immortality, as he is (1 Tim. 6:16). He can not die who is life itself, and necessarily existent; he cannot grow old or decay, because he cannot be measured by time: and this is no part of weakness, but the perfection of power. His power is that whereby he remains forever fixed in his own everlasting being. That cannot be reckoned as necessary to the omnipotence of God which all mankind count a part of weakness in themselves: God is omnipotent, because he is not impotent; and if he could die, he would be impotent, not omnipotent: death is the feebleness of nature. It is undoubtedly the greatest impotence to cease to be: who would count it a part of omnipotency to disenable himself, and sink into nothing and not being? The impossibility for God to die is not a fit article to impeach his omnipotence; this would be a strange way of arguing: a thing is not powerful, because it is not feeble, cannot cease to be powerful,

for death is a cessation of all power. God is almighty in doing what he will, not in suffering what he will not. To die is not an active, but a passive power; a defect of a power: God is of too noble a nature to perish. Some things are impossible to that eminency of nature which he hath above all creatures; as to walk, sleep, feed, these are imperfections belonging to bodies and compounded natures. If he could walk, he were not everywhere present: motion speaks succession. If he could increase, he would not have been perfect before.

3. Some things are impossible to the glorious perfections of God. God cannot do anything unbecoming his holiness and goodness; any thing unworthy of himself, and against the perfections of his nature. God can do whatsoever he can will. As he doth actually do whatsoever he doth actually will, so it is possible for him to do whatsoever it is possible for him to will. He doth whatsoever he will, and can do whatsoever he can will; but he cannot do what he cannot will: he cannot will any unrighteous thing, and therefore cannot do any unrighteous thing. God cannot love sin, this is contrary to his holiness; he cannot violate his word, this is a denial of his truth; he cannot punish an innocent, this is contrary to his goodness; he cannot cherish an impenitent sinner, this is an injury to his justice; he cannot forget what is done in the world, this is a disgrace to his omniscience; he cannot deceive his creature, this is contrary to his faithfulness: none of these things can be done by him, because of the perfection of his nature. Would it not be an imperfection in God to absolve the guilty, and condemn the innocent? Is it congruous to the righteous and holy nature of God, to command murder and adultery; to command men not to worship him, but to be base and unthankful? These things would be against the rules of righteousness; as, when we say of a good man, he cannot rob or fight a duel, we do not mean that he wants a courage for such an act, or that he hath not a natural strength and knowledge to manage his weapon as well as another, but he hath a righteous principle strong in him which will not suffer him to do it; his will is settled against it: no power can pass into act unless applied by the will; but the will of God cannot will anything but what is worthy of him, and decent for his goodness.

(1.) The Scripture saith it is impossible for God to lie (Heb.

6:18); and God cannot deny himself because of his faithfulness (2 Tim. 2:13). As he cannot die, because he is life itself; as he can not deceive, because he is goodness itself; as he cannot do an unwise action, because he is wisdom itself, so he cannot speak a false word, because he is truth itself. If he should speak anything as true, and not know it, where is his infinite knowledge and comprehensiveness of understanding? If he should speak anything as true, which he knows to be false, where is his infinite righteousness? If he should deceive any creature, there is an end of his perfection of fidelity and veracity. If he should be deceived himself, there is an end of his omniscience; we must then fancy him to be a deceitful God, an ignorant God, that is, no God at all. If he should lie, he would be God and no God; God upon supposition, and no God, because not the first truth. All unrighteousness is weakness, not power; it is a defection from right reason, a deviation from moral principles, and the rule of perfect action, and ariseth from a defect of goodness and power: it is a weakness, and not omnipotence, to lose goodness: God is light; it is the perfection of light not to become darkness, and a want of power in light, if it should become darkness: his power is infinitely strong, so is his wisdom infinitely clear, and his will infinitely pure: would it not be a part of weakness to have a disorder in himself, and these perfections shock one against another? Since all perfections are in God, in the most sovereign height of perfection, nothing can be done by the infiniteness of one against the infiniteness of the other. He would then be unstable in his own perfections, and depart from the infinite rectitude of his own will, if he should do an evil action. Again, what is an argument of greater strength, than to be utterly ignorant of infirmity? God is omnipotent because he cannot do evil, and would not be omnipotent if he could; those things would be marks of weakness, and not characters of majesty. Would you count a sweet fountain impotent because it cannot send forth bitter streams? or the sun weak, because it cannot diffuse darkness as well as light in the air? There is an inability arising from weakness, and an ability arising from perfection: it is the perfection of angels and blessed spirits, that they cannot sin; and it would be the imperfection of God, if he could do evil.

(2.) Hence it follows, that it is impossible that a thing past should not be past. If we ascribe a power to God, to make a thing that is past not to be past, we do not truly ascribe power to him, but

a weakness; for it is to make God to lie, as though God might not have created man, yet, after he had created Adam, though he should presently have reduced Adam to his first nothing, yet it would be forever true that Adam was created, and it would forever be false that Adam never was created: so, though God may prevent sin, yet when sin hath been committed, it will always be true that sin was committed; it will never be true to say such a creature that did sin, did not sin; his sin cannot be recalled: though God, by pardon, take off the guilt of Peter's denying our Saviour, yet it will be eternally true that Peter did deny him. It is repugnant to the righteousness and truth of God to make that which was once true to become false, and not true; that is, to make a truth to become a lie, and a lie to become a truth. This is well argued from Heb. 6:18: "It is impossible for God to lie." The apostle argues, that what God had promised and sworn will come to pass, and cannot but come to pass. Now, if God could make a thing past not to be past, this consequence would not be good, for then he might make himself not to have promised, not to have sworn, after he hath promised and sworn; and so, if there were a power to undo that which is past, there would be no foundation for faith, no certainty of revelation. It cannot be asserted, that God hath created the world; that God hath sent his Son to die; that God hath accepted his death for man. These might not be true, if it were possible, that that which hath been done, might be said never to have been done: so that what any may imagine to be a want of power in God, is the highest perfection of God, and the greatest security to a believing creature that hath to do with God.

4. Some things are impossible to be done, because of God's ordination, Some things are impossible, not in their own nature, but in regard of the determined will of God: so God might have destroyed the world after Adam's fall, but it was impossible; not that God wanted power to do it, but because he did not only decree from eternity to create the world, but did also decree to redeem the world by Jesus Christ, and erected the world in order to the manifestation of his "glory in Christ" (Eph. 1:4, 5). The choice of some in Christ was "before the foundation of the world." Supposing that there was no hindrance in the justice of God to pardon the sin of Adam after his fall, and to execute no punishment on him, yet in regard of God's threatening, that in the day he eat of the forbidden fruit he should die, it was impossible: so, though it was possible that the cup should

pass from our blessed Saviour, that is, possible in its own nature, yet it was not possible in regard of the determination of God's will, since he had both decreed and published his will to redeem man by the passion and blood of his Son. These things God, by his absolute power, might have done; but upon the account of his decree, they were impossible, because it is repugnant to the nature of God to be mutable: it is to deny his own wisdom which contrived them, and his own will which resolved them, not to do that which he had decreed to do. This would be a diffidence in his wisdom, and a change of his will. The impossibility of them is no result of a want of power, no mark of an imperfection, of feebleness and impotence; but the perfection of immutability and unchangeableness. Thus have I endeavored to give you a right notion of this excellent attribute of the power of God, in as plain terms as I could, which may serve us for a matter of meditation, admiration, fear of him, trust in him, which are the proper uses we should make of this doctrine of Divine power. The want of a right understanding of this doctrine of the Divine power hath caused many to run into mighty absurdities; I have, therefore, taken the more pains to explain it.

II. . The second thing I proposed, is the reasons to prove God to be omnipotent. The Scripture describes God by this attribute of power (Psalm 115:3): "He hath done whatsoever he pleased." It sometimes sets forth his power in a way of derision of those that seem to doubt of it. When Sarah doubted of his ability to give her a child in her old age (Gen. 18:14), "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" They deserve to be scoffed, that will despoil God of his strength, and measure him by their shallow models. And when Moses uttered something of unbelief of this attribute, as if God were not able to feed 600,000 Israelites, besides women and children, which he aggravates by a kind of imperious scoff; "Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? Or, shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them?" &c. (Num. 11:22). God takes him up short (ver. 23): "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" What! can any weakness seize upon my hand? Can I draw out of my own treasures what is needful for a supply? The hand of God is not at one time strong, and another time feeble. Hence it is that we read of the hand and arm of God, an outstretched arm; because the strength of a man is exerted by his hand and arm; the power of God is called the arm of his power, and the right hand of his strength.

Sometimes, according to the different manifestation of it, it is expressed by finger, when a less power is evidenced; by hand, when something greater; by arm, when more mighty than the former. Since God is eternal, without limits of time, he is also Almighty, without limits of strength. As he cannot be said to be more in being now than he was before, so he is neither more nor less in strength than he was before: as he cannot cease to be so, so he cannot cease to be powerful, because he is eternal. His eternity and power are linked together as equally demonstrable (Rom. 1:20); God is called the God of gods *El Elohim* (Dan. 11:36); the Mighty of mighties, whence all mighty persons have their activity and vigor he is called the Lord of Hosts, as being the Creator and Conductor of the heavenly militia.

Reason 1. The power that is in creatures demonstrates a greater and an unconceivable power in God.

Nothing in the world is without a power of activity according to its nature: no creature but can act something. The sun warms and enlightens everything: it sends its influences upon the earth, into the bowels of the earth, into the depths of the sea: all generations owe themselves to its instrumental virtue. How powerful is a small seed to rise into a mighty tree with a lofty top, and extensive branches, and send forth other seeds, which can still multiply into numberless plants! How wonderful is the power of the Creator, who hath endowed so small a creature as a seed, with so fruitful an activity! Yet this is but the virtue of a limited nature. God is both the producing and preserving cause of all the virtue in any creature, in every creature. The power of every creature belongs to him as the Fountain, and is truly his power in the creature. As he is the first Being, he is the original of all being; as he is the first Good, he is the spring of all goodness; as he is the first Truth, he is the source of all truth; so, as he is the first Power, he is the fountain of all power.

1. He, therefore, that communicates to the creature what power it hath, contains eminently much more power in himself. (Psalm 94:10), "He that teaches man knowledge, shall not he know?" So he that gives created beings power, shall not he be powerful? The first Being must have as much power as he Hath given to other: he could not transfer that upon another, which he did not transcendently possess himself. The sole cause of created power cannot be destitute

of any power in himself. We see that the power of one creature transcends the power of another. Beasts can do the things that plants cannot do; besides the power of growth, they have a power of sense and progressive motion. Men can do more than beasts; they have rational souls to measure the earth and heavens, and to be repositories of multitudes of things, notions, and conclusions. We may well imagine angels to be far superior to man: the power of the Creator must far surmount the power of the creature, and must needs be infinite: for if it be limited, it is limited by himself or by some other; if by some other, he is no longer a Creator, but a creature; for that which limits him in his nature, did communicate that nature to him: not by himself, for he would not deny himself any necessary perfection: we must still conclude a reserve of power in him, that he that made these can make many more of the same kind.

2. All the power which is distinct in the creatures, must be united in God. One creature hath a strength to do this, another to do that; every creature is as a cistern filled with a particular and limited power, according to the capacity of its nature, from this fountain; all are distinct streams from God. But the strength of every creature, though distinct in the rank of creatures, is united in God the centre, whence those lines were drawn, the fountain whence those streams were derived. If the power of one creature be admirable, as the power of an angel, which the Psalmist saith (Psalm 103:20), "excelleth in strength;" how much greater must the power of a legion of angels be! How inconceivably superior the power of all those numbers of spiritual natures, which are the excellent works of God! Now, if all this particular power, which is in every angel distinct, were compacted in one angel, how would it exceed our understanding, and be above our power to form a distinct conception of it! What is thus divided in every angel, must be thought united in the Creator of angels, and far more excellent in him. Everything is in a more noble manner in the fountain, than in the streams which distil and descend from it. He that is the Original of all those distinct powers, must be the seat of all power without distinction: in him is the union of all without division; what is in them as a quality, is in him as his essence. Again, if all the powers of several creatures, with all their principal qualities and vigors, both of beasts, plants, and rational creatures, were united in one subject; as if one lion had the strength of all the lions that ever were; or, if one elephant had the

strength of all the elephants that ever were; nay, if one bee had all the power of motion and stinging that all bees ever had, it would have a vast strength; but if the strength of all those thus gathered into one of every kind should be lodged in one sole creature, one man, would it not be a strength too big for our conception? Or, suppose one cannon had all the force of all the cannons that ever were in the world. what a battery would it make, and, as it were, shake the whole frame of heaven and earth! All this strength must be much more incomprehensible in God; all is united in him. If it were in one individual created nature, it would still be but a finite power in a finite nature: but in God it is infinite and immense.

Reason 2. If there, were not an incomprehensible power in God, he would not be infinitely perfect.

God is the first Being; it can only be said of him, *Est*, he is. All other things are nothing to him; “less than nothing and vanity” (Isa. 40:17), and “reputed as nothing” (Dan. 4:30). All the inhabitants of the earth, with all their wit and strength, are counted as if they were not; just in comparison with Him and his being, as a little mote in the sun-beams: God, therefore, is a pure Being. Any kind of weakness whatsoever is a defect, a degree of not being; so far as anything wants this or that power, it may be said not to be. Were there anything of weakness in God, any want of strength which belonged to the perfection of a nature, it might be said of God, He is not this or that, he wants this or that perfection of Being, and so he would not be a pure Being, there would be something of not being in him. But God being the first Being, the only original Being, he is infinitely distant from not being, and therefore infinitely distant from anything of weakness. Again, if God can know whatsoever is possible to be done by him, and cannot do it, there would be something more in his knowledge than in his power. What would then follow? That the essence of God would be in some regard greater than itself, and less than itself, because his knowledge and his power are his essence; his power as much his essence as his knowledge: and therefore, in regard of his knowledge, his essence would be greater; in regard of his power, his essence would be less; which is a thing impossible to be conceived in a most perfect Being. We must understand this of those things which are properly and in their own nature subjected to the Divine knowledge; for otherwise

God knows more than he can do, for he knows sin, but he cannot act it, because sin belongs not to power but weakness; and sin comes under the knowledge of God, not in itself and its own nature, but as it is a defect from God, and contrary to good, which is the proper object of Divine knowledge. He knows it also not as possible to be done by himself, but as possible to be done by the creature. Again, if God were not omnipotent, we might imagine something more perfect than God: for if we bar God from any one thing which in its own nature is possible, we may imagine a being that can do that thing, one that is able to effect it; and so imagine an agent greater than God, a being able to do more than God is able to do, and consequently a being more perfect than God: but no being more perfect than God can be imagined by any creature. Nothing can be called most perfect, if anything of activity be wanting to it. Active power follows the perfection of a thing, and all things are counted more noble by how much more of efficacy and virtue they possess. We count those the best and most perfect plants, that have the greatest medicinal virtue in them, and power of working upon the body for the cure of distempers. God is perfect of himself, and therefore most powerful of himself. If his perfection in wisdom and goodness be unsearchable, his power, which belongs to perfection, and without which all the other excellencies of his nature were insignificant, and could not show themselves, (as was before evidenced,) must be unsearchable also. It is by the title of Almighty he is denominated, when declared to be unsearchable to perfection (Job 11:7): "Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" This would be limited and searched out, if he were destitute of an active ability to do whatsoever he pleased to do, whatsoever was possible to be done. As he hath not a perfect liberty of will, if he could not will what he pleased; so he would not have a perfect activity, if he could not do what he willed.

Reason, 3. The simplicity of God manifests it. Every substance, the more spiritual it is, the more powerful it is. All perfections are more united in a simple, than in a compounded being. Angels, being spirits, are more powerful than bodies. Where there is the greatest simplicity, there is the greatest unity; and where there is the greatest unity, there is the greatest power. Where there is a composition of a faculty and a member, the member or organ may be weakened and rendered unable to act, though the power doth still reside in the

faculty. As a man, when his arm or hand is cut off or broke, he hath the faculty of motion still; but he hath lost that instrument that part whereby he did manifest and put forth that motion: but God being a pure spiritual nature, hath no members, no organs to be defaced or impaired. All impediments of actions arise either from the nature of the thing that acts, or from something without it. There can be no hindrance to God to do whatsoever he pleases; not in himself, because he is the most simple being, hath no contrariety in himself, is not composed of divers things; and it cannot be from anything without himself, because nothing is equal to him, much less superior. He is the greatest, the Supreme: all things were made by him, depend upon him, nothing can disappoint his intentions.

Reason 4. The miracles that have been in the world evidence the power of God. Extraordinary productions have awakened men from their stupidity, to the acknowledgment of the immensity of Divine power. Miracles are such effects as have been wrought without the assistance and co-operation of natural causes, yea, contrary and besides the ordinary course of nature, above the reach of any created power.

Miracles have been; and saith Bradwardine, to deny that ever such things were, is uncivil: it is inhuman to deny all the histories of Jews and Christians; whosoever denies miracles, must deny all possibility of miracles, and so must imagine himself fully skilled in the extent of Divine power. How was the sun suspended from its motion for some hours (Josh. 10:13); “the dead raised from the grave;” those reduced from the brink of it, that had been brought near to it by prevailing diseases; and this by a word speaking? How were the famished lions bridled from exercising their rage upon Daniel, exposed to them for a prey (Dan. 6:22)? the activity of the fire curbed for the preservation of the three children (Dan. 3:10)? which proves a Deity more powerful than all creatures. No power upon earth can hinder the operation of the fire upon combustible matter, when they are united, unless by quenching the fire, or removing the matter: but no created power can restrain the fire, so long as it remains so, from acting according to its nature. This was done by God in the case of the three children, and that of the burning bush (Exod. 3:2). It was as much miraculous that the bush should not consume, as it was natural that it should burn by the efficacy of

the fire upon it. No element is so obstinate and deaf, but it bears and obeys his voice, and performs his orders, though contrary to its own nature: all the violence or the creature is suspended as soon as it receives his command. He that gave the original to nature, can take away the necessity of nature; he presides over creatures, but is not confined to those laws he hath prescribed to creatures. He framed nature, and can turn the channels of nature according to his own, pleasure. Men dig into the bowels of nature, search into all the treasures of it, to find medicines to cure a disease, and after all their attempts it may prove labor in vain: but God, by one act of his will, one word of his mouth, overturns the victory of death, and rescues from the most desperate diseases. All the miracles which were wrought by the apostles, either speaking some words or touching with the hand, were not effected by any virtue inherent in their words or in their touches; for such virtue inherent in any created finite subject would be created and finite itself, and consequently were incapable to produce effects which required an infinite virtue, as miracles do which are above the power of nature. So when our Saviour wrought miracles, it was not by any quality resident in his human nature, but by the sole power of his Divinity. The flesh could only do what was proper to the flesh; but the Deity did what was proper to the Deity. "God alone doth wonders" (Psalm 136:4): excluding every other cause from producing those things. He only doth those things which are above the power of nature, and cannot be wrought by any natural causes whatsoever. He doth not hereby put his omnipotence to any stress: it is as easy with him to turn nature out of its settled course, as it was to place it in that station it holds, and appoint it that course it runs. All the works of nature are indeed miracles and testimonies of the power of God producing them, and sustaining them: but works above the power of nature, being novelties and unusual, strike men with a greater admiration upon their appearance, because they are not the products of nature, but the convulsions of it. I might also add as an argument, the power of the mind of man to conceive more than hath been wrought by God in the world. And God can work whatsoever perfection the mind of man can conceive: otherwise the reaches of a created imagination and fancy would be more extensive than the power of God. His power, therefore, is far greater than the conception of any intellectual creature; else the creature would be of a greater capacity

to conceive than God is to effect. The creature would have a power of conception above God's power of activity; and consequently a creature, in some respect greater than himself. Now whatsoever a creature can conceive possible to be done, is but finite in its own nature; and if God could not produce what being a created understanding can conceive possible to be done, he would be less than infinite in power, nay, he could not go to the extent of what is finite. But I have touched this before; that God can create more than he hath created, and in a more perfect way of being, as considered simply in themselves.

III. he third general thing is to declare, how the power of God appears in Creation, in Government, in Redemption.

FIRST, IN CREATION. With what majestic lines doth God set for his power, in the giving being and endowments to all the creatures in the world (Job 38.)! All that is in heaven and earth is his, and shows the greatness of his power, glory, victory, and majesty (1 Chron. 29:11). The heaven being so magnificent a piece of work, is called emphatically, "the firmament of his power" (Psalm 150:1); his power being more conspicuous and unavailed in that glorious arch of the world. Indeed, "God exalts by his power" (Job 36:22), that is, exalts himself by his power in all the works of his hands; in the smallest shrub, as well as the most glorious sun. All his works of nature are truly miracles, though we consider them not, being blinded with two frequent and customary a sight of them; yet, in the neglect of all the rest, the view of the heavens doth more affect us with astonishment at the might of God's arm: these declare his glory, and "the firmament showeth his handy work" (Psalm 19:1). And the Psalmist peculiarly calls them his heavens, and the work of his fingers (Psalm 8:3): these were immediately created by God, whereas many other things in the world were brought into being by the power of God, yet by the means of the influence of the heavens.

1. His power is the first thing evident in the story of the creation. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). There is no appearance of anything in this declaratory preface, but of power: the characters of wisdom march after in the distinct formation of things, and animating them with suitable qualities for an universal good. By heaven and earth, is meant the

whole mass of the creatures: by heaven, all the airy region, with all the host of it; by the earth, is meant, all that which makes the entire inferior globe. The Jews observe, that in the first of Genesis, in the whole chapter, unto the finishing the work in six days, God is called אלהים, which is a name of Power, and that thirty-two times in that chapter; but after the finishing the six days' work, he is called האלרום, which, according to their notion, is a name of goodness and kindness: his power is first visible in framing the world, before his goodness is visible in the sustaining and preserving it. It was by this name of Power and Almighty that he was known in the first ages of the world, not by his name, Jehovah (Exod. 6:3): "And I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them." Not but that they were acquainted with the name, but did not experience the intent of the name, which signified his truth in the performance of his promises; they knew him by that name as promising, but they knew him, not by that name, as performing. He would be known by his name Jehovah, true to his word, when he was about to effect the deliverance from Egypt; a type of the eternal redemption, wherein the truth of God, in performing of his first promise, is gloriously magnified. And hence it is that God is called Almighty more in the book of Job than in all the Scripture besides, I think about thirty-two times, and Jehovah but once, which is Job 12:9, unless in Job 38, when God is introduced speaking himself; which is an argument of Job's living before the deliverance from Egypt, when God was known more by his works of creation than by the performance of his promises, before the name Jehovah was formally published. Indeed, this attribute of his eternal power, is the first thing visible and intelligible upon the first glance of the eye upon the creatures (Rom. 1:20). Bring a man out of the cave where he hath been nursed, without seeing anything out of the confines of it, and let him lift up his eyes to the heavens, and take a prospect of that glorious body, the sun, then cast them down to the earth, and behold the surface of it, with its green clothing; the first notion which will start up in his mind from that spring of wonders, is that of power, which he will at first adore with a religious astonishment. The wisdom of God in them is not so presently apparent, till after a more exquisite consideration of his works and knowledge of the properties of their natures, the conveniency of their situations, and the usefulness of

their functions, and the order wherein they are linked together for the good of the universe.

2. By this creative power God is often distinguished from all the idols and false gods in the world. And by this title he sets forth himself when he would act any great and wonderful work in the world (Psalm 135:5, 6): “He is great above all gods,” for “he hath done whatsoever he pleased in heaven and in earth.” Upon this is founded all the worship he challengeth in the world, as his peculiar, glory (Rev. 4:11): “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honor, and power, for thou hast created all things.” And (Rev. 10:6) “I have made the earth, and created man upon it.” “I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded” (Isa. 45:12). What is the issue (ver. 16)? “They shall be ashamed and confounded, all of them, that are makers of idols.” And the weakness of idols is expressed by this title. “The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth” (Jer. 10:11). “The portion of Jacob is not like them, for he is the former of all things” (ver. 16.) What is not that God able to do, that hath created so great a world? How doth the power of God appear in creation?

1st. In making the world of nothing. When we say, the world was made of nothing, we mean, that there was no matter existent for God to work upon, but what he raised himself in the first act of creation. In this regard, the power of God in creation surmounts his power in providence. Creation supposeth nothing, providence supposeth something in being. Creation intimates a creature making, providence speaks a thing already made, and capable of government, and in government. God uses second causes to bring about his purposes.

1. The world was made of nothing. The earth which is described as the first matter, without any form or ornament, without any distinction or figures, was of God’s forming in the bulk, before he did adorn it with his pencil (Gen. 1:1, 2). God, in the beginning, creating the heaven and the earth, includes two things: First. That those were created in the beginning of time, and before all other things. Secondly. That God begun the creation of the world from those things. Therefore before the heavens and the earth there was nothing absolutely created, and therefore no matter in being before an act of creation passed upon it. It could not be eternal, because

nothing can be eternal but God; it must therefore have a beginning. If it had a beginning from itself, then it was before it was. If it acted in the making itself before it was made, then it had a being before it had a being; for that which is nothing, can act nothing: the action of anything supposeth the existence of the thing which acts. It being made, it was not before it was made; for to be made is to be brought into being. It was made, then, by another, and that Maker is God. It is necessary that the First Original of things was from nothing: when we see one thing to arise from another, we must suppose an original of the first of each kind; as, when we see a tree spring up from a seed, we know that seed came out of the bowels of another tree; it had a parent, it had a master; we must come to some first, or else we run into an endless maze: we must come to some first tree, some first seed that had no cause of the same kind, no matter of it, but was mere nothing. Creation doth suppose a production from nothing; because, if you suppose a thing without any real or actual existence, it is not capable of any other production than from nothing: nothing must be supposed before the world, or we must suppose it eternal, and that is to deny it to be a creature, and make it God. The creation of spiritual substances, such as angels and souls, evince this; those things that are purely spiritual, and consist not of matter, cannot pretend to any original from matter, and therefore they rose up from nothing. If spiritual things arose from nothing, much more may corporeal, because they are of a lower nature than spiritual; and he that can create a higher nature of nothing, can create an inferior nature of nothing. As bodily things are more imperfect than spiritual, so their creation may be supposed easier than that of spiritual. There was as little need of any matter to be wrought to his hands, to contrive into this visible fabric, as there was to erect such an excellent order as the glorious cherubims.

2. This creation of things from nothing speaks an infinite power. The distance between nothing and being hath been always counted so great, that nothing but an Infinite Power can make such distances meet together, either for nothing to pass into being, or being to return to nothing. To have a thing arise from nothing, was so difficult a text to those that were ignorant of the Scripture, that they knew not how to fathom it, and therefore laid it down as a certain rule, that of nothing, nothing is made; which is true of a created power, but not of an uncreated and Almighty Power. A

greater distance cannot be imagined than that which is between nothing and something; that which hath no being, and that which hath; and a greater power cannot be imagined than that which brings something out of nothing. We know not how to conceive a nothing, and afterwards a being from that nothing; but we must remain swallowed up in admiration of the Cause that gives it being, and acknowledge it to be without any bounds and measures of greatness and power. The further anything is from being, the more immense must that power be which brings it into being: it is not conceivable that the power of all the angels in one can give being to the smallest spire of grass. To imagine, therefore, so small a thing as a bee, a fly, a grain of corn, or an atom of dust, to be made of nothing, would stupefy any creature in the consideration of it, much more to behold the heavens, with all the troop of stars; the earth, with all its embroidery; and the sea, with all her inhabitants of fish; and man, the noblest creature of all, to arise out of the womb of mere emptiness.

Indeed, God had not acted as an almighty Creator, if he had stood in need of any materials but of his own framing: it had been as much as his Deity was worth, if he had not had all within the compass of his own power that was necessary to operation; if he must have been beholden to something without himself, and above himself, for matter to work upon: had there been such a necessity, we could not have imagined him to be omnipotent, and, consequently, not God.

3. In this the power of God exceeds the power of all natural and rational agents. Nature, or the order of second causes, hath a vast power; the sun generates flies and other insects, but of some matter, the slime of the earth or a dunghill; the sun and the earth bring forth harvests of corn, but from seed first sown in the earth; fruits are brought forth, but from the sap of the plant; were there no seed or plants in the earth, the power of the earth would be idle, and the influence of the sun insignificant; whatsoever strength either of them had in their nature, must be useless without matter to work upon. All the united strength of nature cannot produce the least thing out of nothing; it may multiply and increase things, by the powerful blessing God gave it at the first erecting of the world, but it cannot create. The word which signifies creation, used in Gen. 1:1, is not

ascribed to any second cause, but only to God; a word, in that sense, as incommunicable to anything else as the action it signifies. Rational creatures can produce admirable pieces of art from small things, yet still out of matter created to their hands. Excellent garments may be woven, but from the entrails of a small silkworm. Delightful and medicinal spirits and essences maybe extracted, by ingenious chemists, but out of the bodies of plants and minerals. No picture can be drawn without colors; no statue engraven without stone; no building erected without timber, stones, and other materials: nor can any man raise a thought without some matter framed to his hands, or cast into him.

Matter is, by nature, formed to the hands of all artificers; they bestow a new figure upon it, by the help of instruments, and the product of their own wit and skill, but they create not the least particle of matter; when they want it, they must be supplied or else stand still, as well as nature, for none of them, or all together, can make the least mite or atom: and when they have wrought all that they can, they will not want some to find a flaw and defect in their work. God, as a Creator, hath the only prerogative to draw what he pleases from nothing, without any defect, without any imperfection: he can raise what matter he please; ennoble it with what form he pleases. Of nothing, nothing can be made, by any created agent: but the omnipotent Architect of the world is not under the same necessity, nor is limited to the same rule, and tied by so short a tedder as created nature, or an ingenious, yet feeble artificer.

2d. It appears, in raising such variety of creatures from this barren womb of nothing, or from the matter which he first commanded to appear out of nothing. Had there been any pre-existent matter, yet the bringing forth such varieties and diversities of excellent creatures, some with life, some with sense, and others with reason superadded to the rest, and those out of indisposed and undigested matter, would argue an infinite power resident in the first Author of this variegated fabric. From this matter be formed that glorious sun, which every day displays its glory, scatters its beams, clears the air, ripens our fruits, and maintains the propagation of creatures in the world. From this matter he lighted those torches which he set in the heaven to qualify the darkness of the night: from this he compacted those bodies of light, which, though they seem to

us as little sparks, as if they were the glow-worms of heaven, yet some of them exceed in greatness this globe of the earth on which we live and the highest of them hath so quick a motion, that some tell us they run, in the space of every hour, 42,000,000 of leagues. From the same matter he drew the earth on which we walk; from thence he extracted the flowers to adorn it, the hills to secure the valleys, and the rocks to fortify it against the inundations of the sea; and on this dull and sluggish element he bestowed so great a fruitfulness, to maintain, feed, and multiply so many seeds of different kinds, and conferred upon those little bodies of seeds a power to multiply their kinds, in conjunction with the fruitfulness of the earth, to many thousands. From this rude matter, the slime or dust of the earth, he kneaded the body of man, and wrought so curious a fabric, fit to entertain a soul of a heavenly extraction, formed by the breath of God (Gen. 2:7). He brought light out of thick darkness, and living creatures, fish and fowl, out of inanimate waters (Gen. 1:20), and gave a power of spontaneous motion to things arising from that matter which had no living motion. To convert one thing into another, is an evidence of infinite power, as well as creating things of nothing; for the distance between life and not life is next to that which is between being and not being. God first forms matter out of nothing, and then draws upon, and from this indisposed chaos, many excellent portraitures. Neither earth nor sea were capable of producing living creatures without an infinite power working upon it, and bringing into it such variety and multitude of forms; and this is called, by some, mediate creation, as the producing the chaos, which was without form and void, is called immediate creation. Is not the power of the potter admirable in forming, out of tempered clay, such varieties of neat and curious vessels, that, after they are fashioned and past the furnace, look as if they were not of any lain to the matter they are formed of? and is it not the same with the glass-maker, that, from a little melted jelly of sand and ashes, or the dust of flint, can blow up so pure a body as glass, and in such varieties of shapes? and is not the power of God more admirable, because infinite in speaking out so beautiful a world out of nothing, and such varieties of living creatures from matter utterly indisposed, in its own nature, for such forms?

3d. And this conducts to a third thing, wherein the power of God appears, in that he did all this with the greatest ease and facility.

1. Without instruments. As God made the world without the advice, so without the assistance, of any other: "He stretched forth the heavens alone, and spread abroad the earth by himself" (Isa. 44:24). He had no engine, but his word; no pattern or model, but himself. What need can he have of instruments, that is able to create what instruments he pleases? Where there is no resistance in the object, where no need of preparation or instrumental advantage in the agent; there the actual determination of the will is sufficient to a production. What instrument need we to the thinking of a thought, or an act of our will? Men, indeed, cannot act anything without tools; the best artificer must be beholden to something else for his noblest works of art. The carpenter cannot work without his rule, and axe, and saw, and other instruments; the watch-maker cannot act without his file and pliers; but in creation, there is nothing necessary to God's bringing forth a world, but a simple act of his will, which is both the principal cause, and instrumental. He had no scaffolds to rear it, no engines to polish it, no hammers or mattocks to God and work it together. It is a miserable error to measure the actions of an Infinite Cause by the imperfect model of a finite, since, by his own "power and out-stretched arm, he made the heaven and the earth" (Jer. 32:17). What excellency would God have in his work above others, if he needed instruments, as feeble men do? Every artificer is counted more admirable, that can frame curious works with the less matter, fewer tools, and assistances. God uses instruments in his works of providence, not for necessity, but for the display of his wisdom in the management of them; yet those instruments were originally framed by him without instruments. Indeed, some of the Jews thought the angels were the instruments of God in creating man, and that those words, "Let us make man in our own image" (Gen. 1:26), were spoken to angels. But certainly the Scripture, which denies God any counsellor in the model of creation (Isa. 40:12-14), doth not join any instrument with him in the operation, which is everywhere ascribed to himself "without created assistance" (Isa. 45:18). It was not to angels God spake in that affair; if so, man was made after the image of angels, if they were companions with God in that work; but it is everywhere said, that "Man was made after the image of God" (Gen. 1:27). Again, the image wherein man was created, was that of dominion over the lower creatures, as appears ver. 26, which we find not conferred

upon angels; and it is not likely that Moses should introduce the angels, as God's privy counsel, of whose creation he had not mentioned one syllable. "Let us make man," rather signifies the Trinity, and not spoken in a royal style, as some think. Which of the Jewish kings wrote in the style, *We*? That was the custom of later times; and we must not measure the language of Scripture by the style of Europe, of a far later date than the penning the history of the creation. If angels were his counsellors in the creation of the material world, what instrument had he in the creation of angels? If his own wisdom were the director, and his own will the producer of the one; why should we not think, that he acted by his sole power in the other? It is concluded by most, that the power of creation cannot be derived to any creature, it being a work of omnipotency; the drawing something out from nothing, cannot be communicated without a communication of the Deity itself. The educing things from nothing exceeds the capacity of any creature, and the creature is of too feeble a nature to be elevated to so high a degree. It is very unreasonable to think, that God needed any such aid.

If an instrument were necessary for God to create the world, then he could not do it without that instrument: if he could not, he were not then all-sufficient in himself, if he depended upon anything without himself, for the production or consummation of his works. And it might be inquired, how that instrument came into being; if it begun to be, and there was a time when it was not, it must have its being from the power of God; and then, why could not God as well create all things without an instrument, as create that instrument without an instrument? For there was no more power necessary to a producing the whole without instruments, than to produce one creature without an instrument. No creature can, in its own nature, be an instrument of creation. If any such instrument were used by God, it must be elevated in a miraculous and supernatural way; and what is so an instrument, is, in effect, no instrument; for it works nothing by its own nature, but from an elevation by a superior nature, and beyond its own nature. All that power in the instrument is truly the power of God, and not the power of the instrument; and, therefore, what God doth by an instrument, he could do as well without. If you should see one apply straw to iron, for the cutting of it, and effect it, you would not call the straw an instrument in that action, because there was nothing in the nature of the straw to do it.

It was done wholly by some other force, which might have done it as well without the straw as with it. The narrative of the creation in Genesis, removes any instrument from God. The plants which are preserved and propagated by the influence of the sun, were created the day before the sun, viz. on the “third day,” whereas, the light was collected into the body of the sun on the “fourth day” (Gen. 1:11, 16); to show, that though the plants do instrumentally owe their yearly beauty and preservation to the sun, yet they did not in any manner owe their creation to the instrumental heat and vigor of it.

2. God created the world by a word, by a simple act of his will. The whole creation is wrought by a word; “God said, Let there be light;” and “God said, Let there be a firmament.” Not that we should understand it of a sensible word, but understand it of a powerful order of his own will, which is expressed by the Psalmist in the nature of a command (Psalm 33:9): “He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast;” and (Psalm 148:5), “He commanded, and they were created.” At the same instant that he willed them to stand forth, they did stand forth. The efficacious command of the Creator was the original of all things: the insensibility of nothing obeyed the act of his will. Creation is therefore entitled a calling (Rom. 4:17): “He calls those things which are not, as if they were.” To create is no more with God, than to call; and what he calls, presents itself before him in the same posture that he calls it. He did with more ease make a world, than we can form a thought. It is the same ease to him to create worlds, as to decree them; there needs no more than a resolve to have things wrought at such a time, and they will be, according to his pleasure. This will is his power; “Let there be light,” is the precept of his will; and “there was light,” is the effect of his precept. By a word, was the matter of the heavens and the earth framed; by a word, things separate themselves from the rude mass into their proper forms; by a word, light associates itself into one body, and forms a sun; by a word, are the heavens, as it were, bespangled with stars, and the earth dressed with flowers; by a word, is the world both ceiled and floored: one act of his will, formed the world, and perfected its beauty. All the variety and several exploits of his power were not caused by distinct words or acts of power. God uttered not distinct words for distinct species; as, let there be an elephant, and let there be a lion; but as he produced

those various creatures out of one matter, so by one word. By one single command, those varieties of creatures, with their clothing, ornaments, distinct notes, qualities, functions, were brought forth (Gen. 1:11): by one word, all the seeds of the earth, with their various virtues: by one word, all the fish of the sea, and fowls of the air, in their distinct natures, instincts, colors (Gen. 1:20): by one word, all the beasts of the field, with their varieties (Gen. 1:24). Heaven and earth, spiritual and corporeal creatures, mortal and immortal, the greater and the less, visible and invisible, were formed with the same ease: a word made the least, and a word made the greatest. It is as little difficulty to him to produce the highest angel, as the lightest atom. It is enough for the existence of the stateliest cherubim, for God only to will his being. It was enough for the forming and fixing the sun, to will the compacting of light into one body. The creation of the soul of man is expressed by inspiration (Gen. 2:7); to show, that it is as easy with God to create a rational soul, as for man to breathe. Breathing is natural to man, by a communication of God's goodness; and the creation of the soul is as easy to God, by virtue of his Almighty word. As there was no proportion between nothing and being, so there was as little proportion between a word and such glorious effects. A mere voice, coming from an Omnipotent will, was capable to produce such varieties, which angels and men have seen in all ages of the world, and this without weariness. What labor is there in willing? what pain could there be in speaking a word? (Isa. 40:28), "The Creator of the ends of the earth is not weary." And though he be said to rest after the creation, it is to be meant a rest from work, not a repose from weariness. So great is the power of God, that without any matter, without any instruments, he could create many worlds, and with the same ease as he made this.

4th. I might add also, the appearance of this power in the instantaneous production of things. The ending of his word was not only the beginning, but the perfection of every thing he spake into being; not several words to several parts and members, but one word, one breath of his mouth, one act of his will, to the whole species of the creatures, and to every member in each individual. Heaven and earth were created in a moment; six days went to their disposal; and that comely order we observe in the world was the work of a week: the matter was formed as soon as God had spoken

the word; and in every part of the creation, as soon as God spake the word, "Let it be so" (Gen. 1.), the answer immediately is, "It was so;" which notes the present standing up of the creature according to the act of his will: and, therefore, one observes, that "Let there be light, and there was light;" in the Hebrew are the same words, without any alteration of letter or point, only the conjunctive particle added, אור ויחי אור יחי "Let there be light, and let there be light," to show, that the same instant of the speaking the Divine word, was the appearance of the creature: so great was the authority of his will.

SECONDLY, We are to show God's power in the GOVERNMENT of the world. As God decreed from eternity the creation of things in time, so he decreed from eternity the particular ends of creatures, and their operation respecting those ends. Now, as there was need of his power to execute his decree of creation, there is also need of his power to execute his decree about the manner of government. All government is an act of the understanding, will, and power. Prudence to design belongs to the understanding; the election of the means belongs to the will; and the accomplishment of the whole is an act of power. It is a hard matter to determine which is most necessary: wisdom stands in as much need of power to perfect, as power doth of wisdom, to model and draw out a scheme; though wisdom directs, power must effect. Wisdom and power are distinct things among men: a poor man in a cottage may have more prudence to advise, than a privy counsellor; and a prince more power to act, than wisdom to conduct. A pilot may direct though he be lame, and cannot climb the masts, and spread the sails: but God is wanting in nothing; neither in wisdom to design, nor in will to determine, nor in power to accomplish.

His wisdom is not feeble, nor his power foolish: a feeble wisdom could not act what it would, and a foolish power would act more than it should. The power expressed in his government is shadowed forth in the living creatures, which are God's instruments in it. It is said, "Every one of them had four faces" (Ezek. 1:10); that of a man to signify wisdom; of a lion, eagle, the strongest among birds, to signify their courage and strength to perform their offices. This power is evident in the *natural, moral, gracious* government. There is a natural providence, which consists in the preservation of all things, propagation of them by corruptions and generations, and in a

co-operation with them in their motions to attain their ends. Moral government is of the hearts and actions of men. Gracious government, as respecting the Church.

First, His power is evident in natural government.

1. In preservation. God is the great Father of the world, to nourish it as well as create it. Man and beast would perish if there were not herbs for their food; and herbs would wither and perish, if the earth were not watered with fruitful showers. This some of the heathens acknowledged, in their worshipping God under the image of an ox, a useful creature, by reason of its strength, to which we owe so much of our food in corn. Hence, God is styled the "Preserver of man and beast" (Psalm 36:6). Hence, the Jews called God, *Place*; because he is the subsistence of all things. By the same word whereby he gave being to things, he gives to them continuance and duration in being so much a term of time. As they were "created by his word," they are supported by his word (Heb. 1:3). The same powerful fiat, "Let the earth bring forth grass" (Gen. 1:11), when the plants peeped upon man out of nothing, is expressed every spring, when they begin to lift up their heads from their naked roots and winter graves. The resurrection of light every morning, the reviving the pleasure of all things to the eye; the watering the valleys from the mountain Springs; the curbing the natural appetite of the waters from covering the earth; every draught that the beasts drink, every lodging the fowls have, every bit of food for the sustenance of man and beast, is ascribed to the "opening of his hand," the diffusing of his power (Psalm 104:27, &c.), as much as the first creation of things, and endowing them with their particular nature: whence the plants, which are so serviceable, are called "the trees of the Lord" (ver. 16), of Jehovah, that hath only being and power in himself. The whole Psalm is but the description of his preserving, as the first of Genesis is of his creating power. It is by this power angels have so many thousand years remained in the power of understanding and willing. By this power things distant in their natures have been joined together; a spiritual soul and a dusty body knit in a marriage knot. By this power the heavenly bodies have for so many ages rolled in their spheres, and the tumultuous elements have persisted in their order: by this hath the matter of the world been to this day continued, and as capable of entertaining forms as it was at the first

creation. What an amazing sight would it be to see a man hold a pillar of the Exchange upon one of his fingers? What is this to the power of God, “who holds the waters in the hollow of his hand, metes out the heaven with a span, and weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance” (Isa. 40:12)? The preserving the earth from the violence of the sea is a plain instance of this power. How is that raging element kept pent within those lists where he first lodged it; continues its course in its channel without overflowing the earth, and dashing in pieces the lower part of the creation? The natural situation of the water is to be above the earth, because it is lighter; and to be immediately under the air, because it is heavier than that thinner element. Who restrains this natural quality of it, but that God that first formed it? The word of command at first, “Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further,” keeps those waters linked together in their den, that they may not ravage the earth, but be useful to the inhabitants of it. And when once it finds a gap to enter, what power of earth can hinder its passage? How fruitless sometimes is all the art of man to send it to its proper channel, when once it hath spread its mighty waves over some countries, and trampled part of the inhabited earth under its feet? It hath triumphed in its victory, and withstood all the power of man to conquer its force. It is only the power of God that doth bridle it from spreading itself over the whole earth. And that his power might be more manifest, he hath set but a weak and small bank against it. Though he hath bounded it in some places by mighty rocks, which lift up their heads above it, yet in most places by feeble sand. How often is it seen in every stormy motion, when the waves boil high and roll furiously, as if they would swallow up all the neighboring houses upon the shore; when they come to touch those sandy limits, they bow their heads, fall flat, and sink into the lap whence they were raised, and seem to foam with anger that they can march no further, but must split themselves at so weak an obstacle! Can the sand be thought to be the cause of this? The weakness of it gives no footing to such a thought. Who can apprehend, that an enraged army should retire upon the opposition of a straw in an infant’s hand? Is it the nature of the water? Its retirement is against the natural quality of it; pour but a little upon the ground, and you always see it spread itself. No cause can be rendered in nature; it is a standing monument of the power of God in the preservation of the world, and ought to be more

taken notice of by us in this island, surrounded with it, than by some other countries in the world.

(1.) We find nothing hath power to preserve itself. Doth not every creature upon earth require the assistance of some other for its maintenance? “Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow up without water” (Job 8:11)? Can man or beast maintain itself without grain from the bowels of the earth? Would not every man tumble into the grave, without the aid of other creatures to nourish him? Whence do these creatures receive that virtue of supplying him nourishment, but from the sun and earth? and whence do they derive that virtue, but from the Creator of all things? And should he but slack his hand, how soon would they and all their qualities perish, and the links of the world fall in pieces, and dash one another into their first chaos and confusion! All creatures indeed have an appetite to preserve themselves; they have some knowledge of the outward means for their preservation; so have irrational animals a natural instinct, as well as men have some skill to avoid things that are hurtful, and apply things that are helpful. But what thing in the world can preserve itself by an inward influx into its own being? All things want such a power without God’s *fiat*, “Let it be so:” nothing but is destitute of such a power for its own preservation, as much as it is of a power for its own creation. Were there any true power for such a work, what need of so many external helps from things of an inferior nature to that which is preserved by them? No created thing hath a power to preserve any decayed being. Who can lay claim to such a virtue, as to recall a withering flower to its former beauty, to raise the head of a drooping plant, or put life into a gasping worm when it is expiring; or put impaired vitals into their former posture? Not a man upon earth, nor an angel in heaven, can pretend to such a virtue; they may be spectators, but not assisters, and are, in this case, physicians of no value.

(2.) It is, therefore, the same Power preserves things which at first created them. The creature doth as much depend upon God, in the first instant of its being, for its preservation, as it did, when it was nothing, for its production and creation into being: as the continuance of a thought of our mind depends upon the power of our mind, as well as the first framing of that thought. There is a little difference between creating and preserving power, as there is

between the power of mine eye to begin an act of vision and continue that act of vision, as to cast my eye upon an object and continue it upon that object: as the first act is caused by the eye, so the duration of the act is preserved by the eye; shut the eye, and the act of vision perishes; divert the eye from that object, and that act of vision is exchanged for another. And, therefore, the preservation of things is commonly called a continual creation: and certainly it is no less, if we understand it of a preservation by an inward influence into the being of things. It is one and the same action invariably continued, and obtaining its force every moment; the same action whereby he created them of nothing, and which every moment hath a virtue to produce a thing out of nothing, if it were not yet extant in the world: it remains the same without any diminution throughout the whole time wherein anything doth remain in the world. For all things would return to nothing, if God did not keep them up in the elevation and state to which he at first raised them by his creative power (Acts 17:28): "In him we live, and move, and have our being." By him, or by the same Power whence we derived our being, are our lives maintained: as it was his Almighty Power whereby we were, after we had been nothing, so it is the same power whereby we now are, after he hath made us something. Certainly all things have no less a dependence on God than light upon the sun, which vanisheth and hides its head upon the withdrawing of the sun. And should God suspend that powerful Word, whereby he erected the frame of the world, it would sink down to what it was, before he commanded it to stand up. There needs no new act of power to reduce things to nothing, but the cessation of that Omnipotent influx. When the appointed time set them for their being comes to a period, they faint and bend down their heads to their dissolution; they return to their elements, and perish (Psalm 104:29): "Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." That which was nothing cannot remain on this side nothing, but by the same Power that first called it out of nothing. As when God withdrew his concurring power from the fire, its quality ceased to act upon the three children: so if he withdraws his sustaining power from the creature, its nature will cease to be.

2. It appears in propagation. That powerful word (Gen. 1:22, 23), "Increase and multiply," pronounced at the first creation, hath

spread itself over every part of the world; every animal in the world, in the formation of every one of them. From two of a kind, how great a number of individuals and single creatures have been multiplied, to cover the face of the earth in their continued successions! What a world of plants spring up from the womb of a dry earth, moistened by the influence of a cloud, and hatched by the beams of the sun! How admirable an instance of his propagating power is it, that from a little seed a massy root should strike into the bowels of the earth, a tall body and thick branches, with leaves and flowers of various colors, should break through the surface of the earth, and mount up towards heaven, when in the seed you neither smell the scent, nor see any firmness of a tree, nor behold any of those colors which you view in the flowers that the ears produce! A power not to be imitated by any creature. How astonishing is it, that a small seed, whereof many will not amount to the weight of a grain, should spread itself into leaves, bark, fruit of a vast weight, and multiply itself into millions of seeds! What power is that, that from one man and woman hath multiplied families, and from families, stocked the world with people! Consider the living creatures, as formed in the womb of their several kinds; every one is a wonder of power. The Psalmist instanceth in the forming and propagation of man (Psalm 139:14): "I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works" The forming of the parts distinctly in the womb, the bringing forth into the world every particular member, is a roll of wonders, of power. That so fine a structure as the body of man should be polished in "the lower parts of the earth," as he calls the womb (ver. 15), in so short a time, with members of a various form and usefulness, each laboring in their several functions! Can any man give an exact account of the manner "how the bones do grow in the womb" (Eccles. 11:5)? It is unknown to the father, and no less hid from the mother, and the wisest men cannot search out the depth of it. It is one of the secret works of an Omnipotent Power, secret in the manner, though open in the effect. So that we must ascribe it to God, as Job doth, "Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about" (Job 10:8). Thy hands which formed heaven, have formed every part, every member, and wrought me like a mighty workman. The heavens are said to be the "work of God's hands," and man is here said to be no less. The forming and propagation of man from that earthy matter, is no less a wonder of

power than the structure of the world from a rude and indisposed matter. A heathen philosopher descants elegantly upon it: "Dost thou understand (my son) the forming of man in the womb; who erected that noble, fabric who carved the eyes, the crystal windows of light, and the conductors of the body; who bored the nostrils and ears, those loopholes of scents and sounds; who stretched out and knit the sinews and ligaments for the fastening of every member; who cast the hollow veins, the channels of blood; set and strengthened the bones, the pillars and rafters of the body; who digged the pores, the sinks to expel the filth; who made the heart, the repository of the soul, and formed the lungs like a pipe? What mother, what father, wrought these things? No, none but the Almighty God, who made all things according to his pleasure; it is He who propagates this noble piece from a pile of dust. Who is born by his own advice; who gives stature, features, sense, wit, strength, speech, but God?" It is no less a wonder, that a little infant can live so long in a dark sink, in the midst of filth, without breathing; and the eduction of it out of the womb is no less a wonder than the forming, increase, nourishment of it in that cell. A wonder, that the life of the infant is not the death of the mother, or the life of the mother the death of the infant. This little creature when it springs up from such small beginnings by the power of God, grows up to be one of the lords of the world, to have a dominion over the creatures, and propagates its kind in the same manner: all this is unaccountable without having recourse to the power of God in the government of the creatures. And to add to this wonder, consider also what multitudes of formations and births there are at one time all over the world, in every of which the finger of God is at work; and it will speak an unwearied power. It is admirable in one man, more in a town of men, still more in a greater and larger kingdom, a vaster world; there is a birth for every hour in this city, were but 168 born in a week, though the weekly bills mention more: what is this city to three kingdoms? what three kingdoms to a populous world? Eleven thousand and eighty will make one for every minute in the week; what is this to the weekly propagation in all the nations of the universe, besides the generation of all the living creatures in that space, which are the works of God's fingers as well as man? What will be the result of this, but the notion of an unconceivable, unwearied Almightyness, always active, always operating?

3. It appears in the motions of all creatures. “All things live and move in him” (Acts 17:28); by the same power that creatures have their beings, they have their motions: they have not only a being by his powerful command, but they have their minutely motion by his powerful concurrence. Nothing can act without the almighty influx of God, no more than it can exist without the creative word of God. It is true indeed, the ordering of all motions to his holy ends, is an act of wisdom; but the motion itself, whereby those ends are attained, is a work of his power.

(1). God, as the first cause, hath an influence into the motions of all second causes. As all the wheels in a clock are moved in their different motions by the force and strength of the principal and primary wheel; if there be any defect in that, or if that stand still, all the rest languish and stand idle the same moment. All creatures are his instruments, his engines, and have no spirit, but what he gives, and what he assists. Whatsoever nature works, God works in nature; nature is the instrument, God is the supporter, director, mover of nature; that which the prophet saith in another case, may be the language of universal nature: “Lord, thou hast wrought all our work in us” (Isa. 26:12.) They are works subjectively, efficiently, as second causes; Gods works originally, concurrently. The sun moved not in the valley of Ajalon for the space of many hours, in the time of Joshua (Josh. 10:13); nor did the fire exercise its consuming quality upon the three children, in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace (Dan. 3:25): he withdrew not his supporting power from their being, for then they had vanished, but his influencing power from their qualities, whereby their motion ceased, till he returned his influential concurrence to them; which evidenceth, that without a perpetual derivation of Divine power, the sun could not run one stride or inch of its race, nor the fire devour one grain of light chaff, or an inch of straw. Nothing without his sustaining power can continue in being; nothing without his co-working power can exercise one mite of those qualities it is possessed of.

All creatures are wound up by him, and his hand is constantly upon them, to keep them in perpetual motion.

(2). Consider the variety of motions in a single creature. How many motions are there in the vital parts of a man, or in any other animal, which a man knows not, and is unable to number! The

renewed motion of the lungs, the systoles and diastoles of the heart; the contractions and dilations of the heart, whereby it spouts out and takes in blood; the power of concoction in the stomach;; the motion of the blood in the veins, &c., all which were not only settled by the powerful hand of God, but are upheld by the same, preserved and influenced in every distinct motion by that power that stamped them with that nature. To every one of those there is not only the sustaining power of God holding up their natures, but the motive power of God concurring to every motion; for if we move in him as well as we live in him, then every particle of our motion is exercised by his concurring power, as well as every moment of our life supported by his preserving power. What an infinite variety of motions is there in the whole world in universal nature, to all which God concurs, all which he conducts, even the motions of the meanest as well as the greatest creatures, which demonstrate the indefatigable power of the governor! It is an Infinite Power which doth act in so many varieties, whereby the souls forms every thought, the tongue speaks every word, the body exerts every action. What an Infinite Power is that which presides over the birth of all things, concurs with the motion of the sap in the tree, rivers on the earth, clouds in the air, every drop of rain, fleece of snow, crack of thunder! Not the least motion in the world, but is under an actual influence of this Almighty Mover. And lest any should scruple the concurrence of God to so many varieties of the creature's motion, as a thing utterly inconceivable, let them consider the sun, a natural image and shadow of the perfections of God; doth not the power of that finite creature extend itself to various objects at the same moment of time? How many insects doth it animate, as flies, &c., at the same moment throughout the world! How many several plants doth it erect at its appearance in the spring, whose roots lay mourning in the earth all the foregoing winter! What multitudes of spires of grass, and nobler flowers , doth it midwife in the same hour! It warms the air, melts the blood, cherishes living creatures of various kinds, in distinct places, without tiring: and shall the God of this sun be less than his creature?

(3.) And since I speak of the sun, consider the power of God in the motion of it. The vastness of the sun is computed to be, at the least, 166 times bigger than the earth, and its distance from the earth, some tell us, to be about 4,000,000 of miles; whence it follows, that

it is whirled about the world with that swiftness, that in the space of an hour it runs 1,000,000 of miles, which is as much as if it should move round about the surface of the earth fifty times in one hour; which vastness exceeds the swiftness of a bullet shot out of a cannon, which is computed to fly not above three miles in a minute: so that the sun runs further in one hour's space, than a bullet can in 5,000, if it were kept in motion; so that if it were near the earth, the swiftness of its motion would shatter the whole frame of the world, and dash it in pieces; so that the Psalmist may well say, "It runs a race like a strong man" (Psalm 19:5). What an incomprehensible Power is that which hath communicated such a strength and swiftness to the sun, and doth daily influence its motion; especially since after all those years of its motion, wherein one would think it should have spent itself, we behold it every day as vigorous as Adam did in Paradise, without limping, without shattering itself, or losing any thing of its natural sphits in its unwearied motion. How great must that power be, which hath kept this great body so entire, and thus swiftly moves it every day! Is it not now an argument of omnipotency, to keep all the strings of nature in tune; to wind them up to a due pitch for the harmony he intended by them; to keep things that are contrary from that confusion they would naturally fall into; to prevent those jarrings which would naturally result from their various and snarling qualities; to preserve every being in its true nature; to propagate every kind of creature; order all the operations, even the meanest of them, when there are such innumerable varieties? But let us consider, that this power or preserving things in their station and motion, and the renewing of them, is more stupendous than that which we commonly call miraculous. We call those miracles, which are wrought out of the track of nature, and contrary to the usual stream and current of it; which men wonder at, because they seldom see them, and hear of them as things rarely brought forth in the world; when the truth is, there is more of power expressed in the ordinary station and motion of natural causes than in those extraordinary exertings of power. Is not more power signalized in that whirling motion of the sun every hour for so many ages, than in the suspending of its motion one day, as it was in the days of Joshua? That fire should continually ravage and consume, and greedily swallow up every thing that is offered to it, seems to be the effect of as admirable a power, as the stopping of

its appetite a few moments, as in the case of the three children. Is not the rising of some small seeds from the ground, with a multiplication of their numerous posterity, an effect of as great a power, as our Saviour's feeding many thousands with a few loaves, by a secret augmentation of them? Is not the chemical producing so pleasant and delicious a fruit as the grape, from a dry earth, insipid rain, and a sour vine, as admirable a token of Divine power, as our Saviour's turning water into wine? Is not the cure of diseases by the application of a simple inconsiderable weed, or a slight infusion, as wonderful in itself, as the cure of it by a powerful weed? What if it be naturally designed to heal; what is that nature, who gave that nature, who maintains that nature, who conducts it, co-operates with it? Doth it work of itself, and by its own strength? why not then equally in all, in one as well as another? Miracles, indeed, affect more, because they testify the immediate operation of God, without the concurrence of second causes; not that there is more of the power of God shining in them than in the other.

Secondly, This power is evident in *moral* government.

1. In the restraint of the malicious nature of the devil. Since Satan hath the power of an angel, and the malice of a devil, what safety would there be for our persons from destruction, what security for our goods from rifling, by this invisible, potent, and envious spirit, if his power were not restrained, and his malice curbed, by One more mighty than himself? How much doth he envy God the glory of his creation; and man, the use and benefit of it! How desirous would he be, in regard of his passion, how able in regard of his strength and subtlety, to overthrow or infect all worship, but what was directed to himself; to manage all things according to his lusts, turn all things topsy-turvy, plague the world, burn cities, houses, plunder us of the supports of nature, waste kingdoms, &c.; if he were not held in a chain, as a ravenous lion, or a furious wild horse, by the Creator and Governor of the world! What remedy could be used by man against the activity of this unseen and swift spirit? The world could not subsist under his malice; he would practise the same things upon all as he did upon Job, when he had got leave from his Governor; turn the swords of men into one another's bowels; send fire from heaven upon the fruits of the earth and the cattle intended for the use of man; raise

winds, to shake and tear our houses upon our heads; daub our bodies with scabs and boils, and let all the humors in our blood loose upon us. He that envied Adam a paradise, doth envy us the pleasure of enjoying its out-works. If we were not destroyed by him, we should live in a continued vexation by spectrums and apparitions, affrighting sounds and noise, as some think the Egyptians did in that three days' darkness: he would be alway winnowing us, as he desired to winnow Peter (Luke 22:31). But God over-masters his strength, that he cannot move a hair's breadth beyond his tedder; not only is he unable to touch an upright Job, but to lay his fingers upon one of the unbelieving Gadarenes forbidden and filthy swine without special license (Matt. 8:31). When he is cast out of one place, he walks "through dry places seeking rest" (Luke 11:24), new objects for his malicious designs,— but finding none, till God lets loose the reins upon him for a new employment. Though Satan's power be great, yet God suffers him not to tempt as much as his diabolical appetite would, but as much as Divine wisdom thinks fit; and the Divine power tempers the other's active malice, and gives the creature victory, where the enemy intended spoil and captivity. How much stronger is God, than all the legions of hell; as he that holds a "strong man" (Luke 11:22) from effecting his purpose, testifies more ability than his adversary! How doth he lock him up for a "thousand years" (Rev. 20:3) in a pound, which he cannot leap over! and this restraint is wrought partly by blinding the devil in his designs, partly by denying him concurrence to his motion; as he hindered the active quality of the fire upon the three children, by withdrawing his power, which was necessary to the motion of it; and his power is as necessary for the motion of the devil, as for that of any other creature: sometimes he makes him to confess him against his own interest, as Apollo's oracle confessed. And though when the devil was cast out of the possessed person, he publicly owned Christ to be the "Holy one of God" (Mark 1:24), to render him suspected by the people of having commerce with the unclean spirits; yet this he could not do without the leave and permission of God, that the power of Christ, in stopping his mouth and imposing silence upon him, might be evidence; and that it reaches to the gates of hell, as well as to the quieting of winds and waves. This is a part of the strength, as well as the wisdom of God, that "the deceived and the deceiver are his" (Job 12:16): wisdom to defeat, and power to

overrule his most malicious designs, to his own glory.

2. In the restraint of the natural corruption of men. Since the *impetus* of original corruption runs in the blood, conveyed down from Adam to the veins of all his posterity, and universally diffused in all mankind; what wreck and havoc would it make in the world, if it were not suppressed by this Divine power which presides over the hearts of men! Man is so wretched by nature, that nothing but what is vile and pernicious can drop from him. Man “drinks iniquity like water,” being, by nature, “abominable and filthy” (Job 15:16). He greedily swallows all matter for iniquity, everything suitable to the mire and poison in his nature, and would sprout it out with all fierceness and insolence. God himself gives us the description of man’s nature (Gen. 6:5), that he hath not one good imagination at any time; and the apostle from the Psalmist dilates and comments upon it (Rom. 3:10, &c.) “There is none righteous; no, not one; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood,” &c. This corruption is equal in all, natural in all; it is not more poisonous or more fierce in one man, than in another. The root of all men is the same; all the branches therefore do equally possess the villanous nature of the root. No child of Adam can, by natural descent, be better than Adam, or have less of baseness, and vileness, and venom, than Adam. How fruitful would this loathsome lake be in all kind of streams! What unbridled licentiousness and headstrong fury would triumph in the world, if the power of God did not interpose itself to lock down the flood-gates of it! What rooting up of human society would there be! how would the world be drenched in blood, the number of malefactors be greater than that of apprehenders and punishers! How would the prints of natural laws be rased out of the heart, if God should leave human nature to itself! Who can read the first chapter of Romans, verses (24 to 29), without acknowledging this truth? where there is a catalogue of those villanies which followed upon God’s pulling up the sluices, and letting the malignity of their inward corruption have its natural course! If God did not hold back the fury of man, his garden would be overrun, his vine rooted up; the inclinations of men would hurry them to the worst of wickedness. How great is that Power that curbs, bridles, or changes as many headstrong horses at once, and every minute, as there are sons of Adam upon the earth? The “floods lift up their waves; the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many

waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea” (Psalm 93:3, 4); that doth hush and pen in the turbulent passions of men.

3. In the ordering and framing the hearts of men to his own ends. That must be an Omnipotent hand that grasps and contains the hearts of all men; the heart of the meanest person, as well as of the most towering angel, and turns them as he pleases, and makes them sometime ignorantly, sometime knowingly, concur to the accomplishment of his own purposes! When the hearts of men are so numerous, their thoughts so various and different from one another, yet he hath a key to those millions of hearts, and with infinite power, guided by as infinite wisdom, he draws them into what channels he pleases, for the gaining his own ends. Though the Jews had imbrued their hands in the blood of our Saviour, and their rage was yet recking-hot against his followers, God bridled their fury in the church’s infancy, till it had got some strength, and cast a terror upon them by the wonders wrought by the apostles (Acts 2:43): “And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.” Was there not the same reason in the nature of the works our Saviour wrought, to point them to the finger of God, and calm their rage?

Yet did not the power of God work upon their passions in those miracles, nor stop the impetuosity of the corruption resident in their hearts. Yet now those who had the boldness to attack the Son of God and nail him to the cross, are frightened at the appearance of twelve unarmed apostles; as the sea seems to be afraid when it approacheth the bounds of the feeble sand. How did God bend the hearts of the Egyptians to the Israelites, and turn them to that point, as to lend their most costly vessels, their precious jewels, and rich garments, to supply those whom they had just before tyrannically loaded with their chains (Exod. 3:21, 22)! When a great part of an army came upon Jehoshaphat, to dispatch him into another world, how doth God, in a trice, touch their hearts, and move them, by a secret instinct, at once to depart from him (1 Chron. 18:31)! as if you should see a numerous sight of birds in a moment turn wing another way, by a sudden and joint consent. When he gave Saul a kingdom, he gave him a spirit fit for government, “and gave him another heart” (1 Sam. 10:9); and brought the people to submit to his yoke, who, a little before, wandered about the land upon no nobler

employment than the seeking of asses. It is no small remark of the power of God, to make a number of strong and discontented persons, and desirous enough of liberty, to bend their necks under the yoke of government, and submit to the authority of one, and that of their own nature, often weaker and unwiser than the most of them, and many times an oppressor and invader of their rights. Upon this account David calls God “his fortress, tower, shield” (Psalm 144:2); all terms of strength in subduing the people under him. It is the mighty hand of God that links princes and people together in the bands of government. The same hand that assuageth the waves of the sea, suppresseth the tumults of the people.

Thirdly, It appears in his *gracious* and judicial government.

1. In his gracious government. In the deliverance of his church he is the “strength of Israel” (1 Sam. 15:29), and hath protected his little flock in the midst of wolves; and maintained their standing, when the strongest kingdoms have sunk, and the best jointed states have been broken in pieces; when judgments have ravaged countries, and torn up the mighty, as a tempestuous wind hath often done the tallest trees, which seemed to threaten heaven with their tops, and dare the storm with the depth of their roots, when yet the vine and rose-bushes have stood firm, and been seen in their beauty next morning. The state of the church hath outlived the most flourishing monarchies, when there hath been a mighty knot of adversaries against her; when the bulls of Bashan have pushed her, and the whole tribe of the dragon have sharpened their weapons, and edged their malice; when the voice was strong, and the hopes high to rase her foundation even with the ground; when hell hath roared; when the wit of the world hath contrived, and the strength of the world hath attempted her ruin; when decrees have been passed against her, and the bowers of the world armed for the execution of them; when her friends have drooped and skulked in corners; when there was no eye to pity, and no hand to assist, help hath come from heaven; her enemies have been defeated; kings have brought gifts to her, and reared her; tears have been wiped off her cheeks, and her very enemies, by an unseen power, have been forced to court her whom before they would have devoured quick. The devil and his armies have sneaked into their den, and the church hath triumphed when she hath been upon the brink of the grave. Thus did God send

a mighty angel to be the executioner of Sennacherib's army, and the protector of Jerusalem, who run his sword into the hearts of eighty thousand (2 Kings 19:35), when they were ready to swallow up his beloved city. When the knife was at the throats of the Jews, in Shushan (Esther 8.), by a powerful hand it was turned into the hearts of their enemies.

With what an outstretched arm were the Israelites freed from the Egyptian yoke (Deut. 4:34)! When Pharaoh had mustered a great army to pursue them, assisted with six hundred chariots of war, the Red Sea obstructed their passage before, and an enraged enemy trod on their rear; when the fearful Israelites despaired of deliverance, and the insolent Egyptian assured himself of his revenge, God stretches out his irresistible arm to defeat the enemy, and assist his people; he strikes down the wolves, and preserves the flock. God restrained the Egyptian enmity against the Israelites till they were at the brink of the Red Sea, and then lets them follow their humor, and pursue the fugitives, that his power might more gloriously shine forth in the deliverance of the one, and the destruction of the other. God might have brought Israel out of Egypt in the time of those kings that had remembered the good service of Joseph to their country, but he leaves them till the reign of a cruel tyrant, suffers them to be slaves, that they might by his sole power, be conquerors, which had had no appearance had there been a willing dismissal of them at the first summons (Exod. 9:16); "In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show my power, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." I have permitted thee to rise up against my people, and keep them in captivity, that thou mightest be an occasion for the manifestation of my power in their rescue; and whilst thou art obstinate to enslave them, I will stretch out my arm to deliver them, and make my name famous among the Gentiles, in the wreck of thee and thy host in the Red Sea. The deliverance of the church hath not been in one age, or in one part of the world, but God hath signalized his power in all kingdoms where she hath had a footing: as he hath guided her in all places by one rule, animated her by one spirit, so he hath protected her by the same arm of power. When the Roman emperors bandied all their force against her, for about three hundred years, they were further from effecting her ruin at the end than when they first attempted it; the church grew under their sword, and was hatched under the wings of

the Roman eagle, which were spread to destroy her. The ark was elevated by the deluge, and the waters the devil poured out to drown her did but slime the earth for a new increase of her. She hath sometimes been beaten down, and, like Lazarus, hath seemed to be in the grave for some days, that the power of God might be more visible in her sudden resurrection, and lifting up her head above the throne of her persecutors.

2. In his judicial proceedings. The deluge was no small testimony of his power, in opening the cisterns of heaven, and pulling up the sluices of the sea. He doth but call for the waters of the sea, and they “pour themselves upon the face of the earth” (Amos 9:6.) In forty days’ time the waters overtopped the highest mountains fifteen cubits (Gen. 7:17–20); and by the same power he afterwards reduced the sea to its proper channel, as a roaring lion into his den. A shower of fire from heaven, upon Sodom, and the cities of the plain, was a signal display of his power, either in creating it on the sudden, for the execution of his righteous sentence, or sending down the element of fire, contrary to its nature, which affects ascent, for the punishment of rebels against the light of nature. How often hath he ruined the most flourishing monarchies, led princes away spoiled, and overthrown the mighty, which Job makes an argument of his strength (Job 12:13, 14). Troops of unknown people, the Goths and Vandals, broke the Romans, a warlike people, and hurled down all before them. They could not have had the thought to succeed in such an attempt, unless God had given them strength and motion for the executing his judicial vengeance upon the people of his wrath. How did he evidence his power, by daubing the throne of Pharaoh, and his chamber of presence, as well as the houses of his subjects, with the slime of frogs (Exod. 8:3); turning their waters into blood, and their dust into biting lice (Exod. 7:20); raising his militia of locusts against them; causing a three days’ darkness without stopping the motion of the sun; taking off their first-born, the excellency of their strength, in a night, by the stroke of the angel’s sword! He takes off the chariot wheels of Pharaoh, and presents him with a destruction where he expected a victory; brings those waves over the heads of him and his host, which stood firm as marble walls for the safety of his people; the sea is made to swallow them up, that durst not, by the order of their Governor, touch the Israelites: it only sprinkled the one as a

type of baptism, and drowned the other as an image of hell. Thus he made it both a deliverer and a revenger, the instrument of an offensive and defensive war (Isa. 40:23, 24; “He brings princes to nothing, and makes the judges of the earth as vanity.” Great monarchs have, by his power, been hurled from their thrones and their sceptres, like Venice-glasses, broken before their faces, and they been advanced that have had the least hopes of grandeur. He hath plucked up cedars by the roots, lopped off the branches, and set a shrub to grow up in the place; dissolved rocks, and established bubbles (Luke 1:52): “He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts; he hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted them of low degree.”—And these things he doth magnify his power in:—

(I.) By ordering the nature of creatures as he pleases. By restraining their force, or guiding their motions. The restraint of the destructive qualities of the creatures argues as great a power as the change of their natures, yea, and a greater. The qualities of creatures may be changed by art and composition, as in the preparing of medicines; but what but a Divine Power could restrain the operation of the fire from the three children, while it retained its heat and burning quality in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace? The operation was curbed while its nature was preserved. All creatures are called his host, because he marshals and ranks them as an army to serve his purposes. The whole scheme of nature is ready to favor men when God orders it, and ready to punish men when God commissions it. He gave the Red Sea but a check, and it obeyed his voice (Psalm 106:9): “He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up;” the motion of it ceased, and the waters of it were ranged as defensive walls, to secure the march of his people: and at the motion of the hand of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the sea recovered its violence, and the walls that were framed came tumbling down upon the Egyptian’s heads (Exod. 14:27). The Creator of nature is not led by the necessity of nature: he that settled the order of nature, can change or restrain the order of nature according to his sovereign pleasure. The most necessary and useful creatures he can use as instruments of his vengeance: water is necessary to cleanse, and by that he can deface a world; fire is necessary to warm, and by that he can burn a Sodom: from the water he formed the fowl (Gen. 1:21), and by that he dissolves them in the deluge; fire or heat is necessary

to the generation of creatures, and by that he ruins the cities of the plain. He orders all as he pleases, to perform every tittle and punctilio of his purpose. The sea observed him so exactly, that it drowned not one Israelite, nor saved one Egyptian (Psalm 106:11). There was not one of them left. And to perfect the Israelites' deliverance, he followed them with testimonies of his power above the strength of nature. When they wanted drink, he orders Moses to strike a rock, and the rock spouts a river, and a channel is formed for it to attend them in their journey. When they wanted bread, he dressed manna for them in the heavens, and sent it to their tables in the desert. When he would declare his strength, he calls to the heavens to pour down righteousness, and to the earth to bring forth salvation (Isa. 45:8). Though God had created righteousness or deliverance for the Jews in Babylon, yet he calls to the heavens and the earth to be assistant to the design of Cyrus, whom he had raised for that purpose, as he speaks in the beginning of the chapter (verses 1–4). As God created man for a supernatural end, and all creatures for man as their immediate end, so he makes them, according to opportunities, subservient to that supernatural end of man, for which he created him. He that spans the heavens with his fist, can shoot all creatures like an arrow, to hit what mark he pleases. He that spread the heavens and the earth by a word, and can by a word fold them up more easily than a man can a garment (Heb. 1:12), can order the streams of nature; cannot he work without nature as well as with it, beyond nature, contrary to nature, that can, as it were, fillip nature with his finger into that nothing whence he drew it; who can cast down the sun from his throne, clap the distinguished parts of the world together, and make them march in the same order to their confusion, as they did in their creation: who can jumble the whole frame together, and, by a word, dissolve the pillars of the world, and make the fabric he in a ruinous heap?

(2.) In effecting his purposes by small means: in making use of the meanest creatures. As the power of God is seen in the creation of the smallest creatures, and assembling so many perfections in the little body of an insect, as an ant, or spider, so his power is not less magnified in the use he makes of them. As he magnifies his wisdom, by using ignorant instruments, so he exalts his power, by employing weak instruments in his service: the meanness and imperfection of the matter sets off the excellency of the workman; so the weakness

of the instrument is no foil to the power of the principal Agent. When God hath effected things by means in the Scripture, he hath usually brought about his purposes by weak instruments. Moses, a fugitive from Egypt, and Aaron a captive in it, are the instruments of the Israelites' deliverance. By the motion of Moses' rod, he works wonders in the court of Pharaoh, and summons up his judgments against him. He brought down Pharaoh's stomach for a while, by a squadron of lice and locusts, wherein Divine power was more seen, than if Moses had brought him to his own articles by a multitude of warlike troops. The fall of the walls of Jericho by the sound of rams' horns, was a more glorious character of God's power, than if Joshua had battered it down with a hundred of warlike engines (Josh. 6:20). Thus the great army of the Midianites, which lay as grasshoppers upon the ground, were routed by Gideon in the head of three hundred men; and Goliath, a giant, laid level with the ground by David, a stripling, by the force of a sling: a thousand Philistines dispatched out of the world by the jaw-bone of an ass in the hand of Samson. He can master a stout nation by an army of locusts, and render the teeth of those little insects as destructive as the teeth, yea, the strongest teeth, the cheek-teeth, of a great lion (Joel 1:6, 7). The thunderbolt, which produces sometimes dreadful effects, is compacted of little atoms which fly in the air, small vapors drawn up by the sun, and mixed with other sulphurous matter and petrifying juice. Nothing is so weak, but his strength can make victorious; nothing so small, but by his power he can accomplish his great ends by it; nothing so vile, but his might can conduct to his glory; and no nation so mighty, but he can waste and enfeeble by the meanest creatures. God is great in power in the greatest things, and not little in the smallest; his power in the minutest creatures which he uses for his service, surmounts the force of our understanding.

THIRDLY. The power of God appears in REDEMPTION. As our Saviour is called the Wisdom of God, so he is called the Power of God (1 Cor. 1:24). The arm of Power was lifted up as high as the designs of Wisdom were laid deep: as this way of redemption could not be contrived but by an Infinite Wisdom, so it could not be accomplished but by an Infinite Power. None but God could shape such a design, and none but God could effect it. The Divine Power in temporal deliverances, and freedom from the slavery of human oppressors, vails to that which glitters in redemption; whereby the

devil is defeated in his designs, stripped of his spoils, and yoked in his strength. The power of God in creation requires not those degrees of admiration, as in redemption. In creation, the world was erected from nothing; as there was nothing to act, so there was nothing to oppose; no victorious devil was in that to be subdued; no thundering law to be silenced; no death to be conquered; no transgression to be pardoned and rooted out; no hell to be shut; no ignominious death upon the cross to be suffered. It had been, in the nature of the thing, an easier thing to Divine Power to have created a new world than repaired a broken, and purified a polluted one. This is the most admirable work that ever God brought forth in the world, greater than all the marks of his power in the first creation.

And this will appear, I. In the Person redeeming. II. In the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption. III. In the application of redemption.

I. In the Person redeeming. *First*, In his conception.

1. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin (Luke 1:35): “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee:” which act is expressed to be the effect of the infinite power of God; and it expresses the supernatural manner of the forming the humanity of our Saviour, and signifies not the Divine nature of Christ infusing itself into the womb of the virgin; for the angel refers it to the manner of the operation of the Holy Ghost in the producing the human nature of Christ, and not to the nature assuming that Humanity into union with itself. The Holy Ghost, or the Third Person in the Trinity, overshadowed the virgin, and by a creative act framed the humanity of Christ, and united it to the Divinity. It is, therefore, expressed by a word of the same import with that used in Gen. 1:2, “The Spirit moved upon the face of the waters,” which signifies (as it were) a brooding upon the chaos, shadowing it with his wings, as hens sit upon their eggs, to form them and hatch them into animals; or else it is an allusion to the “cloud which covered the tent of the congregation, when the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exod. 40:34). It was not such a creative act as we call immediate, which is a production out of nothing; but a mediate creation, such as God’s bringing things into form out of the first matter, which had nothing but an obediential or passive disposition to whatsoever

stamp the powerful wisdom of God should imprint upon it. So the substance of the Virgin had no active, but only a passive disposition to this work: the matter of the body was earthy, the substance of the virgin; the forming of it was heavenly, the Holy Ghost working upon that matter. And therefore when it is said, that “she was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 1:18), it is to be understood of the efficacy of the Holy Ghost, not of the substance of the Holy Ghost. The matter was natural, but the manner of conceiving was in a supernatural way, above the methods of nature. In reference to the active principle the Redeemer is called in the prophecy (Isa. 4:2), “The branch of the Lord,” in regard of the Divine hand that planted him: in respect to the passive principle, the fruit of the earth, in regard of the womb that bare him; and therefore said to be “made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4). That part of the flesh of the virgin whereof the human nature of Christ was made, was refined and purified from corruption by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, as a skilful workman separates the dross from the gold: our Saviour is therefore called, “that holy thing” (Luke 1:35), though born of the virgin: he was necessarily some way to descend from Adam. God, indeed, might have created his body out of nothing, or have formed it (as he did Adam’s) out of the dust of the ground: but had he been thus extraordinarily formed, and not propagated from Adam, though he had been a man like one of us, yet he would not have been of kin to us, because it would not have been a nature derived from Adam, the common parent of us all. It was therefore necessary to an affinity with us, not only that he should have the same human nature, but that it should flow from the same principle, and be propagated to him. But now, by this way of producing the humanity of Christ of the substance of the virgin, he was in Adam (say some) corporally, but not seminally; of the substance of Adam, or a daughter of Adam, but not of the seed of Adam: and so he is of the same nature that had sinned, and so what he did and suffered may be imputed to us; which, had he been created as Adam, could not be claimed in a legal and judicial way.

2. It was not convenient he should be born in the common order of nature, of father and mother: for whosoever is so born is polluted. “A clean thing cannot be brought out of an unclean” (Job 14:4). And our Saviour had been incapable of being a redeemer, had he been tainted with the least spot of our nature, but would have stood in

need of redemption himself. Besides, it had been inconsistent with the holiness of the Divine nature, to have assumed a tainted and defiled body. He that was the fountain of blessedness to all nations, was not to be subject to the curse of the law for himself; which he would have been, had he been conceived in an ordinary way. He that was to overturn the devil's empire, was not to be any way captive under the devil's power, as a creature under the curse; nor could he be able to break the serpent's head, had he been tainted with the serpent's breath. Again, supposing that Almighty God by his divine power had so ordered the matter, and so perfectly sanctified an earthly father and mother from all original spot, that the human nature might have been transmitted immaculate to him, as well as the Holy Ghost, did purge that part of the flesh of the virgin of which the body of Christ was made, yet it was not convenient that that person, that was God blessed for ever as well as man, partaking of our nature, should have a conception in the same manner as ours, but different, and in some measure conformable to the infinite dignity of his person: which could not have been, had not a supernatural power and a Divine person been concerned as an active principle in it; besides, such a birth had not been agreeable to the first promise, which calls him "the Seed of the woman" (Gen. 1:15), not of the man; and so the veracity of God had suffered some detriment: the Seed of the woman only is set in opposition to the seed of the serpent.

3. By this manner of conception the holiness of his nature is secured, and his fitness for his office is assured to us. It is now a pure and unpolluted humanity that is the temple and tabernacle of the Divinity: the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily, and dwells in him holily. His humanity is supernaturalized and elevated by the activity of the Holy Ghost, hatching the flesh of the virgin into man, as the chaos into a world. Though we read of some sanctified from the womb, it was not a pure and perfect holiness; it was like the light of fire mixed with smoke, an infused holiness accompanied with a natural taint: but the holiness of the Redeemer by this conception, is like the light of the sun, pure, and without spot. The Spirit of holiness supplying the place of a father in the way of creation. His fitness for his office is also assured to us; for being born of the virgin, one of our nature, but conceived by the Spirit of a Divine person, the guilt of our sins may be imputed to

him because of our nature, without the stain of sin inherent in him; because of his supernatural conception he is capable, as one of kin to us, to bear our curse without being touched by our taint. By this means our sinful nature is assumed without sin in that nature which was assumed by him: "flesh he hath, but not sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3). Real flesh, but not really sinful, only by way of imputation. Nothing but the power of God is evident in this whole work: by ordinary laws and the course of nature a virgin could not bear a son: nothing but a supernatural and almighty grace could intervene to make so holy and perfect a conjunction. The generation of others, in an ordinary way, is by male and female: but the virgin is overshadowed by the Spirit and power of the Highest. Man only is the product of natural generation; this which is born of the virgin is the holy thing, the Son of God. In other generations, a rational soul is only united to a material body: but in this, the Divine nature is united with the human in one person by an indissoluble union.

The *Second* act of power in the person redeeming, is the union of the two natures, the Divine and human. The designing indeed of this was an act of wisdom; but the accomplishing it was an act of power.

1. There is in this redeeming person a union of two natures. He is God and man in one person (Heb. 1:8, 9). "'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness," &c. The Son is called God, having a throne for ever and ever, and the unction speaks him man: the Godhead cannot be anointed, nor hath any fellows. Humanity and Divinity are ascribed to him (Rom. 1:3, 4). "He was of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead." The Divinity and humanity are both prophetically joined (Zech. 12:10), "I will pour out my Spirit;" the pouring forth the Spirit is an act only of Divine grace and power. "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced;" the same person pours forth the Spirit as God, and is pierced as man. "The Word was made flesh" (John 1:14). Word from eternity was made flesh in time; Word and flesh in one person; a great God, and a little infant.

2. The terms of this union were infinitely distant. What greater distance can there be than between the Deity and humanity, between the Creator and a creature? Can you imagine the distance between eternity and time, Infinite Power and miserable infirmity, an

immortal spirit and dying flesh, the highest Being and nothing? yet these are espoused. A God of unmixed blessedness is linked personally with a man of perpetual sorrows: life incapable to die, joined to a body in that economy incapable to live without dying first; infinite purity, and a reputed sinner; eternal blessedness with a cursed nature, Almightyness and weakness, omniscience and ignorance, immutability and changeableness, incomprehensibility and comprehensibility; that which cannot be comprehended, and that which can be comprehended; that which is entirely independent, and that which is totally dependent; the Creator forming all things, and the creature made, met together to a personal union; “The word made flesh” (John 1:14), the eternal Son, the “Seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16). What more miraculous, than for God to become man, and man to become God? That a person possessed of all the perfections of the Godhead, should inherit all the imperfections of the manhood in one person, sin only excepted: a holiness incapable of sinning to be made sin; God blessed forever, taking the properties of human nature, and human nature admitted to a union with the properties of the Creator: the fulness of the Deity, and the emptiness of man united together (Col. 2:9); not by a shining of the Deity upon the humanity, as the light of the sun upon the earth, but by an inhabitation or indwelling of the Deity in the humanity. Was there not need of an Infinite Power to bring together terms so far asunder, to elevate the humanity to be capable of, and disposed for, a conjunction with the Deity? If a God of earth should be advanced to, and united with the body of the sun, such an advance would evidence itself to be a work of Almighty power: the God hath nothing in its own nature to render it so glorious, no power to climb up to so high a dignity: how little would such a union be, to that we are speaking of! Nothing less than an Incomprehensible Power could effect what an Incomprehensible Wisdom did project in this affair.

3. Especially since the union is so strait. It is not such a union as is between a man and his house he dwells in, whence he goes out and to which he returns, without any alteration of himself or his house; nor such a union as is between a man and his garment, which both communicate and receive warmth from one another; nor such as is between an artificer and his instrument wherewith he works; nor such a union as one friend hath with another: all these are distant things, not one in nature, but have distinct substances. Two friends,

though united by love, are distinct persons; a man and his clothes, an artificer and his instruments, have distinct subsistencies; but the humanity of Christ hath no subsistence, but in the person of Christ. The straitness of this union is expressed, and may be somewhat conceived, by the union of fire with iron; “fire pierceth through all the parts of iron, it unites itself with every particle, bestows a light, heat, purity, upon all of it; you cannot distinguish the iron from the fire, or the fire from the iron, yet they are distinct natures; so the Deity is united to the whole humanity, seasons it, and bestows an excellency upon it, yet the natures still remain distinct. And as during that union of fire with iron, the iron is incapable of rust or blackness, so is the humanity incapable of sin: and as the operation of fire is attributed to the red-hot iron (as the iron may be said to heat, burn, and the fire may be said to cut and pierce), yet the imperfections of the iron do not affect the fire; so in this mystery, those things which belong to the Divinity are ascribed to the humanity, and those things which belong to the humanity, are ascribed to the Divinity, in regard of the person in whom those natures are united: yet the imperfections of the humanity do not hurt the Divinity.” The Divinity of Christ is as really united with the humanity, as the soul with the body; the person was one, though the natures were two; so united, that the sufferings of the human nature were the sufferings of that person, and the dignity of the Divine was imputed to the human, by reason of that unity of both in one person; hence the blood of the human nature is said to be the “blood of God” (Acts 20:28). All things ascribed to the Son of God, may be ascribed to this man; and the things ascribed to this man, may be ascribed to the Son of God, as this man is the Son of God, eternal, Almighty; and it may be said, “God suffered, was crucified,” &c., for the person of Christ is but one, most simple; the person suffered, that was God and Man united, making one person.

4. And though the union be so strait, yet without confusion of the natures, or change of them into one another. The two natures of Christ are not mixed, as liquors that incorporate with one another when they are poured into a vessel; the Divine nature is not turned into the human, nor the human into the Divine; one nature doth not swallow up another, and make a third nature distinct from each of them. The Deity is not turned into the humanity, as air (which is next to a spirit) may be thickened and turned into water, and water

may be rarified into air by the power of heat boiling it. The Deity cannot be changed, because the nature of it is to be unchangeable; it would not be Deity, if it were mortal and capable of suffering. The humanity is not changed into the Deity, for then Christ could not have been a sufferer; if the humanity had been swallowed up into the Deity, it had lost its own distinct nature, and put on the nature of the Deity, and, consequently, been incapable of suffering; finite can never, by any mixture, be changed into infinite, nor infinite into finite. This union, in this regard, may be resembled to the union of light and air, which are strictly joined; for the light passes through all parts of the air, but they are not confounded, but remain in their distinct essences as before the union, without the least confusion with one another. The Divine nature remains as it was before the union, entire in itself; only the Divine person assumes another nature to himself. The human nature remains, as it would have done, had it existed separately from the *Λόγος*, except that then it would have had a proper subsistence by itself, which now it borrows from its union with the *Λόγος*, or, word; but that doth not belong to the constitution of its nature. Now let us consider, what a wonder of power is all this: the knitting a noble soul to a body of clay, was not so great an exploit of Almightyness, as the espousing infinite and finite together. Man is further distant from God, than man from nothing. What a wonder is it, that two natures infinitely distant, should be more intimately united than anything in the world; and yet without any confusion! that the same person should have both a glory and a grief; an infinite joy in the Deity, and an inexpressible sorrow in the humanity! That a God upon a throne should be an infant in a cradle; the thundering Creator be a weeping babe and a suffering man, are such expressions of mighty power, as well as condescending love, that they astonish men upon earth, and angels in heaven.

Thirdly, Power was evident in the progress of his life; in the miracles he wrought. How often did he expel malicious and powerful devils from their habitations; hurl them from their thrones, and make them fall from heaven like lightning! How many wonders were wrought by his bare word, or a single touch!

Sight restored to the blind, and hearing to the deaf; palsy members restored to the exercise of their functions; a dismiss given

to many deplorable maladies; impure leprosy chased from the persons they had infected, and bodies beginning to putrefy raised from the grave. But the mightiest argument of power was his patience; that He who was, in his Divine nature, elevated above the world, should so long continue upon a dunghill, endure the contradiction of sinners against himself, be patiently subject to the reproaches and indignities of men, without displaying that justice which was essential to the Deity; and, in especial manner, daily merited by their provoking crimes. The patience of man under great affronts, is a greater argument of power, than the brawniness of his arm; a strength employed in the revenge of every injury, signifies a greater infirmity in the soul, than there can be ability in the body.

Fourthly, Divine power was apparent in his resurrection. The unlocking the belly of the whale for the deliverance of Jonas; the rescue of Daniel from the den of lions; and the restraining the fire from burning the three children, were signal declarations of his power, and types of the resurrection of our Saviour. But what are those to that which was represented by them? That was a power over natural causes, a curbing of beasts, and restraining of elements; but in the resurrection of Christ, God exercised a power over himself, and quenched the flames of his own wrath, hotter than millions of Nebuchadnezzar's furnaces; unlocked the prison doors, wherein the curses of the law had lodged our Saviour, stronger than the belly and ribs of a leviathan. In the rescue of Daniel and Jonas, God overpowered beasts; and in this tore up the strength of the old serpent, and plucked the sceptre from the hand of the enemy of mankind. The work of resurrection, indeed, considered in itself, requires the efficacy of an Almighty power; neither man nor angel can create new dispositions in a dead body, to render it capable of lodging a spiritual soul; nor can they restore a dislodged soul, by their own power, to such a body. The restoring a dead body to life requires an infinite power, as well as the creation of the world; but there was in the resurrection of Christ, something more difficult than this; while he lay in the grave he was under the curse of the law, under the execution of that dreadful sentence, "Thou shalt die the death." His resurrection was not only the re-tying the marriage knot between his soul and body, or the rolling the stone from the grave; but a taking off an infinite weight, the sin of mankind, which lay upon him. So vast a weight could not be removed without the

strength of an Almighty arm. It is, therefore, not to an ordinary operation, but an operation with power (Rom. 1:4), and such a power wherein the glory of the Father did appear (Rom. 6:4); "Raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father," that is, the glorious power of God. As the Eternal generation is stupendous, so is his resurrection, which is called, a new begetting of him (Acts 13:33). It is a wonder of power, that the Divine and human nature should be joined; and no less wonder that his person should surmount and rise up from the curse of God, under which he lay. The apostle, therefore, adds one expression to another, and heaps up a variety, signifying thereby that one was not enough to represent it (Eph. 1:19); "Exceeding greatness of power, and working of mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." It was an hyperbole of power, the excellency of the mightiness of his strength: the loftiness of the expressions seems to come short of the apprehension he had of it in his soul.

II. . This power appears in the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption. The Divine power will appear, if you consider, 1. The nature of the doctrine. 2. The instruments employed in it. 3. The means they used to propagate it. 4. The success they had.

1. The nature of the doctrine. (1.) It was contrary to the common received reason of the world. The philosophers, the masters of knowledge among the Gentiles, had maxims of a different stamp from it. Though they agreed in the being of a God, yet their notions of his nature were confused and embroiled with many errors; the unity of God was not commonly assented unto; they had multiplied deities according to the fancies they had received from some of a more elevated wit and refined brain than others. Though they had some notion of mediators, yet they placed in those seats their public benefactors, men that had been useful to the world, or their particular countries, in imparting to them some profitable invention. To discard those, was to charge themselves with ingratitude to them, from whom they had received signal benefits, and to whose mediation, conduct, or protection, they ascribed all the success they had been blessed with in their several provinces, and to charge themselves with folly for rendering an honor and worship to them so long. Could the doctrine of a crucified Mediator, whom they had

never seen, that had conquered no country for them, never enlarged their territories, brought to light no new profitable invention for the increase of their earthly welfare, as the rest had done, be thought sufficient to balance so many of their reputed heroes? How ignorant were they in the foundations of the true religion! The belief of a Providence was staggering; nor had they a true prospect of the nature of virtue and vice; yet they had a fond opinion of the strength of their own reason, and the maxims that had been handed down to them by their predecessors, which Paul (1 Tim. 6:20) entitles, a “science falsely so called,” either meant of the philosophers or the Gnostics. They presumed that they were able to measure all things by their own reason; whence, when the apostle came to preach the doctrine of the Gospel at Athens, the great school of reason in that age, they gave him no better a title than that of a babbler (Acts 17:18), and openly mocked him (ver. 32); a seed gatherer, one that hath no more brain or sense than a fellow that gathers up seeds that are spilled in a market, or one that hath a vain and empty sound, without sense or reason, like a foolish mountebank; so slightly did those rationalists of the world think of the wisdom of heaven. That the Son of God should veil himself in a mortal body, and suffer a disgraceful death in it, were things above the ken of reason. Besides, the world had a general disesteem of the religion of the Jews, and were prejudiced against anything that came from them; whence the Romans, that used to incorporate the gods of other conquered nations in their capital, never moved to have the God of Israel worshipped among them. Again, they might argue against it with much fleshly reason: here is a crucified God, preached by a company of mean and ignorant persons, what reason can we have to entertain this doctrine, since the Jews, who, as they tell us, had the prophecies of him, did not acknowledge him? Surely, had there been such predictions, they would not have crucified, but crowned their King, and expected from him the conquest of the earth under their power. What reason have we to entertain him, whom his own nation, among whom he lived, with whom he conversed so unanimously, by the vote of the rulers as well as the rout, rejected? It was impossible to conquer minds possessed with so many errors, and applauding themselves in their own reason, and to render them capable of receiving revealed truths without the influence of a Divine power.

(2.) It was contrary to the customs of the world. The strength of

custom in most men, surmounts the strength of reason, and men commonly are so wedded to it, that they will be sooner divorced from anything than the modes and patterns received from their ancestors. The endeavoring to change customs of an ancient standing, hath begotten tumults and furious mutinies among nations, though the change would have been much for their advantage. This doctrine struck at the root of the religion of the world, and the ceremonies, wherein they had been educated from their infancy, delivered to them from their ancestors, confirmed by the customary observance of many ages, rooted in their minds and established by their laws (Acts 17:13); “This fellow persuadeth us to worship God contrary to the law;” against customs, to which they ascribed the happiness of their states, and the prosperity of their people, and would put, in the place of this religion they would abolish, a new one instituted by a man, whom the Jews had condemned, and put to death upon a cross, as an impostor, blasphemous, and seditious person. It was a doctrine that would change the customs of the Jews, who were intrusted with the oracles of God. It would bury forever their ceremonial rites, delivered to them by Moses, from that God, who had, with a mighty hand, brought them out of Egypt, consecrated their law with thunders and lightnings from Mount Sinai, at the time of its publication, backed it with severe sanctions, confirmed it by many miracles, both in the wilderness and their Canaan, and had continued it for so many hundred years. They could not but remember how they had been ravaged by other nations, and judgments sent upon them when they neglected and slighted it; and with what great success they were followed when they valued and observed it; and how they had abhorred the Author of this new religion, who had spoken slightly of their traditions, till they put him to death with infamy. Was it an easy matter to divorce them from that worship, upon which were entailed, as they imagined, their peace, plenty, and glory, things of the dearest regard with mankind? The Jews were no less devoted to their ceremonial traditions than the heathen were to their vain superstitions. This doctrine of the gospel was of that nature, that the state of religion, all over the earth, must be overturned by it; the wisdom of the Greeks must vail to it, the idolatry of the people must stoop to it, and the profane customs of men must moulder under the weight of it. Was it an easy matter for the pride of nature to deny a customary wisdom, to

entertain a new doctrine against the authority of their ancestors, to inscribe folly upon that which hath made them admired by the rest of the world? Nothing can be of greater esteem with men, than the credit of their lawgivers and founders, the religion of their fathers, and prosperity of themselves: hence the minds of men were sharpened against it. The Greeks, the wisest nation, slighted it as foolish; the Jews, the religious nation, stumbled at it, as contrary to the received interpretations of ancient prophecies and carnal conceits of an earthly glory. The dimmest eye may behold the difficulty to change custom, a second nature it is as hard as to change a wolf into a lamb, to level a mountain, stop the course of the sun, or change the inhabitants of Africa into the color of Europe. Custom dips men in as durable a dye as nature. The difficulties of carrying it on against the Divine religion of the Jew, and rooted custom of the Gentiles, were unconquerable by any but an Almighty power. And in this the power of God hath appeared wonderfully.

(3.) It was contrary to the sensuality of the world, and the lusts of the flesh. How much the Gentiles were overgrown with base and unworthy lusts at the time of the publication of the gospel, needs no other memento than the apostle's discourse (Rom. 1.). As there was no error but prevailed upon their minds, so there was no brutish affection but was wedded to their hearts. The doctrine proposed to them was not easy; it flattered not the sense, but checked the stream of nature. It thundered down those three great engines whereby the devil had subdued the world to himself: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life:" not only the most sordid affections of the flesh, but the more refined gratifications of the mind: it stripped nature both of devil and man; of what was commonly esteemed great and virtuous. That which was the root of their fame, and the satisfaction of their ambition, was struck at by this axe of the gospel. The first article of it ordered them to deny themselves, not to presume upon their own worth; to lay their understandings and wills at the foot of the cross, and resign them up to one newly crucified at Jerusalem: honors and wealth were to be despised, flesh to be tamed, the cross to be borne, enemies to be loved, revenge not to be satisfied, blood to be spilled, and torments to be endured for the honor of One they never saw, nor ever before heard of; who was preached with the circumstances of a shameful death, enough to affright them from the entertainment: and the

report of a resurrection and glorious ascension were things never heard of by them before, and unknown in the world, that would not easily enter into the belief of men: the cross, disgrace, self-denial, were only discoursed of in order to the attainment of an invisible world, and an unseen reward, which none of their predecessors ever returned to acquaint them with; a patient death, contrary to the pride of nature, was published as the way to happiness and a blessed immortality: the dearest lusts were to be pierced to death for the honor of this new Lord. Other religions brought wealth and honor; this struck them off from such expectations, and presented them with no promise of anything in this life, but a prospect of misery; except those inward consolations to which before they had been utter strangers, and had never experimented. It made them to depend not upon themselves, but upon the sole grace of God. It decried all natural, all moral idolatry, things as dear to men as the apple of their eyes. It spoiled them of whatsoever the mind, will, and affections of men, naturally lay claim to, and glory in. It pulled self up by the roots, unmanned carnal man, and debased the principle of honor and self-satisfaction, which the world counted at that time noble and brave. In a word, it took them off from themselves, to act like creatures of God's framing; to know no more than he would admit them, and do no more than he did command them. How difficult must it needs be to reduce men, that placed all their happiness in the pleasures of this life, from their pompous idolatry and brutish affections, to this mortifying religion! What might the world say? Here is a doctrine will render us a company of puling animals: farewell generosity, bravery, sense of honor, courage in enlarging the bounds of our country, for an ardent charity to the bitterest of our enemies. Here is a religion will rust our swords, canker our arms, dispirit what we have hitherto called virtue, and annihilate what hath been esteemed worthy and comely among mankind. Must we change conquest for suffering, the increase of our reputation for self-denial, the natural sentiment of self-preservation for affecting a dreadful death? How impossible was it that a crucified Lord, and a crucifying doctrine should be received in the world without the mighty operation of a divine power upon the hearts of men! And in this also the almighty power of God did notably shine forth.

2. Divine power appeared in the instruments employed for the publishing and propagating the gospel; who were (1.) Mean and

worthless in themselves: not noble and dignified with an earthly grandeur, but of a low condition, meanly bred: so far from any splendid estates, that they possessed nothing but their nets; without any credit and reputation in the world; without comeliness and strength; as unfit to subdue the world by preaching, as an army of hares were to conquer it by war: not learned doctors, bred up at the feet of the famous Rabbins at Jerusalem, whom Paul calls “the princes of the world” (1 Cor. 2:8); nor nursed up in the school of Athens, under the philosophers and orators of the time: not the wise men of Greece, but the fishermen of Galilee; naturally skilled in no language but their own, and no more exact in that than those of the same condition in any other nation: ignorant of everything but the language of their lakes, and their fishing trade; except Paul, called some time after the rest to that employment: and after the descent of the Spirit, they were ignorant and unlearned in everything but the doctrine they were commanded to publish; for the council, before whom they were summoned, proved them to be so, which increased their wonder at them (Acts 4:13). Had it been published by a voice from heaven, that twelve poor men, taken out of boats and creeks, without any help of learning, should conquer the world to the cross, it might have been thought an illusion against all the reason of men; yet we know it was undertaken and accomplished by them. They published this doctrine in Jerusalem, and quickly spread it over the greatest part of the world. Folly outwitted wisdom, and weakness overpowered strength. The conquest of the east by Alexander was not so admirable as the enterprise of these poor men. He attempted his conquest with the hands of a warlike nation, though, indeed, but a small number of thirty thousand against multitudes, many hundred thousands of the enemies; yet an effeminate enemy; a people inured to slaughter and victory attacked great numbers, but enfeebled by luxury and voluptuousness. Besides, he was bred up to such enterprises, had a learned education under the best philosopher, and a military education under the best commander, and a natural courage to animate him. These instruments had no such advantage from nature; the heavenly treasure was placed in those earthen vessels, as Gideon’s lamps in empty pitchers (Judges 7:16), that the excellency, or hyperbole, of the power, might be of God (2 Cor. 4:7), and the strength of his arm be displayed in the infirmity of the instruments. They were destitute of earthly wisdom, and therefore

despised by the Jews, and derided by the Gentiles; the publishers were accounted madmen, and the embracers fools. Had they been men of known natural endowments, the power of God had been veiled under the gifts of the creature.

(2.) Therefore a Divine power suddenly spirited them, and fitted them for so great a work. Instead of ignorance, they had the knowledge of the tongues; and they that were scarce well skilled in their own dialect, were instructed on the sudden to speak the most flourishing languages in the world, and discourse to the people of several nations the great things of God (Acts 2:11). Though they were not enriched with any worldly wealth, and possessed nothing, yet they were so sustained that they wanted nothing in any place where they came; a table was spread for them in the midst of their bitterest enemies. Their fearfulness was changed into courage, and they that a few days before skulked in corners for fear of the Jews (John 20:19), speak boldly in the name of that Jesus, whom they had seen put to death by the power of the rulers and the fury of the people: they reproach them with the murder of their Master, and outbrave that great people in the midst of their temple, with the glory of that person they had so lately crucified (Acts 2:23; 3:13). Peter, that was not long before qualmed at the presence of a maid, was not daunted at the presence of the council, that had their hands yet reeking with the blood of his Master; but being filled with the Holy Ghost, seems to dare the power of the priests and Jewish governors, and is as confident in the council chamber, as he had been cowardly in the high-priest's hall (Acts 4:9), &c., the efficacy of grace triumphing over the fearfulness of nature. Whence should this ardor and zeal, to propagate a doctrine that had already borne the scars of the peoples' fury be, but from a mighty Power, which changed those bares into lions, and stripped them of their natural cowardice to clothe them with a Divine courage; making them in a moment both wise and magnanimous, alienating them from any consultations with flesh and blood? As soon as ever the Holy Ghost came upon them as a mighty rushing wind, they move up and down for the interest of God; as fish, after a great clap of thunder, are roused, and move more nimbly on the top of the water; therefore, that which did so fit them for this undertaking, is called by the title of "power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

3. The Divine power appears in the means whereby it was propagated.

(1.) By means different from the methods of the world. Not by force of arms, as some religions have taken root in the world. Mahomet's horse hath trampled upon the heads of men, to imprint an Alcoran in their brains, and robbed men of their goods to plant their religion. But the apostles bore not this doctrine through the world upon the points of their swords; they presented a bodily death where they would bestow an immortal life. They employed not troops of men in a warlike posture, which had been possible for them after the gospel was once spread; they had no ambition to subdue men unto themselves, but to God; they coveted not the possessions of others; designed not to enrich themselves; invaded not the rights of princes, nor the liberties and properties of the people: they rifled them not of their estates, nor scared them into this religion by a fear of losing their worldly happiness. The arguments they used would naturally drive them from an entertainment of this doctrine, rather than allure them to be proselytes to it: their design was to change their hearts, not their government; to wean them from the love of the world, to a love of a Redeemer; to remove that which would ruin their souls. It was not to enslave them, but ransom them; they had a warfare, but not with carnal weapons, but such as were "mighty through God for the pulling down strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4); they used no weapons but the doctrine they preached. Others that have not gained conquests by the edge of the sword and the stratagems of war, have extended their opinions to others by the strength of human reason, and the insinuations of eloquence. by the apostles had as little flourish in their tongues, as edge upon their swords: their preaching was "not with the enticing words of man's wisdom" (1 Cor. 2:4); their presence was mean, and their discourses without varnish; their doctrine was plain, a "crucified Christ;" a doctrine unlaced, ungarnished, untoothsome to the world; but they had the demonstration of the Spirit, and a mighty power for their companion in the work. The doctrine they preached, viz. the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, are called the powers, not of this world, but "of the world to come" (Heb. 6:5). No less than a supernatural power could conduct them in this attempt, with such weak methods in human appearance.

(2.) Against all the force, power, and wit of the world. The division in the eastern empire, and the feeble and consuming state of the western, contributed to Mahomet's success. But never was Rome in a more flourishing condition: learning, eloquence, wisdom, strength, were at the highest pitch. Never was there a more diligent watch against any innovations; never was that state governed by more severe and suspicious princes, than at the time when Tiberius and Nero held the reins. No time seemed to be more unfit for the entrance of a new doctrine than that age, wherein it begun to be first published; never did any religion meet with that opposition from men. Idolatry hath been often settled without any contest; but this hath suffered the same fate with the institutor of it, and endured the contradictions of sinners against itself: and those that published it, were not only without any worldly prop, but exposed themselves to the hatred and fury, to the racks and tortures, of the strongest powers on earth. It never set foot in any place, but the country was in an uproar (Acts 19:28); swords were drawn to destroy it; laws made to suppress it; prisons provided for the professors of it; fires kindled to consume them, and executioners had a perpetual employment to stifle the progress of it. Rome, in its conquest of countries, changed not the religion, rites, and modes of their worship: they altered their civil government, but left them to the liberty of their religion, and many times joined with them in the worship of their peculiar gods; and sometime imitated them at Rome, instead of abolishing them in the cities they had subdued. But all their councils were assembled, and their force was bandied "against the Lord, and against his Christ;" and that city that kindly received all manner of superstitions, hated this doctrine with an irreconcilable hatred. It met with reproaches from the wise, and fury from the potentates; it was derided by the one as the greatest folly, and persecuted by the other as contrary to God and mankind; the one were afraid to lose their esteems by the doctrine, and the other to lose their authority by a sedition they thought a change of religion would introduce. The Romans, that had been conquerors of the earth, feared intestine commotions, and the falling asunder the links of their empire: scarce any of their first emperors, but had their swords dyed red in the blood of the Christians. The flesh with all its lusts, the world with all its flatteries the statesmen with all their craft, and the mighty with all their strength, joined together to extirpate it: though many members

were taken off by the fires, yet the church not only lived, but flourished, in the furnace. Converts were made by the death of martyrs; and the flames which consumed their bodies, were the occasion of firing men's hearts with a zeal for the profession of it. Instead of being extinguished, the doctrine shone more bright, and multiplied under the sickles that were employed to cut it down. God ordered every circumstance so, both in the persons that published it, the means whereby, and the time when, that nothing but his power might appear in it, without anything to dim and darken it.

4. The Divine power was conspicuous in the great success it had under all these difficulties.

Multitudes were prophesied of to embrace it; whence the prophet Isaiah, after the prophecy of the death of Christ (Isa. 53.), calls upon the church to enlarge her tents, and "lengthen out her cords" to receive those multitudes of children that should call her mother (Isa. 54:2, 3); for she should "break forth on the right hand and on the left, and her seed should inherit the Gentiles" the idolaters and persecutors should list their names in the muster-roll of the church. Presently, after the descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven upon the apostles, you find the hearts of three thousand melted by a plain declaration of this doctrine; who were a little before so far from having a favorable thought of it, that some of them at least, if not all, had expressed their rage against it, in voting for the condemning and crucifying the Author of it (Acts 2:41, 42): but in a moment they were so altered, that they breathe out affections instead of fury; neither the respect they had to their rulers, nor the honor they bore to their priests; not the derisions of the people, nor the threatening of punishment, could stop them from owning it in the face of multitudes of discouragements. How wonderful is it that they should so soon, and by such small means, pay a reverence to the servants, who had none for the Master! that they should hear them with patience, without the same clamor against them as against Christ, "Crucify them, crucify them" but, that their hearts should so suddenly be inflamed with devotion to him dead, whom they so much abhorred when living. It had gained footing not in a corner of the world, but in the most famous cities; in Jerusalem, where Christ had been crucified; in Antioch, where the name of Christians first began; in Corinth, a place of ingenious arts; and Ephesus, the seat of

a noted idol. In less than twenty years, there was never a province of the Roman empire, and scarce any part of the known world, but was stored with the professors of it. Rome, that was the metropolis of the idolatrous world, had multitudes of them sprinkled in every corner, whose “faith was spoken of throughout the world” (Rom. 1:8). The court of Nero, that monster of mankind, and the cruelest and sordidest tyrant that ever breathed, was not empty of sincere votaries to it; there were “saints in Coesar’s house” while Paul was under Nero’s chain (Phil. 4.): and it maintained its standing, and and flourished in spite of all the force of hell, two hundred and fifty years before any sovereign prince espoused it. The potentates of the earth had conquered the lands of men, and subdued their bodies; these vanquished hearts and wills, and brought the most beloved thoughts under the yoke of Christ: so much did this doctrine overmaster the consciences of its followers, that they rejoiced more at their yoke, than others at their liberty; and counted it more a glory to die for the honor of it, than to live in the profession of it.

Thus did our Saviour reign and gather subjects in the midst of his enemies; in which respect, in the first discovery of the gospel, he is described as “a mighty Conqueror” (Rev. 6:2), and still conquering in the greatness of his strength. How great a testimony of his power is it, that from so small a cloud should rise so glorious a sun, that should chase before it the darkness and power of hell; triumph over the idolatry, superstition, and profaneness of the world! This plain doctrine vanquished the obstinacy of the Jews, baffled the understanding of the Greeks, humbled the pride of the grandees, threw the devil not only out of bodies, but hearts; tore up, the foundation of his empire, and planted the cross, where the devil had for many ages before established his standard. How much more than a human force is illustrious in this whole conduct! Nothing in any age of the world can parallel it: it being so much against the methods of nature, the disposition of the world, and (considering the resistance against it) seems to surmount even the works of creation. Never were there, in any profession, such multitudes, not of bedlams, but men of sobriety, acuteness, and wisdom, that exposed themselves to the fury of the flames, and challenged death in the most terrifying shapes for the honor of this doctrine. To conclude, this should be often meditated upon to form our understandings to a full assent to the gospel, and the truth of it; the want of which

consideration of power, and the customariness of an education in the outward profession of it, is the ground of all the profaneness under it, and apostasy from it; the disesteem of the truth it declares, and the neglect of the duties it enjoins. The more we have a prospect and sense of the impressions of Divine power in it, the more we shall have a reverence of the Divine precepts.

III. the third thing is, the power of God appears in the application of redemption, as well as in the Person redeeming, and the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption: 1. In the planting grace. 2. In the pardon of sin. 3. In the preserving grace.

First, In the planting grace. There is no expression which the Spirit of God hath thought fit in Scripture to resemble this work to, but argues the exerting of a Divine power for the effecting of it. When it is expressed by light, it is as much as the power of God in the creating the sun; when by regeneration, it is as much as the power of God in forming an infant, and fashioning all the parts of a man; when it is called resurrection, it is as much as the rearing of a body again out of putrified matter; when it is called creation, it is as much as erecting a comely world out of mere nothing, or an inform and uncomely mass.

As we could not contrive the death of Christ for our redemption, so we cannot form our souls to the acceptance of it; the infinite efficacy of grace is as necessary for the one, as the infinite wisdom of God was for laying the platform of the other. It is by his power we have whatsoever pertains to godliness as well as life (2 Pet. 1:3); he puts his fingers upon the handle of the lock, and turns the heart to what point he pleases; the action whereby he performs this, is expressed by a word of force; "He hath snatched us from the power of darkness:" the action whereby it is performed manifests it. In reference to this power, it is called creation, which is a production from nothing; and conversion is a production from something more incapable of that state, than mere nothing is of being. There is greater distance between the terms of sin and righteousness, corruption and grace, than between the terms of nothing and being; the greater the distance is, the more power is required to the producing any thing. As in miracles, the miracle is the greater, where the change is the greater; and the change is the greater, where the distance is the greater. As it was a more signal mark of power to

change a dead man to life, than to change a sick man to health; so that the change here being from a term of a greater distance, is more powerful than the creation of heaven and earth. Therefore, whereas creation is said to be wrought by his hands, and the heavens by his fingers, or his word; conversion is said to be wrought by his arm (Isa. 53:1). In creation, we had an earthly; by conversion, a heavenly state: in creation, nothing is changed into something; in conversion, hell is transformed into heaven, which is more than the turning nothing into a glorious angel. In that thanksgiving of our Saviour, for the revelation of the knowledge of himself to babes, the simple of the world, he gives the title to his Father, of “Lord of heaven and earth” (Matt. 11:5); intimating it to be an act of his creative and preserving power; that power whereby he formed heaven and earth, hath preserved the standing, and governed the motions of all creatures from the beginning of the world. It is resembled to the most magnificent act of divine power that God ever put forth, viz. that “in the resurrection of our Saviour” (Eph. 1:19); wherein there was more than an ordinary impression of might. It is not so small a power as that whereby we speak with tongues, or whereby Christ opened the mouths of the dumb, and the ears of the deaf, or unloosed the cords of death from a person. It is not that power whereby our Saviour wrought those stupendous miracles when he was in the world: but that power which wrought a miracle that amazed the most knowing angels, as well as ignorant man; the taking off the weight of the sin of the world from our Saviour, and advancing him in his human nature to rule over the angelic host, making him head of principalities and powers; as much as to say, as great as all that power which is displayed in our redemption, from the first foundation to the last line in the superstructure. It is, therefore, often set forth with an emphasis, as “Excellency of power” (2 Cor. 4:7), and “Glorious power” (2 Pet. 1:3): “to glory and virtue,” we translate it, but it is *διὰ δόξης*, through glory and virtue, that is, by a glorious virtue or strength.

The instrument whereby it is wrought, is dignified with the title of power. The gospel which God useth in this great affair is called “The power of God to salvation” (Rom. 1:16), and the “Rod of his strength” (Psalm 110:2); and the day of the gospel’s appearance in the heart is emphatically called, “The day of power” (ver. 3); wherein he brings down strong-holds and towering imaginations.

And, therefore, the angel Gabriel, which name signifies the power of God, was always sent upon those messages which concerned the gospel, as to Daniel, Zacharias, Mary. The gospel is the power of God in a way of instrumentality, but the almightiness of God is the principal in a way of efficiency. The gospel is the sceptre of Christ; but the power of Christ is the mover of that sceptre. The gospel is not as a bare word spoken, and proposing the thing; but as backed with a higher efficacy of grace; as the sword doth instrumentally cut, but the arm that wields it gives the blow, and makes it successful in the stroke. But this gospel is the power of God, because he edgeth this by his own power, to surmount all resistance, and vanquish the greatest malice of that man he designs to work upon. The power of God is conspicuous,

1. In turning the heart of man against the strength of the inclinations of nature. In the forming of man of the dust of the ground as the matter contributed nothing to the action whereby God formed it, so it had no principle of resistance contrary to the design of God; but in converting the heart, there is not only wanting a principle of assistance from him in this work, but the whole strength of corrupt nature is alarmed to combat against the power of his grace. When the gospel is presented, the understanding is not only ignorant of it, but the will perverse against it; the one doth not relish, and the other doth not esteem, the excellency of the object. The carnal wisdom in the mind contrives against it, and the rebellious will puts the orders in execution against the counsel of God, which requires the invincible power of God to enlighten the dark mind, to know what it slights; and the fierce will, to embrace what it loathes. The stream of nature cannot be turned, but by a power above nature; it is not all the created power in heaven and earth can change a swine into a man, or a venomous toad into an holy and illustrious angel. Yet this work is not so great, in some respect, as the stilling the fierceness of nature, the silencing the swelling waves in the heart, and the casting out those brutish affections which are born and grow up with us. There would be no, or far less, resistance in a mere animal, to be changed into a creature of a higher rank, than there is in a natural man to be turned into a serious Christian. There is in every natural man a stoutness of heart, a stiff neck, unwillingness to good, forwardness to evil; Infinite Power quells this stoutness, demolisheth these strongholds, turns this wild ass in her course, and

routs those armies of turbulent nature against the grace of God. To stop the floods of the sea is not such an act of power, as to turn the tide of the heart. This power hath been employed upon every convert in the world; what would you say, then, if you knew all the channels in which it hath run since the days of Adam? If the alteration of one rocky heart into a pool of water be a wonder of power, what then is the calming and sweetening by his word those 144,000 of the tribes of Israel, and that numberless multitude of all nations and people that shall stand “before the throne” (Rev. 7:9), which were all naturally so many raging seas? Not one converted soul from Adam to the last that shall be in the end of the world, but is a trophy of the Divine conquest. None were pure volunteers, nor listed themselves in his service, till he put forth his strong arm to draw them to him. No man’s understanding, but was chained with darkness, and fond of it; no man but had corruption in his will, which was dearer to him than anything else which could be proposed for his true happiness. These things are most evident in Scripture and experience.

2. As it is wrought against the inclinations of nature, so against a multitude of corrupt habits rooted in the souls of men. A distemper in its first invasion may more easily be cured, than when it becomes chronical and inveterate. The strength of a disease, or the complication of many, magnifies the power of the physician, and efficacy of the medicine that tames and expels it. What power is that which hath made men stoop, when natural habits have been grown giants by custom; when the putrefaction of nature hath engendered a multitude of worms; when the ulcers are many and deplorable; when many cords, wherewith God would have bound the sinner, have been broken, and (like Sampson the wicked heart hath gloried in its strength, and grown more proud, that it hath stood like a strong fort against those batteries, under which others have fallen flat; every proud thought, every evil habit captivated, serves for matter of triumph to the “power of God” (2 Cor. 10:5). What resistance will a multitude of them make, when one of them is enough to hold the faculty under its dominion, and intercept its operations? So many customary habits, so many old natures, so many different strengths added to nature, every one of them standing as a barricado against the way of grace; all the errors the understanding is possessed with, think the gospel folly; all the vices the will is filled with, count it the

fetter and band. Nothing so contrary to man, as to be thought a fool; nothing so contrary to man, as to enter into slavery. It is no easy matter to plant the cross of Christ upon a heart guided by many principles against the truth of it, and biased by a world of wickedness against the holiness of it. Nature renders a man too feeble and indisposed, and custom renders a man more weak and unwilling to change his hue (Jer. 13:23). To dispossess man then of his self-esteem and self-excellency; to make room for God in the heart, where there was none but for sin, as dear to him as himself; to hurl down the pride of nature; to make stout imaginations stoop to the cross; to make desires of self-advancement sink into a zeal for the glorifying of God, and an overruling design for his honor, is not to be ascribed to any but an outstretched arm wielding the sword of the Spirit. To have a heart full of the fear of God, that was just before filled with a contempt of him; to have a sense of his power, an eye to his glory, admiring thoughts of his wisdom, a faith in his truth, that had lower thoughts of him and all his perfections, than he had of a creature; to have a hatred of his habitual lusts, that had brought him in much sensitive pleasure; to loath them as much as he loved them; to cherish the duties he hated; to live by faith in, and obedience to, the Redeemer, who was before so heartily under the conduct of Satan and self; to chase the acts of sin from his members, and the pleasing thoughts of sin from his mind; to make a stout wretch willingly fall down, crawl upon the ground, and adore that Saviour whom before he out-dared, is a triumphant act of Infinite Power that can subdue all things to itself, and break those multitudes of locks and bolts that were upon us.

3. Against a multitude of temptations and interests. The temptations rich men have in this world are so numerous and strong, that the entrance of one of them into the kingdom of heaven, that is, the entertainment of the gospel, is made by our Saviour an impossible thing with men, and procurable only by the power of God (Luke 18:24–26). The Divine strength only can separate the world from the heart, and the heart from the world. There must be an incomprehensible power to chase away the devil, that had so long, so strong a footing in the affections; to render the soil he had sown with so many tares and weeds, capable of good grain; to make spirits that had found the sweetness of worldly prosperity, wrapt up all their happiness in it, and not only bent down, but—as it were—

buried in earth and mud, to be loosened from those beloved cords, to disrelish the earth for a crucified Christ; I say, this must be the effect of an almighty power.

4. The manner of conversion shows no less the power of God. There is not only an irresistible force used in it, but an agreeable sweetness. The power is so efficacious, that nothing can vanquish it; and so sweet, that none did ever complain of it. The Almighty virtue displays itself invincibly, yet without constraint; compelling the will without offering violence to it, and making it cease to be will: not forcing it, but changing it: not dragging it, but drawing it; making it will where before it pilled; removing the corrupt nature of the will, without invading the created nature and rights of the faculty; not working in us against the physical nature of the will, but working it “to will” (Phil. 2:13). This work is therefore called creation, resurrection, to skew its irresistible power; it is called illumination, persuasion, drawing, to spew the suitableness of its efficacy to the nature of the human faculties: it is a drawing with cords, which testifies an invincible strength; but, with cords of love, which testifies a delightful conquest. It is hard to determine whether it be more powerful than sweet, or more sweet than powerful. It is no mean part of the power of God to twist together victory and pleasure; to give a blow as delightful as strong, as pleasing to the sufferer, as it is sharp to the sinner.

Secondly, The power of God, in the application of redemption, is evident in the pardoning a sinner.

1. In the pardon itself. The power of God is made the ground of his patience; or the reason why he is patient, is, because he would “shew his power” (Rom. 9:22). It is apart of magnanimity to pass by injuries: as weaker stomachs cannot concoct the tougher food, so weak minds cannot digest the harder injuries: he that passes over a wrong is superior to his adversary that does it. When God speaks of his own name as merciful he speaks first of himself as powerful (Exod. 34:6), “The Lord, The Lord God,” that is, The Lord, the strong Lord, Jehovah, the strong Jehovah. Let the power of my Lord be great, saith Moses, when he prays for the forgiveness of the people: the word *jigdal* is written with a great *jod*, or a *jod* above the other letters. The power of God in pardoning is advanced beyond an ordinary strain, beyond the creative strength. In the creation, he had

power over the creatures; in this, power over himself: in creation, not himself, but the creatures were the object of his power; in that, no attribute of his nature could article against his design. In the pardon of a sinner, after many overtures made to him and refused by him, God exerciseth a power over himself; for the sinner path dishonored God, provoked his justice, abused his goodness, done injury to all those attributes which are necessary to his relief: it was not so in creation, nothing was incapable of disobliging God from bringing it into being. The dust, which was the matter of Adam's body, needed only the extrinsic power of God to form it into a man, and inspire it with a living soul: it had not rendered itself obnoxious to Divine justice, nor was capable to excite any disputes between his perfections. But after the entrance of sin, and the merit of death, thereby there was a resistance in justice to the free remission of man: God was to exercise a power over himself, to answer his justice, and pardon the sinner; as well as a power over the creature, to reduce the run away and rebel.

Unless we have recourse to the infiniteness of God's power, the infiniteness of our guilt will weigh us down: we must consider not only that we have a mighty guilt to press us, but a mighty God to relieve us. In the same act of his being our righteousness, he is our strength: "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Isa. 45:24).

2. In the sense of pardon. When the soul hath been wounded with the sense of sin, and its iniquities have stared it in the face, the raising the soul from a despairing condition, and lifting it above those waters which terrified it, to cast the light of comfort, as well as the light of grace, into a heart covered with more than an Egyptian darkness, is an act of his infinite and creating power (Isa. 57:19); "I create the fruit of the lips; Peace." Men may wear out their lips with numbering up the promises of grace and arguments of peace, but all will signify no more, without a creative power, than if all men and angels should call to that white upon the wall to shine as splendidly as the sun. God only can create Jerusalem, and every child of Jerusalem a rejoicing (Isa. 45:18). A man is no more able to apply to himself any word of comfort, under the sense of sin, than he is able to convert himself, and turn the proposals of the word into gracious affections in his heart. To restore the joy of salvation, is, in David's

judgment, an act of sovereign power, equal to that of creating a clean heart (Psalm 51:10, 12). Alas! it is a state like to that of death; as infinite power can only raise from natural death, so from a spiritual death; also from a comfortless death: "In his favor there is life;" in the want of his favor there is death. The power of God hath so placed light in the sun, that all creatures in the world, all the torches upon earth, kindled together, cannot make it day, if that doth not rise; so all the angels in heaven, and men upon earth, are not competent chirurgeons for a wounded spirit. The cure of our spiritual ulcers, and the pouring in balm, is an act of sovereign creative power: it is more visible in silencing a tempestuous conscience than the power of our Saviour was in the stilling the stormy winds and the roaring waves. As none but infinite power can remove the guilt of sin, so none but infinite power can remove the despairing sense of it.

Thirdly, This power is evident in the preserving grace. As the providence of God is a manifestation of his power in a continued creation, so the preservation of grace is a manifestation of his power in a continued regeneration. To keep a nation under the yoke, is an act of the same power that subdued it. It is this that strengthens men in suffering against the fury of hell (Col. 1:13); it is this that keeps them from falling against the force of hell—the Father's hand (John 10:29). His strength abates and moderates the violence of temptations; his staff sustains his people under them; his might defeats the power of Satan, and bruise him under a believer's feet. The counterworkings of indwelling corruption, the reluctances of the flesh against the breathings of the spirit, the fallacy of the senses, and the rovings of the mind, have ability quickly to stifle and extinguish grace, if it were not maintained by that powerful blast that first imbreathed it. No less power is seen in perfecting it, than was in planting it (2 Pet. 1:3); no less in fulfilling the work of faith, than in engrafting the word of faith (2 Thess. 1:11). The apostle well understood the necessity and efficacy of it in the preservation of faith, as well as in the first infusion, when he expresses himself in those terms of a greatness or hyperbole of power, "His mighty power," or the power of his might (Eph. 1:19). The salvation he bestows, and the strength whereby he effects it, are joined together in the prophet's song (Isa. 12:2): "The Lord is my strength and my salvation." And indeed, God doth more magnify his power in

continuing a believer in the world, a weak and half-rigged vessel, in the midst of so many sands wheron it might split, so many rocks whereon it might dash, so many corruptions within, and so many temptations without, than if he did immediately transport him into heaven, and clothe him with a perfect sanctified nature.—To conclude, what is there, then, in the world which is destitute of notices of Divine power? Every creature affords us the lesson; all acts of Divine government are the marks of it. Look into the word, and the manner of its propagation instructs us in it; your changed natures, your pardoned guilt, your shining comfort, your quelled corruptions, the standing of your staggering graces, are sufficient to preserve a sense, and to prevent a forgetfulness, of this great attribute, so necessary for your support, and conducing so much to your comfort.

Use I. Of information and instruction.

Instruct. 1. If incomprehensible and infinite power belongs to the nature of God, then Jesus Christ hath a divine nature, because the acts of power proper to God are ascribed to him. This perfection of omnipotence doth unquestionably pertain to the Deity, and is an incommunicable property, and the same with the essence of God: he, therefore, to whom this attribute is ascribed, is essentially God. This is challenged by Christ, in conjunction with eternity (Rev. 1:8); “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” This the Lord Christ speaks of himself. He who was equal with God, proclaims himself by the essential title of the Godhead, part of which he repeats again (ver. 11), and this is the person which “walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,” the person that “was dead and now lives” (ver. 17, 18), which cannot possibly be meant of the Father, the First Person, who can never come under the denomination of having been dead. Being, therefore, adorned with the same title, he hath the same Deity; and though his omnipotence be only positively asserted (ver. 8), yet, his eternity being asserted (ver. 11, 17), it inferreth his immense power; for he that is eternal, without limits of time, must needs be conceived powerful, without any dash of infirmity. Again, when he is said to be a child born, and a son given, in the same breath he is called the Mighty God (Isa. 9:6). It is introduced as a ground of comfort to the

church, to preserve their hopes in the accomplishment of the promises made to them before. They should not imagine him to have only the infirmity of a man, though he was veiled in the appearance of a man. No, they should look through the disguise of his flesh, to the might of his Godhead. The attribute of mighty is added to the title of God, because the consideration of power is most capable to sustain the drooping church in such a condition, and to prop up her hopes. It is upon this account he saith of himself, "Whatsoever things the Father doth, those also doth the Son likewise" (John 5:19). In the creation of heaven, earth, sea, and the preservation of all creatures, the Son works with the same will, wisdom, virtue, power, as the Father works: not as two may concur in an action in a different manner, as an agent and an instrument, a carpenter and his tools, but in the same manner of operation, *δουλίως*, which we translate likeness, which doth not express so well the emphasis of the word. There is no diversity of action between us; what the Father doth, that I do by the same power, with the same easiness in every respect; there is the same creative, productive, conservative power in both of us; and that not in one work that is done, *ad extra*, but in all, in whatsoever the Father doth. In the same manner, not by a delegated, but natural and essential power, by one undivided operation and manner of working.

1st. The creation, which is a work of Omnipotence, is more than once ascribed to him. This he doth own himself; the creation of the earth, and of man upon it; the stretching out the heavens by his hands, and the forming of "all the hosts of them by his command" (Isa. 45:12). He is not only the Creator of Israel, the church (ver. 12), but of the whole world, and every creature on the face of the earth, and in the glories of the heavens; which is repeated also ver. 18, where, in this act of creation, he is called God himself, and speaks of himself in the term Jehovah; and swears by himself (ver. 23). What doth he swear?

"That unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear." Is this Christ? Yes, if the apostle may be believed, who applies it to him (Rom. 14:11) to prove the appearance of all men before the judgment-seat of Christ, whom the prophet calls (ver. 15) "a God that hides himself;" and so he was a hidden God when obscured in our fleshly infirmities. He was in conjunction with the

Father when the sea received his decree, and the foundations of the earth were appointed; not as a spectator, but as an artificer, for so the word in Prov. 8:30, signifies, “as one brought up with him;” it signifies also, “a cunning workman” (Cant. 7:1). He was the east, or the sun, from whence sprang all the light of life and being to the creature; so the word קדמ (ver. 22), which is translated, “before his works of old,” is rendered by some, and signifies the east as well as before: but if it notes only his existence before, it is enough to prove his Deity. The Scripture doth not only allow him an existence before the world, but exalts him as the cause of the world: a thing may precede another that is not the cause of that which follows; a precedency in age doth not entitle one brother, or thing, the cause of another: but our Saviour is not only ancients than the world, but is the Creator of the world (Heb.1:10, 11). “Who laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands.” So great an eulogy cannot be given to one destitute of omnipotence; since the distance between being and not being is so vast a gulf that cannot be surmounted and stepped over, but by an Infinite Power: he is the first and the last, that called the “generations from the beginning” (Isa. 41:4), and had an almighty voice to call them out of nothing. In which regard he is called the “everlasting Father” (Isa. 9:6), as being the efficient of creation; as God is called the Father of the rain, or as father is taken for the inventor of an art; as Jubal, the first framer and inventor of music, is called “the father of such as handle the harp” (Gen. 4:21). And that Person is said to “make the sea, and form the dry land by his hands” (Psalm 95:5, 6) against whom we are exhorted not to harden our hearts, which is applied to Christ by the apostle (Heb. 3:8); in ver. 3, he is called “a great King,” and “a great God our Maker:” The places wherein the creation is attributed to Christ, those that are the antagonists of his Deity, would evade by understanding them of the new, or evangelical, not of the first, old material creation: but what appearance is there for such a sense? Consider,

(1) That of Heb. 1:10, 11, it is spoken of that earth and heavens which were in the beginning of time; it is that earth shall perish, that heaven that shall be folded up, that creation that shall grow old towards a decay; that is, only the visible and material creation: the spiritual shall endure forever; it grows not old to decay, but grows up to a perfection; it sprouts up to its happiness, not to its detriment.

The same Person creates that shall destroy, and the same world is created by him that shall be destroyed by him, as well as it subsisted by virtue of his omnipotency.

(2.) Can that also (Heb. 1:2), “By whom also he made the worlds,” speaking of Christ, bear the same plea? It was the same Person by whom “God spake to us in these last times,” the same Person which he hath constituted “Heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds:” and the participle also, intimates it to be a distinct act from his speaking or prophetic office, whereby he restored and new created the world, as well as the rightful foundation God had to make him “Heir of all things.” It refers likewise, not to the time of Christ’s speaking upon earth, but to something past, and some thing different from the publication of the gospel: it is not “doth make,” which had been more likely if the apostle had meant only the new creation; but “hath made,” referring to time long since past, something done before his appearance upon earth as a Prophet: “By whom also he made the worlds,” or ages, all things subjected to , or measured by time; which must be meant according to the Jewish phrase of this material visible world: so they entitle God in their Liturgy, the “Lord of Ages,” that is, the Lord of the world, and all ages and revolutions of the world, from the creation to the last period of time. If anything were in being before this frame of heaven and earth, and within the compass of time, it received being and duration from the Son of God. The apostle would give an argument to prove the equity of making him Heir of all things as Mediator, because he was the framer of all things as God. He may well be the Heir or Lord of angels as well as men, who created angels as well as men: all things were justly under his power as Mediator, since they derived their existence from him as Creator.

(3.) But what evasion can there be for that (Col. 1:16)? “By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him.” He is said to be the Creator of material and visible things, as well as spiritual and invisible; of things in heaven, which needed no restoration, as well as things on earth, which were polluted by sin, and stood in need of a new creation. How could the angels belong to the new creation, who had never put off the honor and purity of the first? Since they

never divested themselves of their original integrity, they could not be reinvested with that which they never lost. Besides, suppose the holy angels be one way or other reduced as parts of the new creation, as being under the mediatory government of our Saviour, as their Head, and in regard of their confirmation by him in that happy state. In what manner shall the devils be ranked among new creatures? They are called principalities and powers as well as the angels, and may come under the title of things invisible: that they are called principalities and powers is plain (Eph. 6:12): “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Good angels are not there meant, for what war have believers with them, or they with believers? They are the guardians of them, since Christ hath taken away the enmity between our Lord and theirs, in whose quarrel they were engaged against us: and since the apostle, speaking of “all things created by him,” expresseth it so, that it cannot be conceived he should except anything; how come the finally impenitent and unbelievers, which are things in earth, and visible, to be listed here in the roll of new creatures? None of these can be called new creatures, because they are subjected to the government of Christ; no more than the earth and sea, and the animals in it, are made new creatures, because they are all under the dominion of Christ and his providential government. Again, the apostle manifestly makes the creation he here speaks of, to be the material, and not the new creation; for that he speaks of afterwards as a distinct act of our Lord Jesus, under the title of Reconciliation (Col. 1:20, 21), which was the restoration of the world, and the satisfying for that curse that lay upon it. His intent is here to show that not an angel in heaven, nor a creature upon earth, but was placed in their several degrees of excellency by the power of the Son of God, who, after that act of creation, and the entrance of sin, was the “reconciler” of the world through the blood of his cross.

(4.) There is another place as clear (John 1:3): “All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made that was made.” The creation is here ascribed to him; affirmatively, “All things were made by him;” negatively, there was nothing made without him: and the words are emphatical, οὐδὲ ἓν, not one thing; excepting nothing; including invisible things, as well as things conspicuous to

sense only, mentioned in the story of the creation (Gen. 1.); not only the entire mass, but the distinct parcels, the smallest worm and the highest angel, owe their original to him. And if not one thing, then the matter was not created to his hands; and his work consisted not only in the forming things from that matter: if that *one* thing of matter were excepted, a chief thing were excepted; if *not one thing* were excepted, then he created something of nothing because spirits, as angels and souls, are not made of any pre-existing or fore-created matter. How could the evangelist phrase it more extensively and comprehensively? This is a character of Omnipotency; to create the world, and everything in it, of nothing, requires an infinite virtue and power. If all things were created by Him, they were not created by him as man, because himself, as man, was not in being before the creation; if all things were made by him, then himself was not made, himself was not created; and to be existent without being made, without being created, is to be unboundedly omnipotent. And if we understand it of the new creation, as they do that will not allow him an existence in his Deity before his humanity, it cannot be true of that; for how could he regenerate Abraham, make Simeon and Anna new creatures, who “waited for the salvation of Israel,” and form John Baptist, and fill him with the Holy Ghost, even from the womb (Luke 1:15), who belonged to the new creation, and was to prepare the way, if Christ had not a being before him? The evangelist alludes to, and explains the history of the creation, in the beginning, and acquaints us what was meant by God, said so often, *viz.* the eternal Word, and describes him in his creative power, manifested in the framing the world, before he describes him in his incarnation, when he came to lay the foundation of the restoration of the world (John 1:14), “The Word was made flesh;” this Word who was “with God, who was God, who made all things,” and gave being to the most glorious angels and the meanest creature without exception; this Word, in time, “was made flesh.”

(5.) The creation of things mentioned in these Scriptures cannot be attributed to him as an instrument.

As if when it is said, “God created all things by him, and by him made the worlds,” we were to understand the Father to be the agent, and the Son to be a tool in his Father’s hand, as an axe in the hand of a carpenter, or a file in the hand of a smith, or a servant acting by

command as the organ of his master. The preposition *per*, or *διὰ*, doth not always signify an instrumental cause: when it is said, that the apostle gave the Thessalonians a command “by Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 4:2), was Christ the instrument, and not the Lord of that command the apostle gave? The immediate operation of Christ dwelling in the apostles, was that whereby they gave the commands to their disciples. When we are called “by God” (1 Cor. 1:9), is he the instrumental, or principal cause of our effectual vocation? And can the will of God be the instrument of putting Paul into the apostleship, or the sovereign cause of investing him with that dignity, when he calls himself an “Apostle by the will of God” (Eph. 1:3)? And when all things are said to be through God, as well as of him, must he be counted the instrumental cause of his own creation, counsels, and judgments (Rom. 11:36)? When we “mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit” (Rom. 8:13), or keep the “treasure of the word by the Holy Ghost” (2 Tim. 1:14), is the Holy Ghost of no more dignity in such acts than an instrument? Nor doth the gaining a thing by a person make him a mere instrument or inferior; as when a man gains his right in a way of justice against his adversary by the magistrate, is the judge inferior to the suppliant? If the Word were an instrument in creation, it must be a created or uncreated instrument: if created, it could not be true what the Evangelist saith, that “all things were made by him,” since himself, the principal thing, could not be made by himself: if uncreated, he was God, and so acted by a Divine omnipotency, which surmounts an instrumental cause. But, indeed, an instrument is impossible in creation, since it is wrought only by an act of the Divine will. Do we need any organ to an act of volition? The efficacious will of the Creator is the cause of the original of the body of the world, with its particular members and exact harmony. It was formed “by a word, and established by a command” (Psalm 33:9); the beauty of the creation stood up at the precept of his will. Nor was the Son a partial cause; as when many are said to build a house, one works one part, and another frames another part: God created all things by the immediate operation of the Son, in the unity of essence, goodness, power, wisdom; not an extrinsic, but a connatural instrument. As the sun doth illustrate all things by his light, and quickens all things by his heat, so God created the worlds by Christ, as he was the “brightness or splendor of his glory, the exact image of his person;”

which follows the declaration of his making the worlds by him (Heb. 1:3, 4), to show, that he acted not as an instrument, but one in essential conjunction with him, as light and brightness with the sun. But suppose he did make the world as a kind of instrument, he was then before the world, not bounded by time; and eternity cannot well be conceived belonging to a Being without omnipotency. He is the End, as well as the Author, of the creatures (Col. 1:16); not only the principle which gave them being, but the sea, into whose glory they run and dissolve themselves, which consists not with the meanness of an instrument.

2d. As creation, so preservation, is ascribed to Him (Col. 1:17). "By him all things consist." As he preceded all things in his eternity, so he establishes all things by his omnipotency, and fixes them in their several centres, that they sink not into that nothing from whence he fetched them. By him they flourish in their several beings, and observe the laws and orders he first appointed: that power of his which extracted them from insensible nothing, upholds them in their several beings with the same facility as he spake being into them, even "by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3), and by one creative continued voice, called all generations, from the beginning to the period of the world (Isa. 41:4), and causes them to flourish in their several seasons. It is "by him kings reign, and princes decree justice," and all things are confined within the limits of government. All which are acts of an Infinite Power.

3d. Resurrection is also ascribed to Him. The body crumbled to dust, and that dust blown to several quarters of the world, cannot be gathered in its distinct parts, and new formed for the entertainment of the soul, without the strength of an infinite arm. This he will do, and more; change the vileness of an earthly body into the glory of an heavenly one; a dusty flesh into a spiritual body, which is an argument of a power invincible, to which all things cannot but stoop; for it is by such an operation, which testifies an ability "to subdue all things to himself" (Phil. 3:21), especially when he works it with the same ease as he did the creation, by the power of his voice. (John 5:28), "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth:" speaking them into a restored life from insensible dust, as he did into being from an empty nothing. The greatest acts of power are owned to belong to creation, preservation,

resurrection. Omnipotence, therefore, is his right; and, therefore, a Deity cannot be denied to him that inherits a perfection essential to none but God, and impossible to be entrusted in, or managed by the hands of any creatures. And this is no mean comfort to those that believe in him: he is, in regard of his power, “the horn of salvation;” so Zacharias sings of him (Luke 1:69). Nor could there be any more mighty found out upon whom God could have “laid our help” (Psalm 89:19). No reason, therefore, to doubt his ability to save to the utmost, who hath the power of creation, preservation, and resurrection in his hands. His promises must be accomplished, since nothing can resist him: he hath power to fulfil his word, and bring all things to a final issue, because he is Almighty: by his outstretched arm in the deliverance of his Israel from Egypt, (for it was his arm, 1 Cor. 10.) he showed that he was able to deliver us from spiritual Egypt. The charge of Mediator to expiate sin, vanquish hell, form a church, conduct and perfect it, are not to be effected by a person of less ability than infinite. Let this almightiness of His be the bottom, wherein to cast and fix the anchor of our hopes.

Instruct. 2. Hence may be inferred the Deity of the Holy Ghost. Works of omnipotency are ascribed to the Spirit of God: by the motion of the wings of this Spirit, as a bird over her eggs, was that rude and unshapen mass hatched into a comely world. The stars,—or perhaps the angels, are meant by the “garnishing of the heavens” in the verse before the text,—were brought forth in their comeliness and dignity, as the ornaments of the upper world, by this Spirit; “By his Spirit he bath garnished the heavens.”

To this Spirit Job ascribes the formation both of the body and soul, under the title of Almighty (Job 33:4), “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” Resurrection, another work of omnipotency, is attributed to him (Rom. 8:11). The conception of our Saviour in the womb; the miracles that he wrought, were by the power of the Spirit in him. Power is a title belonging to him, and sometimes both are put together (1 Thess. 1:5, and other places). And that great power of changing the heart, and sanctifying a polluted nature, a work greater than creation, is frequently acknowledged in the Scripture to be the peculiar act of the Holy Ghost. The Father, Son, Spirit, are one

principle in creation, resurrection, and all the works of omnipotence.

Instruct. 3. Inference from the doctrine. The blessedness of God is hence evidenced. If God be Almighty, he can want nothing; all want speaks weakness. If he doth what he will, he cannot be miserable; all misery consists in those things which happen contrary to our will. There is nothing can hinder his happiness, because nothing can resist his power. Since he is omnipotent, nothing can hurt him, nothing can strip him of what he hath, of what he is. If he can do whatsoever he will, he cannot want anything that he wills. He is as happy, as great, as glorious, as he will; for he hath a perfect liberty of will to will, and a perfect power to attain what he will; his will cannot be restrained, nor his power meted. It would be a defect in blessedness, to will what he were not able to do: sorrow is the result of a want of power, with a presence of will. If he could will anything which he could not effect, he would be miserable, and no longer God: he can do whatsoever he pleases, and therefore can want nothing that pleases him. He cannot be happy, the original of whose happiness is not in himself: nothing can be infinitely happy, that is limited and bounded.

Instruct. 4. Hence is the ground for the immutability of God. As he is incapable of changing his resolves, because of his infinite wisdom, so he is incapable of being forced to any change, because of his infinite power. Being almighty, he can be no more changed from power to weakness; than, being all-wise, he can be changed from wisdom to folly; or, being omniscient, from knowledge to ignorance. He cannot be altered in his purposes, because of his wisdom; nor in the manner and method of his actions, because of his infinite strength. Men, indeed, when their designs are laid deepest, and their purposes stand firmest, yet are forced to stand still, or change the manner of the execution of their resolves, by reason of some outward accidents that obstruct them in their course; for, having not wisdom to foresee future hindrances, they have not power to prevent them, or strength to remove them, when they unexpectedly interpose themselves between their desire and performance; but no created power has strength enough to be a bar against God. By the same act of his will that he resolves a thing, he can puff away any impediments that seem to rise up against him. He that wants no means to effect his purposes, cannot be checked by

anything that riseth up to stand in his way; heaven, earth, sea, the deepest places, are too weak to resist his will (Psalm 135:6). The purity of the angels will not, and the devil's malice cannot, frustrate his will; the one voluntarily obeys the beck of his hand, and the other is vanquished by the power of it. What can make him change his purposes; who (if he please) can dash the earth against the heavens in the twinkling of an eye, untying the world from its centre, clap the stars and elements together into one mass, and blow the whole creation of men and devils into nothing? Because he is almighty, therefore he is immutable.

Instruct. 5. Hence is inferred the providence of God, and his government of the world. His power, as well as his wisdom, gives him a right to govern: nothing can equal him, therefore nothing can share the command with him; since all things are his works, it is fittest they should be under his order: he that frames a work, is fittest to guide and govern it. God hath the most right to govern, because he hath knowledge to direct his power, and power to execute the results of his wisdom: he knows what is convenient to order, and hath strength to effect what he orders. As his power would be oppressive without goodness and wisdom, so his goodness and wisdom would be fruitless without power. An artificer that hath lost his hands may direct, but cannot make an engine: a pilot that hath lost his arms may advise the way of steerage, but cannot hold the helm; something is wanting in him to be a complete governor but since both counsel and power are infinite in God, hence results an infinite right to govern, and an infinite fitness, because his will cannot be resisted, his power cannot be enfeebled or diminished; he can quicken and increase the strength of all means as he pleases. He can hold all things in the world together, and preserve them in those functions wherein he settled them, and conduct them to those ends for which he designed them. Every artificer, the more excellent he is, and the more excellency of power appears in his work, is the more careful to maintain and cherish it. Those that deny Providence, do not only ravish from him the bowels of his goodness, but strip him of a main exercise of his power, and engender in men a suspicion of weariness and feebleness in him; as though his strength had been spent in making them, that none is left to guide them. They would make him headless in regard of his wisdom, and bowelless in regard of his goodness, and armless in regard of his strength. If he

did not, or were not able to preserve and provide for his creatures, his power in making them would be, in a great part, an invisible power; if he did not preserve what he made, and govern what he preserves, it would be a kind of strange and rude power, to make, and suffer it to be dashed in pieces at the pleasure of others. If the power of God should relinquish the world, the life of things would be extinguished, the fabric would be confounded, and fall into a deplorable chaos. That which is composed of so many various pieces, could not maintain its union, if here were not a secret virtue binding them together and maintaining those varieties of links. Well, then, since God is not only so good, that he cannot will anything but what is good; so wise, that he cannot err or mistake; but also so able, that he cannot be defeated or mated; he hath every way a full ability to govern the world: where those three are infinite, the right and fitness resulting from thence is unquestionable: and, indeed, to deny God this active part of his power, is to render him weak, foolish, cruel, or all.

Instruct. 6. Here is a ground for the worship of God. Wisdom and power are the grounds of the respect we give to men; they being both infinite in God, are the foundation of a solemn honor to be returned to him by his creatures. If a man makes a curious engine, we honor him for his skill; if another vanquish a vigorous enemy, we admire him for his strength: and shall not the efficacy of God's power in creation, government, redemption, enflame us with a sense of the honor of his name and perfections? We admire those princes that have vast empires, numerous armies, that have a power to conquer their enemies, and preserve their own people in peace. How much more ground have we to pay a mighty reverence to God, who, without trouble and weariness, made and manages this vast empire of the world by a word and beck! What sensible thoughts have we of the noise of thunder, the power of the sun, the storms of the sea! These things that have no understanding have struck men with such a reverence, that many have adored them as gods. What reverence and adoration doth this mighty power, joined with an infinite wisdom in God, demand at our hands! All religion and worship stands especially upon two pillars, goodness, and power in God; if either of these were defective, all religion would faint away. We can expect no entertainment with him without goodness, nor any benefit from him without power. This God prefaceth to the command to

worship him, the benefit his goodness had conferred upon them, and the powerful manner of conveyance of it to them (2 Kings 17:36): “The Lord brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power, and an out-stretched arm; him shall you fear, and him shall you worship, and to him shall you do sacrifice.”

Because this attribute is a main foundation of prayer, the Lord’s Prayer is concluded with a doxology of it, “For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.” As he is rich, possessing all blessings; so he is powerful, to confer all blessings on us, and make them efficacious to us. The Jews repeat many times in their prayers, some say an hundred times, *הַעוֹלָם מֶלֶךְ*, “The King of the world;” it is both an awe and an encouragement. We could not, without consideration of it, pray in faith of success; nay, we could not pray at all, if his power were defective to help us, and his mercy too weak to relieve us. Who would solicit a lifeless, or he a prostrate suppliant, to a feeble arm? Upon this ability of God, our Saviour built his petitions (Heb. 5:7): “He offered up strong cries unto Him that was able to save him from death.” Abraham’s faith hung upon the same string (Rom. 4:21), and the captived church supplicates God to act according to the greatness of his power (Psalm 79:11). In all our addresses this is to be eyed and considered; God is able to help, to relieve, to ease me, let my misery be never so great, and my strength never so weak (Matt. 8:2): “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,” was the consideration the leper had when he came to worship Christ; he was clear in his power, and therefore worshipped him, though he was not equally clear in his will. All worship is shot wrong that is not directed to, and conducted by, the thoughts of this attribute, whose assistance we need. When we beg the pardon of our sins, we should eye mercy and power; when we beg his righting us in any case where we are unjustly oppressed, we do not eye righteousness without power; when we plead the performance of his promise, we do not regard his faithfulness only without the prop of his power. As power ushers in all the attributes of God in their exercise and manifestation in the world, so should it be the butt our eyes should be fixed upon in all our acts of worship: as without his power his other attributes would be useless, so without due apprehensions of his power our prayers will be faithless and comfortless. The title in the Lord’s prayer directs us to a prospect both of his goodness and power; his goodness in the word Father,

his greatness, excellency, and power, in the word Heaven. The heedless consideration of the infiniteness of this perfection roots up piety in the midst of us, and makes us so careless in worship. Did we more think of that Power that raised the world out of nothing, that orders all creatures by an act of his will, that performed so great an exploit as that of our redemption, when masterless sin had triumphed over the world, we should give God the honor and adoration which so great an excellency challengeth and deserves at our hands, though we ourselves had not been the work of his hands, or the monuments of his strength; how could any creature engross to itself that reverence from us which is due to the powerful Creator, of whom it comes infinitely short in strength as well as wisdom?

Instruct. 7. From this we have a ground for the belief of the resurrection. God aims at the glory of his power, as well as the glory of any other attribute. Moses else would not have culled out this as the main argument, in his pleading with God, for the sheathing the sword which he began to draw out against them in the wilderness (Num. 14:16): “The nations will say, Because the Lord was not able to bring these people into the land which he sware to them,” &c. As the finding out the particulars of the dust of our bodies discovers the vastness of his knowledge, so to raise them will manifest the glory of his power as much as creation; bodies that have mouldered away into multitudes of atoms, been resolved into the elements, passed through varieties of changes, been sometimes the matter to lodge the form of a plant, or been turned into the substance of a fish or fowl, or vaped up into a cloud, and been part of that matter which hath compacted a thunder-bolt, disposed of in places far distant, scattered by the winds, swallowed and concocted by beasts; for these to be called out from their different places of abode, to meet in one body, and be restored to their former consistency, in a marriage union, in the “twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:22), it is a consideration that may justly amaze us, and our shallow understandings are too feeble to comprehend it. But is it not credible, since all the disputes against it maybe silenced by reflections on Infinite Power, which nothing can oppose, for which nothing can be esteemed too difficult to effect, which doth not imply a contradiction in itself? It was no less amazing to the blessed virgin to hear a message that she should conceive a Son without knowing a man; but she is quickly answered, by the angel, with a “Nothing is impossible to God”

(Luke 1:34, 37). The distinct parts off our bodies cannot be hid from his all-seeing eye, wherever they are lodged, and in all the changes they pass through, as was discoursed when the Omniscience of God was handled; shall, then, the collection of them together be too hard for his invincible power and strength, and the uniting all those parts into a body, with new dispositions to receive their several souls, be too big and bulky for that Power which never yet was acquainted with any bar? Was not the miracle of our Saviour's multiplying the loaves, suppose it had not been by a new creation, but a collection of grain from several parts, very near as stupendous as this? Had any one of us been the only creatures made just before the matter of the world, and beheld that inform chaos covered with a thick darkness, mentioned Gen. 1:2, would not the report, that from this dark deep, next to nothing, should be raised such a multitude of comely creatures, with such innumerable varieties of members, voices, colors, motions, and such numbers of shining stars, a bright sun, one uniform body of light from this darkness, that should, like a giant, rejoice to run a race, for many thousands of years together, without stop or weariness; would not all these have seemed as incredible as the collection of scattered dust? What was it that erected the innumerable host of heaven, the glorious angels, and glittering stars, for aught we know more numerous than the bodies of men, but an act of the Divine will? and shall the power that wrought this sink under the charge of gathering some dispersed atoms, and compacting them into a human body? Can you tell how the dust of the ground was kneaded by God into the body of man, and changed into flesh, skin, hair, bones, sinews, veins, arteries, and blood, and fitted for so many several activities, when a human soul was breathed into it? Can you imagine how a rib, taken from Adam's side, a lifeless bone, was formed into head, hands, feet, eyes? Why may not the matter of men, which have been, be restored, as well as that which was not, be first erected? Is it harder to repair those things which were, than to create those things which were not? Is there not the same Artificer? Hath any disease or sickliness abated his power? Is the Ancient of Days grown feeble? or shall the elements, and other creatures, that alway yet obeyed his command, ruffle against his raising voice, and refuse to disgorge those remains of human bodies they have swallowed up in their several bowels? Did the whole world, and all the parts of it, rise at his word? and

shall not some parts of the world, the dust of the dead, stand up out of the graves at a word of the same mighty efficacy? Do we not annually see those marks of power which may stun our incredulity in this concern? Do you see in a small acorn, or little seed, any such sights, as a tree with body, bark, branches, leaves, flowers, fruit—where can you find them? Do you know the invisible corners where they lurk in that little body? And yet these you afterwards view rising up from this little body, when sown in the ground, that you could not possibly have any prospect of when you rolled it in your hand, or opened its bowels. And why may not all the particulars of our bodies, however disposed as to their distinct natures invisibly to us, remain distinct, as well as if you mingle a thousand seeds together? they will come up in their distinct kinds, and preserve their distinct virtues. Again, is not the making heaven and earth, the union of the Divine and human nature, eternity and infirmity, to make a virgin conceive a Son, bear the Creator, and bring forth the Redeemer, to form the blood of God of the flesh of a virgin, a greater work than the calling together and uniting the scattered parts of our bodies, which are all of one nature and matter? And since the power of God is manifested in pardoning innumerable sins, is not the scattering our transgressions, as far as the east is from the west, as the expression is, Psalm 103:12, and casting such numbers into the depths of the sea, which is God's power over himself, a greater argument of might than the recalling and repairing the atoms of our bodies from their various receptacles? It is not hard for them to believe this of the resurrection, that have been sensible of the weight and force of their sins, and the power of God in pardoning and vanquishing that mighty resistance which was made in their hearts against the power of his renewing and sanctifying grace. The consideration of the infinite power of God is a good ground of the belief of the resurrection.

hastruct. 8. Since the power of God is so great and incomprehensible, how strange is it that it should be contemned and abused by the creatures as it is! The power of God is beaten down by some, outraged by others, blasphemed by many, under their sufferings. The stripping God of the honor of his creation, and the glory of his preservation of the world, falls under this charge: thus do they that deny his framing the world alone, or thought the first matter was not of God's creation, and such as fancied an evil

principle, the author of all evil, as God is the author of all good, and so exempt from the power of God, that it could not be vanquished by him. These things have formerly found defenders in the world; but they are, in themselves, ridiculous and vain, and have no footing in common reason, and are not worthy of debate in a christian auditory.

In general, all idolatry in the world did arise from the want of a due notion of this Infinite Power. The heathen thought one God was not sufficient for the managing all things in the world, and therefore they feigned several gods, that had several charges; as Ceres presided over the fruits of the earth; Esculapius over the cure of distempers; Mercury for merchandise and trade; Mars for war and battles; Apollo and Minerva for learning and ingenious arts; and Fortune for casual things. Whence doth the other sort of idolatry, the adoring our bags and gold, our dependencies on, and trusting in, creatures for help arise, but from ignorance of God's power, or mean and slender apprehensions of it? First, there is a contempt of it. Secondly, An abuse of it.

1. It is contemned in every sin, especially in obstinacy in sin. All sin whatsoever is built upon some false notion or monstrous conception of one or other of God's perfections, and in particular of this. It includes a secret and lurking imagination, that we are able to grapple with Omnipotence, and enter the lists with Almightyness; what else can be judged of the apostle's expression (1 Cor. 10:22), "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy; are we stronger than he?" Do we think we have an arm too powerful for that justice we provoke, and can repel that vengeance we exasperate? Do we think we are an even match for God, and are able to despoil him of his Divinity? To despise his will, violate his order, practise what he forbids with a severe threatening, and pawns his power to make it good, is to pretend to have an arm like God, and be able to thunder with a voice equal or superior to him, as the expression is (Job 40:9). All security in sin is of this strain; when men are not concerned at Divine threatenings, nor staggered in their sinful race, they intimate, that the declarations of Divine Power are but vain-glorious boastings; that God is not so strong and able as he reports himself to be; and therefore they will venture it, and dare him to try, whether the strength of his arm be as forcible as the words of his mouth are

terrible in his threats; this is to believe themselves Creators, not creatures. We magnify God's power in our wants, and debase it in our rebellions; as though Omnipotence were only able to supply our necessities, and unable to revenge the injuries we offer him.

2. This power is contemned in distrust of God. All distrust is founded in a doubting of his truth, as if he would not be as good as his word; or of his omniscience, as if he had not a memory to retain his word; or of his power, as if he could not be as great as his word. We measure the infinite power of God by the short line of our understandings, as if infinite strength were bounded within the narrow compass of our finite reason; as if he could do no more than we were able to do. How soon did those Israelites lose the remembrance of God's outstretched arm, when they uttered that atheistical speech (Psalm 78:19), "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" As if he that turned the dust of Egypt into lice, for the punishment of their oppressors, could not turn the dust of the wilderness into corn, for the support of their bodies! As if he that had miraculously rebuked the Red Sea, for their safety, could not provide bread, for their nourishment! Though they had seen the Egyptians with lost lives in the morning, in the same place where their lives had been miraculously preserved in the evening, yet they disgrace that experimental power, by opposing to it the stature of the Anakims, the strength of their cities, and the height of their walls (Num. 13:32). And (Num. 14:3). "Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword?" As though the giants of Canaan were too strong for Him, for whom they had seen the armies of Egypt too weak. How did they contract the almightiness of God into the littleness of a little man, as if he must needs sink under the sword of a Canaanite? This distrust must arise either from a flat atheism, a denial of the being of God, or his government of the world; or unworthy conceits of a weakness in him, that he had made creatures too hard for himself; that he were not strong enough to grapple with those mighty Anakims, and give them the possession of Canaan against so great a force. Distrust of him implies either that he was always destitute of power, or that his power is exhausted by his former works, or that it is limited, and near a period: it is to deny him to be the Creator that moulded heaven and earth. Why should we, by distrust, put a slight upon that power which he hath so often expressed, and which, in the minutest works of his hands, surmount

the force of the sharpest understanding?

3. It is contemned in too great a fear of man, which ariseth from a distrust of Divine power. Fear of man is a crediting the might of man with a disrepute of the arm of God, it takes away the glory of his might, and renders the creature stronger than God; and God more feeble than a mortal; as if the arm of man were a rod of iron, and the arm of God a brittle reed. How often do men tremble at the threatenings and hectorings of ruffians, yet will stand as stakes against the precepts and threatenings of God, as though he had less power to preserve us, than enemies had to destroy? With what disdain doth God speak to men infected with this humor (Isa. 51:12, 13)? “Who art thou, that art afraid of a man that shall die, and the Son of man that shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor?” To fear man that is as grass, that cannot think a thought without a Divine concurrence, that cannot breathe, but by a Divine power, nor touch a hair without license first granted from heaven; this is forgetfulness, and consequently a slight of that Infinite Power, which hath been manifested in founding the earth and garnishing the heavens. All fear of man, in the way of our duty, doth in some sort thrust out the remembrance, and discredit the great actions of the Creator. Would not a mighty prince think it a disparagement to him, if his servant should decline his command for fear of one of his subjects? and hath not the great God just cause to think himself disgraced by us, when we deny him obedience for fear of a creature: as though he had but an infant ability too feeble to bear us out in duty, and incapable to balance the strength of an arm of flesh?

4. It is contemned by trusting in ourselves, in means, in man, more than in God. When in any distress we will try every creature refuge, before we have recourse to God; and when we apply ourselves to him, we do it with such slight and perfunctory frames, and with so much despondency, as if we despaired either of his ability or will to help us; and implore him with cooler affections than we solicit creatures: or, when in a disease we depend upon the virtue of the medicine, the ability of the physician, and reflect not upon that power that endued the medicine with that virtue, and

supports the quality in it, and concurs to the operation of it. When we depend upon the activity of the means, as if they had power originally in themselves, and not derivatively; and do not eye the power of God animating and assisting them. We cannot expect relief from anything with a neglect of God, but we render it in our thoughts more powerful than God: we acknowledge a greater fulness in a shallow stream, than in an eternal spring; we do, in effect, depose the true God, and create to ourselves a new one; we assert, by such a kind of acting, the creature, if not superior, yet equal with God, and independent on him. When we trust in our own strength, without begging his assistance; or boast of our own strength, without acknowledging his concurrence, as the Assyrian; “By the strength of my hand have I done this; I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man” (Isa. 10:13). It is, as if the axe should boast itself against him that hews therewith, and thinks itself more mighty than the arm that wields it (ver. 15), when we trust in others more than in God. Thus God upbraids those by the prophet, that sought help from Egypt, telling them (Isa. 31:3), “The Egyptians were men, and not gods;” intimating, that by their dependence on them, they rendered them gods and not men, and advanced them from the state of creatures to that of almighty deities. It is to set a pile of dust, a heap of ashes, above Him that created and preserves the world. To trust in a creature, is to make it as infinite as God; to do that which is impossible in itself to be done. God himself cannot make a creature infinite, for that were to make him God. It is also contemned when we ascribe what we receive to the power of instruments, and not to the power of God. Men, in whatsoever they do for us, are but the tools whereby the Creator works. Is it not a disgrace to the limner to admire his pencil, and not himself; to the artificer, to admire his file and engines, and not his power? “It is not I,” saith Paul, “that labor, but the grace, the efficacious grace of God, which is in me.” Whatsoever good we do is from him, not from ourselves; to ascribe it to ourselves, or to instruments, is to overlook and contemn his power.

5. Unbelief of the gospel is a contempt and disowning Divine power. This perfection hath been discovered in the conception of Christ, the union of the two natures, his resurrection from the grave, the restoration of the world, and the conversion of men, more than in the creation of the world: then what a disgrace is unbelief to all that

power that so severely punished the Jews for the rejecting the gospel: turned so many nations from their beloved superstitions; humbled the power of princes and the wisdom of philosophers; chased devils from their temples by the weakness of fishermen; planted the standard of the gospel against the common notions and inveterate customs of the world! What a disgrace is unbelief to this power which hath preserved Christianity from being extinguished by the force of men and devils, and kept it flourishing in the midst of sword, fire, and executioners; that hath made the simplicity of the gospel overpower the eloquence of orators, and multiplied it from the ashes of martyrs, when it was destitute of all human assistances! Not heartily to believe and embrace that doctrine, which hath been attended with such marks of power, is a high reflection upon this Divine perfection, so highly manifested in the first publication, propagation, and preservation of it.

Secondly, The power of God is abused, as well as contemned. 1. When we make use of it to justify contradictions. The doctrine of transubstantiation is an abuse of this power. When the maintainers of it cannot answer the absurdities alleged against it, they have recourse to the power of God. It implies a contradiction, that the same body should be on earth and in heaven at the same instant of time; that it should be at the right hand of God, and in the mouth and stomach of a man; that it should be a body of flesh, and yet bread to the eye and to the taste; that it should be visible and invisible, a glorious body, and yet gnawn by the teeth of a creature; that it should be multiplied in a thousand places, and yet an entire body in every one, where there is no member to be seen, no flesh to be tasted; that it should be above us in the highest heavens, and yet within us in our lower bowels; such contradictions as these are an abuse of the power of God. Again, we abuse this power when we believe every idle story that is reported, because God is able to make it so if he pleased. We may as well believe *Æsop's Fables* to be true, that birds spake, and beasts reasoned, because the power of God can enable such creatures to such acts. God's power is not the rule of our belief of a thing without the exercise of it in matter of fact, and the declaration of it upon sufficient evidence.

2. The power of God is abused by presuming on it, without using the means he hath appointed. When men sit with folded arms, and

make a confidence in his power a glorious title to their idleness and disobedience, they would have his strength do all, and his precept should move them to do nothing; this is a trust of his power against his command, a pretended glorifying his power with a slight of his sovereignty. Though God be almighty, yet, for the most part, he exerciseth his might in giving life and success to second causes and lawful endeavors. When we stay in the mouth of danger, without any call ordering us to continue, and against a door of providence opened for our rescue, and sanctuary ourselves in the power of God without any promise, without any providence conducting us; this is not to glorify the Divine might, but to neglect it, in neglecting the means which his power affords to us for our escape; to condemn it to our humors, to work miracles for us according to our wills, and against his own. God could have sent a worm to be Herod's executioner when he sought the life of our Saviour, or employed an angel from heaven to have tied his hands or stopped his breath, and not put Joseph upon a flight to Egypt with our Saviour; yet had it not been an abuse of the power of God, for Joseph to have neglected the precept, and slighted the means God gave him for the preserving his own life and that of the child's?

Christ himself, when the Jews consulted to destroy him, presumed not upon the power of God to secure him, but used ordinary means for his preservation, by walling no more openly, but "retiring himself into a city near the wilderness till the hour was come, and the call of his Father manifest" (John 11:53, 54). A rash running upon danger, though for the truth itself, is a presuming upon, and consequently an abuse of, this power; a proud challenging it to serve our turns against the authority of his will, and the force of his precept; a not resting in his ordinate power, but demanding his absolute power to pleasure our follies and presumptions; concluding and expecting more from it than what is authorized by his will.

Instruct. 9. If infinite power be a peculiar property of God, how miserable will all wicked rebels be under this power of God! Men may break his laws, but not impair his arm; they may slight his word, but cannot resist his power. If he swear that he will sweep a place with the besom of destruction, "as he hath thought, so shall it come to pass; and as he hath purposed, so shall it stand," (Isa. 14:23, 24). Rebels against an earthly prince may exceed him in strength,

and be more powerful than their sovereign; none can equal God, much less exceed him. As none can exercise an act of hostility against him without his permissive will, so none can struggle from under his hand without his positive will. He hath an arm not to be moved, a hand not to be wrung aside. God is represented on his throne like a “jasper stone” (Rev. 4:3) , as one of invincible power when he comes to judge; the jasper is a stone which withstands the greatest force. Though men resist the order of his laws, they, cannot the sentence of their punishment, nor the execution of it. None can any more exempt themselves from the arm of his strength, than they can from the authority of his dominion. As they must bow to his sovereignty, so must they sink under his force. A prisoner in this world may make his escape, but a prisoner in the world to come cannot (Job 10:7). “There is none that can deliver out of thine hand.” There is none to deliver when he “tears in pieces” (Psalm 50:22). His strength is uncontrollable; hence his throne his represented as a “fiery flame” (Dan. 7:9). As a spark of fire hath power to kindle one thing after another, and increase till it consumes a forest, a city, swallow up all combustible matter till it consumes a world, and many worlds, if they were in being, what power hath the tree to resist the fire, though it seems mighty, when it outbraves the winds? What man, to this day, hath been able to free himself from that chain of death God clapped upon him for his revolt? And if he be too feeble to rescue himself from a temporal, much less from an eternal death. The devils have, to this minute, groaned under the pile of wrath, without any success in delivering themselves by all their strength, which much surmounts all the strength of mankind, nor have they any hopes to work their rescue to eternity. How foolish is every sinner! Can we poor worms strut it out against Infinite Power? We cannot resist the meanest creatures when God commissions them, and puts a sword into their hands. They will not, no, not the worms, be startled at the glory of a king, when they have the Creator’s warrant to be his executioners (Acts 12:23). Who can withstand him, when he commands the waves and inundations of the sea to leap over the shore; when he divides the ground in earthquakes, and makes it gape wide to swallow the inhabitants of it; when the air is corrupted to breed pestilences; when storms and showers , unseasonably falling, putrify the fruits of the earth; what created power can mend the matter, and, with a prevailing voice, say

to him, What dost thou? There are two attributes God will make glister in hell to the full; his wrath and his power (Rom. 9:22): “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?” If it were mere wrath, and no power to second it, it were not so terrible; but it is wrath and power: both are joined together. It is not only a sharp sword, but a powerful arm; and not only that, for then it were well for the damned creature. To have many sharp blows, and from a strong arm, this may be without putting forth the highest strength a man hath; but in this God makes it his design to make his power known and conspicuous; he takes the sword, as it were, in both hands, that he may show the strength of his arm in striking the harder blow; and therefore the apostles calls it (2 Thess. 1:9) “the glory of his power,” which puts a sting into his wrath; and it is called (Rev. 19:15) “the fierceness of the wrath of the Almighty.” God will do it in such a manner as to make men sensible of his almightiness in every stroke. How great must that vengeance be, that is backed by all the strength of God! When there will be a powerful wrath, without a powerful compassion; when all his power shall be exercised in punishing, and not the least mite of it exercised in pitying; how irresistible will be the load of such a weighty hand! How can the dust of the balance break the mighty bars, or get out of the lists of a powerful vengeance, or hope for any grain of comfort? O, that every obstinate sinner would think of this, and consider his unmeasurable boldness in thinking himself able to grapple with Omnipotence! What force can any have to resist the presence of Him, before whom rocks melt, and the heavens, at length, shall be shrivelled up as a parchment by the last fire! As the light of God’s face is too dazzling to be beheld by us, so the arm of his power is too mighty to be opposed by us. His almightiness is above the reach of our potsherd strength, as his infiniteness is above the capacity of our purblind understanding. God were not omnipotent, if his power could be rendered ineffectual by any.

Use II. A second use of this point, from the consideration of the infinite power of God, is of comfort. As Omnipotence is an ocean that cannot be fathomed, so the comforts from it are streams that cannot be exhausted. What joy can be wanting to him that finds himself folded in the arms of Omnipotence? This perfection is made over to believers in the covenant, as well as any other attribute; “I

am the Lord, your God;” therefore, that power, which is as essential to the Godhead as any other perfection of his nature, is, in the rights and extent of it, assured unto you. Nay, may we not say, it is made over more than any other, because it is that which animates every other perfection; and is the Spirit that gives them motion and appearance in the world. If God had expressed himself in particular, as, “I am a true God, a wise God, a loving God, a righteous God, I am yours;” what would all, or any of those, have signified, unless the other also had been implied, as, “I am an almighty God, I am your God?” In God’s making over himself in any particular attribute, this of his power is included in every one, without which, all his other grants would be insignificant. It is a comfort that power is in the hands of God; it can never be better placed, for he can never use his power to injure his confiding creature; if it were in our own hands, we might use it to injure ourselves. It is a power in the hands of an indulgent Father, not a hard-hearted tyrant; it is a just power; “His right hand is full of righteousness” (Psalm 48:10); because of his righteousness he can never use it ill, and because of his wisdom he can never use it unseasonably. Men that have strength, often misplace the actings of it, because of their folly; and sometimes employ it to base ends, because of their wickedness; but this power in God is always awakened by goodness, and conducted by wisdom; it is never exercised by self-will and passion, but according to the immutable rule of his own nature, which is righteousness. How comfortable is it to think, that you have a God that can do what he pleases; nothing so difficult but he can effect, nothing so strong but he can overrule! You need not dread men, since you have One to restrain them; nor fear devils, since you have One to chain them; no creature but is acted by this power; no creature but must fall upon the withdrawing of this power. It was not all laid out in creation; it is not weakened by his preservation of things; he yet hath a fullness of power, and a residue of Spirit; for whom should that eternal arm of the Lord be displayed, and that incomprehensible thunder of his power be shot out, but for those for whose sake and for whose comfort it is revealed in his word? In particular,

1. Here is comfort in all afflictions and distresses. Our evils can never be so great to oppress us, as his power is great to deliver us. The same power that brought a world out of a chaos, and constituted, and hath hitherto preserved, the regular motion of the

stars, can bring order out of our confusions, and light out of our darkness. When our Saviour was in the greatest distress, and beheld the face of his Father frowning, while he was upon the cross, in his complaint to him, he exerciseth faith upon his power (Matt.

27:46): “Eli, Eli: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” that this, My strong, my strong;

, is a name of power, belonging to God; he comforts himself in his power, while he complains of his frowns.

Follow his pattern, and forget not that power that can scatter the clouds, as well as gather them together.

The Psalmist’s support in his distress, was in the creative power of God (Psalm 121:2): “My help comes from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.”

2. It is comfort in all strong and stirring corruptions and mighty temptations. It is by this we may arm ourselves, and “be strong in the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10); by this we may conquer principalities and powers, as dreadful as hell, but not so mighty as heaven; by this we may triumph over lusts within, too strong for an arm of flesh; by this the devils that have possessed us may be cast out; the battered walls of our souls may be repaired; and the sons of Anak laid flat. That power that brought light out of darkness, and overmastered the deformity of the chaos, and set bounds to the ocean, and dried up the Red Sea by a rebuke, can quell the tumults in our spirits, and level spiritual Goliaths by his word. When the disciples heard that terrifying speech of our Saviour, concerning rich men, that it was “easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matt. 19:24), to entertain the gospel, which commanded self-denial; and that, because of the allurements of the world, and the strong habits in their soul; Christ refers them to the power of God (ver. 26), who could expel those ill habits, and plant good ones: “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” There is no resistance, but he can surmount; no strong-hold, but he can demolish; no tower, but he can level.

3. It is comfort from hence, that all promises shall be performed. Goodness is sufficient to make a promise, but power is

necessary to perform a promise. Men that are honest, cannot often make good their words, because something may intervene that may shorten their ability; but nothing can disable God, without diminishing his godhead. He hath an infiniteness of power to accomplish his word, as well as an infiniteness of goodness to make and utter his word. That might whereby he made heaven and earth, and his keeping truth forever, are joined together (Psalm 146:5, 6); his Father's faithfulness, and his creative power are linked together. It is upon this basis the covenant, and every part of it, is established, and stands as firm as the almightiness of God, whereby he sprung up the earth, and reared the heavens. "No power can resist his will" (Rom. 9:19); "Who can disannul his purpose, and turn back his hand when it is stretched out" (Isa. 14:27)? His word is unalterable, and his power is invincible. He could not deceive himself, for he knew his own strength when he promised: no unexpected event can change his resolution, because nothing can happen without the compass of his foresight. No created strength can stop him in his action, because all creatures are ready to serve him at his command; not the devils in hell, nor all the wicked men on earth, since he hath strength to restrain them, and an arm to punish them. What can be too hard for Him that created heaven and earth? Hence it was, that when God promised anything anciently to his people, he used often the name of the Almighty, the Lord that created heaven and earth, as that which was an undeniable answer to any objection, against anything that might be made against the greatness and stupendousness of any promise; by that name, in all his works of grace, was he known to them (Exod. 6:3). When we are sure of his will, we need not question his strength, since he never over-engaged himself above his ability. He that could not be resisted by anything in creation, nor vanquished by devils in redemption, can never want power to glorify his faithfulness in his accomplishment of whatsoever he hath promised.

4. From this infiniteness of power in God, we have ground of assurance for perseverance. Since conversion is resembled to the works of creation and resurrection, two great marks of his strength, he doth not surely employ himself in the first of changing the heart, to let any created strength baffle that power which he began and intends to glorify. It was this might that struck off the chain, and expelled that strong one that possessed you. What, if you are too

weak to keep him out of his lost possession, will God lose the glory of his first strength, by suffering his foiled adversary to make a re-entry, and regain his former usurpation? His out-stretched arm will not do less by his spiritual, than it did by his national Israel: it guarded them all the way to Canaan, and left them not to shift for themselves after he had struck off the fetters of Egypt, and buried their enemies in the Red Sea (Deut. 1:31). This greatness of the Father, above all, our Saviour makes the ground of believers' continuance forever, against the blasts of hell and engines of the world (John 10:29). "My Father is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands." Our keeping is not in our own weak hands, but in the hands of Him who is mighty to save. That power of God keeps us which intends our salvation. In all fears of falling away, shelter yourselves in the power of God: "He shall be holden up," saith the apostle, speaking concerning one weak in faith; and no other reason is rendered by him but this, "For God is able to make him to stand" (Rom. 14:4).

5. From this attribute of the infinite power of God, we have a ground of comfort in the lowest estate of the church. Let the state of the church be never so deplorable, the condition never so desperate, that Power that created the world, and shall raise the bodies of men, can create a happy state for the church, and raise her from an overwhelming grave; though the enemies trample upon her, they cannot upon the arm that holds her, which by the least motion of it, can lift her up above the heads of her adversaries, and make them feel the thunder of that Power that none can understand: by the "blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed" (Job 4:9); they "shall be scattered as chaff before the wind." If once he "draw his hand out of his bosom," all must fly before him, or sink under him (Psalm 74:11): and when there is "none to help, his own arm sustains him, and brings salvation, and his fury doth uphold him" (Isa. 63:5). What if the church totter under the underminings of hell? What if it hath a sad heart and wet eyes? In what a little moment can he make the night turn into day, and make the Jews, that were preparing for death in Shushan, triumph over the necks of their enemies, and march in one hour with swords in their hands, that expected the last hour "ropes about their necks" (Esth. 9:1, 5)? If Israel be pursued by Pharaoh, the sea shall open its arms to protect them: if they be thirsty, a rock shall spout

out water to refresh them: if they be hungry, heaven shall be their granary for manna: if Jerusalem be besieged, and hath not force enough to encounter Sennacherib, an angel shall turn the camp into an Aceldema, a field of blood. His people shall not want deliverances, till God want a power of working miracles for their security: he is more jealous of his power, than the church can be of her safety. And if we should want other arguments to press him, we may implore him by virtue of his power: for when there is nothing in the church as a motive to him to save it, there is enough in his own name, and “the illustration of his power” (Psalm 106:8). Who can grapple with the omnipotency of that God, who is jealous of, and zealous for, the honor of it? And therefore God, for the most part, takes such opportunities to deliver, wherein his almightiness may be most conspicuous, and his counsels most admirable. He awakened not himself to deliver Israel, till they were upon the brink of the Red Sea; nor to rescue the three children, till they were in the fiery furnace; nor Daniel, till he was in the lion’s den. It is in the weakness of his creature that his strength is perfected, not in a way of addition of perfectness to it, but in a way of manifestation of the perfection of it; as it is the perfection of the sun to shine and enlighten the world, not that the sun receives an increase of light by the darting of his beams, but discovers his glory to the admiration of men, and pleasure of the world. If it were not for such occasions, the world would not regard the mightiness of God, nor know what power were in him. It traverses the stage in its fulness and liveliness upon such occasions, when the enemies are strong, and their strength edged with an intense hatred, and but little time between the contrivance and execution. It is a great comfort that the lowest distresses of the church are a fit scene for the discovery of this attribute, and that the glory of God’s omnipotence, and the church’s security, are so straitly linked together. It is a promise that will never be forgotten by God, and ought never to be forgotten by us, that “in this mountain the hand of the Lord shall rest” (Isa. 25:10); that is, the power of the Lord shall abide; and Moab “shall be trodden under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.” And the “plagues of Babylon shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; for strong is the Lord who judgeth her” (Rev. 18:8).

Use III. The third use is for exhortation.

1. Meditate on this power of God, and press it often upon your minds. We conclude many things of God that we do not practically suck the comfort of, for want of deep thoughts of it, and frequent inspection into it. We believe God to be true, yet distrust him; we acknowledge him powerful, yet fear the motion of every straw. Many truths, though assented to in our understandings, are kept under hatches by corrupt affections, and have not their due influence, because they are not brought forth into the open air of our souls by meditation. If we will but search our hearts, we shall find it is the power of God we often doubt of. When the heart of Ahaz and his subjects trembled at the combination of the Syrian and Israelitish kings against him, for want of a confidence in the power of God, God sends his prophet with commission to work a miraculous sign at his own choice, to rear up his fainting heart; and when he refused to ask a sign out of diffidence of that almighty Power, the prophet complains of it as an affront to his Master (Isa. 7:12, 13). Moses, so great a friend of God, was overtaken with this kind of unbelief, after all the experiments of God's miraculous acts in Egypt; the answer God gives him manifests this to be at the core: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short" (Num. 11:23)? For want of actuated thoughts of this, we are many times turned from our known duty by the blast of a creature; as though man had more power to dismay us, than God hath to support us in his commanded way. The belief of God's power is one of the first steps to all religion; without settled thoughts of it, we cannot pray lively and believingly for the obtaining the mercies we want, or the averting the evils we fear; we should not love him, unless we are persuaded he hath a power to bless us; nor fear him, unless we were persuaded of his power to punish us. The frequent thoughts of this would render our faith more stable, and our hopes more steadfast; it would make us more feeble to sin, and more careful to obey. When the virgin staggered at the message of the angel, that she should "bear a Son," he, in his answer, turns her to the creative power of God (Luke 1:35), "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee;" which seems to be in allusion to the Spirit's moving upon the face of the deep, and bringing a comely world out of a confused mass. Is it harder for God to make a virgin conceive a Son by the power of his Spirit, than to make a world? Why doth he reveal himself so often under the title of Almighty, and press it upon us, but that we should press it upon ourselves? And shall we be

forgetful of that which everything about us, everything within us, is a mark of? How come we by a power of seeing and hearing, a faculty, and act of understanding and will, but by this power framing us, this power assisting us? What though the thunder of his power cannot be understood, no more can any other perfection of his nature; shall we, therefore, seldom think of it? The sea cannot be fathomed, yet the merchant excuseth not himself from sailing upon the surface of it. We cannot glorify God without due consideration of this attribute; for his power is his glory as much as any other, and called both by the name of glory (Rom. 6:4), speaking of Christ's resurrection by the glory of the Father; and also "the riches of his glory" (Eph. 3:16). Those that have strong temptations in their course and over-pressing corruptions in their hearts, have need to think of it out of interest, since nothing but this can relieve them. Those that have experimented the working of it in their new creation, are obliged to think of it out of gratitude. It was this mighty power over himself that gave rise to all that pardoning grace already conferred, or hereafter expected; without it our souls had been consumed, the world overturned; we could not have expected a happy heaven, but have lain yelling in an eternal hell, had not the power of his mercy exceeded that of his justice, and his infinite power executed what his infinite wisdom had contrived for our redemption. How much also should we be raised in our admirations of God, and ravish ourselves in contemplating that might that can raise innumerable worlds in those infinite imaginary spaces without this globe of heaven and earth, and exceed inconceivably what he hath done in the creation of this?

2. From the pressing the consideration of this upon ourselves, let us be induced to trust God upon the account of his power. The main end of the revelation of his power to the patriarchs, and of the miraculous operations of it in Egypt, was to induce them to an entire reposing themselves in God: and the Psalmist doth scarce speak of the Divine Omnipotence without making this inference from it; and scarce exhorts to a trust in God, but backs it with a consideration of his power in creation, it being the chief support of the soul (Psalm 146:1): "Happy is he whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is." That Power is invincible that drew the world out of nothing: nothing can happen to us harder than the making the world without the concurrence of

instruments: no difficulty can nonplus that strength, that hath drawn all things out of nothing, or out of a confused matter next to nothing: no power can rifle what we commit to him (2 Tim. 1:12). He is all power, above the reach of all power; all other powers in the world flowing from him, or depending on him, he is worthy to be trusted, since we know him true, without ever breaking his word; and Omnipotent, never failing of his purpose; and a confidence in it is the chief act whereby we can glorify this power, and credit his arm. A strong God, and a weak faith in omnipotence, do not suit well together. Indeed, we are more engaged to a trust in Divine power than the ancient patriarchs were; they had the verbal declaration of his power, and many of them little other evidence of it, than in the creation of the world; and their faith in God being established in this first discovery of his omnipotence, drew out itself further to believe, that whatsoever God promised by his word, he was able to perform, as well as the creation of the world out of nothing; which seems to be the intendment of the apostle (Heb. 6:3); not barely to speak of the creation of the world by God, which was a thing the Hebrews understood well enough from their ancient oracles; but to show the foundation of the patriarch's faith, *viz.* God making the world by his Word, and what use they made of the discovery of his power in that, to lead them to believe the promise of God concerning the Seed of the woman to be brought into the world. But we have not only the same foundation, but superadded demonstrations of this attribute in the conception of our Saviour, the union of the two natures, the glorious redemption, the propagation of the gospel, and the new creation of the world. They relied upon the naked power of God, without those more illustrious appearances of it, which have been in the ages since, and arrived to their notice; we have the wonderful effects of that which they had but obscure expectations of.

(1.) Consider, trust in God can never be without taking in God's power as a concurrent foundation with his truth. It is the main ground of trust, and so set forth in the prophet (Isa. 26:4); "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." And the faith of the ancients so recommended (Heb. 11.), had this chiefly for its ground; and the faith in gospel times is called a "trusting on his arm" (Isa. 51:5.) All the attributes of God are the objects of our veneration, but they do not equally contribute to the producing trust in our hearts; his eternity, simplicity, infiniteness,

ravish and astonish our minds when we consider them; but there is no immediate tendency in their nature to allure us to a confidence in him, no, not in an innocent state, much less in a lapsed and revolted condition: but the other perfections of his nature, as his holiness, righteousness, mercy, are amiable to us in regard of the immediate operations of them upon and about the creature, and so have something in their own nature to allure us to repose ourselves in him; but yet those cannot engage to an entire trust in him without reflecting upon his ability, which can only render those useful and successful to the creature. For whatsoever bars stand in the way of his holy, righteous, and merciful proceedings toward his creatures, are not overmastered by those perfections, but by that strength of his which can only relieve us in concurrence with the other attributes. How could his mercy succor us without his arm, or his wisdom guide us without his hand, or his truth perform promises to us without his strength? As no attribute can act without it, so in our addresses to him upon the account of any particular perfection in the Godhead according to our indigency, our eye must be perpetually fixed upon this of his power, and our faith would be feeble and dispirited without eyeing this: without this, his holiness, which hates sin, would not be regarded; and his mercy, pitying a grieving sinner, would not be valued. As this power is the ground of a wicked man's fear, so it is the ground of a good man's trust. This was that which was the principal support of Abraham, not barely his promise, but his ability to make it good (Rom. 4:21); and when he was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, the ability of God to raise him up again (Heb. 11:19). All faith would droop, and be in the mire, without leaning upon this; all those attributes which we consider as moral in God, would have no influence upon us without this, which we consider physically in God. Though we value the kindness men may express to us in our distresses, yet we make them not the objects of our confidence, unless they have an ability to act what they express. There can be no trust in God without an eye to his power.

(2.). Sometimes the power of God is the sole object of trust. As when we have no promise to assure us of his will, we have nothing else to pitch upon but his ability; and that not his absolute power, but his ordinate, in the way of his providence; we must not trust in it so as to expect he should please our humor with fresh miracles, but

rest upon his power, and leave the manner to his will. Asa, when ready to conflict with the vast Ethiopian army, pleaded nothing else but this power of God (2 Chron. 14:11). And the three children, who had no particular promise of deliverance (that we read of) stuck to God's ability to preserve them against the king's threatening, and owned it in the face of the king, yet with some kind of inward intimations in their own spirits, that he would also deliver them (Dan. 3:17). "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." And accordingly the fire burnt the cords that tied them, without singeing any thing else about them. But when this power hath been exercised upon like occasions, it is a precedent he hath given us to rest upon. Precedents in law are good pleas, and strong encouragements to the client to expect success in his suit. "Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them," saith David (Psalm 22:4). And Jehoshaphat, in a case of distress (2 Chron. 20:7), "Art not thou our God, that didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel?" When we have not any statute law and promise to plead, we may plead his power, together with the former precedents and act of it. The centurion had nothing else to act his faith upon but the power of Christ, and some evidences of it in the miracles reported of him; but he is silent in the latter, and casts himself only upon the former, acknowledging that Christ had the same command over diseases, as himself had over his soldiers (Matt. 8:10). And our Saviour, when he receives the petition of the blind men, requires no more of them in order to a cure, but a belief of his ability to perform it (Matt. 9:28). "Believe you that I am able to do this?" His will is not known but by revelation, but his power is apprehended by reason, as essentially and eternally linked with the notion of a God. God also is jealous of the honor of this attribute; and since it is so much virtually discredited, he is pleased when any do cordially own it, and entirely resign themselves to the assistance of it. Well, then, in all duties where faith is particularly to be acted, forget not this as the main prop of it: do you pray for a flourishing and triumphing grace? Consider him "as able to make all grace to abound in you" (2 Cor. 9:8). Do you want comfort and reviving under your contritions and godly sorrow? Consider him, as he declares himself, "the high and lofty One" (Isa. 57:15). Are you under pressing distresses? take Eliphaz's advice to Job, when he tells him what he himself would do if he were in his case (Job 5:8),

“I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause:” but observe under what consideration (ver. 9) as to one “that doth great things, and unsearchable; marvellous things without number.” When you beg of him the melting your rocky hearts, the dashing in pieces your strong corruptions, the drawing his beautiful image in your soul, the quickening your dead hearts, and reviving your drooping spirits, and supplying your spiritual wants, consider him as one “able to do abundantly,”

not only “above what you can ask,” but “above what you can think” (Eph. 3:20). Faith will be spiritless, and prayer will be liveless, if power be not eyed by us in those things which cannot be done without an arm of Omnipotence.

3. This doctrine teacheth us humility and submission. The vast disproportion between the mightiness of God, and the meanness of a creature, inculcates the lesson of humility in his presence. How becoming is humility under a mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6)! What is an infant in a giant’s hand, or a lamb in a lion’s paw? Submission to irresistible power is the best policy, and the best security; this gratifies and draws out goodness, whereas murmuring and resistance exasperates and sharpens power. We sanctify his name, and glorify his strength, by falling down before it; it is an acknowledgment of his invisible strength, and our inability to match it. How low should we therefore be before him, against whose power our pride and murmuring can do no good, who can out-wrestle us in our contests, and always overcome when he judges (Rom. 3:4)!

4. This doctrine teacheth us not to fear the pride and force of man. How unreasonable is it to fear a limited, above an unbounded power! How unbecoming is the fear of man in him, who hath an interest in a strength able to curb the strongest devils! Who would tremble at the threats of a dwarf, that hath a mighty and watchful giant for his guard? If God doth but arise, his enemies are scattered (Psalm 68:1): the least motion makes them fly before him: it is no difficult thing for Him, that made them by a word, to unmake their designs, and shiver them in pieces by the breath of his mouth: “He brings princes to nothing, and makes the judges of the earth vanity; they wither when he blows upon them, and their stock shall not take root in the earth. He can command a whirlwind to take them away as stubble” (Isa. 40:23, 24); yea, with the “shaking of his hand he

makes servants to become rulers of those that were their masters” (Zech. 2:9). Whole nations are no more in his hands than a “morning cloud,” or the “dew upon the ground,” or “the chaff before the wind,” or the smoke against the motion of the air, which, though it appear out of a chimney like a black invincible cloud, is quickly dispersed, and becomes invisible (Hos. 13:3). How inconsiderable are the most mighty to this strength, which can puff away a whole world of proud grasshoppers, and a whole sky of daring clouds! He that by his word masters the rage of the sea, can overrule the pride and power of men. Where is the fury of the oppressor? It cannot overleap the bounds he hath set it, nor march an inch beyond the point he hath prescribed it. Fear not the confederacies of man, but “sanctify the Lord of hosts; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread” (Isa. 8:13). To fear men is to dishonor the name of God, and regard him as a feeble Lord, and not as the Lord of hosts, who is mighty in strength, so that they that harden themselves against him shall not prosper.

5. Therefore this doctrine teacheth us the fear of God. The prophet Jeremiah counts it as an impossible thing for men to be destitute of the fear of God, When they seriously consider his name to be great and mighty (Jer. 10:6, 7): “Thou art great, and thy name is great in might: who would not fear thee, O thou King of nations?” Shall we not tremble at his presence, who hath placed the “sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree;” that though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet they cannot prevail (Jer. 5:22). He can arm the weakest creature for our destruction, and disarm the strongest creatures which appear for our preservation. He can command a hair, a crumb, a kernel, to go awry, and strangle us. He can make the heavens brass over our head, stop close the bottles of the clouds, and make the fruit of the fields droop, when there is a small distance to the harvest; he can arm men’s wit, wealth, hands, against themselves; he can turn our sweet morsels into bitter, and our own consciences into devouring lions; he can root up cities by moles, and conquer the proudest by lice and worms. The omnipotence of God is not only the object of a believer’s trust, but a believer’s fear. It is from the consideration of this power only, that our Saviour presses his disciples, whom he entitles his friends, to fear God; which lesson he presses by a double repetition, and with a kind of asseveration, without rendering any other reason than this of

the ability of God to cast into hell (Luke 12:5). We are to fear Him because he can; but bless his goodness because he will not. In regard of his omnipotence, he is to be revered, not only by mortal men, but by the blessed angels, who are past the fear of any danger by his power, being confirmed in a happy state by his unalterable grace: when they adore him for his holiness, they reverence him for his power with covered faces: the title of the “Lord of hosts” is joined in their reverential praise with that of his holiness (Isa. 6:3), “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.” How should we adore that Power which can preserve us, when devils and men conspire to destroy us! How should we stand in awe of that Power which can destroy us, though angels and men should combine to preserve us! The parts of his ways which are discovered, are sufficient motives to an humble and reverential adoration: but who can fear and adore him according to the vastness of his power, and his excellent greatness, since “the thunder of his power who can understand?”

DISCOURSE XI - ON THE HOLINESS OF GOD

EXODUS 15:11.—*Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*

THIS verse is one of the loftiest descriptions of the majesty and excellency of God in the whole Scripture. It is a part of Moses' *Επινίκιον*, or "triumphant song," after a great and real, and a typical victory; in the womb of which all the deliverances of the church were couched. It is the first song upon holy record, and it consists of gratulatory and prophetic matter; it casts a look backward to what God did for them in their deliverance from Egypt; and a look forward to what God shall do for the church in future ages. That deliverance was but a rough draught of something more excellent to be wrought towards the closing up of the world; when his plagues shall be poured out upon the anti-christian powers, which should revive the same song of Moses in the church, as fitted so many ages before for such a scene of affairs (Rev. 15:2, 3). It is observed, therefore, that many words in this song are put in the future tense, noting a time to come; and the very first word, ver. 1, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song;" ירשי, shall sing; implying, that it was composed and calculated for the celebrating some greater action of God's, which was to be wrought in the world. Upon this account, some of the Jewish rabbins, from the consideration of this remark, asserted the doctrine of the resurrection to be meant in this place; that Moses and those Israelites should rise again to sing the same song, for some greater miracles God should work, and greater triumphs he should bring forth, exceeding those wonders at their deliverance from Egypt.

It consists of, 1. A preface (ver. 1); "I will sing unto the Lord." 2. An historical narration of matter of fact (ver. 3, 4), "Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the Red Sea;" which he solely ascribes to God (ver. 6), "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy;" which he doth prophetically, as respecting something to be done in after- times; or further for the completing of that deliverance; or, as others think, respecting their entering into Canaan; for the words, in these two verses, are put in the future tense. The manner of the deliverance is described (ver. 8); "The

floods stood up right as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.” In the 9th. verse, he magnifies the victory from the vain glory and security of the enemy; “The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil,” &c. And ver. 16, 17, He prophetically describes the fruit of this victory, in the influence it shall have upon those nations, by whose confines they were to travel to the promised land; “Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thy arm they shall be as still as a stone, till thy people pass over which thou hast purchased.” The phrase of this and the 17th and 18th verses, seems to be more magnificent than to design only the bringing the Israelites to the earthly Canaan; but seems to respect the gathering his redeemed ones together, to place them in the spiritual sanctuary’ which he had established, wherein the Lord should reign forever and ever, without any enemies to disturb his royalty; “The Lord shall reign forever and ever” (18th). The prophet, in the midst of his historical narrative, seems to be in an ecstasy, and breaks out in a stately exaltation of God in the text.

Who is thee unto thee, O Lard, among the gods? &c. Interrogations are, in Scripture, the strongest affirmations or negations; it is here a strong affirmation of the incomparableness of God, and a strong denial of the worthiness of all creatures to be partners with him in the degrees of his excellency; it is a preference of God before all creatures in holiness, to which the purity of creatures is but a shadow in desert of reverence and veneration, he being “fearful in praises.” The angels cover their faces when they adore him in his particular perfections.

Amongst the gods. Among the idols of the nations, say some; others say, it is not to be found that the Heathen idols are ever dignified with the title of “strong or mighty,” as the word translated gods, doth import; and therefore understand it of the angels, or other potentates of the world; or rather inclusively, of all that are noted for, or can lay claim to, the title of strength and might upon the earth or in heaven. God is so great and majestic, that no creature can share with him in his praise.

Fearful in praises. Various are the interpretations of this passage to be “reverenced in praises;” his praise ought to be celebrated with a religious fear. Fear is the product of his mercy as well as his justice; “He hath forgiveness that he may be feared” (Psalm 130:4).

Or, “fearful in praises;” whom none can praise without amazement at the considerations of his works. None can truly praise him without being affected with astonishment at his greatness. Or, “fearful in praises;” whom no mortal can sufficiently praise, since he is above all praise. Whatsoever a human tongue can speak, or an angelical understanding think of the excellency of his nature and the greatness of his works, falls short of the vastness of the Divine perfection. A creature’s praises of God are as much below the transcendent eminency of God, as the meanness of a creature’s being is below the eternal fulness of the Creator. Or, rather, “fearful,” or terrible, “in praises;” that is, in the matter of thy praise: and the learned Rivet concurs with me in this sense. The works of God, celebrated in this song, were terrible; it was the miraculous overthrow of the strength and flower of a mighty nation; his judgments were severe, as well as his mercy was seasonable. The word נורא signifies glorious and illustrious, as well as terrible and fearful. No man can hear the praise of thy name, for those great judicial acts, without some astonishment at thy justice, the stream, and thy holiness, the spring of those mighty works. This seems to be the sense of the following words, “doing wonders:” fearful in the matter of thy praise; they being wonders which thou hast done among us and for us.

Doing wonders. Congealing the waters by a wind, to make them stand like walls for the rescue of the Israelites; and melting them by a wind, for the overthrow of the Egyptians, are prodigies that challenge the greatest adorations of that mercy which delivered the one, and that justice which punished the other; and of the arm of that power whereby he effected both his gracious and righteous purposes.

Whence observe, that the judgments of God upon his enemies, as well as his mercies to his people, are matters of praise. The perfections of God appear in both. Justice and mercy are so linked together in his acts of providence, that the one cannot be forgotten whilst the other is acknowledged. He is never so terrible as in the assemblies of his saints, and the deliverance of them (Psalm 89:7). As the creation was erected by him for his glory; so all the acts of his government are designed for the same end: and his creatures deny him his due, if they acknowledge not his excellency in

whatsoever dreadful, as well as pleasing garbs, it appears in the world. His terror as well as his righteousness appears, when he is a God of salvation (Psalm 65:5). “By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.” But the expression I pitch upon in the text to handle, is *glorious in holiness*. He is magnified or honorable in holiness; so the word נָאֵדָר is translated (Isa. 42:21). “He will magnify the law, and make it honorable.” Thy holiness hath shone forth admirably in this last exploit, against the enemies and oppressors of thy people. The holiness of God is his glory, as his grace is his riches: holiness is his crown, and his mercy is his treasure. This is the blessedness and nobleness of his nature; it renders him glorious in himself, and glorious to his creatures, that understand any thing of this lovely perfection. Holiness is a glorious perfection belonging to the nature of God. Hence he is in Scripture styled often the Holy One, the Holy One of Jacob, the Holy One of Israel; and oftener entitled Holy, than Almighty, and set forth by this part of his dignity more than by any other. This is more affixed as an epithet to his name than any other: you never find it expressed, His mighty name, or his His wise name; but His great name, and most of all, His holy name. This is his greatest title of honor; in this doth the majesty and venerableness of his name appear. When the sinfulness of Sennacherib is aggravated, the Holy Ghost takes the rise from this attribute (2 Kings 19:22). “Thou hast lift up thine eyes on high, even against the Holy One of Israel;” not against the wise, mighty, &c., but against the Holy One of Israel, as that wherein the majesty of God was most illustrious. It is upon this account he is called light, as impurity is called darkness; both in this sense are opposed to one another: he is a pure and unmixed light, free from all blemish in his essence, nature, and operations.

1. Heathens have owned it. Proclus calls him, the undefiled Governor of the world. The poetical transformations of their false gods, and the extravagancies committed by them, was—in the account of the wisest of them—an unholy thing to report and hear. And some vindicate Epicurus from the atheism wherewith he was commonly charged; that he did not deny the being of God, but those adulterous and contentious deities the people worshipped, which were practices unworthy and unbecoming the nature of God. Hence they asserted, that virtue was an imitation of God, and a virtuous man bore a resemblance to God: if virtue were a copy from God, a

greater holiness must be owned in the original. And when some of them were at a loss how to free God from being the author of sin in the world, they ascribe the birth of sin to matter, and run into an absurd opinion, fancying it to be uncreated, that thereby they might exempt God from all mixture of evil; so sacred with them was the conception of God, as a Holy God.

2. The absurdest heretics have owned it. The Maniches and Marchionites, that thought evil came by necessity, yet would salve God's being the author of it, by asserting two distinct eternal principles, one the original of evil, as God was the fountain of good: so rooted was the notion of this Divine purity, that none would ever slander goodness itself with that which was so disparaging to it.

3. The nature of God cannot rationally be conceived without it. Though the power of God be the first rational conclusion, drawn from the sight of his works, wisdom the next, from the order and connexion of his works, purity must result from the beauty of his works: that God cannot be deformed by evil, who hath made every thing so beautiful in its time. The notion of a God cannot be entertained without separating from him whatsoever is impure and bespotting both in his essence and actions. Though we conceive him infinite in Majesty, infinite in essence, eternal in duration, mighty in power, and wise and immutable in his counsels; merciful in his proceedings with men, and whatsoever other perfections may dignify so sovereign a Being, yet if we conceive him destitute of this excellent perfection, and imagine him possessed with the least contagion of evil, we make him but an infinite monster, and sully all those perfections we ascribed to him before; we rather own him a devil than a God. It is a contradiction to be God and to be darkness, or to have one mote of darkness mixed with his light. It is a less injury to him to deny his being, than to deny the purity of it; the one makes him no god, the other a deformed, unlovely, and a detestable god. Plutarch said not amiss, That he should count himself less injured by that man, that should deny that there was such a man as Plutarch, than by him that should affirm that there was such a one indeed, but he was a debauched fellow, a loose and vicious person. It is a less wrong to God to discard any acknowledgments of his being, and to count him nothing, than to believe him to exist, but imagine a base and unholy Deity. he that with, God is not holy,

speaks much worse than he that saith, There is no God at all. Let these two things be considered.

I. If any, this attribute hath an excellency above his other perfections. There are some attributes of God we prefer, because of our interest in them, and the relation they bear to us: as we esteem his goodness before his power, and his mercy whereby he relieves us, before his justice whereby he punisheth us; as there are some we more delight in, because of the goodness we receive by them; so there are some that God delights to honor, because of their excellency.

1. None is sounded out so, loftily, with such solemnity, and so frequently by angels that stand before his throne, as this. Where do you find any other attribute trebled in the praises of it, as this (Isa. 6:3)? “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of is glory;” and (Rev. 4:8), “The four beasts rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,” &c. His power or sovereignty, as Lord of hosts, is but once mentioned, but with a ternal repetition of his holiness. Do you hear, in any angelical song, any other perfection of the Divine Nature thrice repeated? Where do we read of the crying out Eternal, eternal, eternal; or, Faithful, faithful, faithful, Lord God of Hosts? Whatsoever other attribute is left out, this God would have to fill the mouths of angels and blessed spirits for ever in heaven.

2. He singles it out to swear by (Psalm 89:35); “Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David:” and (Amos 4:2), “The Lord will swear by his holiness:” he twice swears by his holiness; once by his power (Isa. 62:8); once by all, when he swears by his name (Jer. 44:26). He lays here his holiness to pledge for the assurance of his promise, as the attribute most dear to him, most valued by him, as though no other could give an assurance parallel to it in this concern of an everlasting redemption which is there spoken of: he that swears, swears by a greater than himself; God having no greater than himself, swears by himself: and swearing here by his holiness, seems to equal that single one to all his other attributes, as if he were more concerned in the honor of it, than of all the rest. It is as if he should have said, Since I have not a more excellent perfection to swear by, than that of my holiness, I lay this to pawn for your security, and bind myself by that which I will

never part with, were it possible for me to be stripped of all the rest. It is a tacit imprecation of himself, If I lie unto David, let me never be counted holy, or thought righteous enough to be trusted by angels or men. This attribute he makes most of.

3. It is his glory and beauty. Holiness is the honor of the creature; sanctification and honor are linked together (1 Thess. 4:4); much more is it the honor of God; it is the image of God in the creature (Eph. 4:24). When we take the picture of a man, we draw the most beautiful part, the face, which is a member of the greatest excellency. When God would be drawn to the life, as much as can be, in the spirit of his creatures, he is drawn in this attribute, as being the most beautiful perfection of God, and most valuable with him. Power is his hand and arm; omniscience, his eye; mercy, his bowels; eternity, his duration; his holiness is his beauty (2 Chron. 20:21); —“should praise the beauty of holiness.” In Psalm 27:4, David desires “to behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his holy temple;” that is, the holiness of God manifested in his hatred of sin in the daily sacrifices. Holiness was the beauty of the temple (Isa. 46:11); holy and beautiful house are joined together; much more the beauty of God that dwelt in the sanctuary. This renders him lovely to all his innocent creatures, though formidable to the guilty ones. A heathen philosopher could call it the beauty of the Divine essence, and say, that God was not so happy by an eternity of life, as by an excellency of virtue. And the angels’ song intimate it to be his glory (Isa. 6:3); “The whole earth is full of thy glory;” that is, of his holiness in his laws, and in his judgments against sin, that being the attribute applauded by them before.

4. It is his very life. So it is called (Eph. 4:18), “Alienated from the life of God,” that is, from the holiness of God: speaking of the opposite to it, the uncleanness and profaneness of the Gentiles. We are only alienated from that which we are bound to imitate; but this is the perfection always set out as the pattern of our actions, “Be ye holy, as I am holy;” no other is proposed as our copy; alienated from that purity of God, which is as much as his life, without which he could not live. If he were stripped of this, he would be a dead God, more than by the want of any other perfection. His swearing by it intimates as much; he swears often by his own life; “As I live, saith the Lord:” so he swears by his holiness, as if it were his life, and

more his life than any other. Let me not live, or let me not be holy, are all one in his oath. His Deity could not outlive the life of his purity.

II. As it seems to challenge an excellency above all his other perfections, so it is the glory of all the rest. As it is the glory of the Godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the Godhead. As his power is the strength of them, so his holiness is the beauty of them. As all would be weak, without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them. Should this be sullied, all the rest would lose their honor and their comfortable efficacy: as, at the same instant that the sun should lose its light, it would lose its heat, its strength, its generative and quickening virtue. As sincerity is the lustre of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendor of every attribute in the Godhead. His justice is a holy justice; his wisdom a holy wisdom; his arm of power a holy arm (Psalm 98:1); his truth or promise a holy promise (Psalm 105:42). Holy and true go hand in hand (Rev. 6:10). His name, which signifies all his attributes in conjunction, is holy (Psalm 103:1); yea, he is “righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (Psalm 145:17): it is the rule of all his acts, the source of all his punishments. If every attribute of the Deity were a distinct member, purity would be the form, the soul, the spirit to animate them. Without it, his patience would be an indulgence to sin, his mercy a fondness, his wrath a madness, his power a tyranny, his wisdom an unworthy subtilty. It is this gives a decorum to all. His mercy is not exercised without it, since he pardons none but those that have an interest, by union, in the obedience of a Mediator, which was so delightful to his infinite purity. His justice, which guilty man is apt to tax with cruelty and violence in the exercise of it, is not acted out of the compass of this rule. In acts of man’s vindictive justice there is something of impurity, perturbation, passion, some mixture of cruelty; but none of these fall upon God in the severest acts of wrath. When God appears to Ezekiel, in the resemblance of fire, to signify his anger against the house of Judah for their idolatry, “from his loins downward” there was “the appearance of fire;” but, from the loins upward, “the appearance of brightness, as the color of amber” (Ezek. 8:2). His heart is clear in his most terrible acts of vengeance; it is a pure flame, wherewith he scorseth and burns his enemies: he is holy in the most fiery appearance. This attribute,

therefore, is never so much applauded, as when his sword hath been drawn, and he hath manifested the greatest fierceness against his enemies. The magnificent and triumphant expression of it in the text, follows just upon God's miraculous defeat and ruin of the Egyptian army: "The sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters:" then it follows, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness?" And when it was so celebrated by the seraphims (Isa. 6:3), it was when the "posts moved, and the house was filled with smoke" (ver. 4), which are signs of anger (Psalm 18:7, 8). And when he was about to send Isaiah upon a message of spiritual and temporal judgments, that he would make the "heart of that people fat, and their ears heavy, and their eyes shut; waste their cities without inhabitant, and their houses without man, and make the land desolate" (ver. 9–12): and the angels which here applaud him for his holiness, are the executioners of his justice, and here called seraphims, from burning or fiery spirits, as being the ministers of his wrath. His justice is part of his holiness, whereby he doth reduce into order those things that are out of order. When he is consuming men by his fury, he doth not diminish, but manifest purity (Zeph. 3:5); "The just Lord is in the midst of her; he will do no iniquity." Every action of his is free from all tincture of evil. It is also celebrated with praise, by the four beasts about his throne, when he appears in a covenant garb with a rainbow about his throne, and yet with thunderings and lightnings shot against his enemies (Rev. 4:8, compared with ver. 3, 5), to show that all his acts of mercy, as well as justice, are clear from any stain. This is the crown of all his attributes, the life of all his decrees, the brightness of all his actions: nothing is decreed by him, nothing is acted by him, but what is worthy of the dignity, and becoming the honor, of this attribute.

I. The nature of Divine holiness *in general*. The holiness of God *negatively*, is a perfect and unpolled freedom from all evil. As we call gold pure that is not embased by any dross, and that garment clean that is free from any spot, so the nature of God is estranged from all shadow of evil, all imaginable contagion. *Positively*, It is the rectitude or integrity of the Divine nature, or that conformity of it, in affection and action, to the Divine will, as to his eternal law, whereby he works with a becomingness to his own excellency, and whereby he hath a delight and complacency in everything agreeable to his will, and an abhorreny of everything contrary thereunto. As

there is no darkness in his understanding, so there is no spot in his will: as his mind is possessed with all truth, so there is no deviation in his will from it. He loves all truth and goodness; he hates all falsity and evil. In regard of his righteousness, he loves righteousness (Psalm 11:7); “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness,” and “hath no pleasure in wickedness” (Psalm 5:4). He values purity in his creatures, and detests all impurity, whether inward or outward. We may, indeed, distinguish the holiness of God from his righteousness in our conceptions: holiness is a perfection absolutely considered in the nature of God; righteousness, a perfection, as referred to others, in his actions towards them and upon them.

In particular, this property of the Divine nature is, 1. An essential and necessary perfection: he is essentially and necessarily holy. It is the essential glory of his nature: his holiness is as necessary as his being; as necessary as his omniscience: as he cannot but know what is right, so he cannot but do what is just. His understanding is not as created understanding, capable of ignorance as well as knowledge; so his will is not as created wills, capable of unrighteousness, as well as righteousness. There can be no contradiction or contrariety in the Divine nature, to know what is right, and to do what is wrong; if so, there would be a diminution of his blessedness, he would not be a God always blessed, “blessed forever,” as he is (Rom. 9:5). He is as necessarily holy, as he is necessarily God; as necessarily without sin, as without change. As he was God from eternity, so he was holy from eternity. he was gracious, merciful, just in his own nature, and also holy; though no creature had been framed by him to exercise his grace, mercy, justice, or holiness upon. If God had not created a world, he had, in his own nature, been Almighty, and able to create a world. If there never had been anything but himself, yet he had been omniscient, knowing everything that was within the verge and compass of his infinite power; so he was pure in his own nature, though he never had brought forth any rational creature whereby to manifest this purity. These perfections are so necessary, that the nature of God could not subsist without them. And the acts of those, ad intra, or within himself, are necessary; for being omniscient in nature, there must be an act of knowledge of himself and his own nature. Being infinitely holy, an act of holiness in infinitely loving himself, must

necessarily flow from this perfection. As the Divine will cannot but be perfect, so it cannot be wanting to render the highest love to itself, to its goodness, to the Divine nature, which is due to him. Indeed, the acts of those, *ad extra*, are not necessary, but upon a condition. To love righteousness, without himself, or to detect sin, or inflict punishment for the committing of it, could not have been, had there been no righteous creature for him to love, no sinning creature for him to loathe, and to exercise his justice upon, as the object of punishment. Some attributes require a condition to make the acts of them necessary; as it is at God's liberty, whether he will create a rational creature, or no; but when he decrees to make either angel or man, it is necessary, from the perfection of his nature, to make them righteous. It is at God's liberty whether he will speak to man, or no; but if he doth, it is impossible for him to speak that which is false, because of his infinite perfection of veracity. It is at his liberty whether he will permit a creature to sin; but if he sees good to suffer it, it is impossible, but that he should detest that creature that goes cross to his righteous nature. His holiness is not solely an act of his will, for then he might be unholy as well as holy; he might love iniquity and hate righteousness; he might then command that which is good, and afterwards command that which is bad and unworthy; for what is only an act of his will, and not belonging to his nature, is indifferent to him. As the positive law he gave to Adam, of not eating the forbidden fruit, was a pure act of his will, he might have given him liberty to eat of it, if he had pleased, as well as prohibited him. But what is moral and good in its own nature, is necessarily willed by God, and cannot be changed by him, because of the transcendent eminency of his nature, and righteousness of his will. As it is impossible for God to command his creature to hate him, or to dispense with a creature for not loving him,—for this would be to command a thing intrinsically evil, the highest ingratitude, the very spirit of all wickedness, which consists in the hating God,—yet, though God be thus necessarily holy, he is not so by a bare and simple necessity, as the sun shines, or the fire burns; but by a free necessity, not compelled thereunto, but inclined from the fulness of the perfection of his own nature and will; so as by no means he can be unholy, because he will not be unholy; it is against his nature to be so.

2. God is only absolutely holy; “There is none holy as the

Lord” (1 Sam. 2:2); it is the peculiar glory of his nature; as there is none good but God, so none holy but God. No creature can be essentially holy, because mutable; holiness is the substance of God, but a quality and accident in a creature. God is infinitely holy, creatures finitely holy. He is holy from himself, creatures are holy by derivation from him. He is not only holy, but holiness; holiness in the highest degree, is his sole prerogative. As the highest heaven is called the heaven of heavens, because it embraceth in its circle all the heavens, and contains the magnitude of them, and hath a greater vastness above all that it encloseth, so is God the Holy of holies; he contains the holiness of all creatures put together, and infinitely more. As all the wisdom, excellency, and power of the creatures if compared with the wisdom, excellency, and power of God, is but folly, vileness, and weakness; so the highest created purity, if set in parallel with God, is but impurity and uncleanness (Rev. 15:4): “Thou only art holy” It is like the light of a glow-worm to that of the sun (Job 13:15); “The heavens are not pure in his sight, and his angels he charged with folly” (Job 4:18). Though God hath crowned the angels with an unspotted sanctity, and placed them in a habitation of glory, yet, as illustrious as they are, they have an unworthiness in their own nature to appear before the throne of so holy a God; their holiness grows dim and pale in his presence. It is but a weak shadow of that Divine purity, whose light is so glorious, that it makes them cover their faces out of weakness to behold it, and cover their feet out of shame in themselves. They are not pure in his sight, because, though they love God (which is a principle of holiness) as much as they can, yet, not so much as he deserves; they love him with the intensest degree, according to their power; but not with the intensest degree, according to his own amiableness; for they cannot infinitely love God, unless they were as infinite as God, and had an understanding of his perfections equal with himself, and as immense as his own knowledge. God, having an infinite knowledge of himself, can only have an infinite love to himself, and, consequently, an infinite holiness without any defect; because he loves himself according to the vastness of his own amiableness, which no finite being can. Therefore, though the angels be exempt from corruption and soil, they cannot enter into comparison with the purity of God, without acknowledgment of a dimness in themselves.

Besides, he charges them with folly, and puts no trust in them;

because they have the power of sinning, though not the act of sinning; they have a possible folly in their own nature to be charged with. Holiness is a quality separable from them, but it is inseparable from God. Had they not at first a mutability in their nature, none of them could have sinned, there had been no devils; but because some of them sinned, the rest might have sinned. And though the standing angels shall never be changed, yet they are still changeable in their own nature, and their standing is due to grace, not to nature; and though they shall be for ever preserved, yet they are not, nor ever can be, immutable by nature, for then they should stand upon the same bottom with God himself; but they are supported by grace against that changeableness of nature which is essential to a creature; the Creator only hath immortality, that is, immutability (1 Tim. 3:16). It is as certain a truth, that no creature can be naturally immutable and impeccable, as that God cannot create any anything actually polluted and imperfect. It is as possible that the highest creature may sin, as it is possible that it may be annihilated; it may become not holy, as it may become not a creature, but nothing. The holiness of a creature may be reduced into nothing, as well as his substance; but the holiness of the Creator cannot be diminished, dimmed, or overshadowed (James 1:17): "He is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning." It is as impossible his holiness should be blotted, as that his Deity should be extinguished: for whatsoever creature hath essentially such or such qualities, cannot be stripped of them, without being turned out of its essence. As a man is essentially rational; and if he ceaseth to be rational, he ceaseth to be man. The sun is essentially luminous; if it should become dark in its own body, it would cease to be the sun. In regard to this absolute and only holiness of God, it is thrice repeated by the seraphims (Isa. 6:3). The three-fold repetition of a word notes the certainty or absoluteness of the thing, or the irreversibleness of the resolve; as (Ezek. 21:27), "I will overturn, overturn, overturn," notes the certainty of the judgment; also, (Rev. 8:8), "Woe, woe, woe," three times repeated, signifies the same. The holiness of God is so absolutely peculiar to him, that it can no more be expressed in creatures, than his omnipotence, whereby they may be able to create a world; or his omniscience, whereby they may be capable of knowing all things, and knowing God as he knows himself:

3. God is so holy, that he cannot possibly approve of any evil

done by another, but doth perfectly abhor it; it would not else be a glorious holiness (Psalm 5:3). "He hath no pleasure in wickedness." He doth not only love that which is just, but abhor, with a perfect hatred, all things contrary to the rule of righteousness. Holiness can no more approve of sin than it can commit it: to be delighted with the evil in another's act, contracts a guilt, as well as the commission of it; for approbation of a thing is a consent to it. Sometimes the approbation of an evil in another is a more grievous crime than the act itself, as appears in Rom. 1:32, who knowing the judgment of God, "not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do it;" where the "not only" manifests it to be a greater guilt to take pleasure in them. Every sin is aggravated by the delight in it; to take pleasure in the evil of another's action, shows a more ardent affection and love to sin, than the committer himself may have. This, therefore, can as little fall upon God, as to do an evil act himself; yet, as a man may be delighted with the consequences of another's sin, as it may occasion some public good, or private good to the guilty person, as sometimes it may be an occasion of his repentance, when the horridness of a fact stares him in the face, and occasions a self-reflection for that, and other crimes, which is attended with an indignation against them, and sincere remorse for them; so God is pleased with those good things his goodness and wisdom bring forth upon the occasion of sin.

But in regard of his holiness, he cannot approve of the evil, whence his infinite wisdom drew forth his own glory, and his creature's good. His pleasure is not in the sinful act of the creature, but in the act of his own goodness and skill, turning it to another end than what the creature aimed at.

(1.) He abhors it necessarily. Holiness is the glory of the Deity, therefore necessary. The nature of God is so holy, that he cannot but hate it (Hab. 1:13): "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity:" he is more opposite to it than light to darkness, and, therefore, it can expect no countenance from him. A love of holiness cannot be without a hatred of everything that is contrary to it.

As God necessarily loves himself, so he must necessarily hate everything that is against himself: and as he loves himself for his own excellency and holiness, he must necessarily detest whatsoever

is repugnant to his holiness, because of the evil of it. Since he is infinitely good, he cannot but love goodness, as it is a resemblance to himself, and cannot but abhor unrighteousness, as being most distant from him, and contrary to him. If he have any esteem for his own perfections, he must needs have an implacable aversion to all that is so repugnant to him, that would, if it were possible, destroy him, and is a point directed, not only against his glory, but against his life. If he did not hate it, he would hate himself: for since righteousness is his image, and sin would deface his image; if he did not love his image, and loathe what is against his image, he would loathe himself, he would be an enemy to his own nature. Nay, if it were possible for him to love it, it were possible for him not to be holy, it were possible then for him to deny himself, and will that he were no God, which is a palpable contradiction. Yet this necessity in God of hating sin, is not a brutish necessity, such as is in mere animals, that avoid, by a natural instinct, not of choice, what is prejudicial to them; but most free, as well as necessary, arising from an infinite knowledge of his own nature, and of the evil nature of sin, and the contrariety of it to his own excellency, and the order of his works.

(2.) Therefore intensely. Nothing do men act for more than their glory. As he doth infinitely, and therefore perfectly know himself, so he infinitely, and therefore perfectly knows what is contrary to himself, and, as according to the manner and measure of his knowledge of himself, is his love to himself, as infinite as his knowledge, and therefore inexpressible and unconceivable by us: so, from the perfection of his knowledge of the evil of sin, which is infinitely above what any creature can have, doth arise a displeasure against it suitable to that knowledge. In creatures the degrees of affection to, or aversion from a thing, are suited to the strength of their apprehensions of the good or evil in them. God knows not only the workers of wickedness, but the wickedness of their works (Job 11:11), for “he knows vain men, he sees wickedness also.” The vehemency of this hatred is expressed variously in Scripture; he loathes it so, that he is impatient of beholding it; the very sight of it affects him with detestation (Hab. 1:13); he hates the first spark of it in the imagination (Zech. 8:17); with what variety of expressions doth he repeat his indignation at their polluted services (Amos 5:21, 22); “I hate, I detest, I despise, I will not smell, I will not regard;

take away from me the noise of thy songs, I will not hear.” So, (Isa. 1:14), “My soul hates, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them.” It is the abominable thing that he hates (Jer. 44:4); he is vexed and fretted at it (Isa. 63:10; Ezek. 16:33). He abhors it so, that his hatred redounds upon the person that commits it. (Psalm 5:5), “He hates all workers of iniquity.” Sin is the only primary object of his displeasure: he is not displeased with the nature of man as man, for that was derived from him; but with the nature of man as sinful, which is from the sinner himself. When a man hath but one object for the exercise of all his anger, it is stronger than when diverted to many objects: a mighty torrent, when diverted into many streams, is weaker than when it comes in a full body upon one place only. The infinite anger and hatred of God, which is as infinite as his love and mercy, has no other object, against which he directs the mighty force of it, but only unrighteousness. He hates no person for all the penal evils upon him, though they were more by ten thousand times than Job was struck with, but only for his sin. Again, sin being only evil, and an unmixed evil, there is nothing in it that can abate the detestation of God, or balance his hatred of it; there is not the least grain of goodness in it, to incline him to the least affection to any part of it. This hatred cannot but be intense; for as the more any creature is sanctified, the more is he advanced in the abhorrence of that which is contrary to holiness; therefore, God being the highest, most absolute and infinite holiness, doth infinitely, and therefore intensely, hate unholiness; being infinitely righteous, doth infinitely abhor unrighteousness; being infinitely true, doth infinitely abhor falsity, as it is the greatest and most deformed evil. As it is from the righteousness of his nature that he hath a content and satisfaction in righteousness (Psalm 11:7), “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness;” so it is from the same righteousness of his nature, that he detests whatsoever is morally evil: as his nature therefore is infinite, so must his abhorrence be.

(3.) Therefore universally, because necessarily and intensely. He doth not hate it in one, and indulge it in another, but loathes it wherever he finds it; not one worker of iniquity is exempt from it (Psalm 5:5): “Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.” For it is not sin, as in this or that person, or as great or little; but sin, as sin is the object of his hatred; and, therefore, let the person be never so great, and have particular characters of his image upon him, it secures him

not from God's hatred of any evil action he shall commit. He is a jealous God, jealous of his glory (Exod. 20:5); a metaphor, taken from jealous husbands, who will not endure the least adultery in their wives, nor God the least defection of man from his law.

Every act of sin is a spiritual adultery, denying God to be the chief good, and giving that prerogative by that act to some vile thing. He loves it no more in his own people than he doth in his enemies; he frees them not from his rod, the testimony of his loathing their crimes: whosoever sows iniquity, shall reap affliction. It might be thought that he affected their dross, if he did not refine them, and loved their filth, if he did not cleanse them; because of his detestation of their sin, he will not spare them from the furnace, though because of love to their persons in Christ, he will exempt them from Tophet. How did the sword ever and anon drop down upon David's family, after his unworthy dealing in Uriah's case, and cut off ever and anon some of the branches of it? He doth sometimes punish it more severely in this life in his own people, than in others. Upon Jonah's disobedience a storm pursues him, and a whale devours him, while the profane world lived in their lusts without control. Moses, for one act of unbelief, is excluded from Canaan, when greater sinners attained that happiness. It is not a light punishment, but a vengeance he takes on their inventions (Psalm 99:8), to manifest that he hates sin as sin, and not because the worst persons commit it. Perhaps, had a profane man touched the ark, the hand of God had not so suddenly reached him; but when Uzzah, a man zealous for him, as may be supposed by his care for the support of the tottering ark, would step out of his place, he strikes him down for his disobedient action, by the side of the ark, which he would indirectly (as not being a Levite) sustain (2 Sam. 6:7). Nor did our Saviour so sharply reprove the Pharisees, and turn so short from them as he did from Peter, when he gave a carnal advice, and contrary to that wherein was to be the greatest manifestation of God's holiness, *viz.* the death of Christ (Matt. 16:23). He calls him Satan, a name sharper than the title of the devil's children wherewith he marked the Pharisees, and given (besides him) to none but Judas, who made a profession of love to him, and was outwardly ranked in the number of his disciples. A gardener hates a weed the more for being in the bed with the most precious flowers. God's hatred is universally fixed against sin, and he hates it as much in those whose

persons shall not fall under his eternal anger, as being secured in the arms of a Redeemer, by whom the guilt is wiped off, and the filth shall be totally washed away: though he hates their sin, and cannot but hate it, yet he loves their persons, as being united as members to the Mediator and mystical Head. A man may love a gangrened member, because it is a member of his own body, or a member of a dear relation, but he loathes the gangrene in it more than in those wherein he is not so much concerned. Though God's hatred of believers' persons is removed by faith in the satisfactory death of Jesus Christ, yet his antipathy against sin was not taken away by that blood; nay, it was impossible it should. It was never designed, nor had it any capacity to alter the unchangeable nature of God, but to manifest the unspottedness of his will, and his eternal aversion to anything that was contrary to the purity of his Being, and the righteousness of his laws.

(4.) Perpetually: this must necessarily follow upon the others. He can no more cease to hate impurity than he can cease to love holiness: if he should in the least instant approve of anything that is filthy, in that moment he would disapprove of his own nature and being; there would be an interruption in his love of himself, which is as eternal as it is infinite. How can he love any sin which is contrary to his nature, but for one moment, without hating his own nature, which is essentially contrary to sin? Two contraries cannot be loved at the same time; God must first begin to hate himself before he can approve of any evil which is directly opposite to himself. We, indeed, are changed with a temptation, sometimes bear an affection to it, and sometimes testify an indignation against it; but God is always the same without any shadow of change, and "is angry with the wicked every day" (Psalm 7:11), that is, uninterruptedly in the nature of his anger, though not in the effects of it. God indeed may be reconciled to the sinner, but never to the sin; for then he should renounce himself, deny his own essence and his own divinity, if his inclinations to the love of goodness, and his aversion from evil, could be changed, if he suffered the contempt of the one, and encouraged the practice of the other.

4. God is so holy, that he cannot but love holiness in others. Not that he owes anything to his creature, but from the unspeakable holiness of his nature, whence affections to all things that bear a

resemblance of him do flow; as light shoots out from the sun, or any glittering body: it is essential to the infinite righteousness of his nature to love righteousness wherever he beholds it (Psalm 11:7): “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.” He cannot, because of his nature, but love that which bears some agreement with his nature, that which is the curious draught of his own wisdom and purity: he cannot but be delighted with a copy of himself: he would not have a holy nature, if he did not love holiness in every nature: his own nature would be denied by him, if he did not affect everything that had a stamp of his own nature upon it. There was indeed nothing without God, that could invite him to manifest such goodness to man, as he did in creation: but after he had stamped that rational nature with a righteousness convenient for it, it was impossible but that he should ardently love that impression of himself, because he loves his own Deity, and consequently all things which are any sparks and images of it: and were the devils capable of an act of righteousness, the holiness of his nature would incline him to love it, even in those dark and revolted spirits.

5. God is so holy, that he cannot positively will or encourage sin in any. How can he give any encouragement to that which he cannot in the least approve of, or look upon without loathing, not only the crime, but the criminal? Light may sooner be the cause of darkness than holiness itself be the cause of unholiness, absolutely contrary to it: it is a contradiction, that he that is the Fountain of good should be the source of evil; as if the same fountain should bubble up both sweet and bitter streams, salt and fresh (James 3:11); since whatsoever good is in man acknowledges God for its author, it follows that men are evil by their own fault. There is no need for men to be incited to that to which the corruption of their own nature doth so powerfully bend them. Water hath a forcible principle in its own nature to carry it downward; it needs no force to hasten the motion: “God tempts no man, but every man is drawn away by his own lust” (James 1:13, 14). All the preparations for glory are from God (Rom. 9:23); but men are said to “be fitted to destruction” (ver. 22); but God is not said to fit them; they, by their iniquities, fit themselves for ruin, and he, by his long-suffering, keeps the destruction from them for awhile.

(1.) God cannot command any unrighteousness. As all virtue is

summed up in a love to God, so all iniquity is summed up in an enmity to God: every wicked work declares a man an enemy to God (Col. 1:21): “enemies in your minds by wicked works.” If he could command his creature anything which bears an enmity in its nature to himself, he would then implicitly command the hatred of himself, and he would be, in some measure, a hater of himself: he that commands another to deprive him of his life, cannot be said to bear any love to his own life. God can never hate himself, and therefore cannot command anything that is hateful to him and tends to a hating of him, and driving the creature further from him; in that very moment that God should command such a thing, he would cease to be good. What can be more absurd to imagine, than that Infinite Goodness should enjoin a thing contrary to itself, and contrary to the essential duty of a creature, and order him to do anything that bespeaks an enmity to the nature of the Creator, or a deflouring and disparaging his works? God cannot but love himself, and his own goodness; he were not otherwise good; and, therefore, cannot order the creature to do anything opposite to this goodness, or anything hurtful to the creature itself, as unrighteousness is.

(2.) Nor can God secretly inspire any evil into us. It is as much against his nature to incline the heart to sin as it is to command it as it is impossible but that he should love himself, and therefore impossible to enjoin anything that tends to a hatred of himself; by the same reason it is as impossible that he should infuse such a principle in the heart, that might carry a man out to any act of enmity against him. To enjoin one thing, and incline to another, would be an argument of such insincerity, unfaithfulness, contradiction to itself, that it cannot be conceived to fall within the compass of the Divine nature (Deut. 32:4), who is a “God without iniquity,” because “a God of truth” and sincerity, “just and right is he.” To bestow excellent faculties upon man in creation, and incline him, by a sudden impulsion, to things contrary to the true end of him, and induce an inevitable ruin upon that work which he had composed with so much wisdom and goodness, and pronounced good with so much delight and pleasure, is inconsistent with that love which God bears to the creature of his own framing: to incline his will to that which would render him the object of his hatred, the fuel for his justice, and sink him into deplorable misery, it is most absurd, and unchristian-like to imagine.

(3.) Nor can God necessitate man to sin. Indeed sin cannot be committed by force; there is no sin but is in some sort voluntary; voluntary in the root, or voluntary in the branch; voluntary by an immediate act of the will, or voluntary by a general or natural inclination of the will. That is not a crime to which a man is violenced, without any concurrence of the faculties of the soul to that act; it is indeed not an act, but a passion; a man that is forced is not an agent, but a patient under the force: but what necessity can there be upon man from God, since he hath implanted such a principle in him, that he cannot desire anything but what is good, either really or apparently; and if a man mistakes the object, it is his own fault; for God hath endowed him with reason to discern, and liberty of will to choose upon that judgment. And though it is to be acknowledged that God hath an absolute sovereign dominion over his creature, without any limitation, and may do what he pleases, and dispose of it according to his own will, as a “potter doth with his vessel” (Rom. 9:21); according as the church speaks (Isa. 64:8), “We are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand;” yet he cannot pollute any undefiled creature by virtue of that sovereign power, which he hath to do what he will with it; because such an act would be contrary to the foundation and right of his dominion, which consists in the excellency of his nature, his immense wisdom, and unspotted purity; if God should therefore do any such act, he would expunge the right of his dominion by blotting out that nature which renders him fit for that dominion, and the exercise of it. Any dominion which is exercised without the rules of goodness, is not a true sovereignty, but an insupportable tyranny. God would cease to be a rightful Sovereign if he ceased to be good; and he would cease to be good, if he did command, necessitate, or by any positive operation, incline inwardly the heart of a creature directly to that which were morally evil, and contrary to the eminency of his own nature. But that we may the better conceive of this, let us trace man in his first fall, whereby he subjected himself and all his posterity to the curse of the law and hatred of God; we shall find no footsteps, either of precept, outward force, or inward impulsion. The plain story of man’s apostasy dischargeth God from any interest in the crime as an encouragement, and excuseth him from any appearance of suspicion, when he showed him the tree he had reserved, as a mark of his sovereignty, and forbid him to eat of

the fruit of it; he backed the prohibition with the threatening the greatest evil, *viz.* death; which could be understood to imply nothing less than the loss of all his happiness; and in that couched an assurance of the perpetuity of his felicity, if he did not, rebelliously, reach forth his hand to take and “eat of the fruit” (Gen. 2:16, 17). It is true God had given that fruit an excellency, “a goodness for food, and a pleasantness to the eye” (Gen. 3:6). He had given man an appetite, whereby he was capable of desiring so pleasant a fruit; but God had, by creation, arranged it under the command of reason, if man would have kept it in its due obedience; he had fixed a severe threatening to bar the unlawful excursions of it; he had allowed him a multitude of other fruits in the garden, and given him liberty enough to satisfy his curiosity in all, except this only. Could there be anything more obliging to man, to let God have his reserve of that one tree, than the grant of all the rest; and more deterring from any disobedient attempt than so strict a command, spirited with so dreadful a penalty? God did not solicit him to rebel against him; a solicitation to it, and a command against it, were inconsistent. The devil assaults him, and God permitted it, and stands, as it were, a spectator of the issue of the combat. There could be no necessity upon man to listen to, and entertain the suggestions of the serpent; he had a power to resist him, and he had an answer ready for all the devil’s arguments, had they been multiplied to more than they were; the opposing the order of God had been a sufficient confutation of all the devil’s plausible reasonings; that Creator, who hath given me my being, hath ordered me not to eat of it. Though the pleasure of the fruit might allure him, yet the force of his reason might have quelled the liquorishness of his sense; the perpetual thinking of, and sounding out, the command of God, had silenced both Satan and his own appetite; had disarmed the tempter, and preserved his sensitive part in its due subjection. What inclination can we suppose there could be from the Creator, when, upon the very first offer of the temptation, Eve opposes to the tempter the prohibition and threatening of God, and strains it to a higher peg than we find God had delivered it in? For in Gen. 2:17, it is, “You shall not eat of it;” but she adds (Gen. 3:3), “Neither shall you touch it;” which was a remark that might have had more influence to restrain her. Had our first parents kept this fixed upon their understandings and thoughts, that God had forbidden any such act as the eating of the fruit, and

that he was true to execute the threatening he had uttered, of which truth of God they could not but have a natural notion, with what ease might they have withstood the devil's attack, and defeated his design! And it had been easy with them, to have kept their understandings by the force of such a thought, from entertaining any contrary imagination. There is no ground for any jealousy of any encouragements, inward impulsions, or necessity from God in this affair. A discharge of God from this first sin will easily induce a freedom of him from all other sins which follow upon it. God doth not then encourage, or excite, or incline to sin. How can he excite to that which, when it is done, he will be sure to condemn? How can he be a righteous Judge to sentence a sinner to misery for a crime acted by a secret inspiration from himself? Iniquity would deserve no reproof from him, if he were any way positively the author of it. Were God the author of it in us, what is the reason our own consciences accuse us for it, and convince us of it? that, being God's deputy, would not accuse us of it, if the sovereign power by which it acts, did incline us to it. How can he be thought to excite to that which he hath enacted such severe laws to restrain, or incline man to that which he hath so dreadfully punished in his Son, and which it is impossible but the excellency of his nature must incline him eternally to hate? We may sooner imagine, that a pure flame shall engender cold, and darkness be the offspring of a sunbeam, as imagine such a thing as this. "What shall we say, is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." The apostle execrates such a thought (Rom. 9:14.)

6. God cannot act any evil, in or by himself. If he cannot approve of sin in others, nor excite any to iniquity, which is less, he cannot commit evil himself, which is greater; what he cannot positively will in another, can never be willed in himself; he cannot do evil through ignorance, because of his infinite knowledge; nor through weakness, because of his infinite power; nor through malice, because of his infinite rectitude. He cannot will any unjust thing, because, having an infinitely perfect understanding, he cannot judge that to be true which is false; or that to be good which is evil: his will is regulated by his wisdom. If he could will any unjust and irrational thing, his will would be repugnant to his understanding; there would be a disagreement in God, will against mind, and will against wisdom; he being the highest reason, the first truth, cannot

do an unreasonable, false, defective action. It is not a defect in God that he cannot do evil, but a fulness and excellency of power; as it is not a weakness in the light, but the perfection of it, that it is unable to produce darkness; "God is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness" (James 1:17). Nothing pleases him, nothing is acted by him, but what is beseeeming the infinite excellency of his own nature; the voluntary necessity whereby God cannot be unjust, renders him a God blessed forever; he would hate himself for the chief good, if, in any of his actions, he should disagree with his goodness. He cannot do any unworthy thing, not because he wants an infinite power, but because he is possessed of an infinite wisdom, and adorned with an infinite purity; and being infinitely pure, cannot have the least mixture of impurity. As if you can suppose fire infinitely hot, you cannot suppose it to have the least mixture of coldness; the better anything is, the more unable it is to do evil; God being the only goodness, can as little be changed in his goodness as in his essence.

II. . The next inquiry is, The proof that God is holy, or the manifestation of it. Purity is as requisite to the blessedness of God, as to the being of God; as he could not be God without being blessed, so he could not be blessed without being holy. He is called by the title of Blessed, as well as by that of holy (Mark 14:61); "Art thou the Christ, the son of the Blessed?" Unrighteousness is a misery and turbulency in any spirit wherein it is; for it is a privation of an excellency which ought to be in every intellectual being, and what can follow upon the privation of an excellency but unquietness and grief, the moth of happiness? An unrighteous man, as an unrighteous man, can never be blessed, though he were in a local heaven. Had God the least spot upon his purity, it would render him as miserable in the midst of his infinite sufficiency, as iniquity renders a man in the confluence of his earthly enjoyments. The holiness and felicity of God are inseparable in him. The apostle intimates that the heathen made an attempt to sully his blessedness, when they would liken him to corruptible, mutable, impure man (Rom. 1:23, 25): "They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image, made like to corruptible man;" and after, he entitles God a "God blessed forever." The gospel is therefore called, "The glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim. 1:11), in regard of the holiness of the gospel precepts, and in regard of the declaration of

the holiness of God in all the streams and branches, wherein his purity, in which his blessedness consists, is as illustrious as any other perfection of the Divine Being. God hath highly manifested this attribute in the state of nature; in the legal administration; in the dispensation of the gospel. His wisdom, goodness, and power, are declared in creation; his sovereign authority in his law; his grace and mercy in the gospel, and his righteousness in all. Suitable to this threefold state, may be that eternal repetition of his holiness in the prophecy (Isa. 6:3); holy, as Creator and Benefactor; holy, as Lawgiver and Judge; holy, as Restorer and Redeemer.

First, His holiness appears, as he is Creator, in framing man in a perfect uprightness. Angels, as made by God, could not be evil; for God beheld his own works with pleasure, and could not have pronounced them all good, had some been created pure, and others impure; two moral contrarieties could not be good. The angels had a first estate, wherein they were happy (Jude 6); and had they not left their own habitation and state, they could not have been miserable. But, because the Scripture speaks only of the creation of man, we will consider, that the human nature was well strung and tuned by God, according to the note of his own holiness (Eccles. 7:29); "God hath made man upright;" he had declared his power in other creatures, but would declare in his rational creature, what he most valued in himself; and, therefore, created him upright, with a wisdom which is the rectitude of the mind, with a purity which is the rectitude of the will and affections. He had declared a purity in other creatures, as much as they were capable of, viz. in the exact tuning them to answer one another. And that God, who so well tuned and composed other creatures, would not make man a jarring instrument, and place a cracked creature to be Lord of the rest of his earthly fabric. God, being holy, could not set his seal upon any rational creature, but the impression would be like himself, pure and holy also; he could not be created with an error in his understanding; that had been inconsistent with the goodness of God to his rational creature; if so, the erroneous motion of the will, which was to follow the dictates of the understanding, could not have been imputed to him as his crime, because it would have been, not a voluntary, but a necessary effect of his nature; had there been an error in the first wheel, the error of the next could not have been imputed to the nature of that, but to the irregular motion of the first wheel in the

engine. The sin of men and angels, proceeded not from any natural defect in their understandings, but from inconsideration; he that was the author of harmony in his other creatures, could not be the author of disorder in the chief of his works. Other creatures were his footsteps, but man was his image (Gen. 1:26, 27): "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" which, though it seems to imply no more in that place, than an image of his dominion over the creatures, yet the apostle raises it a peg higher, and gives us a larger interpretation of it (Col. 3:10): "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him;" making it to consist in a resemblance to his righteousness. Image, say some, notes the form, as man was a spirit in regard of his soul; likeness, notes the quality implanted in his spiritual nature; the image of God was drawn in him, both as he was a rational, and as he was a holy creature. The creatures manifested the being of a superior power, as their cause, but the righteousness of the first man evidenced, not only a sovereign power, as the donor of his being, but a holy power, as the pattern of his work. God appeared to be a holy God in the righteousness of his creature, as well as an understanding God in the reason of his creature, while he formed him with all necessary knowledge in his mind and all necessary uprightness in his will. The law of love to God, with his whole soul, his whole mind, his whole heart and strength, was originally written upon his nature; all the parts of his nature were framed in a moral conformity with God, to answer this law, and imitate God in his purity, which consists in a love of himself, and his own goodness and excellency. Thus doth the clearness of the stream point us to the purer fountain, and the brightness of the beam evidence a greater splendor in the sun which shot it out. Secondly, His holiness appears in his laws, as he is a Lawgiver and a Judge. Since man was bound to be subject to God, as a creature, and had a capacity to be ruled by the law, as an understanding and willing creature; God gave him a law, taken from the depths of his holy nature, and suited to the original faculties of man. The rules which God hath fixed in the world, are not the resolves of bare will, but result particularly from the goodness of his nature; they are nothing else but the transcripts of his infinite detestation of sin, as he is the unblemished governor of the world. This being the most adorable property of his nature, he hath impressed it upon that law which he would have inviolably observed

as a perpetual rule for our actions, that we may every moment think of this beautiful perfection. God can command nothing but what hath some similitude with the rectitude of his own nature; all his laws, every paragraph of them, therefore, scent of this, and glitter with it (Deut.

4:8): “What nation hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law I set before you this day?” and, therefore, they are compared to fine gold, that hath no speck or dross (Psalm 19:10).

This purity is evident—1. In the moral law, or law of nature. 2. In the ceremonial law. 3. In the allurements annexed to it, for keeping it, and the affrightments to restrain from the breaking of it. 4. In the judgments inflicted for the violation of it.

1. In the moral law: which is therefore dignified with the title of Holy, twice in one verse (Rom. 7:12): “Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good;” it being the express image of God’s will, as our Saviour was of his person, and bearing a resemblance to the purity of his nature. The tables of this law were put into the ark, that, as the mercy seat was to represent the grace of God, so the law was to represent the holiness of God (Psalm 19:1). The Psalmist, after he had spoken of the glory of God in the heavens, wherein the power of God is exposed to our view, introduceth the law, wherein the purity of God is evidenced to our minds (ver. 7, 8, &c.): “Perfect, pure, clean, righteous,” are the titles given to it. It is clearer in holiness than the sun is in brightness; and more mighty in itself, to command the conscience, than the sun is to run its race. As the holiness of the Scripture demonstrates the divinity of its Author; so the holiness of the law doth the purity of the Lawgiver.

(1.) The purity of this law is seen in the matter of it. It prescribes all that becomes a creature towards God, and all that becomes one creature towards another of his own rank and kind. The image of God is complete in the holiness of the first table, and the righteousness of the second; which is intimated by the apostle (Eph. 4:24), the one being the rule of what we owe to God, the other being the rule of what we owe to man: there is no good but it enjoins, and no evil but it disowns. It is not sickly and lame in any part of it; not a good action, but it gives it its due praise; and not an evil action, but

it sets a condemning mark upon. The commands of it are frequently in Scripture called judgments, because they rightly judge of good and evil; and are a clear light to inform the judgment of man in the knowledge of both. By this was the understanding of David enlightened to know every false way, and to “hate it” (Psalm 119:104). There is no case can happen, but may meet with a determination from it; it teaches men the noblest manner of living a life like God himself; honorably for the Lawgiver, and joyfully for the subject. It directs us to the highest end; sets us at a distance from all base and sordid practices; it proposeth light to the understanding, and goodness to the will. It would tune all the strings, set right all the orders of mankind: it censures the least mote, countenanceth not any stain in the life. Not a wanton glance can meet with any justification from it (Matt. 5:28); not a rash anger but it frowns upon (ver. 22). As the Lawgiver wants nothing as an addition to his blessedness, so his law wants nothing as a supplement to its perfection (Deut. 4:2). What our Saviour seems to add, is not an addition to mend any defects, but a restoration of it from the corrupt glosses, wherewith the Scribes and Pharisees had eclipsed the brightness of it: they had curtailed it, and diminished part of its authority, cutting off its empire over the least evil, and left its power only to check the grosser practices. But Christ restores it to the due extent of its sovereignty, and shows it those dimensions in which the holy men of God considered it as “exceeding broad” (Psalm 119:96), reaching to all actions, all motions, all circumstances attending them; full of inexhaustible treasures of righteousness. And though this law, since the fall, doth irritate sin, it is no disparagement, but a testimony to the righteousness of it; which the apostle manifests by his “Wherefore (Rom. 7:8), sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence;” and repeating the same sense (ver. 11), subjoins a, “Wherefore” (ver. 12), “Wherefore the law is holy.” The rising of men’s sinful hearts against the law of God, when it strikes with its preceptive and minatory parts upon their consciences, evidenceth the holiness of the law and the Lawgiver. In its own nature it is a directing rule, but the malignant nature of sin is exasperated by it; as an hostile quality in a creature will awaken itself at the appearance of its enemy. The purity of this beam, and transcript of God, bears witness to a greater clearness and beauty in the sun and original.

Undefiled streams manifest an untainted fountain.

(2.) It is seen in the manner of its precepts. As it prescribes all good, and forbids all evil, so it doth enjoin the one, and banish the other as such. The laws of men command virtuous things; not as virtuous in themselves, but as useful for human society; which the magistrate is the conservator of, and the guardian of justice. The laws of men contain not all the precepts of virtue, but only such as are accommodated to their customs, and are useful to preserve the ligaments of their government. The design of them is not so much to render the subjects good men, as good citizens: they order the practice of those virtues that may strengthen civil society, and discountenance those vices only which weaken the sinew's of it: but God, being the guardian of universal righteousness, doth not only enact the observance of all righteousness, but the observance of it as righteousness. He commands that which is just in itself, enjoins virtues as virtues, and prohibits vices as vices: as they are profitable or injurious to ourselves, as well as to others. Men command temperance and justice; not as virtues in themselves, but as they prevent disorder and confusion in a commonwealth; and forbid adultery and theft, not as vices in themselves, but as they are intrenchments upon property; not as hurtful to the person that commits them, but as hurtful to the person against whose right they are committed. Upon this account, perhaps, Paul applauds the holiness of the law of God in regard of its own nature, as considered in itself; more than he doth the justice of it in regard of man, and the goodness and conveniency of it to the world (Rom. 7:12); the law is holy twice, and just and good but once.

(3.) In the spiritual extent of it. The most righteous powers of the world do not so much regard in their laws what the inward affections of their subjects are: the external acts are only the objects of their decrees, either to encourage them if they be useful, or discourage them if they be hurtful to the community. And, indeed, they can do no other, for they have no power proportioned to inward affections, since the inward disposition falls not under their censure; and it would be foolish for any legislative power to make such laws, which it is impossible for it to put in execution. They can prohibit the outward acts of theft and murder, but they cannot command the love of God, the hatred of sin, the contempt of the world; they

cannot prohibit unclean thoughts, and the atheism of the heart. But the law of God surmounts in righteousness all the laws of the best-regulated commonwealths in the world: it restrains the licentious heart, as well as the violent hand; it damps the very first bubblings of corrupt nature, orders a purity in the spring, commands a clean fountain, clean streams, clean vessels. It would frame the heart to an inward, as well as the life to an outward righteousness, and make the inside purer than the outside. It forbids the first belchings of a murderous or adulterous intention: it obligeth a man as a rational creature, and therefore exacts a conformity of every rational faculty, and of whatsoever is under the command of them. It commands the private closet to be free from the least cobweb, as well as the outward porch to be clean from mire and dirt. It frowns upon all stains and pollutions of the most retired thoughts: hence the apostle calls it a "spiritual law" (Rom. 7:14), as not political, but extending its force further than the frontiers of the man; placing its ensigns in the metropolis of the heart and mind, and curbing with its sceptre the inward motions of the spirit, and commanding over the secrets of every man's breast.

(4). In regard of the perpetuity of it. The purity and perpetuity of it are linked together by the Psalmist (Psalm 19:9): "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever;" the fear of the Lord, that is, that law which commands the fear and worship of God, and is the rule of it. And, indeed, God values it at such a rate, that rather than part with a tittle, or let the honor of it be in the dust, he would not only let "heaven and earth pass away," but expose his Son to death for the reparation of the wrong it had sustained. So holy it is, that the holiness and righteousness of God cannot dispense with it, cannot abrogate it, without despoiling himself of his own being: it is a copy of the eternal law. Can he ever abrogate the command of love to himself, without showing some contempt of his own excellency and very being? Before he can enjoin a creature not to love him, he must make himself unworthy of love, and worthy of hatred; this would be the highest unrighteousness, to order us to hate that which is only worthy of our highest affections. So God cannot change the first command, and order us to worship many gods; this would be against the excellency and unity of God: for God cannot constitute another God, or make anything worthy of an honor equal with himself. Those things that are good, only because they are commanded, are

alterable by God those things that are intrinsically and essentially good, and therefore commanded, are unalterable as long as the holiness and righteousness of God stand firm. The intrinsic goodness of the moral law, the concern God hath for it; the perpetuity of the precepts of the first table, and the care he hath had to imprint the precepts of the second upon the minds and consciences of men, as the Author of nature for the preservation of the world, manifests the holiness of the Lawmaker and Governor.

2. His holiness appears in the ceremonial law: in the variety of sacrifices for sin, wherein he writ his detestation of unrighteousness in bloody characters. His holiness was more constantly expressed in the continual sacrifices, than in those rarer sprinklings of judgments now and then upon the world; which often reached, not the worst, but the most moderate sinners, and were the occasions of the questioning of the righteousness of his providence both by Jews and Gentiles. In judgments his purity was only now and then manifest: by his long patience, he might be imagined by some reconciled to their crimes, or not much concerned in them; but by the morning and evening sacrifice he witnessed a perpetual and uninterrupted abhorrence of whatsoever was evil. Besides those, the occasional washings and sprinklings upon ceremonial defilements, which polluted only the body, gave an evidence, that everything that had a resemblance to evil, was loathsome to him. Add, also, the prohibitions of eating such and such creatures that were filthy; as the swine that wallowed in the mire, a fit emblem for the profane and brutish sinner; which had a moral signification, both of the loathsomeness of sin to God, and the aversion themselves ought to have to everything that was filthy.

3. This holiness appears in the allurements annexed to the law for keeping it, and the affrightments to restrain from the breaking of it. Both promises and threatenings have their fundamental root in the holiness of God, and are both branches of this peculiar perfection. As they respect the nature of God, they are declarations of his hatred of sin, and his love of righteousness; the one belong to his threatenings, the other to his promises; both join together to represent this divine perfection to the creature, and to excite to an imitation in the creature. In the one, God would render sin odious, because dangerous, and curb the practice of evil, which would

otherwise be licentious; in the other, he would commend righteousness, and excite a love of it, which would otherwise be cold. By there God suits the two great affections of men, fear and hope; both the branches of self-love in man: the promises and threatenings are both the branches of holiness in God. The end of the promises is the same with the exhortation the apostle concludes from them (2 Cor. 7:1); "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." As the end of precept is to direct, the end of threatenings is to deter from iniquity, so that the promises is to allure to obedience. Thus God breathes out his love to righteousness in every promise; his hatred of sin in every threatening. The rewards offered in the one, are the smiles of pleased holiness; and the curses thundered in the other, are the sparklings of enraged righteousness.

4. His holiness appears in the judgment inflicted for the violation of this law. Divine holiness is the root of Divine justice, and Divine justice is the triumph of Divine holiness. Hence both are expressed in Scripture by one word of righteousness, which sometimes signifies the rectitude of the Divine nature, and sometimes the vindicative stroke of his arm (Psalm 103:6); "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." So (Dan. 9:7) "Righteousness (that is, justice) belongs to thee." The vials of his wrath are filled from his implacable aversion to iniquity. All penal evils shower down upon the heads of wicked men, spread their root in, and branch out from, this perfection. All the dreadful storms and tempests in the world are blown up by it. Why doth he "rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest!" Because "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness" (Psalm 11:6, 7). And, as was observed before, when he was going about the dreadfullest work that ever was in the world, the overturning the Jewish state, hardening the hearts of that unbelieving people, and cashiering a nation, once dear to him, from the honor of his protection; his holiness, as the spring of all this, is applauded by the seraphims (Isa. 6:3, compared with ver. 9-11), &c. Impunity argues the approbation of a crime, and punishment the abhorrency of it. The greatness of the crime, and the righteousness of the Judge, are the first natural sentiments that arise in the minds of men upon the appearance of Divine judgments in the world, by those that are near them; as, when men see gibbets erected, scaffolds

prepared, instruments of death and torture provided, and grievous punishments inflicted, the first reflection in the spectator is the malignity of the crime, and the detestation the governors are possessed with.

(1). How severely Hath he punished his most noble creatures for it. The once glorious angels, upon whom he had been at greater cost than upon any other creatures, and drawn more lively lineaments of his own excellency, upon the transgression of his law, are thrown into the furnace of justice, without any mercy to pity them (Jude 6). And though there were but one sort of creatures upon the earth that bore his image, and were only fit to publish and keep up his honor below the heavens, yet, upon their apostasy, though upon a temptation from a subtle and insinuating spirit, the man, with all his posterity, is sentenced to misery in life, and death at last; and the woman, with all her sex, have standing punishments inflicted on them, which, as they begun in their persons, were to reach as far as the last member of their successive generations. So holy is God, that he will not endure a spot in his choicest work. Men, indeed, when there is a crack in an excellent piece of work, or a stain upon a rich garment, do not cast, it away; they value it for the remaining excellency, more than hate it for the contracted spot; but God saw no excellency in his creature worthy regarding, after the image of that which he most esteemed in himself was defaced.

(2). How detestable to him are the very instruments of sin! For the ill use the serpent, an irrational creature, was put to by the devil, as an instrument in the fall of man, the whole brood of those animals are cursed (Gen. 3:14), “cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field.” Not only the devil’s head is threatened to be for ever bruised, and, as some think, rendered irrecoverable upon this further testimony of his malice in the seduction of man, who, perhaps, without this new act, might have been admitted into the arms of mercy, notwithstanding his first sin; “though the Scripture gives us no account of this, only this is the only sentence we read of pronounced against the devil, which puts him into an irrecoverable state by a mortal bruising of his head.” But, I say, he is not only punished, but the organ, whereby he blew in his temptation, is put into a worse condition than it was before. Thus God hated the sponge, whereby the devil deformed his beautiful image: thus God,

to manifest his detestation of sin, ordered the beast, whereby any man was slain, to be slain as well as the malefactor (Lev. 20:15). The gold and silver that had been abused to idolatry, and were the ornaments of images, though good in themselves, and incapable of a criminal nature, were not to be brought into their houses, but detested and abhorred by them, because they were cursed, and an abomination to the Lord. See with what loathing expressions this law is enjoined to them (Deut. 7:25, 26). So contrary is the holy nature of God to every sin, that it curseth everything that is instrumental in it.

(3.) How detestable is everything to him that is in the sinner's possession! The very earth, which God had made Adam the proprietor of, was cursed for his sake (Gen. 3:17, 18). It lost its beauty, and lies languishing to this day; and, notwithstanding the redemption by Christ, hath not recovered its health, nor is it like to do, till the completing the fruits of it upon the children of God (Rom. 8:20–22). The whole lower creation was made subject to vanity, and put into pangs, upon the sin of man, by the righteousness of God detesting his offence. How often hath his implacable aversion from sin been shown, not only in his judgments upon the offender's person, but by wrapping up, in the same judgment, those which stood in a near relation to them! Achan, with his children and cattle, are overwhelmed with stones, and burned together (Josh. 7:24, 25). In the destruction of Sodom, not only the grown malefactors, but the young spawn, the infants, at present incapable of the same wickedness, and their cattle, were burned up by the same fire from heaven; and the place where their habitations stood, is, at this day, partly a heap of ashes, and partly an infectious lake, that chokes any fish that swims into it from Jordan, and stifles, as is related, by its vapor, any bird that attempts to fly over it. O, how detestable is sin to God, that causes him to turn a pleasant land, as the "garden of the Lord" (as it is styled Gen. 13:10), into a lake of sulphur; to make it, both in his word and works, as a lasting monument of his abhorrence of evil.

(4.) What design hath God in all these acts of severity and vindictive justice, but to set off the lustre of his holiness? He testifies himself concerned for those laws, which he hath set as hedges and limits to the lusts of men; and, therefore, when he

breathes forth his fiery indignation against a people, he is said to get himself honor: as when he intended the hued Sea, should swallow up the Egyptian army (Exod. 14:17, 18), which Moses, in his triumphant song, echoes back again (Exod. 15:1): “Thou hast triumphed gloriously;” gloriously in his holiness, which is the glory of his nature, as Moses himself interprets it in the text. When men will not own the holiness of God, in a way of duty, God will vindicate it in a way of justice and punishment. In the destruction of Aaron’s sons, that were will-worshippers, and would take strange fire, “sanctified” and “glorified” are coupled (Lev. 10:3): he glorified himself in that act, in vindicating his holiness before all the people, declaring that he will not endure sin and disobedience. He doth therefore, in this life, more severely punish the sins of his people, when they presume upon any act of disobedience, for a testimony that the nearness and dearness of any person to him shall not make him unconcerned in his holiness, or be a plea for impurity. The end of all his judgments is to witness to the world his abominating of sin. To punish and witness against men, are one and the same thing (Micah 1:2): “The Lord shall witness against you;” and it is the witness of God’s holiness (Hos. 5:5): “And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face:” one renders it the excellency of Israel, and understands it of God: the word יָדָג, which is here in our translation, “pride,” is rendered “excellency” (Amos 8:7): “The Lord God hath sworn by his excellency;” which is interpreted “holiness” (Amos 4:2) “The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness.” What is the issue or end of this swearing by “holiness,” and of his “excellency” testifying against them? In all those places, you will find them to be sweeping judgments: in one, Israel and Ephraim shall “fall in their iniquity;” in another, he will “take them away with hooks,” and “their posterity with fish-hooks;” and in another, he would “never forget any of their works.” He that punisheth wickedness in those he before used with the greatest tenderness, furnisheth the world with an undeniable evidence of the detestableness of it to him. Were not judgments sometimes poured out upon the world, it would be believed that God were rather an approver than an enemy to sin. To conclude, since God hath made a stricter law to guide men, annexed promises above the merit of obedience to allure them, and threatenings dreadful enough to affright men from disobedience, he cannot be the cause of sin, nor a lover of it. How can he be the

author of that which he so severely forbids; or love that which he delights to punish; or be fondly indulgent to any evil, when he hates the ignorant instruments in the offences of his reasonable creatures?

Thirdly. The holiness of God appears in our restoration. It is in the glass of the gospel we behold the “glory of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18); that is, the glory of the Lord, into whose image we are changed; but we are changed into nothing, as the image of God, but into holiness: we bore not upon us by creation, nor by regeneration, the image of any other perfection: we cannot be changed into his omnipotence, omniscience, &c., but into the image of his righteousness. This is the pleasing and glorious sight the gospel mirror darts in our eyes. The whole scene of redemption is nothing else but a discovery of judgment and righteousness (Isa. 1:27): “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.”

1. This holiness of God appears in the manner of our restoration, *viz.* by the death of Christ. Not all the vials of judgments, that have, or shall be poured out upon the wicked world, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner’s conscience, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against the rebellious devils, nor the groans of the damned creatures, give such a demonstration of God’s hatred of sin, as the wrath of God let loose upon his Son. Never did Divine holiness appear more beautiful and lovely, than at the time our Saviour’s countenance was most marred in the midst of his dying groans. This himself acknowledges in that prophetic psalm (22:1, 2), when God had turned his smiling face from him, and thrust his sharp knife into his heart, which forced that terrible cry from him, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He adores this perfection of holiness (ver. 3), “But thou art holy;” thy holiness is the spring of all this sharp agony, and for this thou inhabitest, and shalt forever inhabit, the praises of all thy Israel.

Holiness drew the veil between God’s countenance and our Saviour’s soul. Justice indeed gave the stroke, but holiness ordered it. In this his purity did sparkle, and his irreversible justice manifested that all those that commit sin are worthy of death; this was the perfect index of his “righteousness” (Rom. 3:25), that is, of his holiness and truth; then it was that God that is holy, was “sanctified in righteousness” (Isa. 5:16). It appears the more, if you

consider,

(1.) The dignity of the Redeemer's person. One that had been from eternity; had laid the foundations of the world; had been the object of the Divine delight: he that was God blessed forever, become a curse; he who was blessed by angels, and by whom God blessed the world, must be seized with horror; the Son of eternity must bleed to death! When did ever sin appear so irreconcilable to God? Where did God ever break out so furiously in his detestation of iniquity? The Father would have the most excellent person, one next in order to himself, and equal to him in all the glorious perfections of his nature (Phil. 2:6), die on a disgraceful cross, and be exposed to the flames of Divine wrath, rather than sin should live, and his holiness remain forever disparaged by the violations of his law.

(2.) The near relation he stood in to the Father. He was his "own Son that he delivered up" (Rom.

8:32); his essential image, as dearly beloved by him as himself; yet he would abate nothing of his hatred of those sins imputed to one so dear to him, and who never had done anything contrary to his will. The strong cries uttered by him could not cause him to cut off the least fringe of this royal garment, nor part with a thread the robe of his holiness was woven with. The torrent of wrath is opened upon him, and the Father's heart beats not in the least notice of tenderness to sin, in the midst of his Son's agonies. God seems to lay aside the bowels of a father, and put on the garb of an irreconcilable enemy, upon which account, probably, our Saviour in the midst of his passion gives him the title of God; not of Father, the title he usually before addressed to him with, (Matt. 27:46), "My God, my God;" not, My Father, my Father; "why hast thou forsaken me?" He seems to hang upon the cross like a disinherited son, while he appeared in the garb and rank of a sinner. Then was his head loaded with curses, when he stood under that sentence of "Cursed is every one that hangs upon a tree" (Gal. 3:13), and looked as one forlorn and rejected by the Divine purity and tenderness. God dealt not with him as if he had been one in so near a relation to him. He left him not to the will only of the instruments of his death; he would have the chiefest blow himself of bruising of him (Isa. 53:10): "It pleased the Lord to bruise him:" the Lord, because the power of creatures could

not strike a blow strong enough to satisfy and secure the rights of infinite holiness. It was therefore a cup tempered and put into his hands by his Father; a cup given him to drink. In other judgments he lets out his wrath against his creatures; in this he lets out his wrath, as it were, against himself, against his Son, one as dear to him as himself. As in his making creatures, his power over nothing to bring it into being appeared; but in pardoning sin he hath power over himself; so in punishing creatures, his holiness appears in his wrath against creatures, against sinners by inherency; but by punishing sin in his Son, his holiness sharpens his wrath against him who was his equal, and only a reputed sinner; as if his affection to his own holiness surmounted his affection to his Son: for he chose to suspend the breakings out of his affections to his Son, and see him plunged in a sharp and ignominious misery, without giving him any visible token of his love, rather than see his holiness he groaning under the injuries of a transgressing world.

(3.) The value he puts upon his holiness appears further, in the advancement of this redeeming person, after his death. Our Saviour was advanced, not barely for his dying, but for the respect he had in his death to this attribute of God (Heb. 1:9): "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness," &c. By righteousness is meant this perfection, because of the opposition of it to iniquity. Some think "therefore" to be the final cause; as if this were the sense, "Thou art anointed with the oil of gladness, that thou mightest love righteousness and hate iniquity." But the Holy Ghost seeming to speak in this chapter not only of the Godhead of Christ but of his exaltation; the doctrine whereof he had begun in ver. 3, and prosecutes in the following verses, I would rather understand "therefore," for "this cause, or reason, hath God anointed thee;" not "to this end." Christ indeed had an unction of grace, whereby he was fitted for his mediatory work; he had also an unction of glory, whereby he was rewarded for it. In the first regard, it was a qualifying him for his office; in the second regard, it was a solemn inaugurating him in his royal authority. And the reason of his being settled upon a "throne for ever and ever," is, "because he loved righteousness." He suffered himself to be pierced to death, that sin, the enemy of God's purity, might be destroyed, and the honor of the law, the image of God's holiness, might be repaired and fulfilled in

the fallen creature. He restored the credit of Divine holiness in the world, in manifesting, by his death, God an irreconcilable enemy to all sin; in abolishing the empire of sin, so hateful to God, and restoring the rectitude of nature, and new framing the image of God in his chosen ones. And God so valued this vindication of his holiness, that he confers upon him, in his human nature, an eternal royalty and empire over angels and men. Holiness was the great attribute respected by Christ in his dying, and manifested in his death; and for his love to this, God would bestow an honor upon his person, in that nature wherein he did vindicate the honor of so dear a perfection. In the death of Christ, he showed his resolution to preserve its rights; in the exaltation of Christ, he evinced his mighty pleasure for the vindication of it; in both, the infinite value he had for it, as dear to him as his life and glory.

(4.) It may be further considered, that in this way of redemption, his holiness in the hatred of sin seems to be valued above any other attribute. He proclaims the value of it above the person of his Son; since the Divine nature of the Redeemer is disguised, obscured, and veiled, in order to the restoring the honor of it. And Christ seems to value it above his own person, since he submitted himself to the reproaches of men, to clear this perfection of the Divine nature, and make it illustrious in the eyes of the world. You heard before, at the beginning of the handling this argument, it was the beauty of the Deity, the lustre of his nature, the link of all his attributes, his very life; he values it equal with himself, since he swears by it, as well as by his life; and none of his attributes would have a due decorum without it; it is the glory of power, mercy, justice, and wisdom, that they are all holy; so that though God had an infinite tenderness and compassion to the fallen creature, yet it should not extend itself in his relief to the prejudice of the rights of his purity: he would have this triumph in the tenderness of his mercy, as well as the severities of his justice. His mercy had not appeared in its true colors, nor attained a regular end, without vengeance on sin. It would have been a compassion that would, in sparing the sinner, have encouraged the sin, and affronted holiness in the issues of it: had he dispersed his compassions about the world, without the regard to his hatred of sin, his mercy had been too cheap, and his holiness had been contemned; his mercy would not have triumphed in his own nature, whilst his holiness had suffered; he had exercised a mercy with the impairing

his own glory; but now, in this way of redemption, the rights of both are secured, both have their due lustre: the odiousness of sin is equally discovered with the greatest of his compassions; an infinite abhorrence of sin, and an infinite love to the world, march hand in hand together. Never was so much of the irreconcilableness of sin to him set forth, as in the moment he was opening his bowels in the reconciliation of the sinner. Sin is made the chiefest mark of his displeasure, while the poor creature is made the highest object of Divine pity. There could have been no motion of mercy, with the least injury to purity and holiness. In this way mercy and truth, mercy to the misery of the creature, and truth to the purity of the law, “have met together;” the righteousness of God, and the peace of the sinner, “have kissed each other” (Psalm 85:10).

2. The holiness of God in his hatred of sin appears in our justification, and the conditions he requires of all that would enjoy the benefit of redemption. His wisdom hath so tempered all the conditions of it, that the honor of his holiness is as much preserved, as the sweetness of his mercy is experimented by us; all the conditions are records of his exact purity, as well as of his condescending grace. Our justification is not by the imperfect works of creatures, but by an exact and infinite righteousness, as great as that of the Deity which had been offended: it being the righteousness of a Divine person, upon which account it is called the righteousness of God; not only in regard of God’s appointing it, and God’s accepting it, but as it is a righteousness of that person that was God, and is God. Faith is the condition God requires to justification; but not a dead, but an active faith, such a “faith as purifies the heart” (James 2:20; Acts 15:9). He calls for repentance, which is a moral retracting our offences, and an approbation of contemned righteousness and a violated law; an endeavor to gain what is lost, and to pluck out the heart of that sin we have committed. He requires mortification, which is called crucifying; whereby a man would strike as full and deadly a blow at his lusts, as was struck at Christ upon the cross, and make them as certainly die, as the Redeemer did. Our own righteousness must be condemned by us, as impure and imperfect: we must disown everything that is our own, as to righteousness, in reverence to the holiness of God, and the valuation of the righteousness of Christ. He hath resolved not to bestow the inheritance of glory without the root of grace. None are

partakers of the Divine blessedness that are not partakers of the Divine nature: there must be a renewing of his image before there be a vision of his face (Heb. 12:14). He will not have men brought only into a relative state of happiness by justification, without a real state of grace by sanctification; and so resolved he is in it, that there is no admittance into heaven of a starting, but a persevering holiness (Rom. 2:7), “a patient continuance in well-doing:” patient, under the sharpness of affliction, and continuing, under the pleasures of prosperity. Hence it is that the gospel, the restoring doctrine, hath not only the motives of rewards to allure to good, and the danger of punishments to scare us from evil, as the law had; but they are set forth in a higher strain, in a way of stronger engagement; the rewards are heavenly, and the punishments eternal: and more powerful motives besides, from the choicer expressions of God’s love in the death of his Son. The whole design of it is to reinstate us in a resemblance to this Divine perfection; whereby he shows what an affection he hath to this excellency of his nature, and what a detestation he hath of evil, which is contrary to it.

3. It appears in the actual regeneration of the redeemed souls, and a carrying it on to a full perfection. As election is the effect of God’s sovereignty, our pardon the fruit of his mercy, our knowledge a stream from his wisdom, our strength an impression of his power; so our purity is a beam from his holiness. The whole work of sanctification, and the preservation of it, our Saviour begs for his disciples of his Father, under this title (John 17:11, 17): “Holy Father, keep them through thy own name,” and “sanctify them through thy truth;” as the proper source whence holiness was to flow to the creature: as the sun is the proper fountain whence light is derived, both to the stars above, and the bodies here below. Whence He is not only called Holy, but the Holy One of Israel (Isa. 43:15), “I am the Lord your Holy One, the Creator of Israel:” displaying his holiness in them, by a new creation of them as his Israel. As the rectitude of the creature at the first creation was the effect of his holiness, so the purity of the creature, by a new creation, is a draught of the same perfection. He is called the Holy One of Israel more in Isaiah, that evangelical prophet, in erecting Zion, and forming a people for himself; than in the whole Scripture besides. As he sent Jesus Christ to satisfy his justice for the expiation of the guilt of sin, so he sends the Holy Ghost for the cleansing of the filth of sin, and

overmastering the power of it: Himself is the fountain, the Son is the pattern, and the Holy Ghost the immediate imprinter of this stamp of holiness upon the creature. God hath such a value for this attribute, that he designs the glory of this in the renewing the creature, more than the happiness of the creature; though the one doth necessarily follow upon the other, yet the one is the principal design, and the other the consequent of the former: whence our salvation is more frequently set forth, in Scripture, by a redemption from sin, and sanctification of the soul, than by a possession of heaven. Indeed, as God could not create a rational creature, without interesting this attribute in a special manner, so he cannot restore the fallen creature without it. As in creating a rational creature, there must be holiness to adorn it, as well as wisdom to form the design, and power to effect it; so in the restoration of the creature, as he could not inake a reasonable creature unholy, so he cannot restore a fallen creature, and put him in a meet posture to take pleasure in him, without communicating to him a resemblance of himself. As God cannot be blessed in himself without this perfection of purity, so neither can a creature be blessed without it. As God would be unlovely to himself without this attribute, so would the creature be unlovely to God, without a stamp and mark of it upon his nature. So much is this perfection one with God, valued by hiin, and interested in all his works and ways!

III. he third thing I am to do, is to lay down some proposition in the defence of God's holiness in all his acts, about, or concerning sin. It was a prudent and pious advice of Camero, not to be too busy and rash in inquiries and conclusions about the reason of God's providence in the matter of sin. The Scripture hath put a bar in the way of such curiosity, by telling us, that the ways of God's wisdom and righteousness in his judgments are "unsearchable" (Rom. 11:33): much more the ways of God's holiness , as he stands in relation to sin, as a Governor of the world; we cannot consider those things without danger of slipping: our eyes are too weak to look upon the sun without being dazzled: too much curiosity met with a just check in our first parent. To be desirous to know the reason of all God's proceedings in the matter of sin, is to second the ambition of Adam, to be as wise as God, and know the reason of his actings equally with himself. It is more easy, as the same author saith, to give an account of God's providence since the revolt of man, and the

poison that hath universally seized upon human nature, than to make guesses at the manner of the fall of the first man. The Scripture hath given us but a short account of the manner of it, to discourage too curious inquiries into it. It is certain that God made man upright; and when man sinned in paradise, God was active in sustaining the substantial nature and act of the sinner while he was sinning, though not in supporting the sinfulness of the act: he was permissive in suffering it: he was negative in withholding that grace which might certainly have prevented his crime, and consequently his ruin; though he withheld nothing that was sufficient for his resistance of that temptation wherewith he was assaulted. And since the fall of man, God, as a wise governor, is directive of the events of the transgression, and draws the choicest good out of the blackest evil, and limits the sins of men, that they creep not so far as the evil nature of men would urge them to; and as a righteous Judge, he takes away the talent from idle servants, and the light from wicked ones, whereby they stumble and fall into crimes, by the inclinations and proneness of their own corrupt natures, leaves them to the bias of their own vicious habits, denies that grace which they have forfeited, and have no right to challenge, and turns their sinful actions into punishments, both to the committers of them and others.

Prop. I. God's holiness is not chargeable with any blemish for his creating man in a mutable state. It is true, angels and men were created with a changeable nature; as though there was a rich and glorious stamp upon them by the hand of God, yet their natures were not incapable of a base and vile stamp from some other principle: as the silver which bears upon it the image of a great prince, is capable of being melted down, and imprinted with no better an image than that of some vile and monstrous beast. Though God made man upright, yet he was capable of seeking "many inventions" (Eccl. 7:29); yet the hand of God was not defiled by forming man with such a nature. It was suitable to the wisdom of God to give the rational creature, whom he had furnished with a power of acting righteously, the liberty of choice, and not fix him in an unchangeable state without a trial of him in his natural; that if he did obey, his obedience might be the more valuable; and if he did freely offend, his offence might be more inexcusable.

1. No creature can be capable of immutability by nature.

Mutability is so essential to a creature, that a creature cannot be supposed without it; you must suppose it a Creator, not a creature, if you allow it to be of an immutable nature. Immutability is the property of the Supreme Being. God “only hath immortality” (1 Tim. 6:16); immortality, as opposed not only to a natural, but to a sinful death; the word only appropriates every sort of immortality to God, and excludes every creature, whether angel or man, from a partnership with God in this by nature. Every creature, therefore, is capable of a death in sin. “None is good but God,” and none is naturally free from change but God, which excludes every creature from the same prerogative; and certainly, if one angel sinned, all might have sinned, because there was the same root of mutability in one as well as another: It is as possible for a creature to be a Creator, as for a creature to have naturally an incommunicable property of the Creator. All things, whether angels or men, are made of nothing, and therefore, capable of defection; because a creature being made of nothing, cannot be good, *per essentiam*, or essentially good, but by participation from another. Again, every rational creature, being made of nothing, hath a superior which created him and governs him, and is capable of a precept; and, consequently, capable of disobedience as well as obedience to the precept, to transgress it, as well as obey it. God cannot sin, because he can have no superior to impose a precept on him. A rational creature, with a liberty of will and power of choice, cannot be made by nature of such a mould and temper, but he must be as well capable of choosing wrong, as of choosing right; and, therefore, the standing angels, and glorified saints, though they are immutable, it is not by nature that they are so, but by grace, and the good pleasure of God; for though they are in heaven, they have still in their nature a remote power of sinning, but it shall never be brought into act, because God will always incline their wills to love him, and never concur with their wills to any evil act. Since, therefore, mutability is essential to a creature as a creature, this changeableness cannot properly be charged upon God as the author of it; for it was not the term of God’s creating act, but did necessarily result from the nature of the creature, as unchangeableness doth result from the essence of God. The brittleness of a glass is no blame to the art of him that blew up the glass into such a fashion; that imperfection of brittleness is not from the workman, but the matter; so, though unchangeableness be an

imperfection, yet it is so necessary a one, that no creature can be naturally without it; besides, though angels and men were mutable by creation, and capable to exercise their wills, yet they were not necessitated to evil, and this mutability did not infer a necessity that they should fall, because some angels, which had the same root of changeableness in their natures with those that fell, did not fall, which they would have done, if capableness of changing, and necessity of changing, were one and the same thing.

2. Though God made the creature mutable, yet he made him not evil. There could be nothing of evil in him that God created after his own image, and pronounced “good” (Gen. 1:27, 31). Man had an ability to stand, as well as a capacity to fall: he was created with a principle of acting freely, whereby he was capable of loving God as his chief good, and moving to him as his last end; there was a beam of light in man’s understanding to know the rule he was to conform to, a harmony between his reason and his affections, an original righteousness: so that it seemed more easy for him to determine his will to continue in obedience to the precept, than to swerve from it; to adhere to God as his chief good, than to listen to the charms of Satan. God created him with those advantages, that he might with more facility have kept his eyes fixed upon the Divine beauty, than turn his back upon it, and with greater ease have kept the precept God gave him, than have broken it. The very first thought darted, or impression made, by God, upon the angelical or human nature, was the knowledge of himself as their Author, and could be no more than such whereby both angels and men might be excited to a love of that adorable Being, that had framed them so gloriously out of nothing; and if they turned their wills and affections to another object it was not by the direction of God, but contrary to the impression God had made upon them, or the first thought he flashed into them. They turned themselves to the admiring their own excellency, or affecting an advantage distinct from that which they were to look for only from God (1 Tim. 3:6). Pride was the cause of the condemnation of the devil. Though the wills of angels and men were created mutable, and so were imperfect, yet they were not created evil. Though they might sin, yet they might not sin, and, therefore, were not evil in their own nature. What reflection, then, could this mutability of their nature be upon God?

So far is it from any, that he is fully cleared, by storing up in the nature of man sufficient provision against his departure from him. God was so far from creating him evil, that he fortified him with a knowledge in his understanding, and a strength in his nature to withstand any invasion. The knowledge was exercised by Eve, in the very moment of the serpent's assaulting her (Gen. 3:3); Eve said to the serpent, "God hath said, ye shall not eat of it:" and had her thoughts been intent upon this, "God hath said," and not diverted to the motions of the sensitive appetite and liquorish palate, it had been sufficient to put by all the passes the devil did, or could have made at her. So that you see, though God made the creature mutable, yet he made him not evil. This clears the holiness of God.

3. Therefore it follows, That though God created man changeable, yet he was not the cause of his change by his fall. Though man was created defectible, yet he was not determined by God influencing his will by any positive act to that change and apostasy. God placed him in a free posture, set life and happiness before him on the one hand, misery and death on the other; as he did not draw him into the arms of perpetual blessedness, so he did not drive him into the gulf of his misery. He did not incline him to evil. It was repugnant to the goodness of God to corrupt the righteousness of those faculties he had so lately beautified him with. It was not likely he should deface the beauty of that work he had composed with so much wisdom and skill. Would he, by any act of his own, make that bad, which, but a little before, he had acquiesced in as good? Angels and men were left to their liberty and conduct of their natural faculties; and if God inspired them with any motions, they could not but be motions to good, and suited to that righteous nature he had endued them with. But it is most probable that God did not, in a supernatural way, act inwardly upon the mind of man, but left him wholly to that power, which he had, in creation, furnished him with. The Scripture frees God fully from any blame in this, and lays it wholly upon Satan, as the tempter, and upon man, as the determiner of his own will (Gen. 3:6); Eve "took of the fruit, and did eat;" and Adam took from her of the fruit, "and did eat." And Solomon (Eccles. 7:29)

distinguisheth God's work in the creation of man "upright," from man's work in seeking out those ruining inventions. God

created man in a righteous state, and man cast himself into a forlorn state. As he was a mutable creature, he was from God; as he was a changed and corrupted creature, it was from the devil seducing, and his own pliability in admitting. As silver, and gold, and other metals, were created by God in such a form and figure, yet capable of receiving other forms by the industrious art of man; when the image of a man is put upon a piece of metal, God is not said to create that image, though he created the substance with such a property, that it was capable of receiving it; this capacity is from the nature of the metal by God's creation of it, but the carving the figure of this or that man is not the act of God, but the act of man. As images, in Scripture, are called the work of men's hands, in regard of the imagery, though the matter, wood or stone, upon which the image was carved, was a work of God's creative power. When an artificer frames an excellent instrument, and a musician exactly tunes it, and it comes out of their hands without a blemish, but capable to be untuned by some rude hand, or receive a crack by a sudden fall, if it meet with a disaster, is either the workman or musician to be blamed? The ruin of a house, caused by the wastefulness or carelessness of the tenant, is not to be imputed to the workman that built it strong, and left it in a good posture.

Prop. II. God's holiness is not blemished by enjoining man a law, which he knew he would not observe.

1. The law was not above his strength. Had the law been impossible to be observed, no crime could have been imputed to the subject, the fault had lain wholly upon the Governor; the non-observance of it had been from a want of strength, and not from a want of will. Had God commanded Adam to fly up to the sun, when he had not given him wings, Adam might have a will to obey it, but his power would be too short to perform it. But the law set him for a rule, had nothing of impossibility in it; it was easy to be observed; the command was rather below, than above his strength; and the sanction of it was more apt to restrain and scare him from the breach of it, than encourage any daring attempts against it; he had as much power, or rather more, to conform to it, than to warp from it; and greater arguments and interest to be observant of it, than to violate it; his all was secured by the one, and his ruin ascertained by the other. The commands of God are not grievous (1 John 5:3); from the

first to the last command, there is nothing impossible, nothing hard to the original and created nature of man, which were all summed up in a love to God, which was the pleasure and delight of man, as well as his duty, if he had not, by inconsiderateness, neglected the dictates and resolves of his own understanding. The law was suited to the strength of man, and fitted for the improvement and perfection of his nature; in which respect, the apostle calls it “good,”

as it refers to man, as well as “holy,” as it refers to God (Rom. 7:12). Now, since God created man a creature capable to be governed by a law, and as a rational creature endued with understanding and will, not to be governed, according to his nature, without a law; was it congruous to the wisdom of God to respect only the future state of man, which, from the depth of his infinite knowledge, he did infallibly foresee would be miserable, by the wilful defection of man from the rule? Had it been agreeable to the wisdom of God, to respect only this future state, and not the present state of the creature; and therefore leave him lawless, because he knew he would violate the law? Should God forbear to act like a wise governor, because he saw that man would cease to act like an obedient subject? Shall a righteous magistrate forbear to make just and good laws, because he foresees, either from the dispositions of his subjects, their ill-humor, or some circumstances which will intervene, that multitudes of them will incline to break those laws, and fall under the penalty of them? No blame can be upon that magistrate who minds the rule of righteousness, and the necessary duty of his government, since he is not the cause of those turbulent affections of men, which he wisely foresees will rise up against his just edicts.

2. Though the law now be above the strength of man, yet is not the holiness of God blemished by keeping it up. It is true, God hath been graciously pleased to mitigate the severity and rigor of the law, by the entrance of the gospel; yet where men refuse the terms of the gospel, they continue themselves under the condemnation of the law, and are justly guilty of the breach of it, though they have no strength to observe it. The law, as I said before, was not above man’s strength, when he was possessed of original righteousness, though it be above man’s strength, since he was stripped of original righteousness. The command was dated before man had contracted

his impotency, when he had a power to keep it as well as to break it. Had it been enjoined to man only after the fall, and not before, he might have had a better pretence to excuse himself, because of the impossibility of it; yet he would not have had sufficient excuse, since the impossibility did not result from the nature of the law, but from the corrupted nature of the creature. It was “weak through the flesh” (Rom. 8:3), but it was promulged when man had a strength proportioned to the commands of it. And now, since man hath unhappily made himself incapable of obeying it, must God’s holiness in his law be blemished for enjoining it? Must he abrogate those commands, and prohibit what before he enjoined, for the satisfaction of the corrupted creature? Would not this be his “ceasing to be holy,” that his creature might be unblameably unrighteous? Must God strip himself of his holiness, because man will not discharge his iniquity? He cannot be the cause of sin, by keeping up the law, who would be the cause of all the unrighteousness of men, by removing the authority of it. Some things in the law that are intrinsically good in their own nature, are indispensable, and it is repugnant to the nature of God not to command them. If he were not the guardian of his indispensable law, he would be the cause and countenancer of the creatures’ iniquity. So little reason have men to charge God with being the cause of their sin, by not repealing his law to gratify their impotence, that he would be unholy if he did. God must not lose his purity, because man hath lost his, and cast away the right of his sovereignty, because man hath cast away his power of obedience.

3. God’s foreknowledge that his law would not be observed, lays no blame upon him. Though the foreknowledge of God be infallible, yet it doth not necessitate the creature in acting. It was certain from eternity, that Adam would fall, that men would do such and such actions, that Judas would betray our Saviour; God foreknew all those things from eternity; but, it is as certain that this foreknowledge did not necessitate the will of Adam, or any other branch of his posterity, in the doing those actions that were so foreseen by God; they voluntarily run into such courses, not by any impulsion. God’s knowledge was not suspended between certainty and uncertainty; he certainly foreknew that his law would be broken by Adam; he foreknew it in his own decree of not hindering him, by giving Adam the efficacious grace which would infallibly have

prevented it; yet Adam did freely break this law, and never imagined that the foreknowledge of God did necessitate him to it; he could find no cause of his own sin, but the liberty of his own will; he charges the occasion of his sin upon the woman, and consequently upon God in giving the woman to him (Gen. 3:12). He could not be so ignorant of the nature of God, as to imagine him without a foresight of future things: since his knowledge of what was to be known of God by creation, was greater than any man's since, in all probability. But, however, if he were not acquainted with the notion of God's foreknowledge, he could not be ignorant of his own act; there could not have been any necessity upon him, any kind of constraint of him in his action, that could have been unknown to him; and he would not have omitted a plea of so strong a nature, when he was upon his trial for life or death; especially when he urgeth so weak an argument, to impute his crime to God, as the gift of the woman; as if that which was designed him for a help, were intended for his ruin. If God's prescience takes away the liberty of the creature, there is no such thing as a free action in the world (for there is nothing done but is foreknown by God, else we render God of a limited understanding), nor ever was, no, not by God himself, *ad extra*; for whatsoever he hath done in creation, whatsoever he hath done since the creation, was foreknown by him: he resolved to do it, and, therefore, foreknew that he would do it. Did God do it, therefore, necessarily, as necessity is opposed to liberty? As he freely decrees what he will do, so he effects what he freely decreed. Foreknowledge is so far from intrenching upon the liberty of the will, that predetermination, which in the notion of it speaks something more, doth not dissolve it; God did not only foreknow, but determine the suffering of Christ (Acts 4:27, 28). It was necessary, therefore, that Christ should suffer, that God might not be mistaken in his foreknowledge, or come short of his determinate decree; but did this take away the liberty of Christ in suffering? (Eph. 5:2)

“Who offered himself up to God;” that is, by a voluntary act, as well as designed to do it by a determinate counsel. It did infallibly secure the event, but did not annihilate the liberty of the action, either in Christ's willingness to suffer, or the crime of the Jews that made him suffer. God's prescience is God's provision of things arising from their proper causes; as a gardener foresees in his plants

the leaves and the flowers that will arise from them in the spring, because he knows the strength and nature of their several roots which he under ground; but his foresight of these things is not the cause of the rise and appearance of those flowers. If any of us see a ship moving towards such a rock or quicksand, and know it to be governed by a negligent pilot, we shall certainly foresee that the ship will be torn in pieces by the rock, or swallowed up by the sands; but is this foresight of ours from the causes, any cause of the effect; or can we from hence be said to be the authors of the miscarriage of the ship, and the loss of the passengers and goods? The fall of Adam was foreseen by God to come to pass by the consent of his free will, in the choice of the proposed temptation. God foreknew Adam would sin, and if Adam would not have sinned, God would have foreknown that he would not sin. Adam might easily have detected the serpents fraud, and made a better election; God foresaw that he would not do it; God's foreknowledge did not make Adam guilty or innocent: whether God had foreknown it or no, he was guilty by a free choice, and a willing neglect of his own duty. Adam knew that God foreknew that he might eat of the fruit, and fall and die, because God had forbidden him; the foreknowledge that he would do it, was no more a cause of his action, than the foreknowledge that he might do it. Judas certainly knew that his Master foreknew that he would betray him, for Christ had acquainted him with it (John 13:21, 26); yet he never charged this foreknowledge of Christ with any guilt of his treachery.

Prop. III. The holiness of God is not blemished by decreeing the eternal rejection of some men.

Reprobation, in its first notion, is an act of preterition, or passing by man is not made wicked by the the act of God; but it supposeth him wicked; and so it is nothing else but God's leaving a man in that guilt and filth wherein he beholds him. In its second notion, it is an ordination, not to a crime, but to a punishment (Jude 4): "an ordaining to condemnation." And though it be an eternal act of God, yet, in order of nature, it follows upon the foresight of the transgression of man, and supposeth the crime. God considers Adam's revolt, and views the whole mass of his corrupted posterity, and chooses some to reduce to himself by his grace, and leaves others to he sinking in their ruins. Since all mankind fell by the fall

of Adam, and have corruption conveyed to them successively by that root, whereof they are branches; all men might justly be left wallowing in that miserable condition to which they are reduced by the apostasy of their common head; and God might have passed by the whole race of man, as well as he did the fallen angels, without any hope of redemption. He was no more bound to restore man, than to restore devils, nor bound to repair the nature of any one son of Adam; and had he dealt with men as he dealt with the devils, they had had, all of them, as little just ground to complain of God; for all men deserved to be left to themselves, for all were concluded under sin; but God calls out some to make monuments of his grace, which is an act of the sovereign mercy of that dominion, whereby “he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy” (Rom. 9:18); others he passes by, and leaves them remaining in that corruption of nature wherein they were born. If men have a power to dispose of their own goods, without any unrighteousness, why should not God dispose of his own grace, and bestow it upon whom he pleases; since it is a debt to none, but a free gift to any that enjoy it? God is not the cause of sin in this, because his operation about this is negative; it is not an action, but a denial of action, and therefore cannot be the cause of the evil actions of men. God acts nothing, but withholds his power; he doth not enlighten their minds, nor incline their wills so powerfully, as to expel their darkness, and root out those evil habits which possess them by nature. God could, if he would, savingly enlighten the minds of all men in the world, and quicken their hearts with a new life by an invincible grace; but in not doing it, there is no positive act of God, but a cessation of action. We may with as much reason say, that God is the cause of all the sinful actions that are committed by the corporation of devils, since their first rebellion, because he leaves them to themselves, and bestows not a new grace upon them,—as say, God is the cause of the sins of those that he overlooks and leaves in that state of guilt wherein he found them. God did not pass by any without the consideration of sin; so that this act of God is not repugnant to his holiness, but conformable to his justice.

Prop. IV. The holiness of God is not blemished by his secret will to suffer sin to enter into the world. God never willed sin by his preceptive will. It was never founded upon, or produced by any word of his, as the creation was. He never said, Let there be sin

under the heaven, as he said, "Let there be water under the heaven." Nor doth he will it by infusing any habit of it, or stirring up inclinations to it; no, "God tempts no man" (James 1:13). Nor doth he will it by his approving will; it is detestable to him, nor ever can he be otherwise; he cannot approve it either before commission or after.

1. The will of God is in some sort concurrent with sin. He doth not properly will it, but he wills not to hinder it, to which, by his omnipotence, he could put a bar. If he did positively will it, it might be wrought by himself, and so could not be evil. If he did in no sort will it, it would not be committed by his creature; sin entered into the world, either God willing the permission of it, or not willing the permission of it. The latter cannot be said; for then the creature is more powerful than God, and can do that which God will not permit. God can, if he be pleased, banish all sin in a moment out of the world: he could have prevented the revolt of angels, and the fall of man; they did not sin whether he would or no: he might, by his grace, have stepped in the first moment, and made a special impression upon them of the happiness they already possessed, and the misery they would incur by any wicked attempt. He could as well have prevented the sin of the fallen angels, and confirmed them in grace, as of those that continued in their happy state: he might have appeared to man, informed him of the issue of his design, and made secret impressions upon his heart, since he was acquainted with every avenue to his will. God could have kept all sin out of the world, as well as all creatures from breathing it; he was as well able to bar sin forever out of the world, as to let creatures be in the womb of nothing, wherein they were first wrapped. To say God doth will sin as he doth other things, is to deny his holiness; to say it entered without anything of his will, is to deny his omnipotence. If he did necessitate Adam to fall, what shall we think of his purity? If Adam did fall without any concern of God's will in it, what shall we say of his sovereignty? The one taints his holiness, and the other clips his power. If it came without anything of his will in it, and he did not foresee it, where is his omniscience? If it entered whether he would or no, where is his omnipotence (Rom. 9:19)? "Who hath resisted his will?" There cannot be a lustful act in Abimelech, if God will withhold his power (Gen. 20:6); "I withheld thee:" nor a cursing word in Balaam's mouth, unless God give power to speak it (Num.

22:38): “Have I now any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that shall I speak.” As no action could be sinful, if God had not forbidden it; so no sin could be committed, if God did not will to give way to it.

2. God doth not will directly, and by an efficacious will. He doth not directly will it, because he hath prohibited it by his law, which is a discovery of his will: so that if he should directly will sin, and directly prohibit it, he would will good and evil in the same manner, and there would be contradictions in God’s will: to will sin absolutely, is to work it (Psalm 115:3): “God hath done whatsoever hes pleased.” God cannot absolutely will it, because he cannot work it. God wills good by a positive decree, because he hath decreed to effect it. He wills evil by a private decree, because he hath decreed not to give that grace which would certainly prevent it. God doth not will sin simply, for that were to approve it, but he wills it, in order to that good his wisdom will bring forth from it. He wills not sin for itself, but for the event. To will sin as sin, or as purely evil, is not in the capacity of a creature, neither of man nor devil. The will of a rational creature cannot will anything but under the appearance of good, of some good in the sin itself, or some good in the issue of it. Much more is this far from God, who, being infinitely good, cannot will evil as evil; and being infinitely knowing, cannot will that for good which is evil. Infinite wisdom can be under no error or mistake: to will sin as sin, would be an unanswerable blemish on God; but to will to suffer it in order to good, is the glory of his wisdom; it could never have peeped up its head, unless there had been some decree of God concerning it. And there had been no decree of God concerning it, had he not intended to bring good and glory out of it. If God did directly will the discovery of his grace and mercy to the world, he did in some sort will sin, as that without which there could not have been any appearance of mercy in the world; for an innocent creature is not the object of mercy, but a miserable creature and no rational creature but must be sinful before it be miserable.

3. God wills the permission of sin. He doth not positively will sin, but he positively wills to permit it. And though he doth not approve of sin, yet he approves of that act of his will, whereby he permits it. For since that sin could not enter into the world without

some concern of God's will about it, that act of his will that gave way to it, could not be displeasing to him: God could never be diseased with his own act: "He is not as man, that he should repent" (1 Sam. 15:29). What God cannot repent of, he cannot but approve of: it is contrary to the blessedness of God to disapprove of; and be displeased with any act of his own will. If he hated any act of his own will, he would hate himself, he would be under a torture every one that hates his own acts, is under some disturbance and torment for them. That which is permitted by him, is in itself, and in regard of the evil of it, hateful to him: but as the prospect of that good which he aims at in the permission of it is pleasing to him, so that act of his will, whereby he permits it, is ushered in by an approving act of his understanding. Either God approved of the permission, or not; if he did not approve his own act of permission, he could not have decreed an act of permission. It is inconceivable that God should decree such an act which he detested, and positively will that which he hated. Though God hated sin, as being against his holiness, yet he did not hate the permission of sin, as being subservient by the immensity of his wisdom to his own glory. He could never be displeased with that which was the result of his eternal counsel, as this decree of permitting sin was, as well as any other decree, resolved upon in his own breast. For as God acts nothing in time, but what he decreed from eternity, so he permits nothing in time but what he decreed from eternity to permit. To speak properly, therefore, God doth not will sin, but he wills the permission of it, and this will to permit is active and positive in God.

4. This act of permission is not a mere and naked permission, but such an one as is attended with a certainty of the event. The decrees of God to make use of the sin of man for the glory of his grace in the mission and passion of his Son, hung upon this entrance of sin. Would it consist with the wisdom of God to decree such great and stupendous things, the event whereof should depend upon an uncertain foundation which he might be mistaken in? God would have sat in counsel from eternity to no purpose, if he had only permitted those things to be done, without any knowledge of the event of this permission.

God would not have made such provision for redemption to no purpose, or an uncertain purpose, which would have been, if man

had not fallen; or if it had been an uncertainty with God whether he would fall or no. Though the will of God about sin was permissive, yet the will of God about that glory he would promote by the defect of the creature, was positive; and, therefore, he would not suffer so many positive acts of his will to hang upon an uncertain event; and, therefore, he did wisely and righteously order all things to the accomplishment of his great and gracious purposes.

5. This act of permission doth not taint the holiness of God. That there is such an act as permission, is clear in Scripture (Acts 14:16): “Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.” But that it doth not blemish the holiness of God, will appear,

1st. From the nature of this permission.

1. It is not a moral permission, a giving liberty of toleration by any law to commit sin with impunity; when, what one law did forbid, another law doth leave indifferent to be done or not, as a man sees good in himself. As when there is a law made among men, that no man shall go out of such a city or country without license, to go out without license is a crime by the law; but when that law is repealed by another, that gives liberty for men to go and come at their pleasure, it doth not make their going or coming necessary, but leaves those which were before bound, to do as they see good in themselves. Such a permission makes a fact lawful, though not necessary; a man is not obliged to do it, but he is left to his own discretion to do as he pleases, without being chargeable with a crime for doing it. Such a permission there was granted by God to Adam of eating of the fruits of the garden, to choose any of them for food, except the tree of “knowledge of good and evil.” It was a precept to him, not to “eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil;” but the other was a permission, whereby it was lawful for him to feed upon any other that was most agreeable to his appetite but there is not such a permission in the case of sin; this had been an indulgence of it, which had freed man from any crime, and, consequently, from punishment; because, by such a permission by law, he would have had authority to sin if he please God did not remove the law, which he had before placed as a bar against evil, nor ceased that moral impediment of his threatening: such a permission as this, to make sin lawful or indifferent, had been a blot upon God’s holiness.

2. But this permission of God, in the case of sin, is no more than the not hindering a sinful action, which he could have prevented. It is not so much an action of God, as a suspension of his influence, which might have hindered an evil act, and a forbearing to restrain the faculties of man from sin; it is, properly, the not exerting that efficacy which might change the counsels that are taken, and prevent the action intended; as when one man sees another ready to fall, and can preserve him from falling by reaching out his hand, he permits him to fall, that is, he hinders him not from falling. So God describes his act about Abimelech (Gen. 20:6); "I withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore suffered I thee not to touch her." If Abimelech had sinned, he had sinned by God's permission; that is, by God's not hindering, or not restraining him by making any impressions upon him. So that permission is only a withholding that help and grace, which, if bestowed, would have been an effectual remedy to prevent a crime; and it is rather a suspension, or cessation, than properly a permission, and sin may be said to be committed, not without God's permission, rather than by his permission. Thus, in the fall of man, God did not hold the reins strict upon Satan, to restrain him from laying the bait, nor restrain Adam from swallowing the bait: he kept to himself that efficacious grace which he might have darted out upon man to prevent his fall. God left Satan to his malice of tempting, and Adam to his liberty of resisting, and his own strength, to use that sufficient grace he had furnished him with, whereby he might have resisted and overcome the temptation. As he did not drive man to it, so he did not secretly restrain him from it. So, in the Jews crucifying our Saviour, God did not imprint upon their minds, by his Spirit, a consideration of the greatness of the crime, and the horror of his justice due to it; and, being without those impediments, they run furiously, of their own accord, to the commission of that evil; as, when a man lets a wolf or dog out upon his prey, he takes off the chain which held them, and they presently act according to their natures. In the fall of angels and men, God's act was leaving them to their own strength; in sins after the fall, it is God's giving them up to their own corruption; the first is a pure suspension of grace; the other hath the nature of a punishment (Psalm 81:12): "So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts." The first object of this permissive will of God was to leave angels and men to their liberty, and the use of their free will, which

was natural to them, not adding that supernatural grace which was necessary, not that they should not at all sin, but that they should infallibly not sin: they had a strength sufficient to avoid sin, but not sufficient infallibly to avoid sin; a grace sufficient to preserve them, but not sufficient to confirm them.

3. Now this permission is not the cause of sin, nor doth blemish the holiness of God. It doth not intrench upon the freedom of men, but supposeth it, establisheth it, and leaves man to it. God acted nothing, but only ceased to act; and therefore could not be the efficient cause of man's sin. As God is not the author of good, but by willing and effecting it, so he is not the author of evil, but by willing and effecting it, but he doth not positively will evil, nor effect it by any efficacy of his own. Permission is no action, nor the cause of that action which is permitted; but the will of that person who is permitted to do such an action is the cause. God can no more be said to be the cause of sin, by suffering a creature to act as it will, than he can be said to be the cause of the not being of any creature, by denying it being, and letting it remain nothing; it is not from God that it is nothing, it is nothing in itself. Though God be said to be the cause of creation, yet he is never by any said to be the cause of that nothing which was before creation. This permission of God is not the cause of sin, but the cause of not hindering sin. Man and angels had a physical power of sinning from God, as they were created with freewill, and supported in their natural strength; but the moral power to sin was not from God; he counselled them not to it, laid no obligation upon them to use their natural power for such an end; he only left them to their freedom, and not hindered them in their acting what he was resolved to permit.

2d. The holiness of God is not tainted by this, because he was under no obligation to hinder their commission of sin. Ceasing to act, whereby to prevent a crime or mischief, brings not a person permitting it under guilt, unless where he is under an obligation to prevent it; but God, in regard of his absolute dominion, cannot be charged with any such obligation. One man, that doth not hinder the murder of another, when it is in his power, is guilty of the murder in part; but, it is to be considered, that he is under a tie by nature, as being of the same kind, and being the other's brother, by a communion of blood, also under an obligation of the law of charity,

enacted by the common Sovereign of the world: but what he was there upon God, since the infinite transcendancy of his nature, and his sovereign dominion, frees him from any such obligation (Job 9:12)? “If he takes away, who shall say, What dost thou?” God might have prevented the fall of men and angels; he might have confirmed them all in a state of perpetual innocency; but where is the obligation? He had made the creature a debtor to himself, but he owed nothing to the creature. Before God can be charged with any guilt in this case, it must be proved, not only that he could, but that he was bound to hinder it. No person can be justly charged with another’s fault, merely for not preventing it, unless he be bound to prevent it; else, not only the first sin of angels and man would be imputed to God, as the Author, but all the sins of men. He could not be obliged by any law, because he had no superior to impose any law upon him; and it will be hard to prove that he was obliged, from his own nature, to prevent the entrance of sin, which he would use as an occasion to declare his own holiness, so transcendent a perfection of his nature, more than ever it could have been manifested by a total exclusion of it, *viz.* in the death of Christ. He is no more bound, in his own nature, to preserve, by supernatural grace, his creature from falling, after he had framed him with a sufficient strength to stand, than he was obliged, in his own nature, to bring his creature into being when it was nothing. He is not bound to create a rational creature, much less bound to create him with supernatural gifts; though, since God would make a rational creature, he could not but make him with a natural uprightness and rectitude.

God did as much for angels and men as became a wise governor: he had published his law, backed it with severe penalties, and the creature wanted not a natural strength to observe and obey it. Had not man power to obey all the precepts of the law, as well as one? How was God bound to give him more grace, since what he had already was enough to shield him, and keep up his resistance against all the power of hell? It had been enough to have pointed his will against the temptation, and he had kept off the force of it. Was there any promise past to Adam of any further grace which he could plead as a tie upon God? No such voluntary limit upon God’s supreme dominion appears upon record. Was anything due to man which he had not? anything promised him which was not performed? What action of debt, then, can the creature bring against God? Indeed,

when man began to neglect the light of his own reason, and became inconsiderate of the precept, God might have enlightened his understanding by a special flash, a supernatural beam, and imprinted upon him a particular consideration of the necessity of his obedience, the misery he was approaching to by his sin, the folly of any apprehension of an equality in knowledge; he might have convinced him of the falsity of the serpent's arguments, and uncased to him the venom that lay under those baits. But how doth it appear that God was bound to those additional acts when he had already lighted up in him a "spirit, which was the candle of the Lord" (Prov. 20:27), whereby he was able to discern all, if he had attended to it. It was enough that God did not necessitate man to sin, did not counsel him to it; that he had given him sufficient warning in the threatening, and sufficient strength in his faculties, to fortify him against temptation. He gave him what was due to him as a creature of his own framing; he withdrew no help from him, that was due to him as a creature, and what was not due he was not bound to impart. Man did not beg preserving grace of God, and God was not bound to offer it, when he was not petitioned for it especially: yet if he had begged it, God having before furnished him sufficiently, might, by the right of his sovereign dominion, have denied it without any impeachment of his holiness and righteousness. Though he would not in such a case have dealt so bountifully with his creature as he might have done, yet he could not have been impleaded, as dealing unrighteously with his creature. The single word that God had already uttered, when he gave him his precept, was enough to oppose against all the devil's wiles, which tended to invalidate that word: the understanding of man could not imagine that the word of God was vainly spoken; and the very suggestion of the devil, as if the Creator should envy his creature, would have appeared ridiculous, if he had attended to the voice of his own reason. God had done enough for him, and was obliged to do no more, and dealt not unrighteously in leaving him to act according to the principles of his nature. To conclude, if God's permission of sin were enough to charge it upon God, or if God had been obliged to give Adam supernatural grace, Adam, that had so capacious a brain, could not be without that plea in his mouth, "Lord thou mightest have prevented it; the commission of it by me could not have been without thy permission of it:" or, "Thou hast been wanting to me, as

the author of my nature.” No such plea is brought by Adam into the court, when God tried and cast him; no such pleas can have any strength in them. Adam had reason enough to know, that there was sufficient reason to overrule such a plea.

Since the permission of sin casts no dirt upon the holiness of God, as I think hath been cleared, we may under this head consider two things more.

1. That God’s permission of sin is not so much as his restraint or limitation of it. Since the entrance of the first sin into the world by Adam, God is more a hinderer than a permitter of it. If he hath permitted that which he could have prevented, he prevents a world more, that he might, if he pleased, permit: the hedges about sin are larger than the outlets; they are but a few streams that glide about the world, in comparison of that mighty torrent he dams up both in men and devils. He that understands what a lake of Sodom is in every man’s nature, since the universal infection of human nature, as the apostle describes it (Rom. 3:9, 10, &c.), must acknowledge, that if God should cast the reins upon the necks of sinful men, they would run into thousands of abominable crimes, more than they do the impression of all natural laws would be raced out, the world would be a public stew, and a more bloody slaughter house; human society would sink into a chaos; no starlight of commendable morality would be seen in it; the world would be no longer an earth, but an hell, and have lain deeper in wickedness than it doth. If God did not limit sin, as he doth the sea, and put bars to the waves of the heart, as well as those of the waters, and say of them, “Hitherto you shall go, and no further;” man hath such a furious ocean in him, as would overflow the banks; and where it makes a breach in one place, it would in a thousand, if God should suffer it to act according to its impetuous current. As the devil hath lust enough to destroy all mankind, if God did not bridle him; deal with every man as he did with Job, ruin their comforts, and deform their bodies with scabs; infect religion with a thousand more errors; fling disorders into commonwealths, and make them as a fiery furnace, full of nothing but flame; if he were not chained by that powerful arm, that might let him loose to fulfil his malicious fury; what rapines, murders, thefts, would be committed, if he did not stint him! Abimelech would not only lust after Sarah, but deflour her; Laban not only

pursue Jacob, but rifle him; Saul not only hate David, but murder him; David not only threaten Nabal, but root him up, and his family, did not God girdle in the wrath of man: a greater remainder of wrath is pent in, than flames out, which yet swells for an outlet. God may be concluded more holy in preventing men's sins, than the author of sin in permitting some; since, were it not for his restraints by the pull-back of conscience, and infused motions and outward impediments, the world would swarm more with this cursed brood.

2. His permission of sin is in order to his own glory, and a greater good. It is no reflection upon the Divine goodness to leave man to his own conduct, whereby such a deformity as sin sets foot in the world; since he makes his wisdom illustrious in bringing good out of evil, and a good greater than that evil he suffered to spring up. God did not permit sin, as sin, or permit it barely for itself: As sin is not lovely in its own nature, so neither is the permission of sin intrinsically good or amiable for itself, but for those ends aimed at in the permission of it. God permitted sin, but approved not of the object of that permission, sin; because that, considered in its own nature, is solely evil: nor can we think that God could approve of the act of permission, considered only in itself as an act; but as it respected that event which his wisdom would order by it. We cannot suppose that God should permit sin, but for some great and glorious end: for it is the manifestation of his own glorious perfections he intends in all the acts of his will (Prov. 16:4), "The Lord hath made all things for himself"—*לפניו* hath wrought all things; which is not only his act of creation, but ordination: "for himself;" that is, for the discovery of the excellency of his nature, and the communication of himself to his creature. Sin indeed, in its own nature, hath no tendency to a good end; the womb of it teems with nothing but monsters; it is a spurn at God's sovereignty, and a slight of his goodness: it both deforms and torments the person that acts it; it is black and abominable, and hath not a mite of goodness in the nature of it. If it ends in any good, it is only from that Infinite transcendency of skill, that can bring good out of evil, as well as light out of darkness. Therefore God did not permit it as sin, but as it was an occasion for the manifestation of his own glory. Though the goodness of God would have appeared in the preservation of the world, as well as it did in the creation of it, yet his mercy could not have appeared without the entrance of sin, because the object of

mercy is a miserable creature; but man could not be miserable as long as he remained innocent. The reign of sin opened a door for the reign and triumph of grace (Rom. 5:21), "As sin hath reigned unto death, so might grace reign through righteousness to eternal life;" without it, the bowels of mercy had never sounded, and the ravishing music of Divine grace could never have been heard by the creature. Mercy, which renders God so amiable, could never else have beamed out to the world. Angels and men upon this occasion beheld the stirrings of Divine grace, and the tenderness of Divine nature, and the glory of the Divine persons in their several functions about the redemption of man, which had else been a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed; the song of glory to God, and good will to men in a way of redemption had never been sung by them. It appears in his dealing with Adam, that he permitted his fall, not only to show his justice in punishing, but principally his mercy in rescuing; since he proclaims to him first the promise of a Redeemer to "bruise the serpent's head," before he settled the punishment he should smart under in the world (Gen. 3:15–17). And what fairer prospect could the creature have of the holiness of God, and his hatred of sin, than in the edge of that sword of justice, which punished it in the sinner; but glittered more in the punishment of a Surety so near allied to him? Had not man been criminal, he could not have been punishable, nor any been punishable for him: and the pulse of Divine holiness could not have eaten so quick, and been so visible, without an exercise of his vindicative justice. He left man's mutable nature, to fall under righteousness, that thereby he might commend the righteousness of his own nature (Rom. 3:7). Adam's sin in its nature tended to the ruin of the world, and God takes an occasion from it for the glory of his grace in the redemption of the world; he brings forth thereby a new scene of wonders from heaven, and a surprising knowledge on earth; as the sun breaks out more strongly after a night of darkness and tempest. As God in creation framed a chaos by his power, to manifest his wisdom in bringing order out of disorder, light out of darkness, beauty out of confusion and deformity, when he was able by a word to have made all creatures stand up in their beauty, without the precedency of a chaos; so God permitted a moral chaos to manifest a greater wisdom in the repairing a broken image, and restoring a deplorable creature, and bringing out those perfections of his nature, which had else been

wrapt up in a perpetual silence in his own bosom. It was therefore very congruous to the holiness of God to permit that which he could make subservient for his own glory, and particularly for the manifestation of this attribute of holiness, which seems to be in opposition to such a permission.

Prop. V. The holiness of God is not blemished by his concurrence with the creature in the material part of a sinful act. Some to free God from having any hand in sin, deny his concurrence to the actions of the creature; because, if he concurs to a sinful action, he concurs to the sin also: not understanding how there can be a distinction between the act, and the sinfulness or viciousness of it; and how God can concur to a natural action, without being stained by that moral evil which cleaves to it. For the understanding of this, observe,

1. There is a concurrence of God to all the acts of the creature (Acts 17:28); “in him we live, and move, and have our being.” We depend upon God in our acting as well as in our being: there is as much an efficacy of God in our motion as in our production; as none have life without his power in producing it, so none have any operation without his providence concurring with it. In him, or by him, that is, by his virtue preserving and governing our motions, as well as by his power bringing us into being. Hence man is compared to an axe (Isa. 10:15), an instrument that hath no action, without the co-operation of a superior agent handling it: and the actions of the second causes are ascribed to God; the grass, that is, the product of the sun, rain, and earth, he is said to make to grow upon the mountains (Psalm 147:8); and the skin and flesh, which is by natural generation, he is said to clothe us with (Job 10:5), in regard of his co-working with second causes, according to their natures. As nothing can exist, so nothing can operate without him; let his concurrence be removed, and the being and action of the creature cease; remove the sun from the horizon, or a candle from a room, and the light which flowed from either of them ceaseth. Without God’s preserving and concurring power, the course of nature would sink, and the creation be in vain. All created things depend upon God as agents, as well as beings, and are subordinate to him in a way of action, as well as in a way of existing. If God suspend his influence from their action, they would cease to act, as the fire did

from burning the three children, as well as if God suspend his influence from their being, they would cease to be. God supports the nature whereby actions are wrought, the mind where actions are consulted, and the will where actions are determined, and the motive-power whereby actions are produced. The mind could not contrive, nor the hand act, a wickedness, if God did not support the power of the one in designing, and the strength of the other in executing a wicked intention. Every faculty in its being, and every faculty in its motion, hath a dependence upon the influence of God. To make the creature independent upon God in anything which speaks perfection, as action considered as action is, is to make the creature a sovereign being. Indeed, we cannot imagine the concurrence of God to the good actions of men since the fall, without granting a concurrence of God to evil actions; because there is no action so purely good but hath a mixture of evil in it, though it takes its denomination of good from the better part (Eccles. 7:20), "There is no man that doth good, and sins not."

2. Though the natural virtue of doing a sinful action be from God, and supported by him, yet this doth not blemish the holiness of God; while God concurs with them in the act, he instils no evil into men.

(1.) No act, in regard of the substance of it, is evil. Most of the actions of our faculties, as they are actions, might have been in the state of innocency. Eating is an act Adam would have used if he had stood firm, but not eating to excess. Worship was an act that should have been performed to God in innocence, but not hypocritically. Every action is good by a physical goodness, as it is an act of the mind or hand, which have a natural goodness by creation; but every action is not morally good: the physical goodness of the action depends on God, the moral evil on the creature. There is no action, as a corporeal action, is prohibited by the law of God; but as it springs from an evil disposition, and is tainted by a venomous temper of mind. There is no action so bad, as attended with such objects and circumstances; but if the objects and circumstances were changed, might be a brave and commendable action: so that the moral goodness or badness of an act is not to be esteemed from the substance of the act, which hath always a physical goodness; but from the objects, circumstances, and constitution of the mind in the

doing of it. Worship is an act good in itself; but the worship of an image is bad in regard of the object. Were that act of worship directed to God that is paid to a statue, and offered up to him with a sincere frame of mind, it would be morally good. The act, in regard of its substance, is the same in both, and considered as separated from the object to which the worship is directed, hath the same real goodness in regard of the substance; but when you consider this action in relation to the different objects, the one hath a moral goodness, and the other a moral evil. So in speaking: speaking being a motion of the tongue in the forming of words, is an excellency belonging to a reasonable creature; an endowment bestowed, continued, and supported by God. Now, if the same tongue forms words whereby it curseth God this minute, and forms words whereby it blesses and praises God the next minute, the faculty of speaking is the same, the motion of the tongue is the same in pronouncing the name of God either in a way of cursing or blessing (James 3:9, 10); it is the “same mouth that blesseth and curseth;” and the motion of it is naturally good in regard of the substance of the act in both; it is the use of an excellent power God hath given, and which God preserves, in the use of it. But the estimation of the moral goodness or evil is not from the act itself, but from the disposition of the mind. Once more: killing, as an act is good; nor is it unlawful as an act; for if so, God would never have commanded his people Israel to wage any war, and justice could not be done upon malefactors by the magistrate. A man were bound to sacrifice his life to the fury of an invader, rather than secure it by dispatching that of an enemy; but killing an innocent, or killing without authority, or out of revenge, is bad. It is not the material part of the act, but the object, manner, and circumstance, that makes it good or evil. It is no blemish to God’s holiness to concur to the substance of an action, without having any hand in the immorality of it; because, whatsoever is real in the substance of the action might be done without evil. It is not evil as it is an act, as it is a motion of the tongue or hand, for then every motion of the tongue or hand would be evil.

(2.) Hence it follows, that an act, as an act, is one thing, and the viciousness another. The action is the efficacy of the faculty, extending itself to some outward object; but the sinfulness of an act consists in a privation of that comeliness and righteousness which

ought to be in an action; in a want of conformity of the act with the law of God, either written in nature, or revealed in the Word. Now, the sinfulness of an action is not the act itself, but is considered in it as it is related to the law, and is a deviation from it; and so it is something cleaving to the action, and therefore to be distinguished from the act itself, which is the subject of the sinfulness. When we say such an action is sinful, the action is the subject, and the sinfulness of the action is that which adheres to it. The action is not the sinfulness, nor the sinfulness the action; they are distinguished as the member, and a disease in the member, the arm and the palsy in it: the arm is not the palsy, nor is the palsy the arm; but the palsy is a disease that cleaves to the arm: so sinfulness is a deformity that cleaves to an action. The evil of an action is not the effect of an action, nor attends it as it is an action, but as it is an action so circumstantiated, and conversant about this or that object; for the same action done by two several persons, may be good in one, and bad in the other; as when two judges are in joint commission for the trial of a malefactor, both upon the appearance of his guilt condemn him. This action in both, considered as an action, is good; for it is an adjudging a man to death, whose crime deserves such a punishment. But this same act, which is but one joint act of both, may be morally good in one judge, and morally evil in the other: morally good in him that condemns him out of an unbiassed consideration of the demerit of his fact, obedience to the law, and conscious of the duty of his place; and morally evil in the other, who hath no respect to those considerations, but joins in the act of condemnation, principally moved by some private animosity against the prisoner, and desire of revenge for some injury he hath really received, or imagines that he hath received from him. The act in itself is the same materially in both; but in one it is an act of justice, and in the other an act of murder, as it respects the principles and motives of it in the two judges; take away the respect of private revenge, and the action in the ill judge had been as laudable as the action of the other. The substance of an act, and the sinfulness of an act, are separable and distinguishable; and God may concur with the substance of an act, without concurring with the sinfulness of the act: as the good judge, that condemned the prisoner out of conscience, concurred with the evil judge, who condemned the prisoner out of private revenge; not in the principle and motive of condemnation, but in the

material part of condemnation. So God assists in that action of a man wherein sin is placed, but not in that which is the formal reason of sin, which is a privation of some perfection the action ought morally to have.

(3.) It will appear further in this, that hence it follows that the action, and the viciousness of the action, may have two distinct causes. That may be a cause of the one that is not the cause of the other, and hath no hand in the producing of it. God concurs to the act of the mind as it counsels, and to the external action upon that counsel, as he preserves the faculty, and gives strength to the mind to consult, and the other parts to execute; yet he is not in the least tainted with the viciousness of the action. Though the action be from God as a concurrent cause, yet the ill quality of the action is solely from the creature with whom God concurs. The sun and the earth concur to the production of all the plants that are formed in the womb of the one, and midwived by the other. The sun distributes heat, and the earth communicates sap; it is the same heat dispersed by the one, and the same juice bestowed by the other: it hath not a sweet juice for one, and a sour juice for another. This general influx of the sun and earth is not the immediate cause that one plant is poisonous, and another wholesome; but the sap of the earth is turned by the nature and quality of each plant: if there were not such an influx of the sun and earth, no plant could exert that poison which is in its nature; but yet the sun and earth are not the cause of that poison which is in the nature of the plant. If God did not concur to the motions of men, there could be no sinful action, because there could be no action at all; yet this concurrence is not the cause of that venom that is in the action, which ariseth from the corrupt nature of the creature, no more than the sun and earth are the cause of the poison of the plant, which is purely the effect of its own nature upon that general influx of the sun and earth. The influence of God pierceth through all subjects; but the action of man done by that influence is vitiated according to the nature of its own corruption. As the sun equally shines through all the quarrels in the window; if the glass be bright and clear, there is a pure splendor; if it be red or green, the splendor is from the sun; but the discoloring of that light upon the wall, is from the quality of the glass. But to be yet plainer: the soul is the image of God, and by the acts of the soul, we may come to the knowledge of the acts of God; the soul gives motion to

the body and every member of it, and no member could move without a concurrent virtue of the soul; if a member be paralytic or gouty, whatsoever motion that gouty member hath, is derived to it from the soul; but the goutiness of the member was not the act of the soul, but the fruit of ill humors in the body; the lameness of the member, and the motion of the member, have two distinct causes; the motion is from one cause, and ill motion from another. As the member could not move irregularly without some ill humor or cause of that distemper, so it could not move at all without the activity of the soul: so, though God concur to the act of understanding, willing, and execution, why can he not be as free from the irregularity in all those, as the soul is free from the irregularity of the motion of the body, while it is the cause of the motion itself? There are two illustrations generally used in this case, that are not unfit; the motion of the pen in writing is from the hand that holds it, but the blurs by the pen are from some fault in the pen itself: and the music of the instrument is from the hand that touches it, but the jarring from the faultiness of the strings; both are the causes of the motion of the pen and strings, but not the blurs or jarrings.

(4). It is very congruous to the wisdom of God, to move his creatures according to their particular natures; but this motion makes him not the cause of sin. Had our innocent nature continued, God had moved us according to that innocent nature; but when the state was changed for a corrupt one, God must either forbear all concurrence, and so annihilate the world, or move us according to that nature he finds in us. If he had overthrown the world upon the entrance of sin, and created another upon the same terms, sin might have as soon defaced his second work, as it did the first; and then it would follow, that God would have been alway building and demolishing. It was not fit for God to cease from acting as a wise governor of his creature, because man did cease from his loyalty as a subject. Is it not more agreeable to God's wisdom as a governor, to concur with his creature according to his nature, than to deny his concurrence upon every evil determination of the creature? God concurred with Adam's mutable nature in his first act of sin; he concurred to the act, and left him to his mutability. If Adam had put out his hand to eat of any other unforbidden fruit, God would have supported his natural faculty then, and concurred with him in his motion. When Adam would put out his hand to take the forbidden

fruit, God concurred to that natural action, but left him to the choice of the object, and to the use of his mutable nature and when man became apostate, God concurs with him according to that condition wherein he found him, and cannot move him otherwise, unless he should alter that nature man had contracted. God moving the creature as he found him, is no cause of the ill motion of the creature: as when a wheel is broken the space of a foot, it cannot but move ill in that part till it be mended. He that moves it, uses the same motion (as it is his act) which he would have done had the wheel been sound; the motion is good in the mover, but bad in the subject: it is not the fault of him that moves it, but the fault of that wheel that is moved, whose breaches came by some other cause. A man doth not use to lay aside his watch for some irregularity, as long as it is capable of motion, but winds it up: why should God cease from concurring with his creature in its vital operations and other actions of his will, because there was a flaw contracted in that nature, that came right and true out of his hand? And as he that winds up his disordered watch, is in the same manner the cause of its motion then, as he was when it was regular, yet, by that act of his, he is not the cause of the false motion of it. but that is from the deficiency of some part of the watch itself: so, though God concurs to that action of the creature, whereby the wickedness of the heart is drawn out, yet is not God therefore as unholy as the heart.

(5.) God hath one end in his concurrence, and man another in his action: so that there is a righteous, and often a gracious end in God, when there is a base and unworthy end in man. God concurs to the substance of the act; man produceth the circumstance of the act, whereby it is evil. God orders both the action wherein he concurs, and the sinfulness over which he presides, as a governor, to his own ends. In Joseph's case, man was sinful, and God merciful; his brethren acted "envy," and God designed "mercy" (Gen. 45:4, 5). They would be rid of him as an eye-sore, and God concurred with their action to make him their preserver (Gen. 1:20), "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good." God concurred to Judas his action of betraying our Saviour; he supported his nature while he contracted with the priests, and supported his members while he was their guide to apprehend him; God's end was the manifestation of his choicest love to man, and Judas' end was the gratification of his own covetousness. The Assyrian did a divine

work against Jerusalem, but not with a Divine end (Isa. 10:5–7). He had a mind to enlarge his empire, enrich his coffers with the spoil, and gain the title of a conqueror; he is desirous to invade his neighbors, and God employs him to punish his rebels; but he means not so, nor doth his heart think so; he intended not as God intended. The axe doth not think what the carpenter intends to do with it. But God used the rapine of ambitious nature as an instrument of his justice; as the exposing malefactors to wild beasts was an ancient punishment, whereby the magistrates intended the execution of justice, and to that purpose used the natural fierceness of the beasts to an end different from what those ravaging creatures aimed at. God concurred with Satan in spoiling Job of his goods, and scarifying his body; God gave Satan licence to do it, and Job acknowledges it to be God's act (Job 1:12–21); but their ends were different; God concurred with Satan for the clearing the integrity of his servant, when Satan aimed at nothing but the provoking him to curse his Creator. The physician applies leeches to suck the superfluous blood, but the leeches suck to glut themselves, without any regard to the intention of the physician, and the welfare of the patient. In the same act where men intend to hurt, God intends to correct; so that his concurrence is in a holy manner, while men commit unrighteous actions. A judge commands the executioner to execute the sentence of death, which he hath justly pronounced against a malefactor, and admomsheth him to do it out of love to justice; the executioner hath the authority of the judge for his commission, and the protection of the judge for his security; the judge stands by to countenance and secure him in the doing of it; but if the executioner hath not the same intention as the judge, *viz.* a love to justice in the performance of his office, but a private hatred to the offender, the judge, though he commanded the fact of the executioner, yet did not command this error of his in it; and though he protects him in the fact, yet he owns not this corrupt disposition in him in the doing what was enjoined him, as any act of his own.

To conclude this. Since the creature cannot act without God, cannot lift up a hand, or move his tongue, without God's preserving and upholding the faculty, and preserving the power of action, and preserving every member of the body in its actual motion, and in every circumstance of its motion, we must necessarily suppose God to have such a way of concurrence as doth not intrench upon his

holiness. We must not equal the creature to God, by denying his dependence on him; nor must we imagine such a concurrence to the sinfulness of an act, as stains the Divine purity, which is, I think, sufficiently salved by distinguishing the matter of the act from the evil adhering to it; for since all evil is founded in some good, the evil is distinguishable from the good, and the deformity of the action from the action itself; which, as it is a created act, hath a dependence on the will and influence of God; and as it is a sinful act, is the product of the will of the creature.

Prop. VI. The holiness of God is not blemished by proposing objects to a man, which he makes use of to sin. There is no object proposed to man, but is directed by the providence of God, which influenceth all the motions in the world; and there is no object proposed to man, but his active nature may, according to the goodness or badness of his disposition, make a good or an ill use of: That two men, one of a charitable, the other of a hard-hearted disposition, meet with an indigent and necessitous object, is from the providence of God; yet this indigent person is relieved by the one, and neglected by the other. There could be no action in the world, but about some object; there could be no object offered to us but by Divine Providence; the active nature of man would be in vain, if there were not objects about which it might be exercised. Nothing could present itself to man as an object, either to excite his grace, or awaken his corruption, but by the conduct of the Governor of the world. That David should walk upon the battlements of his palace, and Bathsheba be in the bath at the same time, was from the Divine Providence which orders all the affairs of the world (2 Sam. 11:7); and so some understand (Jer. 6:21): “Thus saith the Lord, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and sons together shall fall upon them.” Since they have offered sacrifices without those due qualifications in their hearts, which were necessary to render them acceptable to me, I will lay in their way such objects, which their corruption will use ill to their farther sin and ruin; so (Psalm 105:25), “He turned their heart to hate his people;” that is, by the multiplying his people, he gave occasion to the Egyptians of hating them, instead of caressing them, as they had formerly done. But God’s holiness is not blemished by this; for,

1. This proposing or presenting of objects invades not the

liberty of any man. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, set in the midst of the garden of Eden,—had no violent influence on man to force him to eat of it; his liberty to eat of it, or not, was reserved entire to himself; no such charge can be brought against any object whatsoever. If a man meet accidentally at a table with meat that is grateful to his palate, but hurtful to the present temper of his body, doth the presenting this sort of food to him strip him of his liberty to decline it, as well as to feed of it? Can the food have any internal influence upon his will, and lay the freedom of it asleep whether he will or no? Is there any charm in that, more than in other sorts of diet? No; but it is the habit of love which he hath to that particular dish, the curiosity of his fancy, and the strength of his own appetite, whereby he is brought into a kind of slavery to that particular meat, and not anything in the food itself. When the word is proposed to two persons, it is embraced by the one, rejected by the other; is it from the word itself, which is the object, that these two persons perform different acts? The object is the same to both, but the manner of acting about the object is not the same; is there any invasion of their liberty by it? Is the one forced by the word to receive it, and the other forced by the word to reject it? Two such contrary effects cannot proceed from one and the same cause; outward things have only an objective influence, not an inward; if the mere proposal of things did suspend or strike down the liberty of man, no angels in heaven, no man upon earth, no, not our Saviour himself; could do anything freely, but by force; objects that are ill used are of God's creation, and though they have allurements in them, yet they have no compulsive power over the will. The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was pleasing to the sight; it had a quality to allure; there had not else needed a prohibition to bar the eating of it; but it could not have so much power to allure, as the Divine threatening to deter.

2. The objects are good in themselves, but the ill use of them is from man's corruption. Bathsheba was, by God's providence, presented to David's sight, but it was David's disposition moved him to so evil an act; what if God knew that he would use that object ill? yet he knew he had given him a power to refrain from any ill use of it; the objects are innocent, but our corruption poisons them. The same object hath been used by one to holy purposes and holy improvements, that hath been used by another to sinful ends; when a

charitable object is presented to a good man, and a cruel man, one relieves him, the other reviles him; the object was rather an occasion to draw out the charity of one, as well as the other; but the refusing to reach out a helping hand, was not from the person in calamity, but the disposition of the refuser to whom he was presented; it is not from the nature of the object that men do good or evil, but from the disposition of the person; what is good in itself, is made bad by our corruption. As the same meat which nourishes and strengthens a sound constitution, cherisheth the disease of another that eats at the same table, not from any unwholesome quality in the food, but the vicious quality of the humors lodging in the stomach, which turn the diet into fuel for themselves, which in its own nature was apt to engender a wholesome juice. Some are perfected by the same things whereby others are ruined. Riches are used by some, not only for their own, but the advantage of others in the world; by others only for themselves, and scarcely so much as their necessities require. Is this the fault of the wealth, or the dispositions of the persons, who are covetous instead of being generous? It is a calumny, therefore, upon God to charge him with the sin of man upon this account. The rain that drops from the clouds upon the plants is sweet in itself, but when it moistens the root of any venomous plant, it is turned into the juice of the plant, and becomes venomous with it. The miracles that our Saviour wrought, were applauded by some, and envied by the Pharisees; the sin arose not from the nature of the miracles, but the malice of their spirits. The miracles were fitter in their own nature to have induced them to an adoration of our Saviour, than to excite so vile a passion against one that had so many marks from heaven to dignify him, and proclaim him worthy of their respect. The person of Christ was an object proposed to the Jews; some worship him, others condemn and crucify him, and according to their several vices and base ends they use this object.

Judas to content his covetousness, the Pharisees to glut their revenge, Pilate for his ambition, to preserve himself in his government, and avoid the articles the people might charge him with of countenancing an enemy to Caesar. God at that time put into their minds a rational and true proposition which they apply to ill purposes. Caiaphas said, that “it was expedient for one man to die for the people,” which “he spake not of himself” (John 11:50, 51). God put it into his mind; but he might have applied it better than he

did, and considered, though the maxim was commendable, whether it might justly be applied to Christ, or whether there was such a necessity that he must die, or the nation be destroyed by the Romans. The maxim was sound. and holy, decreed by God; but what an ill use did the high-priest make of it to put Christ to death as a seditious person, to save the nation from the Roman fury!

3. Since the natural corruption of men will use such objects ill, may not God, without tainting himself, resent such objects to them in subserviency to his gracious decrees Whatsoever God should present to men in that state, they would make an ill use of; hath not God, then, the sovereign prerogative to present what he pleases, and suppress others? To offer that to them which may serve his holy purpose, and hide other things from them which are not so conducing to his gracious ends, which would be as much the occasions of exciting their sin, as the others which he doth bring forth to their view? The Jews, at the time of Christ, were of a turbulent and seditious humor; they expected a Messiah, a temporal king, and would readily have embraced any occasion to have been up in arms to have delivered themselves from the Roman yoke; to this purpose the people attempted once to make him king: and probably the expectation they had that he had such a design to head them, might be one reason of their "hosannas;" because without some such conceit it was not probable they should so soon change their note, and vote him to the cross in so short a time, after they had applauded him as if he had been upon a throne; but their being defeated of strong expectations, usually ended in a more ardent fury. This turbulent and seditious humor God directs in another channel, suppresseth all occurrences that might excite them to a rebellion against the Romans, which, if he had given way to, the crucifying Christ, which was God's design to bring about at that time, had not probably been effected, and the salvation of mankind been hindered or stood at a stay for a time. God, therefore, orders such objects and occasions, that might direct this seditious humor to another channel, which would else have run out in other actions, which had not been conducing to the great design he had then in the world. Is it not the right of God, and without any blemish to his holiness, to use those corruptions which he finds sown in the nature of his creature by the hand of Satan, and to propose such objects as may excite the exercise of them for his own service? Sure God hath as much right

to serve himself of the creature of his own framing, and what natures soever they are possessed with, and to present objects to that purpose, as a falconer hath to offer this or that bird to his hawk to exercise his courage, and excite his ravenousness, without being termed the author of that ravenousness in the creature. God planted not those corruptions in the Jews, but finds them in those persons over whom he hath an absolute sovereignty in the right of a Creator, and that of a Judge for their sins: and by the right of that sovereignty may offer such objects and occasions, which, though innocent in themselves, he knows they will make use of to ill purposes, but which by the same decree that he resolves to present such occasions to them, he also resolves to make use of them for his own glory. It is not conceivable by us what way that death of Christ, which was necessary for the satisfaction of Divine justice, could be brought about without ordering the evil of some men's hearts by special occasions to effect his purpose; we cannot suppose that Christ can be guilty of any crime that deserved death by the Jewish law; had he been so a criminal, he could not have been a Redeemer: a perfect innocence was necessary to the design of his coming. Had God himself put him to that death, without using instruments of wickedness in it, by some remarkable hand from heaven, the innocence of his nature had been forever eclipsed, and the voluntariness of his sacrifice had been obscured: the strangeness of such a judgment would have made his innocence incredible; he could not reasonably have been proposed as an object of faith. What, to believe in one that was struck dead by a hand from heaven? The propagation of the doctrine of redemption had wanted a foundation; and though God might have raised him again, the certainty of his death had been as questionable as his innocence in dying, had he not been raised. But God orders everything so as to answer his own most wise and holy ends, and maintain his truth, and the fulfilling the predictions of the minutest concerns about them, and all this by presenting occasions innocent in themselves, which the corruptions of the Jews took hold of, and whereby God, unknown to them, brought about his own decrees: and may not this be conceived without any taint upon God's holiness? for when there are seeds of all sin in man's nature, why may not God hinder the sprouting up of this or that kind of seed, and leave liberty to the growth of the other, and shut up other ways of sinning, and restrain men from them, and

let them loose to that temptation which he intends to serve himself of, hiding from them those objects which were not so serviceable to his purpose, wherein they would have sinned, and offer others, which he knew their corruption would use ill, and were serviceable to his ends; since the depravation of their natures would necessarily hurry them to evil without restraining grace, as a scale will necessarily rise up when the weight in it, which kept it down, is taken away?

Prop. VII. The holiness of God is not blemished by withdrawing his grace from a sinful creature, whereby he falls into more sin. That God withdraws his grace from men, and gives them up sometimes to the fury of their lusts, is as clear in Scripture, as anything (Deut. 29:4): “Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear,” &c. Judas was delivered to Satan after the sop, and put into his power, for despising former admonitions. He often leaves the reins to the devil, that he may use what efficacy he can in those that have offended the Majesty of God; he withholds further influences of grace, or withdraws what before he had granted them. Thus he withheld that grace from the sons of Eli, that might have made their father’s pious admonitions effectual to them (1 Sam. 2:25): “They hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.” He gave grace to Eli to reprove them, and withheld that grace from them, which might have enabled them against their natural corruption and obstinacy to receive that reproof. But the holiness of God is not blemished by this.

1. Because the act of God in this is only negative. Thus God is said to “harden” men: not by positive hardening, or working anything in the creature, but by not working, not softening, leaving a man to the hardness of his own heart, whereby it is unavoidable by the depravation of man’s nature, and the fury of his passions, but that he should be further hardened, and “increase unto more ungodliness,” as the expression is (2 Tim. 2:19). As a man is said to give another his life, when he doth not take it away when it lay at his mercy; so God is said to “harden” a man, when he doth not mollify him when it was in his power, and inwardly quicken him with that grace whereby he might infallibly avoid any further provoking of him. God is said to harden men when he removes not from them the incentives to sin, curbs not those principles which are ready to

comply with those incentives, withdraws the common assistances of his grace, concurs not with counsels and admonitions to make them effectual; flasheth not in the convincing light which he darted upon them before. If hardness follows upon God's withholding his softening grace, it is not by any positive act of God, but from the natural hardness of man. If you put fire near to wax or rosin, both will melt; but when that fire is removed, they return to their natural quality of hardness and brittleness; the positive act of the fire is to melt and soften, and the softness of the rosin is to be ascribed to that; but the hardness is from the rosin itself, wherein the fire hath no influence, but only a negative act by a removal of it: so, when God hardens a man, he only leaves him to that stony heart which he derived from Adam, and brought with him into the world. All men's understandings being blinded, and their wills perverted in Adam, God's withdrawing his grace is but a leaving them to their natural pravity, which is the cause of their further sinning, and not God's removal of that special light he before afforded them, or restraint he held over them. As when God withdraws his preserving power from the creature, he is not the efficient, but deficient cause of the creature's destruction; so, in this case, God only ceaseth to bind and darn up that sin which else would break out.

2. The whole positive cause of his hardness is from man's corruption. God infuseth not any sin into his creatures, but forbears to infuse his grace, and restrain their lusts, which, upon the removal of his grace, work impetuously: God only gives them up to that which he knows will work strongly in their hearts. And, therefore, the apostle wipes off from God any positive act in that uncleanness the heathens were given up to (Rom. 1:24, "Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts." And, ver. 26, God gave them up to "vile affections;" but they were their own affections, none of God's inspiring,) by adding, "through the lusts of their own hearts." God's giving them up was the logical cause, or a cause by way of argument; their own lusts were the true and natural cause; their own they were, before they were given up to them, and belonging to none, as the author, but themselves, after they were given up to them. The lust in the heart, and the temptation without, easily close and mix interests with one another: as the fire in a coal pit will with the fuel, if the streams derived into it for the quenching it be dammed up: the natural passions will run to a

temptation, as the waters of a river tumble towards the sea. When a man that haul bridled in a high-mettled horse from running out, gives him the reins; or a huntsman takes off the string that held the dog, and lets him run after the hare,—are they the immediate cause of the motion of the one, or the other?—no, but the mettle and strength of the horse, and the natural inclination of the hound, both which are left to their own motions to pursue their own natural instincts. Man doth as naturally tend to sin as a stone to the centre, or as a weighty thing inclines to a motion to the earth it is from the propension of man's nature that he “drinks up iniquity like water:” and God doth no more when he leaves a man to sin, by taking away the hedge which stopped him, but leave him to his natural inclination. As a man that breaks up a dam he hath placed, leaves the stream to run in their natural channel; or one that takes away a prop from a stone to let it fall, leaves it only to that nature which inclines it to a descent; both have their motion from their own nature, and man is sin from his own corruption. The withdrawing the sunbeams is not the cause of darkness, but the shadiness of the earth; nor is the departure of the sun the cause of winter, but the coldness of the air and earth, which was tempered and beaten back into the bowels of the earth by the vigor of the sun, upon whose departure they return to their natural state: the sun only leaves the earth and air as it found them at the beginning of the spring or the beginning of the day. If God do not give a man grace to melt him, yet he cannot be said to communicate to him that nature which hardens him, which man hath from himself. As God was not the cause of the first sin of Adam, which was the root of all other, so he is not the cause of the following sins, which, as branches, spring from that root; man's free-will was the cause of the first sin, and the corruption of his nature by it the cause of all succeeding sins. God doth not immediately harden any man, but doth propose those things, from whence the natural vice of man takes an occasion to strengthen and nourish itself. Hence, God is said to “harden Pharaoh's heart” (Exod. 7:13), by concurring with the magicians in turning their rods into serpents, which stiffened his heart against Moses, conceiving him by reason of that, to have no more power than other men, and was an occasion of his father hardening: and Pharaoh is said to “harden himself” (Exod. 8:32); that is, in regard of his own natural passion.

3. God is holy and righteous, because he doth not withdraw from man, till man deserts him. To say, that God withdrew that grace from Adam, which he had afforded him in creation, or anything that was due to him, till he had abused the gifts of God, and turned them to an end contrary to that of creation, would be a reflection upon the Divine holiness. God was first deserted by man before man was deserted by God; and man doth first contemn and abuse the common grace of God, and those relics of natural light, that “enlighten every man that comes into the world” (John 1:9); before God leaves him to the hurry of his own passions. Ephraim was first joined to idols, before God pronounced the fatal sentence, “Let him alone” (Hos. 4:17): and the heathens first changed the glory of the incorruptible God, before God withdrew his common grace from the corrupted creature (Rom. 1:23, 24); and they first “served the creature more than the Creator,” before the Creator gave them up to the slavish chains of their vile affections (ver. 25, 26). Israel first cast off God before God cast off them; but then “he gave them up to their own hearts’ lusts, and they walked in their own counsels” (Psalm 81:11, 12). Since sin entered into the world by the fall of Adam, and the blood of all his posterity was tainted, man cannot do anything that is formally good; not for want of faculties, but for the want of a righteous habit in those faculties, especially in the will; yet God discovers himself to man in the works of his hands; he hath left in him footsteps of natural reason; he doth attend him with common motions of his Spirit; corrects him for his faults with gentle chastisements. He is near unto all in some kind of instructions: he puts many times providential bars in their way of sinning; but when they will rush into it as the horse into the battle, when they will rebel against the light, God doth often leave them to their own course, sentence him that is “filthy to be filthy still” (Rev. 22:11), which is a righteous act of God, as he is rector and governor of the world. Man’s not receiving, or not improving what God gives, is the cause of God’s not giving further, or taking away his own, which before he had bestowed; this is so far from being repugnant to the holiness and righteousness of God, that it is rather a commendable act of his holiness and righteousness, as the rector of the world, not to let those gifts continue in the hand of a man who abuses them contrary to his glory. Who will blame a father, that, after all the good counsels he hath given to his son to reclaim him,

all the corrections he hath inflicted on him for his irregular practice, leaves him to his own courses, and withdraws those assistances which he scoffed at, and turned the deaf ear unto? Or, who will blame the physician for deserting the patient, who rejects his counsel, will not follow his prescriptions, but dasheth his physic against the wall? No man will blame him, no man will say that he is the cause of the patient's death, but the true cause is the fury of the distemper, and the obstinacy of the diseased person, to which the physician left him. And who can justly blame God in this case, who yet never denied supplies of grace to any that sincerely sought it at his hands; and what man is there that lies under a hardness, but first was guilty of very provoking sins? What unholiness is it to deprive men of those assistances, because of their sin, and afterwards to direct those counsels and practices of theirs, which he hath justly given them up unto, to serve the ends of his own glory in his own methods?

4. Which will appear further by considering, that God is not obliged to continue his grace to them. It was at his liberty whether he could give any renewing grace to Adam after his fall, or to any of his posterity: he was at his own liberty to withhold it or communicate it: but, if he were under any obligation then, surely he must be under less now, since the multiplication of sin by his creatures: but, if the obligation were none just after the fall, there is no pretence now to fasten any such obligation on God. That God had no obligation at first, hath been spoken to before; he is less obliged to continue his grace after a repeated refusal, and a peremptory abuse, than he was bound to proffer it after the first apostasy. God cannot be charged with unholiness in withdrawing his grace after we have received it, unless we can make it appear that his grace was a thing due to us, as we are his creatures, and as he is governor of the world. What prince looks upon himself as obliged to reside in any particular place of his kingdom? But suppose he be bound to inhabit in one particular city, yet after the city rebels against him, is he bound to continue his court there, spend his revenue among rebels, endanger his own honor and security, enlarge their charter, or maintain their ancient privileges? Is it not most just and righteous for him to withdraw himself, and leave them to their own tumultuousness and sedition, whereby they should eat the fruit of their own doings? If there be an obligation on God as a governor, it

would rather lie on the side of justice to leave man to the power of the devil whom he courted, and the prevalency of those lusts he hath so often caressed; and wrap up in a cloud all his common illuminations, and leave him destitute of all common workings of his Spirit.

Prop. VIII. God's holiness is not blemished by his commanding those things sometimes which seem to be against nature, or thwart some other of his precepts; as when God commanded Abraham with his own hand to sacrifice his son (Gen. 22:2), there was nothing of unrighteousness in it. God hath a sovereign dominion over the lives and beings of his creatures, whereby as he creates one day, he might annihilate the next; and by the same right that he might demand the life of Isaac, as being his creature, he might demand the obedience of Abraham, in a ready return of that to him, which he had so long enjoyed by his grant. It is true, killing is unjust when it is done without cause, and by a private authority; but the authority of God surmounts all private and public authority whatsoever. Our lives are due to him when he calls for them; and they are more than once forfeit to him by reason of transgression. But, howsoever the case is, God commanded him to do it for the trial of his grace, but suffered him not to do it in favor to his ready obedience; but had Isaac been actually slain and offered, how had it been unrighteous in God, who enacts laws for the regulation of his creature, but never intended them to the prejudice of the rights of his sovereignty? Another case is that of the Israelities borrowing jewels of the Egyptians, by the order of God (Exod. 11:2, 3; 12:36). Is not God Lord of men's goods, as well as their lives? What have any, they have not received? and that not as proprietors independent on God, but his stewards; and may not he demand a portion of his steward to bestow upon his favorite? He that had power to dispose of the Egyptians' goods, had power to order the Israelites to ask them. Besides, God acted the part of a just judge in ordering them their wages for their service in this method, and making their task-masters give them some recompense for their unjust oppression so many years; it was a command from God, therefore, rather for the preservation of justice (the basis of all those laws which link human society), than any infringement of it. It was a material recompense in part, though not a formal one in the intention of the Egyptians; it was but in part a recompense; it must needs come short of the damage the poor

captives had sustained by the tyranny of their masters, who had enslaved them contrary to the rules of hospitality; and could not make amends for the lives of the poor infants of Israel, whom they had drowned in the river. He that might for the unjust oppression of his people have taken away all their lives, destroyed the whole nation, and put the Israelites into the possession of their lands, could, without any unrighteousness, dispose of part of their goods; and it was rather an act of clemency to leave them some part, who had doubly forfeited all. Again, the Egyptians were as ready to lend by God's influence, as the Israelites were to ask by God's order: and though it was a loan, God, as Sovereign of the world, and Lord of the earth, and the fulness thereof, alienated the property by assuming them to the use of the tabernacle, to which service, most, if not all of them, were afterwards dedicated. God, who is lawgiver, hath power to dispense with his own law, and make use of his own goods, and dispose of them as he pleases; it is no unholiness in God to dispose of that which he hath a right unto. Indeed, God cannot command that which is in its own nature intrinsically evil; as to command a rational creature not to love him, not to worship him, to call God to witness to a lie; these are intrinsically evil; but for the disposing of the lives and goods of his creatures, which they have from him in right, and not in absolute propriety, is not evil in him, because there is no repugnancy in his own nature to such acts, nor is it anything inconsistent with the natural duty of a creature, and in such cases he may use what instruments he please. The point was; that holiness is a glorious perfection of the nature of God. We have showed the nature of this holiness in God; what it is; and we have demonstrated it, and proved that God is holy, and must needs be so; and also the purity of his nature in all his acts about sin: let us now improve it byway of use.

IV. Is holiness a transcendent perfection belonging to the nature of God? The first use shall be of instruction and information.

Inform. 1. How great and how frequent is the contempt of this eminent perfection in the Deity! Since the fall, this attribute, which renders God most amiable in himself, renders him most hateful to his apostate creature. It is impossible that he that loves iniquity, can affect that which is irreconcilably contrary to the iniquity he loves. Nothing so contrary to the sinfulness of man as the holiness of God,

and nothing is thought of by the sinner with so much detestation. How do men account that which is the most glorious perfection of the Divinity, unworthy to be regarded as an accomplishment of their own souls! and when they are pressed to an imitation of it, and a detestation of what is contrary to it, have the same sentiment in their heart which the devil had in his language to Christ, Why art thou come to torment us before our time? What an enmity the world naturally hath to this perfection, I think is visible in the practice of the heathen, who among all their heroes which they deified, elevated none to that dignity among them for this or that moral virtue that came nearest to it, but for their valor or some usefulness in the concerns of this life. Aesculapius was deified for his skill in the cure of diseases; Bacchus, for the use of the grape; Vulcan, for his operations by fire; Hercules, for his destroying of tyrants and monsters; but none for their mere virtue; as if anything of purity were unworthy their consideration in the frame of a Deity, when it is the glory of all other perfections; so essential it is, that when men reject the imitation of this, God regards it as a total rejection of himself, though they own all the other attributes of his nature (Psalm 81:11): “Israel would none of me:” why? because “they walked not in his ways” (ver. 13); those ways wherein the purity of the Divine nature was most conspicuous; they would own him in his power, when they stood in need of a deliverance; they would own him in his mercy, when they were plunged in distress; but they would not imitate him in his holiness. This being the lustre of the Divine nature, the contempt of it is an obscuring all his other perfections, and a dashing a blot upon his whole escutcheon.

To own all the rest, and deny him this, is to frame him as an unbeautiful monster,—a deformed power. Indeed, all sin is against this attribute; all sin aims in general at the being of God, but in particular at the holiness of his Being. All sin is a violence to this perfection; there is not an iniquity in the world, but directs its venomous sting against the Divine purity; some sins are directed against his omniscience, as secret wickedness; some against his providence, as distrust; some against his mercy, as unbelief; some against his wisdom, as neglecting the means instituted by him, censuring his ways and actings; some against his power, as trusting in means more than in God, and the immoderate fear of men more than of God; some against his truth, as distrusting his promise, or

not fearing his threatening; but all agree together in their enmity against this, which is the peculiar glory of the Deity: every one of them is a receding from the Divine image; and the blackness of every one is the deeper, by how much the distance of it from the holiness of God is the greater. This contrariety to the holiness of God, is the cause of all the absolute atheism (if there be any such) in the world; what was the reason “the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,” but because the fool is “corrupt, and hath done abominable work” (Psalm 14:1)? If they believe the being of a God, their own reason will enforce them to imagine him holy; therefore, rather than fancy a holy God, they would fain fancy none at all.—In particular,

1. The holiness of God is injured, in unworthy representations of God, and imaginations of him in our own minds. The heathen fell under this guilt, and ascribed to their idols those vices which their own sensuality inclined them to, unworthy of a man, much more unworthy of a God, that they might find a protection of their crimes in the practice of their idols. But is this only the notion of the heathens? may there not be many among us whose love to their lusts, and desires of sinning without control, move them to slander God in their thoughts, rather than reform their lives, and are ready to frame, by the power of their imaginative faculty, a God, not only winking, but smiling, at their impurities? I am sure God charges the impieties of men upon this score, in that Psalm (50:21) which seems to be a representation of the day of judgment, as some gather from ver. 6, when God sums up all together: “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself;” not a detester, but approver of thy crimes: and the Psalmist seems to express God’s loathing of sin in such a manner, as intimates it to be contrary to the ideas and resemblances men make of him in their minds (Psalm 5:4); “For thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness;” as we say, in vindication of a man, he is not such a man as you imagine him to be; thou art not such a God as the world commonly imagines thee to be, a God taking pleasure in iniquity. It is too common for men to fancy God not as he is, but as they would have him; strip him of his excellency for their own security. As God made man after his image, man would dress God after his own modes, as may best suit the content of his lusts, and encourage him in a course of sinning; for, when they can frame such

a notion of God, as if he were a countenancer of sin, they will derive from thence a reputation to their crimes, commit wickedness with an unbounded licentiousness, and crown their vices with the name of virtues, because they are so like to the sentiments of that God they fancy: from hence (as the Psalmist, in the Psalm before mentioned) ariseth that mass of vice in the world; such conceptions are the mother and nurse of all impiety. I question not but the first spring is some wrong notion of God, in regard of his holiness: we are as apt to imagine God as we would have him, as the black Ethiopians were to draw the image of their gods after their own dark hue, and paint him with their own color: as a philosopher in Theodoret speaks; If oxen and lions had hands, and could paint as men do, they would frame the images of their gods according to their own likeness and complexion. Such notions of God render him a swinish being, and worse than the vilest idols adored by the Egyptians, when men fancy a God indulgent to their appetites and most sordid lusts.

2. In defacing the image of God in our own souls. God, in the first draught of man, conformed him to his own image, or made him an image of himself; because we find that in regeneration this image is renewed (Eph. 4:24); “The new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.” He did not take angels for his pattern, in the first polishing the soul, but himself. In defacing this image we cast dirt upon the holiness of God, which was his pattern in the framing of us, and rather choose to be conformed to Satan, who is God’s grand enemy, to have God’s image wiped out of us, and the devil’s pictured in us: therefore, natural men, in an unregenerate state, may justly be called devils, since our Saviour called the worst man, Judas, so (John 6:1), and Peter, one of the best (Matt. 16:23): and if this title be given, by an infallible Judge, to one of the worst, and one of the best, it may, without wrong to any, be ascribed to all men that wallow in their sin, which is directly contrary to that illustrious image God did imprint upon them. How often is it seen that men control the light of their own nature, and stain the clearest beams of that candle of the Lord in their own spirits, that fly in the face of their own consciences, and say to them, as Ahab to Micaiah, Thou didst “never prophesy good to me;” thou didst never encourage me in those things that are pleasing to the flesh; and use it at the same rate as the wicked king did the prophet, “imprison it in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18), because it starts up in

them sometimes sentiments of the holiness of God, which it represents in the soul of man! How jolly are many men when the exhalations of their sensitive part rise up to cloud the exactest principle of moral nature in their minds, and render the monstrous principles of the law of corruption more lively! Whence ariseth the wickedness which hath been committed with an open face in the world, and the applause that hath been often given to the worst of villanies? Have we not known, among ourselves, men to glory in their shame, and esteem that a most gentle accomplishment of man, which is the greatest blot upon his nature, and which, if it were upon God, would render him no God, but an impure devil so that to be a gentleman among us hath been the same as to be an incarnate devil; and to be a man, was to be no better, but worse, than a brute? Vile wretches! is not this a contempt of Divine holiness, to kill that Divine seed which lies languishing in the midst of corrupted nature; to cut up any sprouts of it as weeds unworthy to grow in their gardens, and cultivate what is the seed of hell; prefer the rotten fruits of Sodom, marked with a Divine curse, before those relics of the fruits of Eden, of God's own planting?

3. The holiness of God is injured in charging our sin upon God. Nothing is more natural to men, than to seek excuses for their sin, and transfer it from themselves to the next at hand, and rather than fail, shift it upon God himself; and if they can bring God into a society with them in sin, they will hug themselves in a security that God cannot punish that guilt wherein he is a partner. Adam's children are not of a different disposition from Adam himself, who, after he was arraigned and brought to his trial, boggles not at flinging his dirt in the face of God, his Creator, and accuseth him as if he had given him the woman, not to be his help, but his ruin (Gen. 3:12); "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." He never supplicates for pardon, nor seeks a remedy, but reflects his crime upon God: Had I been alone, as I was first created, I had not eaten; but the woman, whom I received as a special gift from thee, hath proved my tempter and my bane. When man could not be like God in knowledge, he endeavored to make God like him in his crime; and when his ambition failed of equalizing himself with God, he did, with an insolence too common to corrupted nature, attempt, by the imputation of his sin, to equal the Divinity with himself. Some think

Cain had the same sentiment in his answer to God's demand where his brother was (Gen. 2:9); "Am I my brother's keeper?" Art not thou the Keeper and Governor of the world? why didst not thou take care of him, and hinder my killing him, and drawing this guilt upon myself, and terror upon my conscience? David was not behind, when, after the murder of Uriah, he sweeps the dirt from his own door to God's (2 Sam. 11:25); "The sword devoureth one as well as another;" fathering that solely upon Divine Providence which was his own wicked contrivance: though afterwards he is more ingenuous in clearing God, and charging himself (Psalm 51:4): "Against thee, thee only have I sinned;" and he clears God in his judgment too. It is too common for the "foolishness of man to pervert his way;" and then "his heart frets against the Lord" (Prov. 19:3). He studies mischief, runs in a way of sin, and when he hath conjured up troubles to himself, by his own folly, he excuseth himself, and, with indignation, charges God as the author both of his sin and misery, and sets his mouth against the heavens. It is a more horrible thing to accuse God as a principal or accessory in our guilt, than to conceive him to be a favorer of our iniquity; yet both are bad enough.

4. The holiness of God is injured when men will study arguments from the holy word of God to color and shelter their crimes. When men will seek for a shelter for their lies, in that of the midwives to preserve the children, or in that of Rahab to save the spies, as if, because God rewarded their fidelity, he countenanced their sin. How often is Scripture wrested to be a plea for unbecoming practices, that God, in his word, may be imagined a patron for their iniquity? It is not unknown that some have maintained their quaffing and carousing (from Eccles. 8:11), "That a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry:" and their gluttony (from Matt. 5:11), "That which goes into the belly defiles not a man." The Jesuits' morals are a transcript of this. How often hath the Passion of our Saviour, the highest expression of God's holiness, been employed to stain it, and encourage the most debauched practices! Grace hath been turned into wantonness, and the abundance of grace been used as a blast to increase the flames of sin, as if God had no other aim in that work of redemption, but to discover himself more indulgent to our sensual appetites, and by his severity with his Son, become more gracious to

our lusts; this is to feed the roots of hell with the dews of heaven, to make grace a pander for the abuse of it, and to employ the expressions of his holiness in his word to be a sword against the essential holiness of his nature: as if a man should draw an apology for his treason out of that law that was made to forbid, not to protect, his rebellion. Not the meanest instrument in the temple was to be alienated from the use it was by Divine order appointed to, nor was it to be employed in any common use; and shall the word of God, which is the image of his holiness, be transferred by base interpretations to be an advocate for iniquity? Such an ill use of his word reflects upon that hand which imprinted those characters of purity and righteousness upon it: as the misinterpretation of the wholesome laws of a prince, made to discourage debauchery, reflects upon his righteousness and sincerity in enacting them.

5. The holiness of God is injured, when men will put up petitions to God to favor them in a wicked design. Such there are, and taxed by the apostle (James 4:3), “Ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts,” who desired mercies from God, with an intent to make them instruments of sin, and weapons of unrighteousness; as it is reported of a thief, that he always prayed for the success of his robbery. It hath not been rare in the world to appoint fasts and prayers for success in wars manifestly unjust, and commenced upon breaches of faith. Many covetous men petition God to prosper them in their unjust gain; as if the blessed God sat in his pure majesty upon a throne of grace, to espouse unjust practices, and make iniquity prosperous. There are such as “offer sacrifice with an evil mind” (Prov. 21:27), to barter with God for a divine blessing to spirit a wicked contrivance. How great a contempt of the holiness of God is this! How inexcusable would it be for a favorite to address himself to a just prince with this language: Sir, I desire a boon of such lands that he near me, for an addition to my estate, that I may have supports for my debauchery, and be able to play the villain more powerfully among my neighbors! Hereby he implies that his prince is a friend to such crimes and wickedness he intends his petition for. Is not this the language of many men’s hearts in the immediate presence of God? The order of prayer runs thus, “Hallowed be thy name;” first to have a deep sense of the holiness of the Divine nature, and an ardent desire for the glory of it. This order is inverted by asking those things which are not agreeable to

the will of God, not meet for us to ask, and not meet for God to give; or asking things agreeable to the will of God, but with a wicked intention. This is, in effect, to desire God to strip himself of his holiness, and commit sacrilege upon his own nature to gratify our lusts.

6. The purity of God is contemned, in hating and scoffing at the holiness which is in a creature. Whoever looks upon the holiness of a creature as an unlovely thing, can have no good opinion of the amiableness of Divine purity. Whosoever hates those qualities and graces that resemble God in any person, must needs condemn the original pattern, which is more eminent in God. If there be no comeliness in a creature's holiness, to render it grateful to us, we should say of God himself, were he visible among us, with those in the prophet (Isa. 53.), "There is no beauty in him, that we should desire him." Holiness is beautiful in itself. If God be the most lovely Being, that which is a likeness to him, so far as it doth resemble him, must needs be amiable, because it partakes of God; and, therefore, those that see no beauty in an inferior holiness, but contemn it because it is a purity above them, contemn God much more. He that hates that which is imperfect merely for that excellency which is in it, doth much more hate that which is perfect, without any mixture or stain. Holiness being the glory of God, the peculiar title of the Deity, and from him derived unto the nature of a creature, he that mocks this in a person, derides God himself; and, when he cannot abuse the purity in the Deity, he will do it in his image; as rebels that cannot wrong the king in his person, will do it in his picture, and his subjects that are loyal to him. He that hates the picture of a man, hates the person represented by it much more; he that hates the beams, hates the sun; the holiness of a creature is but a beam from that infinite Sun, a stream from that eternal Fountain. Where there is a derision of the purity of any creature, there is a greater reflection upon God in that derision, as he is the Author of it. If a mixed and stained holiness be more the subject of any man's scoffs than a great deal of sin, that person hath a disposition more roundly to scoff at God himself, should he appear in that unblemished and unspotted purity which infinitely shines in his nature. O! it is a dangerous thing to scoff and deride holiness in any person, though never so mean; such do deride and scoff at the most holy God.

7. The holiness of God is injured by our unprepared addresses to him, when, like swine, we come into the presence of God with all our mire reeking and steaming upon us. A holy God requires a holy worship; and if our best duties, having filth in every part, as performed by us, are unmeet for God, how much more unsuitable are dead and dirty duties to a living and immense holiness! Slight approaches and drossy frames speak us to have imaginations of God as of a slight and sottish being. This is worse than the heathens practised, who would purge their flesh before they sacrificed, and make some preparations in a seeming purity, before they would enter into their temples. God is so holy, that were our services as refined as those of angels, we could not present him with a service meet for his holy nature (Josh. 24:19). We contemn, then, this perfection, when we come before him without due preparation; as if God himself were of an impure nature, and did not deserve our purest thoughts in our applications to him; as if any blemished and polluted sacrifice were good enough for him, and his nature deserved no better. When we excite not those elevated frames of spirit which are due to such a being, when we think to put him off with a lame and imperfect service, we worship him not according to the excellency of his nature, but put a slight upon his majestic sanctity. When we nourish in our duties those foolish imaginations which creep upon us; when we bring into, and continue our worldly, carnal, debauched fancies in his presence, worse than the nasty servants, or bemired dogs, a man would blush to be attended with in his visits to a neat person. To be conversing with sordid sensualities, when we are at the feet of an infinite God, sitting upon the throne of his holiness, is as much a contempt of him, as it would be of a prince, to bring a vessel full of nasty dung with us, when we come to present a petition to him in his royal robes; or as it would have been to God, if the high priest should have swept all the blood and excrements of the sacrifices from the foot of the altar into the Holy of holies, and heaped it up before the mercy-seat, where the presence of God dwelt between the cherubims, and afterwards shovelled it up into the ark, to be lodged with Aaron's rod and the pot of manna.

8. God's holiness is slighted in depending upon our imperfect services to bear us out before the tribunal of God. This is too ordinary. The Jews were often infected with it (Rom. 3:10), who, not

well understanding the enormity of their transgressions, the interweaving of sin with their services, and the unspottedness of the Divine purity, mingled an opinion of merit with their sacrifices, and thought, by the cutting the throat of a beast, and offering it upon God's altar, they had made a sufficient compensation to that holiness they had offended. Not to speak of many among the Romanists who have the same notion, thinking to make satisfaction to God by erecting an hospital, or endowing a church, as if this injured perfection could be contented with the dregs of their purses, and the offering of an unjust mammon, more likely to mind God of the injury they have done him, than contribute to the appeasing of him. But is it not too ordinary with miserable men, whose consciences accuse them of their crimes, to rely upon the mumbling of a few formal prayers, and in the strength of them, to think to stand before the tremendous tribunal of God, and meet with a discharge upon this account from any accusation this Divine perfection can present against them? Nay, do not the best Christians sometimes find a principle in them, that makes them stumble in their goings forth to Christ, and glorifying the holiness of God in that method which he hath appointed? Sometimes casting an eye at their grace, and sticking awhile to this or that duty, and gazing at the glory of the temple-building, while they should more admire the glorious Presence that fills it. What is all this but a villifying of the holiness of the Divine nature, as though it would be well enough contented with our impurities and imperfections, because they look like a righteousness in our estimation as though dross and dung, which are the titles the apostles gives to all the righteousness of a fallen creature (Phil. 3:8), were valuable in the sight of God, and sufficient to render us comely before him. It is a blasphemy against this attribute, to pretend that anything so imperfect, so daubed, as the best of our services are, can answer to that which is infinitely perfect, and be a ground of demanding eternal life: it is at best, to set up a gilded Dagon, as a fit companion for the ark of his Holiness; our own righteousness as a suitable mate for the righteousness of God: as if he had repented of the claim he made by the law to an exact conformity, and thrown off the holiness of his nature for the fondling of a corrupted creature. Rude and foolish notions of the Divine purity are clearly evidenced by any confidence in any righteousness of our own, though never so splendid. It is a rendering

the righteousness of God as dull and obscure as that of men; a mere outside, as their own; as blind as the heathens pictured their Fortune, that knew as little how to discern the nature and value of the offerings made to her, as to distribute her gifts, as if it were all one to them, to have a dog or a lamb presented in sacrifice. As if God did not well understand his own nature, when he enacted so holy a law, and strengthened it with so severe a threatening; which must follow upon our conceit, that he will accept a righteousness lower than that which bears some suitableness to the holiness of his own nature, and that of his law; and that he could easily be put off with a pretended and counterfeit service. What are the services of the generality of men, but suppositions, that they can bribe God to an indulgence of them in their sins, and by an oral sacrifice, cause him to divest himself of his hatred of their former iniquities, and countenance their following practises. As the harlot, that would return fresh to her uncleanness, upon the confidence that her peace offering had contented the righteousness of God (Prov. 7:14): as though a small service could make him wink at our sins, and lay aside the glory of his nature; when, alas! the best duties in the most gracious persons in this life, are but as the steams of a spiced dung-hill, a composition of myrrh and froth, since there are swarms of corruptions in their nature, and secret sins that they need a cleansing from.

9. It is a contemning the holiness of God, when we charge the law of God with rigidness. We cast dirt upon the holiness of God when we blame the law of God, because it shackles us, and prohibit our desired pleasures; and hate the law of God, as they did the prophets, because they did not prophesy smooth things; but called to them, to “get” them “out of the way, and turn aside out of the path, and cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them” (Isa. 30:10, 11). Put us no more in mind of the holiness of God, and the holiness of his law; it is a troublesome thing for us to hear of it: let him be gone from us, since he will not countenance our vices, and indulge our crimes; we would rather hear there is a God, than you would tell us of a holy one. We are contrary to the law, when we wish it were not so exact; and, therefore, contrary to the holiness of God, which set the stamp of exactness and righteousness upon it. We think him injurious to our liberty, when, by his precept he thwarts our pleasure; we wish it of another frame, more mild, more

suitable to our minds: it is the same, as if we should openly blame God for consulting with his own righteousness, and not with our humors, before he settled his law; that he should not have drawn from the depths of his righteous nature, but squared it to accommodate our corruption.

This being the language of such complaints, is a reproving God, because he would not be unholy, that we might be unrighteous with impunity. Had the Divine law been suited to our corrupt state, God must have been unholy to have complied with his rebellious creature. To charge the law with rigidness, either in language or practice, is the highest contempt of God's holiness; for it is an implicit wish, that God were as defiled, polluted, disorderly, as our corrupted selves.

10. The holiness of God is injured opinionatively. (1). In the opinion of venial sins. The Romanists divide sins into venial and mortal: mortal, are those which deserve eternal death; venial, the lighter sort of sins, which rather deserve to be pardoned than punished; or if punished, not with an eternal, but temporal punishment. This opinion hath no foundation in, but is contrary to, Scripture. How can any sin be in its own nature venial, when the due "wages of every sin is death" (Rom. 6:23)? and he who "continues not in every thing that the law commands," falls under a "curse" (Gal. 3:10). It is a mean thought of the holiness and majesty of God to imagine, that any sin which is against an infinite majesty, and as infinite a purity both in the nature of God and the law of God, should not be considered as infinitely heinous. All sins are transgressions of the eternal law, and in every one the infinite holiness of God is some way slighted. (2). In the opinion of works of supererogation. That is, such works as are not commanded by God, which yet have such a dignity and worth in their own nature, that the performers of them do not only merit at God's hands for themselves, but fill up a treasure of merits for others, that come short of fulfilling the precepts God hath enjoined. It is such a mean thought of God's holiness, that the Jews, in all the charges brought against them in Scripture, were never guilty of. And if you consider what pitiful things they are, which are within the compass of such works, you have sufficient reason to bewail the ignorance of man, and the low esteem he hath of so glorious a perfection. The whipping themselves

often in a week, extraordinary watchings, fastings, macerating their bodies, wearing a capuchin's habit, &c. are pitiful things to give content to an Infinite Purity. As if the precept of God required only the inferior degrees of virtue, and the counsels the more high and excellent; as if the law of God, which the Psalmist counts "perfect" (Psalm 19:7), did not command all good, and forbid all evil; as if the holiness of God had forgotten itself in the framing the law, and made it a scanty and defective rule; and the righteousness of a creature were not only able to make an eternal righteousness, but surmount it. As man would be at first as knowing as God, so some of his posterity would be more holy than God; set up a wisdom against the wisdom of God, and a purity above the Divine purity. Adam was not so presumptuous; he intended no more than an equalling God in knowledge; but those would exceed him in righteousness, and not only presume to render a satisfaction for themselves to the holiness they have injured, but to make a purse for the supply of others that are indigent, that they may stand before the tribunal of God with a confidence in the imaginary righteousness of a creature. How horrible is it for those that come short of the law of God themselves, to think that they can have enough for a loan to their neighbors! An unworthy opinion.

Inform. 2. It may inform us, how great is our fall from God, and how distant we are from him. View the holiness of God, and take a prospect of the nature of man, and be astonished to see a person created in the Divine image, degenerated into the image of the devil. We are as far fallen from the holiness of God, which consists in a hatred of sin, as the lowest point of the earth is from the highest point of the heavens. The devil is not more fallen from the rectitude of his nature and likeness to God, than we are; and that we are not in the same condition with those apostate spirits, is not from anything in our nature, but from the mediation of Christ, upon which account God hath indulged in us a continuance of some remainders of that which Satan is wholly deprived of. We are departed from our original pattern; we were created to live the "life of God," that that is, a life of "holiness;" but now we are "alienated from the life of God" (Eph.4:18), and of a beautiful piece we are become deformed, daubed over with the most defiling mud: we "work uncleanness with greediness," according to our ability, as creatures; as God doth work "holiness" with affection and ardency, according to his infiniteness,

as Creator. More distant we are from God by reason of sin, than the vilest creature, the most deformed toad, or poisonous serpent, is from the highest and most glorious angel. By forsaking our innocence, we departed from God as our original copy. The apostle might well say (Rom. 3:23), that by sin “we are come short of the glory of God.” Interpreters trouble themselves much about that place, “Man is come short of the glory of God,” that is, of the holiness of God, which is the glory of the Divine nature, and was pictured in the rational, innocent creature. By the “glory of God,” is meant the holiness of God; (as 1 Cor. 3:18), “Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory;” that is the glory of God in the text, into the image of which we are changed; but the Scripture speaks of no other image of God, but that of holiness; “we are come short of the glory of God;” of the holiness of God, which is the glory of God; and the image of it, which was the glory of man. By sin, which is particular in opposition to the purity of God, man was left many leagues behind any resemblance to God; he stripped off that which was the glory of his nature, and was the only means of glorifying God as his Creator. The word *ὑστεροῦνται*, the apostle uses, is very significant,—postponed by sin an infinite distance from any imitation of God’s holiness, or any appearance before him in a garb of nature pleasing to him. Let us lament our fall and distance from God.

Inform. 3. All unholiness is vile, and opposite to the nature of God. It is such a loathsome thing, that the “purity of God’s eye is averse from beholding” (Hab. 1:3). It is not said there, that he will not, but he cannot, look on evil; there cannot be any amicableness between God and sin, the natures of both are so directly and unchangeably contrary to one another. Holiness is the life of God; it endures as long as his life; he must be eternally averse from sin, he can live no longer than he lives in the hatred and loathing of it. If he should for one instant cease to hate it, he would cease to live. To be a holy God, is as essential to him, as to be a living God; and he would not be a living God, but a dead God, if he were in the least point of time an unholy God. He cannot look on sin without loathing it; he cannot look on sin but his heart riseth against it; it must needs be most odious to him, as that which is against the glory of his nature, and directly opposite to that which is the lustre and varnish

of all his other perfections. It is the “abominable thing which his soul hates” (Jer.44:4); the vilest terms imaginable are used to signify it. Do you understand the loathsomeness of a miry swine, or the nauseousness of the vomit of a dog? these are emblems of sin (2 Peter 2:22). Can you endure the steams of putrefied carcasses from an open sepulchre (Rom. 3:23)? is the smell of the stinking sweat or excrements of a body delightful? the word *ῥυπαρίαν* in James 1:21, signifies as much. Or is the sight of a body overgrown with scabs and leprosy grateful to you?

So vile, so odious is sin, in the sight of God. It is no light thing, then, to fly in the face of God; to break his eternal law; to dash both the tables in pieces: to trample the transcript of God’s own nature under our feet; to cherish that which was inconsistent with his honor; to lift up our heels against the glory of his nature; to join issue with the devil in stab in his heart, and depriving him of his life. Sin, in every part of it, is an opposition to the holiness of God, and consequently an envying him a being and life, as well as a glory. If sine such a thing, “ye that love the Lord, hate evil”

Inform. 4. Sin cannot escape a due punishment. A hatred of unrighteousness, and consequently a will to punish it, is as essential to God as a love of righteousness. Since he is not as an heathen idol, but hath eyes to see, and purity to hate every iniquity, he will have an infinite justice to punish whatsoever is against infinite holiness. As he loves everything that is amiable, so he loathes everything that is filthy, and that constantly, without any change; his whole nature is set, against it; he abhors nothing but this. It is not the devil’s knowledge or activity that his hatred is terminated in, but the malice and unholiness of his nature; it is this only is the object of his severity; it is in the recompense of this only that there can be a manifestation of his justice. Sin must be punished; for,

1. This detestation of sin must be manifested. How should we certainly know his loathing of it, if he did not manifest, by some act, how ungrateful it is to him? As his love to righteousness would not appear, without rewarding it; so his hatred of iniquity would be as little evidenced, without punishing it; his justice is the great witness to his purity. The punishment, therefore, inflicted on the wicked, shall be, in some respect, as great as the rewards bestowed upon the righteous. Since the hatred of sin is natural to God, it is as natural to

him to show, one time or other, his hatred of it. And since men have a conceit that God is like them in impurity, there is a necessity of some manifestation of himself to be infinitely distant from those conceits they have of him (Ps. 50:21); "I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." He would else encourage the injuries done to his holiness, favor the extravagances of the creature, and condemn, or at least slight, the righteousness both of his own nature, and his sovereign law. What way is there for God to manifest his hatred, but by threatening the sinner? and what would this be but a vain affrightment, and ridiculous to the sinner, if it were never to be put in execution? There is an indissoluble connection between his hatred of sin, and punishment of the offender (Ps. 11:5, 6); "The wicked, his soul hates. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone," &c. He cannot approve of it without denying himself; and a total impunity would be a degree of approbation. The displeasure of God is eternal and irreconcilable against sin; for sin being absolutely contrary to his holy nature, he is eternally contrary to it; if there be not, therefore, a way to separate the sin from the sinner, the sinner must lie under the displeasure of God; no displeasure can be manifested without some marks of it upon the person that lies under the displeasure. The holiness of God will right itself of the wrongs done to it, and scatter the profaners of it at the greatest distance from him, which is the greatest punishment that can be inflicted; to be removed far from the Fountain of Life is the worst of deaths; God can so soon lay aside his purity, as always forebear his displeasure against an impure person; it is all one not to hate it, and not to manifest his hatred of it.

2. As his holiness is natural and necessary, so is the punishment of unholiness necessary to him. It is necessary that he should abominate sin, and therefore necessary he should discountenance it. The severities of God against sin are not vain scare-crows; they have their foundation in the righteousness of his nature; it is because he is a righteous and holy God, that he "will not forgive our transgressions and sins" (Josh. 24:19), that is, that he will punish them. The throne of his "holiness is a fiery flame" (Dan. 7:9); there is both a pure light and a scorching heat. Whatsoever is contrary to the nature of God, will fall under the justice of God; he would else violate his own nature, deny his own perfection, seem to be out of love with his own glory and life. He doth not hate it out of choice,

but from the immutable propension of his nature; it is not so free an act of his will, as the creation of man and angels, which he might have forborne as well as effected. As the detestation of sin results from the universal rectitude of his nature, so the punishment of sin follows upon that, as he is the righteous Governor of the world: it is as much against his nature not to punish it, as it is against his nature not to loathe it; he would cease to be holy if he ceased to hate it, and he would cease to hate it if he ceased to punish it. Neither the obedience of our Saviour's life, nor the strength of his cries, could put a bar to the cup of his passion; God so hated sin, that when it was but imputed to his Son, without any commission of it, he would bring a hell upon his soul.

Certainly if God could have hated sin without punishing it, his Son had never felt the smart of his wrath; his love to his Son had been strong enough to have caused him to forbear, had not the holiness of his nature been stronger to move him to inflict a punishment according to the demerit of his sin. God cannot but be holy, and therefore cannot but be just, because injustice is a part of unholiness.

3. Therefore there can be no communion between God and unholy spirits. How is it conceivable, that God should hate the sin, and cherish the sinner, with all his filth in his bosom? that he should eternally detest the crime, and eternally fold the sinner in his arms? Can less be expected from the purity of his nature, than to separate an impure soul, as long as it remains so? Can there be any delightful communion between those whose natures are contrary? Darkness and light may as soon kiss each other, and become one nature: God and the devil may as soon enter into an eternal league and covenant together. For God to have pleasure in wickedness, and to admit evil to dwell with him, are equally impossible to his nature (Psalm 5:4): while he hates impurity, he cannot have communion with an impure person. It may as soon be expected, that God should hate himself, offer violence to his own nature, lay aside his purity as an abominable thing, and blot his own glory, as love an impure person, entertain him as his delight, and set him in the same heaven and happiness with himself, and his holy angels. He must needs loathe him, he must needs banish him from his presence, which is the greatest punishment. God's holiness and hatred of sin necessarily

infer the punishment of it.

Inform. 5. There is, therefore, a necessity of the satisfaction of the holiness of God by some sufficient mediator. The Divine purity could not meet with any acquiescence in all mankind after the fall sin was hated; the sinner would be ruined, unless some way were found out to repair the wrongs done to the holiness of God; either the sinner must be condemned for ever, or some satisfaction must be made, that the holiness of the Divine nature might eternally appear in its full lustre. That it is essential to the nature of God to hate all unrighteousness, as that which is absolutely repugnant to his nature, none do question. That the justice of God is so essential to him, as that sin could not be pardoned without satisfaction, some do question; though this latter seems rationally to follow upon the former. That holiness is essential to the nature of God, is evident; because, else, God may as much be conceived without purity, as he might be conceived without the creating the sun or stars. No man can, in his right wits, frame a right notion of a Deity without purity. It would be less blasphemy against the excellency of God, to conceit him not knowing, than to imagine him not holy: and, for the essentialness of his justice, Joshua joins both his holiness and his jealousy as going hand in hand together (Josh. 24:19); “He is a holy God, he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your sin.” But consider only the purity of God, since it is contrary to sin, and, consequently, hating the sinner; the guilty person cannot be reduced to God, nor can the holiness of God have any complacency in a filthy person, but as fire hath in stubble, to consume it. How the holy God should be brought to delight in man without a salvo for the rights of his holiness, is not to be conceived without an impeachment of the nature of God. The law could not be abolished; that would reflect, indeed, upon the righteousness of the Lawgiver: to abolish it, because of sin, would imply a change of the rectitude of his nature. Must he change his holiness for the sake of that which was against his holiness, in a compliance with a profane and unrighteous creature? This should engage him rather to maintain his law, than to null it; and to abrogate his law as soon as he had enacted it, since sin stepped into the world presently after it, would be no credit to his wisdom. There must be a reparation made of the honor of God’s holiness; by ourselves it could not be without condemnation; by another it could not be without a sufficiency in the person: no

creature could do it. All the creatures being of a finite nature, could not make a compensation for the disparagements of Infinite Holiness. He must have despicable and vile thoughts of this excellent perfection, that imagines that a few tears, and the glavering fawnings at the death of a creature, can be sufficient to repair the wrongs, and restore the rights of this attribute. It must, therefore, be such a compensation as might be commensurate to the holiness of the Divine nature and the Divine law, which could not be wrought by any, but Him that was possessed of a Godhead to give efficacy and exact congruity to it. The Person designed and appointed by God for so great an affair, was "one in the form of God, one equal with God," (Phil. 2:6), who could not be termed by such a title of dignity, if he had not been equal to God in the universal rectitude of the Divine nature, and therefore in his holiness. The punishment due to sin is translated to that person for the righting Divine holiness, and the righteousness of that Person is communicated to the sinner for the pardon of the offending creature. If the sinner had been eternally damned, God's hatred of sin had been evidenced by the strokes of his justice; but his mercy to a sinner had lain in obscurity. If the sinner had been pardoned and saved without such a reparation, mercy had been evident; but his holiness had hid its head for ever in his own bosom. There was therefore a necessity of such a way to manifest his purity, and yet to bring forth his mercy: that mercy might not always sigh for the destruction of the creature, and that holiness might not mourn for the neglect of its honor.

Inform. 6. Hence it will follow, there is no justification of a sinner by any thing in himself. After sin had set foot in the world, man could present nothing to God acceptable to him, or bearing any proportion to the holiness of his law, till God set forth a Person, upon whose account the acceptation of our persons and services is founded (Eph. 1:6), "Who hath made us accepted in the Beloved." The Infinite purity of God is so glorious, that it shames the holiness of angels, as the light of the sun dims the light of the fire; much more will the righteousness of fallen man, who is vile, and "drinks up iniquity like water," vanish into nothing in his presence. With what self-abasement and abhorrence ought he to be possessed that comes as short of the angels in purity, as a dunghill doth of a star! The highest obedience that ever was performed by any mere man, since lapsed nature, cannot challenge any acceptance with God, or

stand before so exact an inquisition. What person hath such a clear innocence, and unspotted obedience in such a perfection, as in any degree to suit the holiness of the Divine nature? (Psalm 143:2): "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." If God should debate the case simply with a man in his own person, without respecting the Mediator, he were not able to "answer one of a thousand." Though we are his servants, as David was, and perform a sincere service, yet there are many little motes and dust of sin in the best works, that cannot he undiscovered from the eye of his holiness; and if we come short in the least of what the law requires, we are "guilty of all" (James 2:10). So that "In thy sight shall no man living be justified;" in the sight of thy infinite holiness, which hates the least spot; in the sight of thy infinite justice, which punishes the least transgression. God would descend below his own nature, and vilify both his knowledge and his purity, should he accept that for a righteousness and holiness which is not so in itself; and nothing is so, which hath the least stain upon it contrary to the nature of God. The most holy saints in Scripture, upon a prospect of his purity, have cast away all confidence in themselves; every flash of the Divine purity has struck them into a deep sense of their own impurity and shame for it (Job 42:6), "Wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes." What can the language of any man be that lies under a sense of infinite holiness and his own defilement in the least, but that of the prophet (Isa. 6:5), "Woe is me, I am undone?" And what is there in the world can administer any other thought than this, unless God be considered in Christ, "reconciling the world to himself?" As a holy God, so righted, as that he can dispense with the condemnation of a sinner, without dispensing with his hatred of sin; pardoning the sin in the criminal, because it hath been punished in the Surety. That righteousness which God hath "set forth" for justification, is not our own, but a "righteousness which is of God" (Phil. 3:9, 10), of God's appointing, and of God's performing; appointed by the Father, who is God, and performed by the Son, who is one with the Father; a righteousness surmounting that of all the glorious angels, since it is an immutable one which can never fail, an "everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24); a righteousness wherein the holiness of God can acquiesce, as considered in itself, because it is a righteousness of one equal with God. As we therefore dishonor the

Divine Majesty when we insist upon our own bemired righteousness for our justification (as if a “mortal man were as just as God,” and a “man as pure as his Maker” (Job 4:17), so we highly honor the purity of his nature, when we charge ourselves with folly, acknowledge ourselves unclean, and accept of that righteousness which gives a full content to his infinite purity. There can be no justification of a sinner by anything in himself.

Inform. 7. If holiness be a glorious perfection of the Divine nature, then the Deity of Christ might be argued from hence. He is indeed dignified with the title of the “Holy One” (Acts 3:14, 16), a title often given to God in the Old Testament; and he is called the “Holy of holies” (Dan. 9:24); but because the angels seemed to be termed “Holy ones” (Dan. 4:13, 17), and the most sacred place in the temple was also called the “Holy of holies,” I shall not insist upon that. But you find our Saviour particularly applauded by the angels, as “holy,” when this perfection of the Divine nature, together with the incommunicable name of God, are linked together, and ascribed to him (Isa. 6:3): “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; and the whole earth is full of his glory;” which the apostle interprets of “Christ” (John 12:39, 41). Isaiah, again: “He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them.” These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. He that Isaiah saw environed with the seraphims, in a reverential posture before his face, and praised as most holy by them, was the true and eternal God; such acclamations belong to none but the great Jehovah, God, blessed forever; but, saith John, it was the “glory of Christ” that Isaiah saw in this vision; Christ, therefore, is “God blessed forever,” of whom it was said, “Holy, holy, holy Lord of Hosts.” The evangelist had been speaking of Christ, the miracles which he wrought, the obstinacy of the Jews against believing on him; his glory, therefore, is to be referred to the subject he had been speaking of. The evangelist was not speaking of the Father, but of the Son, and cites those words out of Isaiah; not to teach anything of the Father, but to show that the Jews could not believe in Christ. He speaks of him that had wrought so many miracles; but Christ wrought those miracles: he speaks of him whom the Jews refused to believe on; but Christ was the person they would not believe on, while they acknowledged God. It was the glory of

this person Isaiah saw, and this person Isaiah spake of, if the words of the evangelist be of any credit. The angels are too holy to give acclamations belonging to God, to any but him that is God.

Inform. 8. God is fully fit for the government of the world. The righteousness of God's nature qualifies him to be Judge of the world; if he were not perfectly righteous and holy, he were incapable to govern and judge the world (Rom. 3:5): "If there be unrighteousness with God, how shall he judge the world?" "God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment" (Job 34:12). How despicable is a judge that wants innocence! As omniscience fits God to be a judge, so holiness fits him to be a righteous judge (Psalm 1:6): "The Lord knows," that is, loves, "the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Inform. 9. If holiness be an eminent perfection of the Divine nature, the Christian religion is of a Divine extraction: it discovers the holiness of God, and forms the creature to a conformity to him. It gives us a prospect of his nature, represents him in the "beauty of holiness" (Psalm 110:3), more than the whole glass of the creation. It is in this evangelical glass the glory of the Lord is beheld, and rendered amiable and imitable (2 Cor. 3:18). It is a doctrine "according to godliness" (1 Tim. 6:3), directing us to live the life of God; a life worthy of God, and worthy of our first creation by his hand. It takes us off from ourselves, fixeth us upon a noble end, points our actions, and the scope of our lives to God. It quells the monsters of sin, discountenanceth the motes of wickedness; and it is no mean argument for the divinity of it, that it sets us no lower a pattern for our imitation, than the holiness of the Divine Majesty. God is exalted upon the throne of his holiness in it, and the creature advanced to an image and resemblance of it (1 Pet. 1:16): "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Use 2. The second use is for comfort. This attribute frowns upon lapsed nature, but smiles in the restorations made by the gospel. God's holiness, in conjunction with his justice, is terrible to a guilty sinner; but now, in conjunction with his mercy, by the satisfaction of Christ, it is sweet to a believing penitent. In the "first covenant," the purity of his nature was joined with the rigors of his justice; in the "second covenant," the purity of his nature is joined with the sweetness and tenderness of his mercy. In the one, justice flames

against the sinner in the right of injured holiness; in the other, mercy yearns towards a believer, with the consent of righted holiness. To rejoice in the holiness of God is the true and genuine spirit of a renewed man: “My heart rejoiceth in the Lord;”—what follows? —“There is none holy as the Lord” (1 Sam. 2:1, 2). Some perfections of the Divine nature are astonishing, some affrighting; but this may fill us both with astonishment at it, and a joy in it.

1. By covenant, we have an interest in this attribute, as well as any other. In that clause of “God’s being our God,” entire God with all his glory, all his perfections are passed over as a portion, and a gracious soul is brought into union with God, as his God; not with a part of God, but with God in the simplicity, extent, integrity of his nature; and therefore in this attribute. And, upon some account, it may seem more in this attribute than in any other; for if he be our God, he is our God in his life and glory, and therefore in his purity especially, without which he could not live; he could not be happy and blessed. Little comfort will it be to have a dead God, or a vile God, made over to us; and as, by this covenant, he is our Father, so he gives us his nature, and communicates his holiness in all his dispensations; and in those that are severest, as well as those that are sweetest (Heb. 12:10): “But he corrects us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” Not simply “partakers of holiness,” but of “his holiness;” to have a portraiture of it in our nature, a medal of it in our hearts, a spark of the same nature with that immense splendor and flame in himself. The holiness of a covenant soul is a resemblance of the holiness of God, and formed by it; as the picture of the sun in a cloud is a fruit of his beams, and an image of its author. The fulness of the perfection of holiness remains in the nature of God, as the fulness of the light doth in the sun; yet there are transmissions of light from the sun to the moon, and it is a light of the same nature both in the one and in the other. The holiness of a creature is nothing else but a reflection of the Divine holiness upon it; and to make the creature capable of it, God takes various methods, according to his covenant grace.

2. This attribute renders God a fit object for trust and dependence. The notion of an unholy and unrighteous God, is an uncomfortable idea of him, and beats off our hands from laying any hold of him. It is upon this attribute the reputation and honor of God

in the world is built; what encouragement can we have to believe him, or what incentives could we have to serve him, without the lustre of this in his nature? The very thought of an unrighteous God is enough to drive men at the greatest distance from him; as the honesty of a man gives a reputation to his word, so doth the holiness of God give credit to his promise. It is by this he would have us stifle our fears and fortify our trust (Isa. 41:14): “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:” he will be in his actions what he is in his nature. Nothing shall make him defile his own excellency; unrighteousness is the ground of mutability; but the promise of God doth never fail, because the rectitude of his nature doth never languish: were his attributes without the conduct of this, they would be altogether formidable. As this is the glory of all his other perfections, so this only renders him comfortable to a believing soul. Might we not fear his power to crush us, his mercy to overlook us, his wisdom to design against us, if this did not influence them? What an oppression is power without righteousness in the hand of a creature; destructive, instead of protecting! The devil is a mighty spirit, but not fit to be trusted, because he is an impure spirit. When God would give us the highest security of the sincerity of his intentions, he swears by this attribute (Psalm 8:35): his holiness, as well as his truth, is laid to pawn for the security of his promise. As we make God the judge between us and others, when we swear by him, so he makes his holiness the judge between himself and his people, when he swears by it.

(1.) It is this renders him fit to be confided in for the answer of our prayers. This is the ground of his readiness to give. “If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good gifts to them that ask him” (Matt. 7:11)! Though the holiness of God be not mentioned, yet it is to be understood; the emphasis lies on these words, “if you, being evil:” God is then considered in a disposition contrary to this, which can be nothing but his righteousness. If you that are unholy, and have so much corruption in you, to render you cruel, can bestow upon your children the good things they want, how much more shall God, who is holy, and hath nothing in him to check his mercifulness to his creatures, grant the petitions of his supplicants! It was this attribute edged the fiduciary importunity of the souls under the altar,

for the revenging their blood unjustly shed upon the earth “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth” (Rev. 6:10)? Let not thy holiness stand with folded arms, as careless of the eminent sufferings of those that fear thee; we implore thee by the holiness of thy nature, and the truth of thy word.

(2.) This renders him fit to be confided in for the comfort of our souls in a broken condition. The reviving the hearts of the spiritually afflicted, is a part of the holiness of his nature; “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble” (Isa. 57:15). He acknowledgeth himself the lofty One; they might therefore fear he would not revive them; but he is also the holy One, and therefore he will refresh them; he is not more lofty than he is holy; besides, the argument of the immutability of his promise, and the might of his power, here is the holiness of his nature moving him to pity his drooping creature: his promise is ushered in with the name of power, “high and lofty One,” to bar their distrust of his strength, and with a declaration of his holiness, to check any despair of his will: there is no ground to think I should be false to my word, or misemploy my power, since that cannot be, because of the holiness of my name and nature.

(3.) This renders him fit to be confided in for the maintenance of grace, and protection of us against our spiritual enemies. What our Saviour thought an argument in prayer, we may well take as a ground of our confidence. In the strength of this he puts up his suit, when in his mediatory capacity he intercedes for the preservation of his people (John 17:11); “Holy Father, keep through thy own name those that thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are.” “Holy Father,” not merciful Father; or powerful, or wise Father, but “holy;” and (ver. 25), “righteous Father.” Christ pleads that attribute for the performance of God’s word, which was laid to pawn when he passed his word: for it was by his holiness that he swore, that “his seed should endure forever, and his throne as the sun before him” (Psalm 89:36); which is meant of the perpetuity of the covenant which he made with Christ, and is also meant of the preservation of the mystical seed of David, and the perpetuating his loving-kindness

to them (ver. 32, 33). Grace is an image of God's holiness, and, therefore, the holiness of God is most proper to be used as an argument to interest and engage him in the preservation of it. In the midst of church-provocations, he will not utterly extinguish, because he is the "Holy One" in the midst of her (Hos. 11:9): nor in the midst of judgments will he condemn his people to death, because he is "their Holy One" (Hab. 1:12); but their enemies shall be ordained for judgment, and established for correction. One prophet assures them in the name of the Lord, upon the strength of this perfection; and the other, upon the same ground, is confident of the protection of the church, because of God's holiness engaged in an inviolable covenant.

3. *Comfort.* Since holiness is a glorious perfection of the nature of God, "he will certainly value every holy soul." It is of a greater value with him than the souls of all men in the world, that are destitute of it: "wicked men are the worst of vilenesses," mere dross and dunghill. Purity, then, which is contrary to wickedness, must be the most precious thing in his esteem; he must needs love that quality which he is most pleased with in himself, as a father looks with most delight upon the child which is possessed with those dispositions he most values in his own nature. "His countenance doth behold the upright" (Psalm 11:7). He looks upon them with a full and open face of favor, with a countenance clear, unmasked, and smiling with a face full of delight. Heaven itself is not such a pleasing object to him as the image of his own uncreated holiness in the created holiness of men and angels: as a man esteems that most which is most like him, of his own generation, more than a piece of art, which is merely the product of his wit or strength. And he must love holiness in the creature, he would not else love his own image, and, consequently, would undervalue himself. He despiseth the image the wicked bears (Psalm 73:20), but he cannot disesteem his own stamp on the godly; he cannot but delight in his own work, his choice work, the master-piece of all his works, the new creation of things; that which is next to himself, as being a Divine nature like himself (2 Pet. 1:4). When he overlooks strength, parts, knowledge, he cannot overlook this: he "sets apart him that is godly for himself" (Psalm 4:3), as a peculiar object to take pleasure in; he reserves such for his own complacency, when he leaves the rest of the world to the devil's power; he is choice of them above all his other works, and

will not let any have so great a propriety in them as himself. If it be so dear to him here in its imperfect and mixed condition, that he appropriates it as a peculiar object for his own delight, how much more will the unspotted purity of glorified saints be infinitely pleasing to him! so, that he will take less pleasure in the material heavens than in such a soul. Sin only is detestable to God; and when this is done away, the soul becomes as lovely in his account, as before it was loathsome.

4. It is comfort, upon this account, that “God will perfect holiness in every upright soul.” We many times distrust God, and despond in ourselves, because of the infinite holiness of the Divine nature, and the dunghill corruption in our own; but the holiness of God engageth him to the preservation of it, and, consequently, to the perfection of it, as appears by our Saviour’s argument (John 17:11), “Holy Father, keep through thy own name, those whom thou hast given me;”—to what end?—“that they may be one as we are;” one with us, in the resemblances of purity. And the holiness of the soul is used as an argument by the Psalmist (Psalm 86:2), “Preserve my soul, for I am holy;” that is, I have an ardent desire to holiness: thou hast separated me from the mass of the corrupted world, preserve and perfect me with the assembly of the glorified choir. The more holy any are, the more communicative they are; God being most holy, is most communicative of that which he most esteems in himself, and delights to see in his creature: he is, therefore, more ready to impart his holiness to them that beg for it, than to communicate his knowledge or his power. Though he were holy, yet he let Adam fall, who never petitioned his holiness to preserve him; he let him fall, to declare the holiness of his own nature, which had wanted its due manifestation without it: but since that cannot be declared in a higher manner than it hath been already in the death of the Surety, that bore our guilt, there is no fear he should cast the work out of his hands, since the design of the permission of man’s apostasy, in the discovery of the perfections of his nature, has been fully answered. The “finishing the good work he hath begun,” hath a relation to the glory of Christ; and his own glory in Christ to be manifested in the day of his appearing (Phil. 1:6), wherein the glory, both of his own holiness, and the holiness of the Mediator, are to receive their full manifestation. As it is a part of the holiness of Christ to “sanctify his church” (Eph. 5:26, 27) till not a wrinkle or

spot be left, so it is the part of God not to leave that work imperfect which his holiness hath attempted a second time to beautify his creature with.

He will not cease exalting this attribute, which is the believers, by the new covenant, till he utters that applauding speech of his own work (Cant. 4:7), “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.”

Use 3, is for Exhortation. Is holiness an eminent perfection of the Divine nature? Then—

Exhort. 1. Let us get and preserve right and strong apprehensions of this Divine perfection. Without a due sense of it, we can never exalt God in our hearts; and the more distinct conceptions we have of this, and the rest of his attributes, the more we glorify him. When Moses considered God as “his strength and salvation,” he would exalt him (Exod. 15:2); and he could never break out in so admirable a doxology as that in the text, without a deep sense of the glory of his purity, which he speaks of with so much admiration. Such a sense will be of use to us.

1. In promoting genuine convictions. A deep consideration of the holiness of God cannot but be followed with a deep consideration of our impure and miserable condition by reason of sin: we cannot glance upon it without reflections upon our own vileness. Adam no sooner heard the voice of a holy God in the garden, but he considered his own nakedness with shame and fear (Gen. 3:10); much less can we fix our minds upon it, but we must be touched with a sense of our own uncleanness. The clear beams of the sun discover that filthiness in our garments and members, which was not visible in the darkness of the night. Impure metals are discerned by comparing them with that which is pure and perfect in its kind. The sense of guilt is the first natural result upon a sense of this excellent perfection; and the sense of the imperfection of our own righteousness is the next. Who can think of it, and reflect upon himself as an object fit for Divine love? Who can have a due thought of it, without regarding himself as stubble before a consuming fire? Who can, without a confusion of heart and face, glance upon that pure eye which beholds with detestation the foul motes, as well as the filthier and bigger spots? When Isaiah saw his glory, and heard

how highly the angels exalted God for this perfection, he was in a cold sweat, ready to swoon, till a seraphim, with a coal from the altar, both purged and revived him (Isa. 6:5, 7). They are sound and genuine convictions, which have the prospect of Divine purity for their immediate spring, and not a foresight of our own misery; when it is not the punishment we have deserved, but the holiness we have offended, most grates our hearts. Such convictions are the first rude draughts of the Divine image in our spirits, and grateful to God, because they are an acknowledgment of the glory of this attribute, and the first mark of honor given to it by the creature. Those that never had a sense of their own vileness, were always destitute of a sense of God's holiness. And, by the way, we may observe, that those that scoff at any for hanging down the head under the consideration and conviction of sin (as is too usual with the world), scoff at them for having deeper apprehensions of the purity of God than themselves, and consequently make a mock of the holiness of God which is the ground of those convictions; a sense of this would prevent such a damnable reproaching.

2. A sense of this will render us humble in the possession of the greatest holiness a creature were capable of. We are apt to be proud, with the Pharisee, when we look upon others wallowing in the mire of base and unnatural lusts: but let any clap their wings, if they can, in a vain boasting and exaltation, when they view the holiness of God. What torch, if it had reason, would be proud, and swagger in its own light, if it compared itself with the sun? "Who can stand before this holy Lord God?" is the just reflection of the holiest person, as it was of those (1 Sam. 6:20) that had felt the marks of his jealousy after their looking into the ark, though likely out of affection to it, and triumphant joy at its return. When did the angels testify, by the covering of their faces, their weakness to bear the lustre of his majesty, but when they beheld his glory? When did they signify, by their covering their feet, the shame of their own vileness, but when their hearts were fullest of the applaudings of this perfection (Isa. 6:2, 3)? Though they found themselves without spot, yet not with such a holiness that they could appear either with their faces or feet unvailed and unmasked in the presence of God. Doth the immense splendor of this attribute engender shaming reflections in those pure spirits? What will it, what should it, do in us, that dwell in houses of clay, and creep up and down with that clay upon

our backs, and too much of it in our hearts? The stars themselves, which appear beautiful in the night, are masked at the awaking of the sun. What a dim light is that of a glow-worm to that of the sun!

The apprehensions of this made the elders humble themselves in the midst of their glory, by “casting down their crowns before his throne” (Rev. 4:8, 10); a metaphor taken from the triumphing generals among the Romans, who hung up their victorious laurels in the Capitol, dedicating them to their gods, acknowledging them their superiors in strength, and authors of their victory. This self-emptiness at the consideration of Divine purity, is the note of the true church, represented by the twenty-four elders, and a note of a true member of the church; whereas boasting of perfection and merit is the property of the anti-christian tribe, that have mean thoughts of this adorable perfection, and think themselves more righteous than the unspotted angels. What a self-annihilation is there in a good man, when the sense of Divine purity is most lively in him! yea, how detestable is he to himself! There is as little proportion between the holiness of the Divine Majesty, and that of the most righteous creature, as there is between a nearness of a person that stands upon a mountain, to the sun, and of him that beholds him in a vale; one is nearer than the other, but it is an advantage not to be boasted of, in regard of the vast distance that is between the sun and the elevated spectator.

3. This would make us full of an affectionate reverence in all our approaches to God. By this perfection God is rendered venerable, and fit to be revered by his creature; and magnificent thoughts of it in the creature would awaken him to an actual reverence of the Divine majesty (Psalm 3:9): “Holy and reverend is his name;” a good opinion of this would engender in us a sincere respect towards him; we should then “serve the Lord with fear,” as the expression is (Psalm 2:11), that is, be afraid to cast anything before him that may offend the eyes of his purity. Who would venture rashly and garishly into the presence of an eminent moralist, or of a righteous king upon his throne? The fixedness of the angels arose from the continual prospect of this. What if we had been with Isaiah when he saw the vision, and beheld him in the same glory, and the heavenly choir in their reverential posture in the service of God; would it not have barred our wanderings, and staked us down

to our duty? Would not the fortifying an idea of it in our minds produce the same effect? It is for want of this we carry ourselves so loosely and unbecomingly in the Divine presence, with the same, or meaner, affections than those wherewith we stand before some vile creature that is our superior in the world; as though a piece of filthy flesh were more valuable than this perfection of the Divinity. How doth the Psalmist double his exhortation to men to sing praise to God (Psalm 47:6): “Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises;” because of his majesty, and the purity of his dominion! and (ver. 8), “God reigneth over the heathen, God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.” How would this elevate us in praise, and prostrate us in prayer, when we praise and pray with an understanding and insight of that nature we bless or implore; as he speaks (ver. 7), “Sing ye praises with understanding.” The holiness of God in his government and dominion, the holiness of his nature, and the holiness of his precepts, should beget in us an humble respect in our approaches.

The more we grow in a sense of this, the more shall we advance in the true performance of all our duties. Those nations which adored the sun, had they at first seen his brightness wrapped and masked in a cloud, and paid a veneration to it, how would their adorations have mounted to a greater point, after they had seen it in its full brightness, shaking off those veils, and chasing away the mists before it! what a profound reverence would they have paid it, when they beheld it in its glory and meridian brightness! Our reverence to God in all our addresses to him will arrive to greater degrees, if every act of duty be ushered in, and seasoned with the thoughts of God as sitting upon a throne of holiness; we shall have a more becoming sense of our own vileness, a greater ardor to his service, a deeper respect in his presence, if our understanding be more cleared, and possessed with notions of this perfection. Thus take a view of God in this part of his glory, before you fall down before his throne, and assure yourselves you will find your hearts and services quickened with a new and lively spirit.

4. A due sense of this perfection in God would produce in us a fear of God, and arm us against temptation and sin. What made the heathen so wanton and loose, but the representations of their gods as vicious? Who would stick at adulteries, and more prodigious lusts,

that can take a pattern for them from the person he adores for a deity? Upon which account Plato would have poets banished from his commonwealth, because, by dressing up their gods in wanton garbs in their poems, they encouraged wickedness in the people. But if the thoughts of God's holiness were impressed upon us, we should regard sin with the same eye, mark it with the same detestation in our measures, as God himself doth. So far as we are sensible of the Divine purity, we should account sin vile as it deserves; we should hate it entirely, without a grain of love to it, and hate it perpetually (Psalm 119:104): "Through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way." He looks into God's statute-book, and thereby arrives to an understanding of the purity of his nature, whence his hatred of iniquity commenced. This would govern our motion, check our vices; it would make us tremble at the hissing of a temptation: when a corruption did but peep out, and put forth its head, a look to the Divine Purity would be attended with a fresh convoy of strength to resist it. There is no such fortification, as to be wrapped up in the sense of this: this would fill us with an awe of God; we should be ashamed to admit any filthy thing into us, which we know is detestable to his pure eye. As the approach of a grave and serious man makes children hasten their trifles out of the way; so would a consideration of this attribute make us cast away our idols, and fling away our ridiculous thoughts and designs.

5. A due sense of this perfection would inflame us with a vehement desire to be conformed to Him. All our desires would be ardent to regulate ourselves according to this pattern of holiness and goodness, which is not to be equalled; the contemplating it as it shines forth in the face of Christ, will "transform us into the same image" (2 Cor. 3:19). Since our lapsed state, we cannot behold the holiness of God in itself without affrightment; nor is it an object of imitation, but as tempered in Christ to our view. When we cannot, without blinding ourselves, look upon the sun in its brightness, we may behold it through a colored glass, whereby the lustre of it is moderated, without dazzling our eyes. The sense of it will furnish us with a greatness of mind, that little things will be contemned by us; motives of a greater alloy would have little influence upon us: we should have the highest motives to every duty, and motives of the same strain which influence the angels above. It would change us, not only into an angelical nature, but a divine nature: we should act

like men of another sphere; as if we had received our original in another world, and seen with angels the ravishing beauties of heaven. How little would the mean employments of the world sink us into dirt and mud! How often hath the meditation of the courage of a valiant man, or acuteness and industry of a learned person, spurred on some men to an imitation of them, and transformed them into the same nature! as the looking upon the sun imprints an image of the sun upon our eye, that we seem to behold nothing but the sun a while after. The view of the Divine purity would fill us with a holy generosity to imitate him, more than the examples of the best men upon earth. It was a saying of a heathen, that “if virtue were visible, it would kindle a noble flame of love to it in the heart, by its ravishing beauty.” Shall the infinite purity of the Author of all virtue come short of the strength of a creature? Can we not render that visible to us by frequent meditation, which, though it be invisible in his nature, is made visible in his law, in his ways, in his Son? It would make us ready to obey him, since we know he cannot command anything that is sinful, but what is holy, just, and good: it would put all our affections in their due place, elevate them above the creature, and subject them to the Creator.

6. It would make us patient and contented under all God’s dispensations. All penal evils are the fruits of his holiness, as he is Judge and Governor of the world: he is not an arbitrary Judge, nor doth any sentence pronounced, nor warrant for execution issue from him, but what bears upon it a stamp of the righteousness of his nature; he doth nothing by passion or unrighteousness, but according to the eternal law of his own unstained nature, which is the rule to him in his works, the basis and foundation of his throne and sovereign dominion (Psalm 89:14): “Justice,” or righteousness, “and judgment are the habitation of thy throne;” upon these his sovereign power is established: so that there can be no just complaint or indictment brought against any of his proceedings with men. How doth our Saviour, who had the highest apprehensions of God’s holiness, justify God in his deepest distresses, when he cried, and was not answered in the particular he desired, in that prophetic Psalm of him (Psalm 22:2, 3), “I cry day and night, but thou hearest not!” Thou seemest to be deaf to all my petitions, afar off “from the words of my roaring; but thou art holy;” I cast no blame upon thee: all thy dealings are squared by thy holiness: this is the only law to

thee; in this I acquiesce. It is part of thy holiness to hide thy face from me, to show thereby thy detestation of sin. Our Saviour adores the Divine purity in his sharpest agony, and a like sense of it would guide us in the same steps to acknowledge and glorify it, in our greatest desertions and afflictions; especially since as they are the fruit of the holiness of his nature, so they are the means to impart to us clearer stamps of holiness, according to that in himself, which is the original copy (Heb.

12:10). He melts us down as gold, to fit us for the receiving a new impression, to mortify the affections of the flesh, and clothe us with the graces of his Spirit. The due sense of this would make us to submit to his stroke, and to wait upon him for a good issue of his dealings.

Exhort. 2. Is holiness a perfection of the Divine nature? Is it the glory of the Deity? Then let us glorify this holiness of God. Moses glorifies it in the text, and glorifies it in a song, which was a copy for all ages. The whole corporation of seraphims have their mouths filled with the praises of it. The saints, whether militant on earth, or triumphant in heaven, are to continue the same acclamation, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts” (Rev. 4:8). Neither angels nor glorified spirits exalt at the same rate the power which formed them creatures, nor goodness which preserves them in a blessed immortality, as they do holiness, which they bear some beams of in their own nature, and whereby they are capacitated to stand before His throne. Upon the account of this, a debt of praise is demanded of all rational creatures by the Psalmist (Psalm 99:3), “Let them praise thy great and terrible name, for it is holy.” Not So much for the greatness of his Majesty, or the treasures of his justice; but as they are considered in conjunction with his holiness, which renders them beautiful; “for it is holy.” Grandeur and majesty, simply in themselves, are not objects of praise, nor do they merit the acclamations of men, when destitute of righteousness: this only renders everything else adorable; and this adorns the Divine greatness with an amiableness (Isa. 12:6): “Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee;” and makes his might worthy of praise (Luke 1:49). In honoring this, which is the soul and spirit of all the rest, we give a glory to all the perfections which constitute and beautify his nature: and without the glorifying this we glorify

nothing of them, though we should extol every other single attribute a thousand times. He values no other adoration of his creatures, unless this be interested, nor accepts anything as a glory from them (Lev. 10:3) "I will be sanctified in them that come near me, and I will be glorified:" as if he had said, In manifesting my name to be holy, you truly, you only honor me. And as the Scripture seldom speaks of this perfection without a particular emphasis, it teaches us not to think of it without a special elevation of heart: by this act only, while we are on earth, can we join consort with the angels in heaven; he that doth not honor it, delight in it, and in the meditation of it, hath no resemblance of it; he hath none of the image, that delights not in the original.

Everything of God is glorious, but this most of all. If he built the world principally for anything, it was for the communication of his goodness, and display of his holiness. He formed the rational creature to manifest his holiness in that law whereby he was to be governed: then deprive not God of the design of his own glory. We honor this attribute,

1. When we make it the ground of our love to God. Not because he is gracious to us, but holy in himself. As God honors it, in loving himself for it, we should honor it, by pitching our affections upon him chiefly for it. What renders God amiable to himself, should render him lovely to all his creatures (Isa. 42:21): "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake." If the hatred of evil be the immediate result of a love to God, then the peculiar object or term of our love to God, must be that perfection which stands in direct opposition to the hatred of evil (Psalm 97:10): "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." When we honor his holiness in every stamp and impression of it: his law, not principally because of its usefulness to us, its accommodateness to the order of the world, but for its innate purity; and his people, not for our interest in them, so much as for bearing upon them this glittering mark of the Deity, we honor then the purity of the Lawgiver, and the excellency of the Sanctifier.

2. We honor it, when we regard chiefly the illustrious appearance of this in his judgments in the world. In a case of temporal judgment, Moses celebrates it in the text; in a case of spiritual judgments, the angels applaud it in Isaiah. All his severe

proceedings are nothing but the strong breathings of this attribute. Purity is the flash of his revenging sword. If he did not hate evil, his vengeance would not reach the committers of it. He is a “refiner’s fire” in the day of his anger (Mal. 3:2). By his separating judgments, “he takes away the wicked of the earth like dross” (Psalm 119:119). How is his holiness honored, when we take notice of his sweeping out the rubbish of the world; how he suits punishment to sin, and discovers his hatred of the matter and circumstances of the evil, in the matter and circumstances of the judgment. This perfection is legible in every stroke of his sword; we honor it when we read the syllables of it, and not by standing amazed only at the greatness and severity of the blow, when we read how holy he is in his most terrible dispensations: for as in them God magnifies the greatness of his power, so he sanctifies himself; that is, declares the purity of his nature as a revenger of all impiety (Ezek.38:22, 23); “And I will plead against him with pestilence, and with blood: and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the people that are with him, an overflowing rain and great hailstones; fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself.”

3. We honor this attribute, when we take notice of it in every accomplishment of his promise, and every grant of a mercy. His truth is but a branch of his righteousness, a slip from this root. He is glorious in holiness in the account of Moses, because he “led forth his people whom he had redeemed” (Exod. 15:13); his people by a covenant with their fathers, being the God of Moses, the God of Israel, and the God of their fathers (ver. 2). “My God, and my father’s God, I will exalt thee.” For what? for his faithfulness to his promise. The holiness of God, which Mary (Luke 1:49) magnifies, is summed up in this, the help he afforded his servant Israel in the “remembrance of his mercy, as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed forever” (ver. 54, 55). The certainty of his covenant mercy depends upon an unchangeableness of his holiness. What are “sure mercies,” (Isa. 55:3), are holy mercies in the Septuagint, and in Acts 13:34, which makes that translation canonical. His nearness to answer us, when we call upon him for such mercies, is a fruit of the holiness of his name and nature (Psalm 165:17). “The Lord is holy in all his works; the Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him.” Hannah, after a return of prayer, sets a particular mark upon this, in her song (1 Sam. 2:2); “There is none holy as the Lord;”

separated from all dross, firm to his covenant, and righteous in it to his suppliants, that confide in him, and plead his word. When we observe the workings of this in every return of prayer, we honor it; it is a sign the mercy is really a return of prayer, and not a mercy of course, bearing upon it only the characters of a common providence. This was the perfection David would bless, for the catalogue of mercies in Psalm 103:1, &c.; “Bless his holy name.” Certainly, one reason why sincere prayer is so delightful to him, is because it puts him upon the exercise of this his beloved perfection, which he so much delighteth to honor. Since God acts in all those as the governor of the world, we honor him not, unless we take notice of that righteousness which fits him for a governor, and is the inward spring of all his motions (Gen. 18:25). “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” It was his design in his pity to Israel, as well as the calamities he intended against the heathens, to be “sanctified in them; that is, declared holy in his merciful as well as his judicial procedure” (Ezra 36:21, 23). Hereby God credits his righteousness, which seemed to be forgotten by the one, and contemned by the other; he removes, by this, all suspicion of unfaithfulness in him.

4. We honor this attribute, when we trust his covenant, and promise against outward appearances. Thus our Saviour, in the prophecy of him (Psalm 22:2–4), when God seemed to bar up the gates of his palace against the entry of any snore petitions, this attribute proves the support of the Redeemer’s soul; “But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel:” as it refers to what goes before, it has been twice explained; as it refers to what follows, it is a ground of trust; “Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel:” thou hast had the praises of Israel for many ages, for thy holiness. How? “Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them;” they honored thy holiness by their trust, and thou didst honor their faith by a deliverance; thou always hadst a purity that would not shame nor confound them. I will trust in thee as thou art holy, and expect the breaking out of this attribute for my good as well as my predecessors; “Our fathers trusted in thee,” &c.

5. We honor this attribute, when we show a greater affection to the marks of his holiness in times of the greatest contempt of it. As the Psalmist (Psalm 119:127); “They have made void thy law, therefore I love thy commandments above gold;” while they spurn at

the purity of thy law, I will value it above the gold they possess; I will esteem it as gold, because others count it as dross; by their scorn of it, my love to it shall be the warmer; and my hatred of iniquity shall be the sharper: the disdain of others should inflame us with a zeal and fortitude to appear in behalf of his despised honor. We honor this holiness many other ways; by preparation for our addresses to him, out of a sense of his purity; when we imitate it: as He honors us by “teaching us his statutes” (Psalm 119:135), so we honor him by learning and observing them. When we beg of him to show himself a refiner of us, to make us more conformable to him in holiness, and bless him for any communication of it to us, it renders us beautiful and lovely in his sight. To conclude: to honor it, is the way to engage it for us; to give it the glory of what it hath done, by the arm of power for our rescue from sin, and beating down our corruptions at his feet, is the way to see more of its marvellous works, and behold a clearer brightness. As unthankfulness makes him withdraw his grace (Rom. 1:21, 24), so glorifying him causes him to impart it. God honors men in the same way they honor him; when we honor him by acknowledging his purity, he will honor us by communicating of it to us. This is the way to derive a greater excellency to our souls.

Exhort. 3. Since holiness is an eminent perfection of the Divine nature, let us labor after a conformity to God in this perfection. The nature of God is presented to us in the Scripture, both as a pattern to imitate, and a motive to persuade the creature to holiness (1 John 3:3; Matt. 5:48; Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16). Since it is, therefore, the nature of God, the more our natures are beautified with it, the more like we are to the Divine nature. It is not the pattern of angels, or archangels, that our Saviour, or his apostle, proposeth for our imitation; but the original of all purity, God himself; the same that created us, to be imitated by us. Nor is an equal degree of purity enjoined us; though we are to be pure, and perfect, and merciful as God is, yet not essentially so; for that would be to command us an impossibility in itself; as much as to order us to cease to be creatures, and commence gods. No creature can be essentially holy but by participation from the chief Fountain of Holiness; but we must have the same kind of holiness, the same truth of holiness. As a short line may be as straight as another, though it parallel it not in the immense length of it; a copy may have the likeness of the

original, though not the same perfection; we cannot be good, without eyeing some exemplar of goodness as the pattern. No pattern is so suitable as that which is the highest goodness and purity. That limner that would draw the most excellent piece, fixes his eyes upon the most perfect pattern. He that would be a good orator, or poet, or artificer, considers some person most excellent in each kind, as the object of his imitation. Who so fit as God to be viewed as the pattern of holiness, in our intendment of, and endeavor after holiness? The Stoics, one of the best sects of philosophers, advised their disciples to pitch upon some eminent example of virtue, according to which to form their lives; as Socrates, &c. But true holiness doth not only endeavor to live the life of a good man, but chooses to live a divine life; as before the man was “alienated from the life of God” (Eph. 4:19), so, upon his return, he aspires after the life of God. To endeavor to be like a good man is to make one image like another; to set our clocks by other clocks, without regarding the sun: but true holiness consists in a likeness to the most exact sampler. God being the first purity, is the rule as well as the spring of all purity in the creature, the chief and first object of imitation. We disown ourselves to be his creatures, if we breathe not after a resemblance to him in what he is imitable. There was in man, as created according to God’s image, a natural appetite to resemble God: it was at first planted in him by the Author of his nature. The devil’s temptation of him by that motive to transgress the law, had been as an arrow shot against a brazen wall, had there not been a desire of some likeness to his Creator engraven upon him (Gen. 3:5): it would have had no more influence upon him, than it could have had upon a mere animal. But man mistook the term; he would have been like God in knowledge, whereas, he should have affected a greater resemblance of him in purity. O that we could exemplify God in our nature! Precepts may instruct us more, but examples affect us more; one directs us, but the other attracts us. What can be more attractive of our imitation, than that which is the original of all purity, both in men and angels? This conformity to him consists in an imitation of him,

1. In his law. The purity of his nature was first visible in this glass; hence, it is called a “holy” law (Rom. 7:12); a “pure” law (Psalm 19:8). Holy and pure, as it is a ray of the pure nature of the Lawgiver. When our lives are a comment upon his law, they are

expressive of his holiness: we conform to his holiness when we regulate ourselves by his law, as it is a transcript of his holiness: we do not imitate it, when we do a thing in the matter of it agreeable to that holy rule, but when we do it with respect to the purity of the Lawgiver beaming in it. If it be agreeable to God's will, and convenient for some design of our own, and we do anything only with a respect to that design, we make not God's holiness discovered in the law our rule, but our own conveniency: it is not a conformity to God, but a conformity of our actions to *self*. As in abstinence from intemperate courses, not because the holiness of God in his law hath prescribed it, but because the health of our bodies, or some noble contentments of life, require it; then it is not God's holiness that is our rule, but our own security, conveniency, or something else which we make a God to ourselves. It must be a real conformity to the law: our holiness should shine as really in the practice, as God's purity doth in the precept. God hath not a pretence of purity in his nature, but a reality: it is not only a sudden boiling up of an admiration of him, or a starting wish to be like him, from some sudden impression upon the fancy, which is a mere temporary blaze, but a settled temper of soul, loving everything that is like him, doing things out of a firm desire to resemble his purity in the copy he hath set; not a resting in negatives, but aspiring to positives; holy and harmless are distinct things: they were distinct qualifications in our High Priest in his obedience to the law (Heb. 7:26), so they must be in us.

2. In his Christ. As the law is the transcript, so Christ is the image of his holiness: the glory of God is too dazzling to be beheld by us: the acute eye of an angel is too weak to look upon that bright sun without covering his face: we are much too weak to take our measures from that purity which is infinite in his nature. But he hath made his Son like us, that by the imitation of him in that temper, and shadow of human flesh, we may arrive to a resemblance of him (2 Cor. 3:18). Then there is a conformity to him, when that which Christ did is drawn in lively colors in the soul of a Christian; when, as he died upon the cross, we die to our sins; as he rose from the grave, we rise from our lusts; as he ascended on high, we mount our souls thither; when we express in our lives what shined in his, and exemplify in our hearts what he acted in the world, and become one with him, as he was separate from sinners. The holiness of God in

Christ is our ultimate pattern: as we are not only to believe in Christ, but “by Christ in God” (John 14:1), so we are not only to imitate Christ, but the holiness of God as discovered in Christ. And, to enforce this upon us, let us consider,

(1.) It is this only wherein he commands our imitation of him. We are not commanded to be mighty and wise, as God is mighty and wise: but “be holy, as I am holy.” The declarations of his power are to enforce our subjection; those of his wisdom, to encourage our direction by him; but this only to attract our imitation. When he saith, “I am holy,” the immediate inference he makes, is, “Be ye so too,” which is not the proper instruction from any other perfection.¹²⁶ Man was created by Divine power, and harmonized by Divine wisdom, but not after them, or according to them, as the true image; this was the prerogative of Divine holiness, to be the pattern of his rational creature: wisdom and power were subservient to this, the one as the pencil, the other as the hand that moved it. The condition of a creature is too mean to have the communications of the Divine essence; the true impressions of his righteousness and goodness we are only capable of. It is only in those moral perfections we are said to resemble God. The devils, those impure and ruined spirits, are nearer to him in strength and knowledge than we are; yet in regard of that natural and intellectual perfection, never counted like him, but at the greatest distance from him, because at the greatest distance from his purity. God values not a natural might, nor an acute understanding, nor vouchsafes such perfections the glorious title of that of his image. Plutarch saith, God is angry with those that imitate his thunder or lightning, his works of majesty, but delighted with those that imitate his virtue. In this only we can never incur any reproof from him, but for falling short of him and his glory. Had Adam endeavored after an imitation of this, instead of that of Divine knowledge, he had escaped his fall, and preserved his standing; and had Lucifer wished himself like God in this, as well as his dominion, he had still been a glorious angel, instead of being now a ghastly devil: to reach after a union with the Supreme Being, in regard of holiness, is the only generous and commendable ambition.

(2.) This is the prime way of honoring God. We do not so glorify God by elevated admirations, or eloquent expressions, or pompous

services of him, as when we aspire to a conversing with him with unstained spirits, and live to him in living like him. The angels are not called holy for applauding his purity, but conforming to it. The more perfect any creature is in the rank of beings, the more is the Creator honored; as it is more for the honor of God to create an angel or man, than a mere animal; because there are in such clearer characters of Divine power and goodness, than in those that are inferior. The more perfect any creature is morally, the more is God glorified by that creature; it is a real declaration, that God is the best and most amiable Being; that nothing besides him is valuable, and worthy to be object of our imitation. It is a greater honoring of him, than the highest acts of devotion, and the most religious bodily exercise, or the singing this song of Moses in the text, with a triumphant spirit; as it is more the honor of a father to be imitated in his virtues by his son, than to have all the glavering commendations by the tongue or pen of a vicious and debauched child. By this we honor him in that perfection which is dearest to him, and counted by him as the chiefest glory of his nature. God seems to accept the glorifying this attribute, as if it were a real addition to that holiness which is infinite in his nature, and because infinite, cannot admit of any increase: and, therefore, the word sanctified is used instead of glorified. (Isa. 8:13), "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." And (Isa. 29:23), "They shall sanctify the holy One of Jacob, and fear the God of Israel." This sanctification of God is by the fear of him, which signifies in the language of the Old Testament, a reverence of him, and a righteousness before him. He doth not say, when he would have his power or wisdom glorified, Empower me or make me wise; but when he would have his holiness glorified by the creature, it is, Sanctify me; that is, manifest the purity of my nature by the holiness of your lives: but he expresseth it in such a term, as if it were an addition to this infinite perfection; so acceptable it is to him, as if it were a contribution from his creature for the enlarging an attribute so pleasing to him, and so glorious in his eye. It is, as much as in the creature lies, a preserving the life of God, since this perfection is his life; and that he would as soon part with his life as part with his purity. It keeps up the reputation of God in the world, and attracts others to a love of him; whereas, unworthy carriages defame God in the eyes of men, and bring up an ill report of him, as if he were such

an one as those that profess him, and walk unsuitably to their profession, appear to be.

(3.) This is the excellency and beauty of a creature. The title of "beauty" is given to it in Psalm 110:3; "beauties," in the plural number, as comprehending it in all other beauties whatsoever. What is a Divine excellency cannot be a creature's deformity: the natural beauty of it is a representation of the Divinity; and a holy man ought to esteem himself excellent in being such in his measure as his God is, and puts his principal felicity in the possession of the same purity in truth. This is the refined complexion of the angels that stand before his throne. The devils lost their comeliness when they fell from it. It was the honor of the human nature of our Saviour, not only to be united to the Deity, but to be sanctified by it. He was "fairer than all the children of men," because he had a holiness above the children of men: "grace was poured into his lips" (Psalm 45:2). It was the jewel of the reasonable nature in paradise: conformity to God was man's original happiness in his created state; and what was naturally so, cannot but be immutably so in its own nature. The beauty of every copied thing consists in its likeness to the original; everything hath more of loveliness, as it hath greater impressions of its first pattern in this regard holiness hath more of beauty on it than the whole creation, because it partakes of a greater excellency of God than the sun, moon, and stars. No greater glory can be, than to be a conspicuous and visible image of the invisible, and holy, and blessed God. As this is the splendor of all the Divine attributes, so it is the flower of all a christian's graces, the crown of all religion: it is the glory of the Spirit. In this regard the king's daughter is said to be "all glorious within" (Psalm 45:13). It is more excellent than the soul itself, since the greatest soul is but a deformed piece without it a "diamond without lustre." What are the noble faculties of the soul without it, but as a curious rusty watch, a delicate heap of disorder and confusion? It is impossible there can be beauty where there are a multitude of "spots and wrinkles" that blemish a countenance (Eph. 5:27). It can never be in its true brightness but when it is perfect in purity; when it regains what it was possessed of by creation, and dispossessed of by the fall, and recovers its primitive temper. We are not so beautiful by being the work of God, as by having a stamp of God upon us. Worldly greatness may make men honorable in the sight of creeping worms.

Soft lives, ambitious reaches, luxurious pleasures, and a pompous religion, render no man excellent and noble in the sight of God: this is not the excellency and nobility of the Deity which we are bound to resemble; other lines of a Divine image must be drawn in us to render us truly excellent.

(4.) It is our life. What is the life of God is truly the life of a rational creature. The life of the body consists not in the perfection of its members, and the integrity of its organs; these remain when the body becomes a carcass; but in the presence of the soul, and its vigorous animation of every part to perform the distinct offices belonging to each of them. The life of the soul consists not in its being, or spiritual substance, or the excellency of its faculties of understanding and will, but in the moral and becoming operations of them. The spirit is only "life because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:10). The faculties are turned by it, to acquit themselves in their functions, according to the will of God; the absence of this doth not only deform the soul, but, in a sort, annihilate it, in regard of its true essence and end. Grace gives a Christian being, and a want of it is the want of a true being (1 Cor. 15:10). When Adam divested himself of his original righteousness, he came under the force of the threatening, in regard of a spiritual death; every person is "morally dead while he lives" an unholy life (1 Tim. 5:6). What life is to the body, that is righteousness to the spirit; and the greater measure of holiness it hath, the more of life it hath, because it is in a greater nearness, and partakes more fully of the fountain of life. Is not that the most worthy life, which God makes most account of, without which his life could not be a pleasant and blessed life, but a life worse than death? What a miserable life is that of the men of the world, that are carried, with greedy inclinations, to all manner of unrighteousness, whither their interests or their lusts invite them! The most beautiful body is a carcass, and the most honorable person hath but a brutish life (Psalm 49:20); miserable creatures when their life shall be extinct without a Divine rectitude, when all other things will vanish as the shadows of the night at the appearance of the sun! Holiness is our life.

(5.) It is this only fits us for communion with God. Since it is our beauty and our life, without it what communion can an excellent God have with deformed creatures; a living God with dead

creatures? “Without holiness none shall see God” (Heb. 12:14). The creature must be stripped of his unrighteousness, or God of his purity, before they can come together. Likeness is the ground of communion, and of delight in it: the opposition between God and unholy souls is as great as that between “light and darkness”(1 John 1:6). Divine fruition is not so much by a union of presence as a union of nature. Heaven is not so much an outward as an inward life; the foundation of glory is laid in grace; a resemblance to God is our vital happiness, without which the vision of God would not be so much as a cloudy and shadowy happiness, but rather a torment than a felicity; unless we be of a like nature to God, we cannot have a pleasing fruition of him. Some philosophers think that if our bodies were of the same nature with the heavens, of an ethereal substance, the nearness to the sun would cherish, not scorch us. Were we partakers of a Divine nature, we might enjoy God with delight; whereas, remaining in our unlikeness to him, we cannot think of him, and approach to him without terror. As soon as sin had stripped man of the image of God, he was an exile from the comfortable presence of God, unworthy for God to hold any correspondence with: he can no more delight in a defiled person that a man can take a toad into intimate converse with him; he would hereby discredit his own nature, and justify our impurity. The holiness of a creature only prepares him for an eternal conjunction with God in glory. Enoch’s walking with God was the cause of his being so soon wafted to the place of a full fruition of him; he hath as much delight in such as in heaven itself; one is his habitation as well as the other; the one is his habitation of glory, and the other is the house of his pleasure: if he dwell in Zion, it must be a “holy mountain” (Joel 3:17), and the members of Zion must be upheld in their rectitude and integrity before they be “set before the face of God forever” (Psalm 41:12.) Such are styled his jewels, his portion, as if he lived upon them, as a man upon his inheritance. As God cannot delight in us, so neither can we delight in God without it. We must purify ourselves “as he is pure,” if we expect to “see him as he is,” in the comfortable glory and beauty of his nature (1 John 3:2, 3), else the sight of God would be terrible and troublesome: we cannot be satisfied with the likeness of God at the resurrection, unless we have a righteousness wherewith to “behold his face” (Psalm 17:15). It is a vain imagination in any to think that heaven can be a place of

happiness to him, in whose eye the beauty of holiness which fills and adorns it, is an unlovely thing; or that any can have a satisfaction in that Divine purity which is loathsome to him in the imitations of it. We cannot enjoy him, unless we resemble him; nor take any pleasure in him, if we were with him, without something of likeness to him. Holiness fits us for communion with God.

(6.) We can have no evidence of our election and adoption without it. Conformity to God, in purity, is the fruit of electing love (Eph. 1:4); “He hath chosen us that we should be holy.” The goodness of the fruit evidenceth the nature of the root: this is the seal that assures us the patent is the authentic grant of the Prince. Whatsoever is holy, speaks itself to be from God; and whosoever is holy, speaks himself to belong to God. This is the only evidence that “we are born of God” (1 John 2:29). The subduing our souls to him, the forming us into a resemblance to himself, is a more certain sign we belong to him, than if we had, with Isaiah, seen his glory in the vision, with all his train of angels about him. This justifies us to be the seed of God, when he hath, as it were, taken a slip from his own purity, and engrafted it in our spirits: he can never own us for his children without his mark, the stamp of holiness. The devil’s stamp is none of God’s badge. Our spiritual extraction from him is but pretended, unless we do things worthy of so illustrious a birth, and becoming the honor of so great a father: what evidence can we else have of any child-like love to God, since the proper act of love is to imitate the object of our affections? And that we may be in some measure like to God in this excellent perfection.

1st. Let us be often viewing and ruminating on the holiness of God, especially as discovered in Christ. It is by a believing meditation on him, that we are “changed into the same image” (2 Cor. 3:18). We can think often of nothing that is excellent in the world, but it draws our faculties to some kind of suitable operation; and why should not such an excellent idea of the holiness of God in Christ perfect our understandings, and awaken all the powers of our souls to be formed to actions worthy of him? A painter employed in the limning some excellent piece, has not only his pattern before his eyes, but his eye frequently upon the pattern, to possess his fancy to draw forth an exact resemblance. He that would express the image of God, must imprint upon his mind the purity of his nature; cherish

it in his thoughts, that the excellent beauty of it may pass from his understanding to his affections, and from his affections to his practice. How can we arise to a conformity to God in Christ, whose most holy nature we seldom glance upon, and more rarely sink our souls into the depths of it by meditation! Be frequent in the meditation of the holiness of God.

2d. Let us often exercise ourselves in acts of love to God, because of this perfection. The more adoring thoughts we have of God, the more delightfully we shall aspire to, and more ravishingly catch after, anything that may promote the more full draught of his Divine image in our hearts. What we intensely affect, we desire to be as near to as we can, and to be that very thing, rather than ourselves. All imitations of others arise from an intense love to their persons or excellency. When the soul is ravished with this perfection of God, it will desire to be united with it; to have it drawn in it, more than to have its own being continued to it: it will desire and delight in its own being, in order to this heavenly and spiritual work. The impressions of the nature of God upon it, and the imitations of the nature of God by it, will be more desirable than any natural perfection whatsoever. The will in loving is rendered like the object beloved; is turned into its nature, and imbibes its qualities. The soul, by loving God, will find itself more and more transformed into the Divine image; whereas, slighted ensamples are never thought worthy of imitation.

3d. Let us make God our end. Every man's mind forms itself to a likeness to that which it makes its chief end. An earthly soul is as drossy as the earth he gapes for; an ambitious soul is as elevated as the honor he reaches at; the same characters that are upon the thing aimed at, will be imprinted upon the spirit of him that aims at it. When God and his glory are made our end, we shall find a silent likeness pass in upon us; the beauty of God will by degrees enter upon our souls.

4th. In every deliberate action, let us reflect upon the Divine purity as a pattern. Let us examine whether anything we are prompted unto bear an impression of God upon it; whether it looks like a thing that God himself would do in that case, were he in our natures and in our circumstances. See whether it hath the livery of God upon it, how congruous it is to his nature; whether, and in what

manner, the holiness of God can be glorified thereby; and let us be industrious in all this; for can such an imitation be easy which is resisted by the constant assaults of the flesh, which is discouraged by our own ignorance, and depressed by our faint and languishing desires after it? O! happy we, if there were such a heart in us!

Exhort. 4. If holiness be a perfection belonging to the nature of God; then, where there is some weak conformity to the holiness of God, let us labor to grow up in it, and breathe after fuller measures of it. The more likeness we have to him, the more love we shall have from him. Communion will be suitable to our imitation; his love to himself in his essence, will cast out beams of love to himself in his image. If God loves holiness in a lower measure, much more will he love it in a higher degree, because then his image is more illustrious and beautiful, and comes nearer to the lively, lineaments of his own infinite purity.

Perfection in anything is more lovely and amiable than imperfection in any state; and the nearer anything arrives to perfection, the further are those things separated from it which might cool an affection to it. An increase in holiness is attended with a manifestation of his love (John 14:21): “He that hath my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me, and he shall be loved of, my Father, and I will love him, and I will manifest myself to him.” It is a testimony of love to God, and God will not be behind-hand with the creature in kindness; he loves a holy man for some resemblance to him in his nature; but when there is an abounding in sanctified dispositions suitable to it, there is an increase of favor; the more we resemble the original, the more shall we enjoy the blessedness of that original as any partake more of the Divine likeness, they partake more of the Divine happiness.

Exhort. 5. Let us carry ourselves holily, in a spiritual manner, in all our religious approaches to God (Psalm 93:5); “Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, for ever.” This attribute should work in us a deep and reverential respect to God. This is the reason rendered why we should “worship at his footstool,” in the lowest posture of humility prostrate before him, because “he is holy” (Psalm 99:5). Shoes must be put off from our feet (Exod. 3:5), that is, lusts from our affections, everything that our souls are clogged and bemired with, as the shoe is with dirt. He is not willing we should offer to

him an impure soul, mired hearts, rotten carcasses, putrefied in vice, rotten in iniquity; our services are to be as free from profaneness, as the sacrifices of the law were to be free from sickness or any blemish. Whatsoever is contrary to his purity, is abhorred by him, and unlovely in his sight; and can meet with no other success at his hands, but a disdainful turning away both of his eye and ear (Isa. 1:15). Since he is an immense purity, he will reject from his presence, and from having any communion with him, all that which is not conformable to him; as light chases away the darkness of the night, and will not mix with it. If we “stretch out” our “hands towards him,” we must “put iniquity far away from us” (Job 11:13, 14); the fruits of all service will else drop off to nothing. “Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to the Lord”: when? when the heart is purged by Christ sitting as a “purifier of silver” (Mal. 3:3, 4). Not all the incense of the Indies yield him so sweet a savor, as one spiritual act of worship from a heart estranged from the vileness of the world, and ravished with an affection to, and a desire of imitating, the purity of his nature.

Exhort. 6. Let us address for holiness to God, the fountain of it. As he is the author of bodily life in the creature, so he is the author of his own life, the life of God in the soul. By his holiness he makes men holy, as the sun by his light enlightens the air. He is not only the Holy One, but our Holy One (Isa. 43:15); “The Lord that sanctifies us” (Lev. 20:8). As he hath mercy to pardon us, so he hath holiness to purify us, the excellency of being a sun to comfort us, and a shield to protect us, giving “grace and glory” (Psalm 74:11). Grace whereby we may have communion with him to our comfort, and strength against our spiritual enemies for our defence; grace as our preparatory to glory, and grace growing up till it ripen in glory. He only can mould us into a Divine frame; the great original can only derive the excellency of his own nature to us. We are too low, too lame, to lift up ourselves to it; too much in love with our own deformity, to admit of this beauty without a heavenly power inclining our desires for it, our affections to it, our willingness to be partakers of it. He can as soon set the beauty of holiness in a deformed heart, as the beauty of harmony in a confused mass, when he made the world. He can as soon cause the light of purity to rise out of the darkness of corruption, as frame glorious spirits out of the insufficiency of nothing. His beauty doth not decay; he hath as much

in himself now as he had in his eternity; he is as ready to impart it, as he was at the creation; only we must wait upon him for it, and be content to have it by small measures and degrees. There is no fear of our sanctification, if we come to him as a God of holiness, since he is a God of peace, and the breach made by Adam is repaired by Christ (1 Thess. 5:23): “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly,” &c. He restores the sanctifying Spirit which was withdrawn by the fall, as he is a God pacified, and his holiness righted by the Redeemer. The beauty of it appears in its smiles upon a man in Christ, and is as ready to impart itself to the reconciled creature, as before justice was to punish the rebellious one. He loves to send forth the streams of this perfection into created channels, more than any else. He did not design the making the creature so powerful as he might, because power is not such an excellency in his own nature, but as it is conducted and managed by some other excellency. Power is indifferent, and may be used well or ill, according as the possessor of it is righteous or unrighteous. God makes not the creature so powerful as he might, but he delights to make the creature that waits upon him as holy as it can be; beginning it in this world, and ripening it in the other. It is from him we must expect it, and from him that we must beg it, and draw arguments from the holiness of his nature, to move him to work holiness in our spirits; we cannot have a stronger plea. Purity is the favorite of his own nature, and delights itself in the resemblances of it in the creature. Let us also go to God, to preserve what he hath already wrought and imparted. As we cannot attain it, so we cannot maintain it without him. God gave it Adam, and he lost it; when God gives it us, we shall lose it without his influencing and preserving grace; the channel will be without a stream, if the fountain do not bubble it forth; and the streams will vanish, if the fountain doth not constantly supply them. Let us apply ourselves to him for holiness, as he is a God glorious in holiness; by this we honor God, and advantage ourselves.

DISCOURSE XII - ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD

MARK 10:18.—*And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.*

THE words are part of a reply of our Saviour to the young man's petition to him: a certain person came in haste, "running" as being eager for satisfaction, to entreat his directions, what he should do to inherit everlasting life; the person is described only in general (ver. 17), "There came one," a certain man: but Luke describes him by his dignity (Luke 18:18), "A certain ruler;" one of authority among the Jews. He desires of him an answer to a legal question, "What he should do?" or, as Matthew hath it, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life" (Matt. 19:16)? He imagined everlasting felicity was to be purchased by the works of the law; he had not the least sentiments of faith: Christ's answer implies, there was no hopes of the happiness of another world by the works of the law, unless they were perfect, and answerable to every divine precept. He doth not seem to have any ill, or hypocritical intent in his address to Christ; not to tempt him, but to be instructed by him. He seems to come with an ardent desire, to be satisfied in his demand; he performed a solemn act of respect to him, he kneeled to him, *γονυπετήσας*, prostrated himself upon the ground; besides, Christ is said (ver. 21) to love him, which had been inconsistent with the knowledge Christ had of the hearts and thoughts of men, and the abhorrence he had of hypocrites, had he been only a counterfeit in this question. But the first reply Christ makes to him, respects the title of "Good Master," which this ruler gave him in his salutation.

1st, Some think, that Christ hereby would draw him to an acknowledgment of him as God; you acknowledge me "good;" how come you to salute me with so great a title, since you do not afford it to your greatest doctors? Lightfoot, *in loc.* observes, that the title of *Rabbi bone* is not in all the Talmud. You must own me to be God, since you own me to be "good;" goodness being a title only due, and properly belonging, to the Supreme Being. If you take me for a common man, with what conscience can you salute me in a manner proper to God? since no man is "good," no, not one, but the heart of man is evil continually. The Arians used this place, to back their denying the Deity of Christ: because, say they, he did not acknowledge himself "good," therefore he did not acknowledge

himself God. But he doth not here deny his Deity, but reproves him for calling him good, when he had not yet confessed him to be more than a man. You behold my flesh, but you consider not the fulness of my Deity; if you account me “good,” account me God, and imagine me not to be a simple and a mere man. He disowns not his own Deity, but allures the young man to a confession of it. Why callest thou me good, since thou dost not discover any apprehensions of my being more than a man? Though thou comest with a greater esteem to me than is commonly entertained of the doctors of the chair, why dost thou own me to be “good,” unless thou own me to be God? If Christ had denied himself in this speech to be “good,” he had rather entertained this person with a frown and a sharp reproof for giving him a title due to God alone, than have received him with that courtesy and complaisance as he did. Had he said, there is none “good” but the Father, he had excluded himself; but in saying, there is none “good” but God, he comprehends himself.

2d. Others say, that Christ had no intention to draw him to an acknowledgment of his Deity, but only asserts his divine authority or mission from God. For which interpretation Maldonat calls Calvin an Arianizer. He doth not here assert the essence of his Deity, but the authority of his doctrine; as if he should have said, You do without ground give me the title of “good,” unless you believe I have a Divine commission for what I declare and act. Many do think me an impostor, an enemy of God, and a friend to devils; you must firmly believe that I am not so, as your rulers report me, but that I am sent of God, and authorized by him; you cannot else give me the title of good, but of wicked. And the reason they give for this interpretation, is, because it is a question, whether any of the apostles understood him, at this time, to be God, which seems to have no great strength in it; since not only the devil had publicly owned him to be the “Holy One of God” (Luke 4:34), but John the Baptist had borne record, that he was the “Son of God” (John 1:32, 34); and before this time Peter had confessed him openly, in the hearing of the rest of the disciples, that he was “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). But I think Paroeus’ interpretation is best, which takes in both those; either you are serious or deceitful in this address; if you are serious, why do you call me “good,” and make bold to fix so great a title upon one you have no higher

thoughts of than a mere man? Christ takes occasion from hence, to assert God to be only and sovereignly “good:” “There is none good but God.” God only hath the honor of absolute goodness, and none but God merits the name of “good.” A heathen could say much after the same manner; All other things are far from the nature of good; call none else good but God, for this would be a profane error: other things are only good in opinion, but have not the true substance of goodness: he is “good” in a more excellent way than any creature can be denominated “good.”

1. God is only originally good, good of himself. All created goodness is a rivulet from this fountain, but Divine goodness hath no spring; God depends upon no other for his goodness; he hath it in, and of, himself: man hath no goodness from himself, God hath no goodness from without himself: his goodness is no more derived from another than his being: if we were good by any external thing, that thing must be in being before him, or after him; if before him, he was not then himself from eternity; if after him, he was not good in himself from eternity. The end of his creating things, then, was not to confer a goodness upon his creatures, but to partake of a goodness from his creatures. God is good by and in himself, since all things are only good by him; and all that goodness which is in creatures, is but the breathing of his own goodness upon them: they have all their loveliness from the same hand they have their being from.

Though by creation God was declared good, yet he was not made good by any, or by all the creatures. He partakes of none, but all things partake of him. He is so good, that he gives all, and receives nothing; only good, because nothing is good but by him nothing hath a goodness but from him.

2. God only is infinitely good. A boundless goodness that knows no limits, a goodness as infinite as his essence, not only good, but best; not only good, but goodness itself, the supreme inconceivable goodness. All things else are but little particles of God, small sparks from this immense flame, sips of goodness to this fountain. Nothing that is good by his influence can equal him who is good by himself: derived goodness can never equal primitive goodness. Divine goodness communicates itself to a vast number of creatures in various degrees; to angels, glorified spirits, men on

earth, to every creature; and when it hath communicated all that the present world is capable of, there is still less displayed, than left to enrich another world. All possible creatures are not capable of exhausting the wealth, the treasures, that Divine bounty is filled with.

3. God is only perfectly good, because only infinitely good. He is good without indigence, because he hath the whole nature of goodness, not only some beams that may admit of increase of degree. As in him is the whole nature of entity, so in him is the whole nature of excellency. As nothing hath an absolute perfect being but God, so nothing hath an absolutely perfect goodness but God; as the sun hath a perfection of heat in it, but what is warmed by the sun is but imperfectly hot, and equals not the sun in that perfection of heat wherewith it is naturally endued. The goodness of God is the measure and rule of goodness in everything else.

4. God only is immutably good. Other things may be perpetually good by supernatural power, but not immutably good in their own nature. Other things are not so good, but they may be bad; God is so good, that he cannot be bad. It was the speech of a philosopher, that it was a hard thing to find a good man, yea, impossible; but though it were possible to find a good man, he would be good but for some moment, or a short time: for though he should be good at this instant, it was above the nature of man to continue in a habit of goodness, without going awry and warping. But “the goodness of God endureth forever” (Psalm 52:1). God always glitters in goodness, as the sun, which the heathens called the visible image of the Divinity, doth with light. There is not such a perpetual light in the sun as there is a fulness of goodness in God; “no variableness” in him, as he is the “Father of Lights” (James 1:17).

Before I come to the doctrine, that is, the chief scope of the words, some remarks may be made upon the young man’s question and carriage: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

1. The opinion of gaining eternal life by the outward observation of the law, will appear very unsatisfactory to an inquisitive conscience. This ruler armed, and certainly did confidently believe, that he had fulfilled the law (ver. 20): “All this

have I observed from my youth;” yet he had not any full satisfaction in his own conscience; his heart misgave, and started upon some sentiments in him, that something else was required, and what he had done might be too weak, too short to shoot heaven’s lock for him. And to that purpose he comes to Christ, to receive instructions for the piecing up whatsoever was defective. Whosoever will consider the nature of God, and the relation of a creature, cannot with reason think, that eternal life was of itself due from God as a recompense to Adam, had he persisted in a state of innocence. Who can think so great a reward due, for having performed that which a creature in that relation was obliged to do? Can any man think another obliged to convey an inheritance of a thousand pounds per annum upon his payment of a few farthings, unless any compact appears to support such a conceit? And if it were not to be expected in the integrity of nature, but only from the goodness of God, how can it be expected since the revolt of man, and the universal deluge of natural corruption? God owes nothing to the holiest creature; what he gives is a present from his bounty, not the reward of the creature’s merit. And the apostle defies all creatures, from the greatest to the least, from the tallest angel to the lowest shrub, to bring out any one creature that hath first given to God (Rom. 11:35); “Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?” The duty of the creature, and God’s gift of eternal life, is not a bargain and sale. God gives to the creature, he doth not properly repay; for he that repays hath received something of an equal value and worth before. When God crowns angels and men, he bestows upon them purely what is his own, not what is theirs by merit and natural obligation: though indeed, what God gives by virtue of a promise made before, is, upon the performance of the condition, due by gracious obligation. God was not indebted to man in innocence, but every man’s conscience may now mind him that he is not upon the same level as in the state of integrity; and that he cannot expect anything from God, as the salary of his merit, but the free gift of Divine liberality. Man is obliged to the practice of what is good, both from the excellency of the Divine precepts, and the duty he owes to God; and cannot, without some declaration from God, hope for any other reward, than the satisfaction of having well acquitted himself.

2. It is the disease of human nature, since its corruption, to hope

for eternal life by the tenor of the covenant of works. Though this ruler's conscience was not thoroughly satisfied with what he had done, but imagined he might, for all that, fall short of eternal life, yet he still hugs the imagination of obtaining it by doing (ver. 17); "What shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" This is natural to corrupted man.

Cain thought to be accepted for the sake of his sacrifice; and, when he found his mistake, he was so weary of seeking happiness by doing, that he would court misery by murdering. All men set too high a value upon their own services. Sinful creatures would fain make God a debtor to them, and be purchasers of felicity: they would not have it conveyed to them by God's sovereign bounty, but by an obligation of justice upon the value of their works. The heathens thought God would treat men according to the merit of their services; and it is no wonder they should have this sentiment, when the Jews, educated by God in a wiser school, were wedded to that notion. The Pharisees were highly fond of it: it was the only argument they used in prayer for Divine blessing. You have one of them boasting of his frequency in fasting, and his exactness in paying his tithes (Luke 19:12); as if God had been beholden to him, and could not, without manifest wrong, deny him his demand. And Paul confesseth it to be his own sentiment before his conversion; he accounted this "righteousness of the law gain to him" (Phil. 3:7); he thought, by this, to make his market with God. The whole nation of the Jews affected it, encompassing sea and land to make out a righteousness of their own, as the Pharisees did to make proselytes. The Papists follow their steps, and dispute for justification by the merit of works, and find out another key of works of supererogation, to unlock heaven's gate, than whatever the Scripture informed us of. It is from hence, also, that men are so ready to make faith, as a work, the cause of our justification. Man foolishly thinks he hath enough to set up himself after he hath proved bankrupt, and lost all his estate. This imagination is born with us, and the best Christians may find some sparks of it in themselves, when there are springings up of joy in their hearts, upon the more close performance of one duty than of another; as if they had wiped off their scores, and given God a satisfaction for their former neglects. "We have forsaken all, and followed thee," was the boast of his disciples: "What shall we have, therefore?" was a branch of this root (Matt. 19:27). Eternal life is a

gift, not by any obligation of right, but an abundance of goodness; it is owing, not to the dignity of our works, but the magnificent bounty of the Divine nature, and must be sued for by the title of God's promise, not by the title of the creature's services. We may observe,

3. How insufficient are some assents to Divine truth, and some expressions of affection to Christ, without the practice of christian precepts. This man addressed Christ with a profound respect, acknowledging him more than an ordinary person, with a more reverential carriage than we read any of his disciples paid to him in the days of his flesh; he fell down at his feet, kissed his knees, as the custom was, when they would testify the great respect they had to any eminent person, especially to their rabbins. All this some think to be included in the word *γονυπετήσας*, He seems to acknowledge him the Messiah by giving him the title of "Good," a title they did not give to their doctors of the chair; he breathes out his opinion, that he was able to instruct him beyond the ability of the law; he came with a more than ordinary affection to him, and expectation of advantage from him, evident by his departing sad, when his expectations were frustrated by his own perversity; it was a sign he had a high esteem of him from whom he could not part without marks of his grief. What was the cause of his refusing the instructions he pretended such an affection to receive? He had possessions in the world. How soon do a few drops of worldly advantages quench the first sparks of an ill-grounded love to Christ! How vain is a complimentary and cringing devotion, without a supreme preference of God, and valuation of Christ above every outward allurements. We may observe this,

4. We should never admit anything to be ascribed to us, which is proper to God. "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." If you do not acknowledge me God, ascribe not to me the title of Good. It takes off all those titles which fawning flatterers give to men, "mighty," "invincible" to princes, "holiness" to the pope. We call one another good, without considering how evil; and wise, without considering how foolish; mighty, without considering how weak, and knowing, without considering how ignorant. No man, but hath more of wickedness than goodness; of ignorance than knowledge; of weakness than strength. God is a jealous God of his own honor; he will not have the creature share

with him in his royal titles. It is a part of idolatry to give men the titles which are due to God; a kind of a worship of the creature together with the Creator. Worms will not stand out, but assault Herod in his purple, when he usurps the prerogative of God, and prove stiff and invincible vindicators of their Creator's honor, when summoned to arms by the Creator's word (Acts 12:22, 23).

Doctrine. The observation which I intend to prosecute, is this:— Pure and perfect goodness is only the royal prerogative of God; goodness is a choice perfection of the Divine nature. This is the true and genuine character of God; he is good, he is goodness, good in himself, good in his essence, good in the highest degree, possessing whatsoever is comely, excellent, desirable; the highest good, because first good: whatsoever is perfect goodness, is God; whatsoever is truly goodness in any creature, is a resemblance of God. All the names of God are comprehended in this one of good. All gifts, all variety of goodness, are contained in him as one common good. He is the efficient cause of all good, by an overflowing goodness of his nature, he refers all things to himself, as the end, for the representation of his own goodness; “Truly God is good” (Psalm 73:1). Certainly, it is an undoubted truth; it is written in his works of nature, and his acts of grace (Exod. 34:6). “He is abundant in goodness.” And every thing is a memorial, not of some few sparks, but of his greater goodness (Psalm 145:7). This is often celebrated in the Psalms, and men invited more than once, to sing forth the praises of it (Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31). It may better be admired than sufficiently spoken of, or thought of, as it merits. It is discovered in all his works, as the goodness of a tree in all its fruits; it is easy to be seen, and more pleasant to be contemplated. In general,

1. All nations in the world have acknowledged God good; *Τὸ Ἄγαθὸν* was one of the names the Platonists expressed him by; and good and God, are almost the same words in our language. All as readily consented in the notion of his goodness, as in that of his Deity. Whatsoever divisions or disputes there were among them in the other perfections of God, they all agreed in this without dispute, saith Synesius. One calls him Venus, in regard of his loveliness. Another calls him *Ἔρωιτα* love, as being the band which ties all things together. No perfection of the Divine nature is more

eminently, nor more speedily visible in the whole book of the creation, than this. His greatness shines not in any part of it, where his goodness doth not as gloriously glisten: whatsoever is the instrument of his work, as his power; whatsoever is the orderer of his work, as his wisdom; yet nothing can be adored as the motive of his work, but the goodness of his nature. This only could induce him to resolve to create his wisdom then steps in, to dispose the methods of what he resolved; and his power follows to execute, what his wisdom hath disposed, and his goodness designed. His power in making, and his wisdom in ordering, are subservient to his goodness; and this goodness, which is the end of the creation, is as visible to the eyes of men, as legible to the understanding of men, as his power in forming them, and his wisdom in tuning them. And as the book of creation, so the records of his government must needs acquaint them with a great part of it, when they have often beheld him, stretching out his hand, to supply the indigent, relieve the oppressed, and punish the oppressors, and give them, in their distresses, what might “fill their hearts with food and gladness.” It is this the apostle (Rom. 1:20, 21,) means by his Godhead, which he links with his eternity and power, as clearly seen in the things that are made, as in a pure glass, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” The Godhead which comprehends the whole nature of God as discoverable to his creatures, was not known, yea, was impossible to be known, by the works of creation. There had been nothing then reserved to be manifested in Christ: but his goodness, which is properly meant there by his Godhead, was as clearly visible as his power. The apostle upbraids them with their unthankfulness, and argues their inexcusableness, because the arm of his power in creation made no due impression of fear upon their spirits, nor the beams of his goodness wrought in them sufficient sentiments of gratitude. Their not glorifying God, was a contempt of the former; and their not being thankful, was a slight of the latter. God is the object of honor, as he is powerful, and the object of thankfulness properly as he is bountiful. All the idolary of the heathens, is a clear testimony of their common sentiment of the goodness of God: since the more eminently useful any person was in some advantageous invention for the benefit of mankind, they thought he merited a rank

in the number of their deities. The Italians esteemed Pithagoras a god, because he was *Φιλαιθρωπίατος*: to be good and useful, was an approximation to the Divine nature. Hence it was, that when the Lystrians saw a resemblance of the Divine goodness in the charitable and miraculous cure of one of their crippled citizens, presently they mistook Paul and Barnabas for gods, and inferred from thence their right to divine worship, inquiring into nothing else but the visible character of their goodness and usefulness, to capacitate them for the honor of a sacrifice (Acts 14:8–11). Hence it was, that they adored those creatures that were a common benefit, as the sun and moon, which must be founded upon a preexistent notion, not only of a Being, but of the bounty and goodness of God, which was naturally implanted in them, and legible in all God's works. And the more beneficial anything was to them, and the more sensible advantages they received from it, the higher station they gave it in the rank of their idols, and bestowed upon it a more solemn worship: an absurd mistake to think everything that was sensibly good to them, to be God, clothing himself in such a form to be adored by them. And upon this account the Egyptians worshipped God under the figure of an ox; and the East Indians, in some parts of their country, deify a heifer, intimating the goodness of God, as their nourisher and preserver, in giving them corn, whereof the ox is an instrument in serving for ploughing, and preparing the ground.

2. The notion of goodness is inseparable from the notion of a God. We cannot own the existence of God, but we must confess also the goodness of his nature. Hence, the apostle gives to his goodness the title of his Godhead, as if goodness and godhead were convertible terms (Rom. 1:20). As it is indissolubly linked with the being of a Deity, so it cannot be severed from the notion of it: we as soon, undeify him by denying him good, as by denying him great: *Optimus*, *Maximus*, the best, greatest, was the name whereby the Romans entitled Him. His nature is as good, as it is majestic; so doth the Psalmist join them (Psalm 145:6, 7), "I will declare my greatness; they shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness." They considered his goodness before his greatness, in putting *Optimus* before *Maximus*; greatness without sweetness, is an unruly and affrighting monster in the world; like a vast turbulent sea, always casting out mire and dirt. Goodness is the brightness and loveliness of our majestic Creator. To fancy a God without it, is to

fancy a miserable, scanty, narrow-hearted, savage God, and so an unlovely, and horrible being: for he is not a God that is not good; he is not a God that is not the highest good: infinite goodness is more necessary to, and more straitly joined with an infinite Deity, than infinite power and infinite wisdom: we cannot conceive him God, unless we conceive him the highest good, having nothing superior to himself in goodness, as he hath nothing superior to himself in excellency and perfection. No man can possibly form a notion of God in his mind and yet form a notion of something better than God; for whoever thinks anything better than God, fancieth a God with some defect: by how much the better he thinks that thing to be, by so much the more imperfect he makes God in his thoughts. This notion of the goodness of God was so natural, that some philosophers and others, being startled at the evil they saw in the world, fancied, besides a good God, an evil principle, the author of all punishments in the world. This was ridiculous; for those two must be of equal power, or one inferior to the other; if equal, the good could do nothing, but the evil one would restrain him; and the evil one could do nothing, but the good one would contradict him; so they would be always contending, and never conquering: if one were inferior to the other, then there would be nothing but what that superior ordered. Good, if the good one were superior; and nothing but evil, if the bad one were superior. In the prosecution of this, let us see.

I What this goodness is. II. Some propositions concerning the nature of it. III. That God is good. IV. The manifestation of it in creation, providence, and redemption. V. The use.

I. What this goodness is. There is a goodness of being, which is the natural perfection of a thing; there is the goodness of will, which is the holiness, and righteousness of a person; there is the goodness of the hand, which we call liberality, or beneficence, a doing good to others.

1. We mean not by this, the goodness of his essence, or the perfection of his nature. God is thus good, because his nature is infinitely perfect; he hath all things requisite to the completing of a most perfect and sovereign Being. All good meets in his essence, as all water meets in the ocean. Under this notion all the attributes of God, which are requisite to so illustrious a Being, are comprehended. All things that are, have a goodness of being in

them, derived to them by the power of God, as they are creatures; so the devil is good, as he is a creature of God's making: he hath a natural goodness, but not a moral goodness: when he fell from God, he retained his natural goodness as a creature; because he did not cease to be, he was not reduced to that nothing, from whence he was drawn; but he ceased to be morally good, being stripped of his righteousness by his apostasy; as a creature, he was God's work; as a creature, he remains still God's work; and, therefore, as a creature, remains still good, in regard of his created being. The more of being anything hath, the more of this sort of natural goodness it hath; and so the devil hath more of this natural goodness than men have; because he hath more marks of the excellency of God upon him, in regard of the greatness of his knowledge, and the extent of his power, the largeness of his capacity, and the acuteness of his understanding, which are natural perfections belonging to the nature of an angel, though he hath lost his moral perfections. God is sovereignly and infinitely good in this sort of goodness. He is unsearchably perfect (Job 11:7); nothing is wanting to his essence, that is necessary to the perfection of it; yet this is not that which the Scripture expresseth under the term of goodness, but a perfection of God's nature as related to us, and which he poureth forth upon all his creatures, as goodness which flows from this natural perfection of the Deity.

2. Nor is it the same with the blessedness of God, but something flowing from his blessedness. Were he not first infinitely blessed, and full in himself, he could not be infinitely good and diffusive to us; had he not an infinite abundance in his own nature, he could not be overflowing to his creatures; had not the sun a fulness of light in itself, and the sea a vastness of water, the one could not enrich the world with its beams, nor the other fill every creek with its waters.

3. Nor is it the same with the holiness of God. The holiness of God is the rectitude of his nature, whereby he is pure, and without spot in himself; the goodness of God is the efflux of his will, whereby he is beneficial to his creatures: the holiness of God is manifest in his rational creatures; but the goodness of God extends to all the works of his hands. His holiness beams most in his law; his goodness reacheth to everything that had a being from him (Psalm

145:9): “The Lord is good to all.” And though he be said in the same Psalm (ver. 17) to be “holy in all his works,” it is to be understood of his bounty, bountiful in all his works; the Hebrew word signifying both holy and liberal, and the margin of the Bible reads it “merciful” or “bountiful.”

4. Nor is this goodness of God the same with the mercy of God. Goodness extends to more objects than mercy; goodness stretcheth itself out to all the works of his hands; mercy extends only to a miserable object: for it is joined with a sentiment of pity, occasioned by the calamity of another. The mercy of God is exercised about those that merit punishment; the goodness of God is exercised upon objects that have not merited anything contrary to the acts of his bounty. Creation is an act of goodness, not of mercy; providence in governing some part of the world, is an act of goodness, not of mercy. The heavens, saith Austin, need the goodness of God to govern them, but not the mercy of God to relieve them; the earth is full of the misery of man, and the compassions of God; but the heavens need not the mercy, of God to pity them, because they are not miserable; though they need the goodness and power of God to sustain them; because, as creatures, they are impotent without him. God’s goodness extends to the angels, that kept their standing, and to man in innocence, who in that state stood not in need of mercy. Goodness and mercy are distinct, though mercy be a branch of goodness; there may be a manifestation of goodness, though none of mercy. Some think Christ had been incarnate, had not man fallen: had it been so, there had been a manifestation of goodness to our nature, but not of mercy, because sin had not made our natures miserable. The devils are monuments of God’s creating goodness, but not of his pardoning compassions. The grace of God respects the rational creature; mercy the miserable creature; goodness all his creatures, brutes, and the senseless plants, as well as reasonable man.

5. By goodness, is meant the bounty of God. This is the notion of goodness in the world; when we say a good man, we mean either a holy man in his life, or a charitable and liberal man in the management of his goods. A righteous man, and a good man, are distinguished (Rom. 5:7). “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet for a good man one would even dare to die;” for an innocent

man, one as innocent of the crime as himself would scarce venture his life; but for a good man, a liberal, tender-hearted man, that had been a common good in the place where he lived, or had done another as great a benefit as life itself amounts to, a man out of gratitude might dare to die. "The goodness of God is his inclination to deal well and bountifully with his creatures." It is that whereby he wills there should be something besides himself for his own glory. God is good himself, and to himself, *i. e.* highly amiable to himself; and, therefore, some define it a perfection of God, whereby he loves himself and his own excellency; but as it stands in relation to his creatures, it is that perfection of God whereby he delights in his works, and is beneficial to them. God is the highest goodness, because he doth not act for his own profit, but for his creatures' welfare, and the manifestation of his own goodness. He sends out his beams, without receiving any addition to himself, or substantial advantage from his creatures. It is from this perfection that he loves whatsoever is good, and that is whatsoever he hath made, "for every creature of God is good" (1 Tim. 4:4); every creature hath some communications from him, which cannot be without some affection to them; every creature hath a footstep of Divine goodness upon it; God, therefore, loves that goodness in the creature, else he would not love himself. God hates no creature, no, not the devils and damned, as creatures; he is not an enemy to them, as they are the works of his hands; he is properly an enemy, that doth simply and absolutely wish evil to another; but God doth not absolutely wish evil to the damned; that justice that he inflicts upon them, the deserved punishment of their sin, is part of his goodness, as shall afterwards be shown. This is the most pleasant perfection of the Divine nature; his creating power amazes us; his conducting wisdom astonisheth us; his goodness, as furnishing us with all conveniences, delights us; and renders both his amazing power, and astonishing wisdom, delightful to us. As the sun, by effecting things, is an emblem of God's power; by discovering things to us, is an emblem of his wisdom; but by refreshing and comforting us, is an emblem of his goodness; and without this refreshing virtue it communicates to us, we should take no pleasure in the creatures it produceth, nor in the beauties it discovers. As God is great and powerful, he is the object of our understanding; but as good and bountiful, he is the object of our love and desire.

6. The goodness of God comprehends all his attributes. All the acts of God are nothing else but the effluxes of his goodness, distinguished by several names, according to the objects it is exercised about. As the sea, though it be one mass of water, yet we distinguish it by several names, according to the shores it washeth, and beats upon; as the British and German Ocean, though all be one sea. When Moses longed to see his glory, God tells him, he would give him a prospect of his goodness (Ex. 33:19): "I will make all my goodness to pass before thee." His goodness is his glory and Godhead, as much as is delightfully visible to his creatures, and whereby he doth benefit man: "I will cause my goodness," or "comeliness," as Calvin renders it, "to pass before thee;" what is this, but the train of all his lovely perfections springing from his goodness? the whole catalogue of mercy, grace, long-suffering, abundance of truth, summed up in this one word (Ex. 34:6). All are streams from this fountain; he could be none of this, were he not first good. When it confers happiness without merit, it is grace; when it bestows happiness against merit, it is mercy; when he bears with provoking rebels, it is long-suffering; when he performs his promise, it is truth; when it meets with a person to whom it is not obliged, it is grace; when he meets with a person in the world, to which he hath obliged himself by promise, it is truth; when it commiserates a distressed person, it is pity; when it supplies an indigent person, it is bounty; when it succors an innocent person, it is righteousness; and when it pardons a penitent person, it is mercy; all summed up in this one name of goodness; and the Psalmist expreseth the same sentiment in the same words (Psalm 145:7, 8): "They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy; the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over his works." He is first good, and then compassionate. Righteousness is often in Scripture taken, not for justice, but charitableness; this attribute, saith one, is so full of God, that it doth deify all the rest, and verify the adorableness of him. His wisdom might contrive against us, his power bear too hard upon us; one might be too hard for an ignorant, and the other too mighty for an impotent creature; his holiness would scare an impure and guilty creature, but his goodness conducts them all for us, and makes them all amiable to us; whatever comeliness they have in the

eye of a creature, whatever comfort they afford to the heart of a creature, we are obliged for all to his goodness. This puts all the rest upon a delightful exercise; this makes his wisdom design for us, and this makes his power to act for us; this veils his holiness from affrighting us, and this spirits his mercy to relieve us: all his acts towards man, are but the workmanship of this. What moved him at first to create the world out of nothing, and erect so noble a creature as man, endowed with such excellent gifts; was it not his goodness? what made him separate his Son to be a sacrifice for us, after we had endeavored to rase out the first marks of his favor; was it not a strong bubbling of goodness? What moves him to reduce a fallen creature to the due sense of his duty, and at last bring him to an eternal felicity; is it not, only his goodness? This is the captain attribute that leads the rest to act. This attends them, and spirits them in all his ways of acting. This is the complement and perfection of all his works; had it not been for this, which set all the rest on work, nothing of his wonders had been seen in creation, nothing of his compassions had been seen in redemption,

II. . The second thing is, some propositions to explain the nature of this goodness.

1. He is good by his own essence. God is not only good in his essence, but good by his essence; the essence of “every created being is good;” so the unerring God pronounced everything which he had made (Gen. 1:31). The essence of the worst creatures, yea, of the impure and savage devils, is good; but they are not good *per essentiam*, for then they could not be bad, malicious, and oppressive. God is good, as he is God; and therefore good by himself; and from himself, not by participation from another; he made everything good, but none made him good; since his goodness was not received from another, he is good by his own nature. He could not receive it from the things he created, they are later than he; since they received all from him, they could bestow nothing on him; and no God preceded him, in whose inheritance and treasures of goodness, he could be a successor; he is absolutely his own goodness, he needed none to make him good; but all things needed him, to be good by him. Creatures are good by being made so by him, and cleaving to him; he is good without cleaving to any goodness without him. Goodness is not a quality in him, but a nature; not a babit added to

his essence, but his essence itself; he is not first God, and then afterwards good; but he is good as he is God; his essence, being one and the same, is formally and equally God and good. *Αυιάγαθον*, “good of himself,” was one of the names the Platonists gave him. He is essentially good in his own nature, and not by any outward action which follows his essence. He is an independent Being, and hath nothing of goodness or happiness from anything without him, or anything he doth act about. If he were not good by his essence, he could not be eternally good, he could not be the first good; he would have something before him, from whence he derived that goodness wherewith he is possessed; nor could he be perfectly good, for he could not be equally good to that from whom he derived his goodness; no star, no splendid body, that derives light from the sun, doth equal that sun by which it is enlightened. Hence his goodness must be infinite, and circumscribed by no limits; the exercise of his goodness may be limited by himself; but his goodness, the principle, cannot; for since his essence is infinite, and his goodness is not distinguished from his essence, it is infinite also; if it were limited, it were finite; he cannot be bounded by anything without him; if so, then he were not God, because he would have something superior to him, to put bars in his way; if there were anything to fix him, it must be a good or evil being; good it cannot be, for it is the property of goodness to encourage goodness, not to bound it; evil it cannot be, for then it would extinguish goodness, as well as limit it; it would not be content with the circumscribing it, without destroying it; for it is the nature of every contrary, to endeavor the destruction of its opposite. He is essentially good by his own essence; therefore, good of himself; therefore, eternally good; and therefore, abundantly good.

2. God is the prime and chief goodness. Being good *per se*, and by his own essence, he must needs be the chief goodness, in whom there can be nothing but good, from whom there can proceed nothing but good, to whom all good whatsoever must be referred, as the final cause of all good. As he is the chief Being, so he is the chief good; and as we rise by steps from the existence of created things, to acknowledge one Supreme Being, which is God, so we mount by steps from the consideration of the goodness of created things, to acknowledge one Infinite Ocean of sovereign goodness, whence the streams of created goodness are derived. When we

behold things that partake of goodness from another , we must acquiesce in one that hath goodness by participation from no other, but originally from himself, and therefore supremely in himself above all other things: so that, as nothing greater and. more majestic can be imagined, so also nothing better and more excellent can be conceived than God. Nothing can add to him, or make him better than he is; nothing can detract from him, to make him worse; nothing can be added to him, nothing can be severed from him; no created good can render him more excellent; no evil, from any creature, can render him less excellent; “our goodness extends not to him” (Psalm 16:2); “wickedness may hurt a man, as we are, and our righteousness may profit the son of man; but, if we be righteous, what give we to Him, or what receives he at our hands” (Job 35:7, 8)? as he hath no superior in place above him, so, being chief of all, he cannot be made better by any inferior to him. How can he be made better by any that hath from himself all that he hath? The goodness of a creature may be changed, but the goodness of the Creator is immutable; he is always like himself, so good that he cannot be evil, as he is so blessed that he cannot be miserable. Nothing is good but God, because nothing is of itself but God; as all things, being from nothing, are nothing in comparison of God, so all things, being from nothing, are scanty and evil in comparison of God. If anything had been, *ex Deo*, God being the matter of it, it had been as good as God is, but since the principle, whence all things were drawn, was nothing, though the efficient cause by which they were extracted from nothing was God, they are as nothing in goodness, and not estimable in comparison of God (Psalm 73:25): “Whom have I in heaven but thee?”

&c. God is all good; every creature hath a distinct variety of goodness: God distinctly pronounced every day’s work in the creation “good.” Food communicates the goodness of its nourishing virtue to our bodies; flowers the goodness of their odors to our smell; every creature a goodness of comeliness to our sight; plants the goodness of healing qualities for our cure; and all derive from themselves a goodness of knowledge, objectively to our understandings. The sun, by one sort of goodness, warms us; metals enrich us; living creatures sustain us, and delight us by another; all those have distinct kinds of goodness, which are eminently summed up in God, and are all but parts of his immense goodness. It is he

that enlightens us by his sun, nourisheth us by bread (Matt. 4:4): “It is not by bread alone that we live, but by the word of God.” It is all but his own supreme goodness, conveyed to us through those varieties of conduit-pipes. “God is all good;” other things are good in their kind; as, a good man, a good angel, a good tree, a good plant; but God hath a good of all kinds eminently in his nature. He is no less all-good, than he is almighty, and all-knowing; as the sun contains in it all the light, and more light than is in all the clearest bodies in the world, so doth God contain in himself all the good, and more good than is in the richest creatures.

Nothing is good, but as it resembles him; as nothing is hot, but as it resembles fire, the prime subject of heat. God is omnipotent, therefore no good can be wanting to him. If he were destitute of any which he could not have, he were not almighty: he is so good, that there is no mixture of anything which can be called not good in him; everything besides him wants some good, which others have. Nothing can be so evil as God is good. There can be no evil but there is some mixture of good with it; no nature so evil but there is some spark of goodness in it: but God is a good which hath no taint of evil; nothing can be so supreme an evil as God is supreme goodness. He is only good, without capacity of increase; he is all good, and unmixedly good; none good but God: a goodness, like the sun, that hath all light, and no darkness. That is the second thing; he is the supreme and chief goodness.

3. This goodness is communicative. None so communicatively good as God. As the notion of God includes goodness, so the notion of goodness includes diffusiveness; without goodness he would cease to be a Deity, and without diffusiveness he would cease to be good. The being good is necessary to the being God; for goodness is nothing else, in the notion of it, but a strong inclination to do good; either to find or make an object, wherein to exercise itself, according to the propension of its own nature; and it is an inclination of communicating itself, not for its own interest, but the good of the object it pitcheth upon. Thus God is good by nature; and his nature is not without activity; he acts conveniently to his own nature (Psalm 119:68): “Thou art good, and dost good.” And nothing accrues to him, by the communications of himself to others, since his blessedness was as great before the frame of any creature as ever

it was since the erecting of the world; so that the goodness of Christ himself increaseth not the lustre of his happiness (Psalm 16:2): “My goodness extends not to thee.” He is not of a niggardly and envious nature; he is too rich to have any cause to envy, and too good to have any will to envy; he is as liberal as he is rich, according to the capacity of the object about which his goodness is exercised. The Divine goodness, being the supreme goodness, is goodness in the highest degree of activity; not an idle, enclosed, pent up goodness, as a spring shut up, or a fountain sealed, bubbling up within itself, but bubbling out of itself: a fountain of gardens to water every part of his creation; “He is an ointment poured forth” (Cant. 1:3): nothing spreads itself more than oil, and takes up a larger space wheresoever it drops. It may be no less said of the goodness of God, as it is of the fulness of Christ (Eph. 1:23); “He fills all in all:” he fills rational creatures with understanding, sensitive nature with vigor and motion, the whole world with beauty and sweetness. Every taste, every touch of a creature, is a taste and touch of Divine goodness. Divine goodness offers itself in one spark in this creature, in another spark in the other creature, and altogether make up a goodness inconceivable by any creature. The whole mass, and extracted spirit of it, is infinitely short of the goodness of the Divine nature, imperfect shadows of that goodness which is in himself. Indeed, the more excellent anything is, the more nobly it acts; how remotely doth light, that excellent brightness of the creation, disperse itself! How doth that glorious creature, which God hath set in the heavens, spread its wings over heaven and earth, roll itself about the world, cast its beams upward and downward, insinuate into all corners, pierce the depths, and shoot up its rays into the heights, encircle the higher and lower creatures in its arms, reach out its communications to influence everything under the earth, as well as dart its beams of light and heat on things above, or upon the earth! “Nothing is hid from it” (Psalm 19:6); not from its power, nor from its sweetness. How communicative also is water, a necessary and excellent creature! How active is it in a river, to nourish the living creatures engendered in its womb! refresheth every shore it runs by; promotes the propagation of fruits for the nourishment, and bestows a verdure upon the ground, for the delight of man; and where it cannot reach the higher ground in its substance, it doth by its vapors, mounted up and concocted by the sun, and gently

distilled upon the earth, for the opening its womb to bring forth its fruits. God is more prone to communicate himself, than the sun to spread its wings, or the earth to mount up its fruits, or the water to multiply living creatures.

Goodness is his nature. Hence were there internal communications of himself from eternity; diffusions of himself, without himself, in time, in the creation of the world, like a full vessel running over. He created the world that he might impart his goodness to something without him, and diffuse larger measures of his goodness, after he had laid the first foundation of it in his being; and therefore he created several sorts of creatures, that they might be capable of various and distinct measures of his liberality, according to the distinct capacities of their nature, but imparted most to the rational creature, because that is only capable of an understanding to know him, and will to embrace him. He is the highest goodness, and therefore a communicative goodness, and acts excellently according to his nature.

4. God is necessarily good. None is necessarily good but God; he is as necessarily good, as he is necessarily God. His goodness is as inseparable from his nature as his holiness. He is good by nature, not only by will; as he is holy by nature, not only by will, he is good in his nature, and good in his actions; and as he cannot be bad in his nature, so he cannot be bad in his communications; he can no more act contrary to this goodness in any of his actions, than he can un-God himself. It is not necessary that God should create a world; he was at his own choice whether he would create or no; but when he resolves to make a world, it is necessary that he should make it good, because he is goodness itself, and cannot act against his own nature. He could not create anything without goodness in the very act; the very act of creation, or communicating being to anything without himself, is in itself an act of goodness, as well as an act of power; had he not been good in himself, nothing could have been endued with any goodness by him. In the act of giving being, he is liberal; the being he bestows is a displaying his own liberality; he could not confer what he needs not, and which could not be deserved, without being bountiful; since what was nothing, could not merit to be brought into being, the very act of giving to nothing a being, was an act of choice goodness. He could not create anything

without goodness as the motive, and the necessary motive; his goodness could not necessitate him to make the world, but his goodness could only move him to resolve to make a world; he was not bound to erect and fashion it because of his goodness, but he could not frame it without his goodness as the moving cause. He could not create anything, but he must create it good. It had been inconsistent with the supreme goodness of his nature, to have created only murderous, ravenous, injurious creatures; to have created a bedlam rather than a world: a mere heap of confusion would have been as inconsistent with his Divine goodness, as with his Divine wisdom. Again, when his goodness had moved him to make a creature, his goodness would necessarily move him to be beneficial to his creature; not that this necessity results from any merit in the creature, which he had framed; but from the excellency and diffusiveness of his own nature, and his own glory; the end for which he formed it, which would have been obscure, yea, nothing, without some degrees of his bounty. What occasion of acknowledgments and praise could the creature have for its being, if God had given him only a miserable being, while it was innocent in action? The goodness of God would not suffer him to make a creature, without providing conveniences for it, so long as he thought good to maintain its being, and furnishing it with that which was necessary to answer that end for which he created it; and his own nature would not suffer him to be unkind to his rational creature, while it was innocent. It had been injustice to inflict evil upon the creature, that had not offended, and had no relation to an offending creature; the nature of God could not have brought forth such an act: and, therefore, some say, that God, after he had created man, could not presently annihilate him, and take away his life and being. As a sovereign, he might do it; as Almighty, he was able to do it, as well as create him; but in regard of his goodness, he could not morally do it: for had he annihilated man as soon as ever he had made him, he had not made man for himself, and for his own glory; to be loved, worshipped, sought, and acknowledged by him. He would not then have been the end of man; he had created him in vain, and the world in vain, which he assures us he did not (Isa. 45:18, 19). And, certainly, if the gifts of God be without repentance, man could not have been annihilated after his creation, without repentance in God, without any cause, had not sin entered into the

world. If God did not say to man, after sin had made its entrance into the world, "Seek ye me in vain," he could not, because of his goodness, have said so to man in his innocence. As God is necessarily mind, so he is necessarily will; as he is necessarily knowing, so he is necessarily loving. He could not be blessed, if he did not know himself, and his own perfection; nor good, if he did not delight in himself, and his own perfections. And this goodness whereby he delights in himself, is the source of his delight in his creatures, wherein he sees the footsteps of himself. If he loves himself, he cannot but love the resemblance of himself, and the image of his own goodness. He loves himself, because he is the highest goodness and excellency; and loves everything as it resembles himself, because it is an efflux of his own goodness; and as he doth necessarily love himself, and his own excellency, so he doth necessarily love anything that resembles that excellency, which is the primary object of his esteem. But,

5. Though he be necessarily good, yet he is also freely good. The necessity of the goodness of his nature hinders not the liberty of his actions; the matter of his acting is not at all necessary, but the manner of his acting in a good and bountiful way, is necessary, as well as free. He created the world and man freely, because he might choose whether he would create it, but he created them good necessarily, because he was first necessarily good in his nature, before he was freely a Creator. When he created man, he freely gave him a positive law, but necessarily a wise and righteous law; because he was necessarily wise, and righteous, before he was freely a Lawgiver. When he makes a promise, he freely lets the word go out of his lips, but when he hath made it, he is necessarily a faithful performer; because he was necessarily true and righteous in his nature, before he was freely a promiser. God is necessarily good in his nature, but free in his communications of it; to make him necessarily to communicate his goodness in the first creation of the creature, would render him but impotent, good without liberty and without will; if the communications of it be not free, the eternity of the world must necessarily be concluded, which some anciently asserted from the naturalness of God's goodness, making the world flow from God as light from the sun. God, indeed, is necessarily good, affective in regard of his nature, but freely good, *affectivé*, in regard of the effluxes of it to this or that particular subject he

pitcheth on. He is not so necessarily communicative of his goodness as the sun of his light, or a tree of its cooling shade, that chooseth not its objects, but enlightens all indifferently, without any variation or distinction; this were to make God of no more understanding than the sun, to shine not where it pleaseth, but where it must. He is an understanding agent, and hath a sovereign right to choose his own subjects; it would not be a supreme goodness, if it were not a voluntary goodness. It is agreeable to the nature of the highest good, to be absolutely free, to dispense his goodness in what methods and measures he leaseth, according to the free determinations of his own will, guide by the wisdom of his mind, and regulated by the holiness of his nature. He is not to “give an account of any of his matters” (Job 33:13); “He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion” (Rom. 9:15); and he will be good, to whom he will be good; when he doth act, he cannot but act well, so it is necessary; yet he may act this good or that good, to this or that degree, so it is free. As it is the perfection of his nature, it is necessary; as it is the communication of his bounty, it is voluntary. The eye cannot but see if it be open, yet it may glance upon this or that color, fix upon this or that object, as it is conducted by the will. God necessarily loves himself, because he is good, yet not by constraint, but freedom; because his affection to himself is from a knowledge of himself. He necessarily loves his own image, because it is his image; yet freely, because not blindly, but from motions of understanding and will. What necessity could there be upon him, to resolve to communicate his goodness? It could not be to make himself better by it, for he had a goodness incapable of any addition; he confers a goodness on his creatures, but reaps not a harvest of goodness to his own essence from his creatures. What obligation could there be from the creature, to confer a goodness on him to this or that degree, for this or that duration? If he had not created a man, nor angel, he had done them no wrong; if he had given them only a simple being, he had manifested a part of his goodness, without giving them a right to challenge any more of him; if he had taken away their beings after a time when he had answered his end, he had done them no injury for what law obliged him to enrich them, and leave them in that being wherein he had invested them, but his sole goodness? Whatever sparks of goodness any creature hath, are the free effusions of God’s bounty, the offspring

of his own inclination to do well, the simple favor of the donor; not purchased, not merited by the creature. God is as unconstrained in his liberty, in all his communications, as infinite in his goodness, the fountain of them.

6. This goodness is communicative with the greatest pleasure. Moses desired to see his glory, God assures him he should see his goodness (Exod.33:18, 19); intimating that his goodness is his glory, and his glory his delight also. He sends not forth his blessings with an ill will; he doth not stay till they are squeezed from him; he prevents men with his blessings of goodness (Psalm 21:3); he is most delighted when he is most diffusive; and his pleasure in bestowing, is larger than his creature's in possessing. He is not covetous of his own treasures. He lays up his goodness in order to laying it out with a complacency wholly divine. The jealousy princes have of their subjects makes them sparing of their gifts, for fear of giving them materials for rebellion: God's foresight of the ill use men would make of his benefits damped him not in bestowing his largesses. He is incapable of envy; his own happiness can no more be diminished, than it can be increased. None can over-top him in goodness, because nothing hath any good but what is derived from him; his gifts are without repentance: sorrow hath no footing in him, who is infinitely happy, as well as infinitely good. Goodness and envy are inconsistent. How unjustly, then, did the devil accuse God! What God gives out of goodness, he gives with joy and gladness. He did not only will that we should be, but rejoice that he had brought us into being; he rejoiced in his works (Psalm 104:31), and his wisdom stood by him, "delighting in the habitable parts of the earth" (Prov. 8:31). He beheld the world after its creation with a complacency, and still governs it with the same pleasure wherewith he reviewed it. Infinite cheerfulness attends infinite goodness. He would not give, if he had not a pleasure that others should enjoy his goodness; since he is better than anything, and more communicative than anything; he is more joyful in giving out, than the sun can be to run its race, in pouring forth light. He is said only to repent, and grieve, when men answer not the obligations and ends of his goodness; which would be their own felicity, as well as his glory. Though he doth not force greater degrees of his goodness upon those that neglect it, yet he denies them not to those that solicit him for it: it is always greater pleasure to him to impart upon the importunities

of the creatures, than it is to a mother to reach out her breast to her crying and longing infant. He is not wearied by the solicitations of men; he is pleased with their prayers, because he is pleased with the imparting of his own goodness: he seems to be in travail with it, longing to be delivered of it into the lap of his creature. He is as much delighted with petitions for his liberality in bestowing his best goodness, as princes are weary of the craving of their subjects. None can be so desirous to squeeze those that are under them, as God is delighted to enlarge his hand towards them. It is the nature of his goodness to be glad of men's solicitations for it, because they are significant valuations of it, and therefore fit occasions for him to bestow it. Since he doth not delight in the unhappiness of any of his creatures, he certainly delights in what may conduce unto their felicity. He doth with the same delight multiply the effects of his goodness where his wisdom sees it convenient, as he beheld the first-fruits of his goodness with a complacency upon laying the top-stone of the creation.

7. The displaying of this goodness was the motive and end of all his works of creation and providence. God being infinitely wise, would not act without the highest reason, and for the highest end. The reason that induced him to create, must be of as great an eminency as himself: the motive could not be taken without him, because there was nothing but himself in being; it must be taken, therefore, from within himself, and from some one of those most excellent perfections whereby we conceive him. But, upon the exact consideration of all of them, none can seem to challenge that honor of being the motive of them, to resolve the setting forth any work, but his own goodness; this being the first thing manifest in his creation, seems to be the first thing moving him to a resolution to create. Wisdom may be considered as directing, power considered as acting, but it is natural to reflect upon goodness as moving the one to direct, and the other to act. Power was the principle of his action, wisdom the rule of his action, goodness the motive of his action; principle and rule are awakened by the motive, and subservient to the end. That which is the most amiable perfection in the Divine nature, and that which he first took notice of, as the footsteps of them, in the distinct view of every day's work, and the general view of the whole frame, seems to claim the best right to be entitled the motive and end of his creation of things. God could have no end but

himself, because there was nothing besides himself. Again, the end of every agent is that which he esteems good, and the best good for that kind of action: since nothing is to be esteemed good but God, nothing can be the ultimate end of God but himself, and his own goodness. What a man wills chiefly is his end; but God cannot will any other thing but himself as his end, because there is nothing superior to himself in goodness. He cannot will anything that supremely serves himself and his own goodness as his end; for, if he did, that which he wills must be superior to himself in goodness, and then he is not God; or inferior to him in goodness, and then he would not be righteous, in willing that which is a lower good before a higher. God cannot will anything as his end of acting, but himself, without undeifying himself.

God's will being infinitely good, cannot move for anything but what is infinitely good; and, therefore, whatsoever God made, he made for himself (Prov. 16:4), that whatsoever he made might bear a badge of this perfection upon it, and be a discovery of his wonderful goodness: for the making things for himself doth not signify any indigence in God, that he made anything to increase his excellency (for that is capable of no addition), but to manifest his excellency. God possessing everything eminently in himself, did not create the world for any need he had of it; finite things were unable to make any accession to that which is infinite. Man, indeed, builds a house to be a shelter to him against wind and weather, and makes clothes to secure him from cold, and plants gardens for his recreation and health. God is above all those little helps; he did not make the world for himself in such a kind, but for himself, *i. e.* the manifestation of himself and the riches of his nature; not to make himself blessed, but to discover his own blessedness to his creatures, and to communicate something of it to them. He did not garnish the world with so much bounty, that he might live more happily than he did before, but that his rational creatures might have fit conveniences. As the end for which God demands the performance of our duty is not for his own advantage, but for our good (Deut. 10:13), so the end why he conferred upon us the excellency of such a being was for our good, and the discovery of his goodness to us; for had not God created the world, he had been wholly unknown to any but himself; he produced creatures, that he might be known: as the sun shines not only to discover other things, but to be seen itself in its

beauty and brightness. God would create things, because he would be known in his glory and liberality; hence is it that he created intellectual creatures, because without them the rest of the creation could not be taken notice of: it had been in some sort in vain; for no nature lower than an understanding nature, was able to know the marks of God in the creation, and acknowledge him as God. In this regard, God is good above all creatures, because he intends only to communicate his goodness in creation, not to acquire any goodness, or excellency from them, as men do in their framing of things. God is all, and is destitute of nothing, and, therefore, nothing accrues to him by the creation, but the acknowledgment of his goodness. This goodness, therefore, must be the motive and end of all his works.

III. the third thing, that God is good.

1. The more excellent anything is in nature, the more of goodness and kindness it hath. For we see more of love and kindness in creatures that are endued with sense, to their descendants, than in plants, that have only a principle of growth. Plants preserve their seeds whole that are enclosed in them; animals look to their young only after they are dropped from them; yet, after some time, take no more notice of them than of a stranger that never had any birth from them. But man, that hath a higher principle of reason, cherisheth his offspring, and gives them marks of his goodness while he lives, and leaves not the world at the time of his death without some testimonies of it: much more must God, who is a higher principle than sense or reason, be “good” and bountiful to all his offspring. The more perfect anything is, the more it doth communicate itself. The sun is more excellent than the stars, and, therefore, doth more sensibly, more extensively, disperse its liberal beams than the stars do. And the better any man is, the more charitable he is; God being the most excellent nature, having nothing more excellent than himself, because nothing more ancient than himself, who is the Ancient of Days: there is nothing, therefore, better and more bountiful than himself.

2. He is the cause of all created goodness; he must therefore himself be the Supreme Good. What good is in the heavens, is the product of some Being above the earth; and those varieties of goodness in the earth, and several creatures, are somewhere in their fulness and union: that, therefore, which possesses all those

scattered goodnesses in their fulness, must be all good, all that good which is displayed in creatures; therefore sovereignly best. Whatsoever natural or moral goodness there is in the world, in angels, or men, or inferior creatures, is a line drawn from that centre, the bubblings of that fountain. God cannot but be better than all, since the goodness that is in creatures is the fruit of his own. If he were not good, he could produce no good: he could not bestow what he had not. If the creature be "good," as the apostle says "every creature is" (1 Tim. 4:4), he must needs be better than all, because they have nothing but what is derived to them from him; and much more goodness than all, because finite beings are not capable of receiving into them, and containing in themselves, all that goodness which is in an Infinite Being; when we search for good in creatures, they come short of that satisfaction which is in God (Psalm 4:6). As the certainty of a first principle of all things, is necessarily concluded from the being of creatures, and the upholding and sustaining power and virtue of God is concluded from the mutability of those things in the world; whence we infer, that there must be some stable foundation of those tottering things, some firm hinge upon which those changeable things do move, without which there would be no stability in the kinds of things, no order, no agreement, or union among them: so from the goodness of everything, and their usefulness to us, we must conclude him good, who made all those things. And since we find distinct goodnesses in the creature, we must conclude that one principle whence they did flow, excels in the glory of goodness: all those little glimmerings of goodness which are scattered in the creatures, as the image in the glass, represent the face, posture, motion of him whose image it is, but not in the fulness of life and spirit, as in the original; it is but a shadow at the best, and speaks something more excellent in the copy. As God hath an infiniteness of being above them, so he hath a supremacy of goodness beyond them: what they have, is but a participation from him; what he hath, must be infinitely supereminent above them. If anything be good by itself, it must be infinitely good, it would set itself no bounds; we must make as many gods, as particulars of goodness in the world: but being good by the bounty of another, that from whence they flow must be the chief goodness. It is God's excellency and goodness, which, like a beam, pierceth all things: he decks spirits with reason, endues matter with form, furnisheth

everything with useful qualities. As one beam of the sun illustrates fire, water, earth; so one beam of God enlightens and endows minds, souls, and universal nature nothing in the world had its goodness from itself, any more than it had its being from itself: The cause must be richer than the effect.

But that which I intend is *the defence of this goodness*.

First, The goodness of God is not impaired by suffering sin to enter into the world, and man to fall thereby. It is rather a testimony of God's goodness, that he gave man an ability to be happy, than any charge against his goodness, that he settled man in a capacity to be evil. God was first a benefactor to man, before man could be a rebel against God. May it not be inquired, whether it had not been against the wisdom of God, to have made a rational creature with liberty, and not suffer him to act according to the nature he was endowed with, and to follow his own choice for some time? Had it been wisdom to frame a free creature, and totally to restrain that creature from following its liberty? Had it been goodness, as it were, to force the creature to be happy against its will? God's goodness furnished Adam with a power to stand; was it contrary to his goodness, to leave Adam to a free use of that power? To make a creature, and not let that creature act according to the freedom of his nature, might have been thought to have been a blot upon his wisdom, and a constraint upon the creature, not to make use of that freedom of his nature, which the Divine goodness had bestowed upon him. To what purpose did God make a law, to govern his rational creature, and yet resolve that creature should not have his choice, whether he would obey it or no? Had he been really constrained to observe it, his observation of it could no more have been called obedience, than the acts of brutes that have a kind of natural constraint upon them by the instinct of their nature, can be called obedience: in vain had God endowed a creature with so great and noble a principle as liberty. Had it been goodness in God, after he had made a reasonable creature, to govern him in the same manner as he does brutes by a necessary instinct? It was the goodness of God to the nature of men and angels, to leave them in such a condition, to be able to give him a voluntary obedience, a nobler offering than the whole creation could present him with; and shall this goodness be undervalued, and accounted mean, because

man made an ill use of it, and turned it into wantonness? As the unbelief of man doth not diminish the redeeming grace of God (Rom. 3:3), so neither doth the fall of man lessen the creating goodness of God. Besides, why should the permission of sin be thought more a blemish to his goodness, than the providing a way of redemption for the destroying the works of sin and the devil, be judged the glory of it, whereby he discovered a goodness of grace that surpassed the bounds of nature? If this were a thing that might seem to obscure or deface the goodness of God, in the permission of the fall of angels and Adam, it was in order to bring forth a greater goodness in a more illustrious pomp, to the view of the world (Rom. 11:32): “God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.” But if nothing could be alleged for the defence of his goodness in this, it were most comely for an ignorant creature not to impeach his goodness, but adore him in his proceedings, in the same language the apostle doth (ver. 33): “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

Secondly, Nor is his goodness prejudiced, by not making all things the equal subjects of it.

1. It is true all things are not subjects of an equal goodness. The goodness of God is not so illustriously manifested in one thing as another. In the creation he hath dropped goodness upon some, in giving them beings and sense, and poured it upon others in endowing them with understanding and reason. The sun is full of light, but it hath a want of sense; brutes excel in the vigor of sense, but they are destitute of the light of reason; man hath a mind and reason conferred on him, but he hath neither the acuteness of mind, nor the quickness of motion equal with an angel. In providence also he doth give abundance, and opens his hand to some; to others he is more sparing: he gives greater gifts of knowledge to some, while he lets others remain in ignorance; he strikes down some, and raiseth others; he afflicts some with a continual pain, while he blesseth others with an uninterrupted health; he hath chosen one nation wherein to set up his gospel sun, and leaves another benighted in their own ignorance. “Known was God in Judea; they were a peculiar people alone of all the nations of the earth” (Deut. 14:2). He was not equally good to the angels: he held forth his hand to support

some in their happy habitation, while he suffered others to sink in irreparable ruin; and he is not so diffusive here of his goodness to his own as he will be in heaven. Here their sun is sometimes clouded, but there all clouds and shades will be blown away, and melted into nothing: instead of drops here, there will be above rivers of life. Is any creature destitute of the open marks of his goodness, though all are not enriched with those signal characters which he vouchsafes to others? He that is unerring, pronounced everything good distinctly in its production, and the whole good in its universal perfection (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). Though he made not all things equally good, yet he made nothing evil; and though one creature in regard of its nature may be better than another, yet an inferior creature, in regard of its usefulness in the order of the creation, may be better than a superior. The earth hath a goodness in bringing forth fruits, and the waters in the sea a goodness in multiplying food. That any of us have a being is goodness; that we have not so healthful a being as others is unequal, but not unjust goodness. He is good to all, though not in the same degree: "The whole earth is full of his mercy" (Psalm 119:64). A good man is good to his cattle, to his servants; he makes a provision for all, but he bestows not those floods of bounty upon them that he doth upon his children. As there are various gifts, but one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4), so there are various distributions, but from one goodness; the drops, as well as the fuller streams, are of the same fountain, and relish of the nature of it; and though he do not make all men partake of the riches of his grace after the corruption of their nature, is his goodness disgraced hereby? or doth he merit the title of cruelty? Will any diminish the goodness of a father for his not setting up his son after he hath foolishly and wilfully proved bankrupt; or not rather admire his liberality in giving him so large a stock to trade with when he first set him up in the world?

2. The goodness of God to creatures, is to be measured by their distinct usefulness to the common end. It were better for a toad or serpent to be a man, *i. e.* better for the creature itself, as it were advanced to a higher degree of being, but not better for the universe: he could have made every pebble a living creature, and every living creature a rational one; but that he made everything as we see, it was a goodness to the creature itself; but that he did not make it of a higher elevation in nature, was a part of his goodness to the rational

creature. If all were rational creatures, there would have been wanting creatures of an inferior nature for their conveniency; there would have wanted the manifestation of the variety and “fulness of his goodness.” Had all things in the world been rational creatures, much of that goodness which he hath communicated to rational creatures would not have appeared: how could man have showed his skill in taming and managing creatures more mighty than himself? What materials would there have been to manifest the goodness of God, bestowed upon the reasonable creatures for framing excellent works and inventions? Much of the goodness of God had lain wrapt up from sense and understanding. All other things partake not of so great a goodness as man; yet they are so subservient to that goodness poured forth on man, that little of it could have been seen without them. Consider man, every member in his body hath a goodness in itself; but a greater goodness as referred to the whole, without which the goodness of the more noble part would not be manifested. The head is the most excellent member, and hath greater impressions of Divine goodness upon it, in regard that it is the organ of understanding: were every member of the body a head, what a deformed monster would man be! If he were all head, where would be feet for motion, and arms for action? Man would be fit only for thought, and not for exercise. The goodness of God in giving man so noble a part as the head, could not be known without a tongue, whereby to express the conception of his mind; and without feet and hands whereby to act much of what he conceives, and determines, and execute the resolves of his will; all those have a goodness in themselves, an honor, a comeliness from the goodness of God (1 Cor. 12:22, 23), but not so great a goodness as the nobler part: yet, if you consider them in their functions, and refer them to that excellent member which they serve, their inferior goodness is absolutely necessary to the goodness of the other; without which, the goodness of the head and understanding would be in obscurity, be insignificant to the whole world, and, in a great measure, to the person himself that wants such members.

3. “The goodness of God is more seen in this inequality.” If God were equally good to all, it would destroy commerce, unity, the links of human society, damp charity, and render that useless which is one of the noblest and delightfulest duties to be exercised here; it would cool prayer, which is excited by wants, and is a necessary

demonstration of the creature's dependence on God. But in this inequality every man hath enough in his enjoyments for praise, and in his wants, matter for his prayer. Besides the inequality of the creature is the ornament of the world; what pleasure could a garden afford if there were but one sort of flowers, or one sort of plants? far less than when there is variety to please the sight, and every other sense. Again, the freedom of Divine goodness, which is the glory of it, is evident hereby; had he been alike good to all, it would have looked like a necessary, not a free act; but by the inequality, it is manifest that he doth not do it by a natural necessity as the sun shines, but by a voluntary liberty, as being the entire Lord, and free disposer of his own goods; and that is the gift of the pleasure of his will, as well as the efflux of his nature, that he hath not a goodness without wisdom, but a wisdom as rich as his bounty.

4. The goodness of God could not be equally communicated to all, after their settlement in their several beings,—because they have not a capacity in their natures for it: he doth bestow the marks of his goodness according to that natural capacity of fitness he perceives in his creatures; as the water of the sea fills every creek and gulf with different measures, according to the compass each have to contain it; and as the sun doth disperse light to the stars above, and the places below, to some more, to some less, according to the measures of their reception. God doth not do good to all creatures according to the greatness of his own power, and the extent of his own wealth, but according to the capacity of the subject; not so much good as he can do, but so much good as the creature can receive. The creature would sink, if God would pour out all his goodness upon it; as Moses would have perished, if God should have shown him all his glory (Exod. 33:18, 20). He doth manifest more good to his reasonable creatures, because they are more capable of acknowledging, and setting forth his goodness.

5. God ought to be allowed the free disposal of his own goodness. Is not God the Lord of his own gifts; and will you not allow him the privilege of having some more peculiar objects of his love and pleasure, which you allow without blame to man, and use yourself without any sense of a crime? Is a prince esteemed good, though he be not equally bountiful to all his servants, nor equally gracious in pardoning all his rebels; and shall the goodness of the

great Sovereign of the world be impeached, notwithstanding those mighty distributions of it, because he will act according to his own wisdom and pleasure, and not according to men's fancies and humors? Must purblind reason be the judge and director how God shall dispose of his own, rather than his own infinite wisdom and sovereign will? Is God less good, because there are numberless nothings, which he is able to bring into being? He could create a world of more creatures than he hath done: doth he, therefore, wish evil to them, by letting them remain in that nothing from whence he could draw them? No; but he denies that good to them, which he is able, if he pleased, to confer upon them. If God doth not give that good to a creature which it wants by its own demerit, can he be said to wish evil to it; or, only to deny that goodness which the creature hath forfeited, and which is at God's liberty to retain or disperse? Though God cannot but love his own image where he finds it, yet when this image is lost, and the devil's image voluntary received, he may choose whether he will manifest his goodness to such a one or no. Will you not account that man liberal, that distributes his alms to a great company, though he rejects some? Much more will you account him good, if he rejects none that implore him, but dispenseth his doles to every one upon their petition: and is he not good, because he will not bestow a farthing upon those that address not themselves to him? God is so good, that he denies not the best good to those that seek him: he hath promised life and happiness to them that do so. Is he less good, because he will not distribute his goodness to those that despise him? Though he be good, yet his wisdom is the rule of dispensing his goodness.

6. The severe punishment of offenders, and the afflictions he inflicts upon his servants, are no violations of his goodness. The notion of God's vindictive justice is as naturally inbred, and implanted in the mind of man, as that of his goodness, and those two sentiments never shocked one another. The heathen never thought him bad, because he was just; nor unrighteous, because he was good. God being infinitely good, cannot possibly intend or act anything but what is good: "Thou art good, and thou doest good;" *i. e.* whatsoever thou dost is good, whatsoever it be, pleasant or painful to the creature (Psalm 119:68): punishments themselves are not a moral evil in the person that inflicts, though they are a natural evil in the person that suffers them. In ordering punishment to the

wicked, good is added to evil; in ordering impunity to the wicked, evil is added to evil. To punish wickedness is right, therefore good: to leave men uncontrolled in their wickedness, is unrighteous, and therefore bad. But again shall his justice in some few judgments in the world, impeach his goodness, more than his wonderful patience to sinners is able to silence the calumnies against him? Is not his hand fuller of gracious doles, than of dreadful thunderbolts? Doth he not oftener seem forgetful of his justice, when he pours out upon the guilty the streams of his mercy, than to be forgetful of his goodness, when he sprinkles in the world some drops of his wrath?

First, God's judgments in the world, do not infringe his goodness; for,

1. The justice of God is a part of the goodness of his nature. God himself thought so, when he told Moses he would make all his goodness pass before him (Exod. 33:19): he leaves not out in that enumeration of the parts of it, his resolution, by no means to clear the guilty, but to visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children (Exod. 34:7). It is a property of goodness to hate evil, and, therefore, a property of goodness to punish it: it is no less righteousness to give according to the deserts of a person in a way of punishment, than to reward a person that obeys his precepts in a way of recompense. Whatsoever is righteous is good; sin is evil; and, therefore, whatsoever doth witness against it, is good; his goodness, therefore, shines in his justice, for without being just he could not be good. Sin is a moral disorder in the world: every sin is injustice: injustice breaks God's order in the world; there is a necessity therefore of justice to put the world in order. Punishment orders the person committing the injury, who, when he will not be in the order of obedience, must be in the order of suffering for God's honor. The goodness of all things which God pronounced so, consisted in their order and beneficial helpfulness to one another: when this order is inverted, the goodness of the creature ceaseth: if it be a bad thing to spoil this order, is it not a part of Divine goodness to reduce them into order, that they may be reduced in some measure to their goodness? Do we ever account a governor less in goodness, because he is exact in justice, and punisheth that which makes a disorder in his government? and is it a diminution of the Divine goodness, to punish that which makes a disorder in the world? As wisdom

without goodness would be a serpentine craft, and issue in destruction; so goodness without justice would be impotent indulgence, and cast things into confusion. When Abel's blood cried out for vengeance against Cain, it spake a good thing; Christ's blood speaking better things than the blood of Abel, implies that Abel's blood spake a good thing; the comparative implies a positive (Heb. 12:24). If it were the goodness of that innocent blood to demand justice, it could not be a badness in the Sovereign of the world to execute it. How can God sustain the part of a good and righteous judge, if he did not preserve human society? and how would it be preserved, without manifesting himself by public judgments against public wrongs? Is there not as great a necessity that goodness should have instruments of judgment, as that there should be prisons, bridewells, and gibbets, in a good commonwealth? Did not the thunderbolts of God sometimes roar in the ears of men, they would sin with a higher hand than they do, fly more in the face of God, make the world as much a moral, as it was at first a natural chaos: the ingenuity of men would be damped, if there were not something to work upon their fears, to keep them in their due order. Impunity of the innocent person is worse than any punishment. It is a misery to want medicines for the cure of a sharp disease; and a mark of goodness in a prince to consult for the security of the political body, by cutting off a gangrened and corrupting member: and what prince would deserve the noble title of good, if he did not restrain, by punishment, those evils which impair the public welfare? Is it not necessary that the examples of sin, whereby others have been encouraged to wickedness, should be made examples of justice, whereby the same persons and others may be discouraged from what before they were greedily inclined unto? Is not a hatred of what is bad and unworthy, as much a part of Divine goodness, as a love to what is excellent, and bears a resemblance to himself? Could he possibly be accounted good, that should bear the same degree of affection to a prodigious vice, as to a sublime virtue? and should behave himself in the same manner of carriage to the innocent and culpable? could you account him good, if he did always with pleasure behold evil, and perpetually suffer the oppressions of the innocent under unpunished wickedness? How should we know the goodness of the Divine nature, and his affection to the goodness of his creature, if he did not by some acts of severity witness his

implacable aversion against sin, and his care to preserve the good government of the world? If corrupted creatures should always be exempt from the effects of his indignation, he would declare himself not to be infinitely good, because he would not be really righteous. No man thinks it a natural vice in the sun, by the power of its scorching heat, to dry up and consume the unwholesome vapors of the air; nor are the demonstrations of Divine justice any blots upon his goodness, since they are both for the defence and glory of his holiness, and for the preservation of the beauty and order of the world.

2. Is it not part of the goodness of God to make laws, and annex threatenings; and shall it be an impeachment of his goodness to support them? The more severe laws are made for deterring evil, the better is that prince accounted in making such provision for the welfare of the community. The design of laws, and the design of upholding the honor of those laws by the punishment of offenders, is to promote goodness and restrain evil; the execution of those laws must be therefore pursuant to the same design of goodness which first settled them. Would it not be contrary to goodness, to suffer that which was designed for the support of goodness, to be scorned and slighted? It would neither be prudence nor goodness, but folly and vice, to let laws, which were made to promote virtue, be broken with impunity. Would not this be to weaken virtue, and give a new life and vigor to vice? Not only the righteousness of the law itself, but the wisdom of the Lawgiver would be exposed to contempt, if the violations of it remained uncontrolled, and the violence offered by men passed unpunished. None but will acknowledge the Divine precepts to be the image of the righteousness of God, and beneficial for the common good of the world (Rom. 7:12): "The law is holy, just, and good," and so is every precept of it; the law is for no other end, but to keep the creature in subjection to, and dependence on God; this dependence could not be preserved without a law, nor that law be kept in reputation, without a penalty; nor would that penalty be significant without an execution. Every law loseth the nature of a law, without a penalty; and the penalty loseth its vigor, without the infliction of it: how can those laws attain their end, if the transgressions of them be not punished? Would not the wickedness of the men's hearts be encouraged by such a kind of uncomely goodness? and all the threatenings be to no other end, than to

engender vain and fruitless fears in the minds of men? Is it good for the majesty of God to suffer itself to be trampled on by his vassals? to suffer men, by their rebellion, to level his law with the wickedness of their own hearts; and by impunity slight his own glory, and encourage their disobedience? Who would give any man, any prince, any father, that should do so, the name of a good governor? If it were a fruit of Divine goodness to make laws, is it contrary to goodness to support the honor of them? It is every whit as rational and as good to vindicate the honor of his laws by justice, as at first to settle them by authority; as much goodness to vindicate it from contempt, as at first to enact it; as it is as much wisdom to preserve a law, as at first to frame it: shall his precepts be thought by him unworthy of a support, that were not thought by him unworthy to be made?

The same reason of goodness that led him to enjoin them, will lead him to revenge them. Did evil appear odious to him, while he enacted this law; and would not his goodness, as well as his wisdom, appear odious to him, if he did never execute it? Would it not be a denial of his own goodness, to be led by the foolish and corrupt judgment of his creatures, and slight his own law, because his rebels spurn at it? Since he valued it before they could actually contemn it, would he not misjudge his own law and his own wisdom, discount from the true value of them, condemn his own acts, censure his precepts as unrighteous, and therefore evil and injurious? remove the differences between good and evil, look upon vice as virtue, and wickedness as righteousness, if he thought his commands unworthy a vindication? How can there be any support to the honor of his precepts, without sometimes executing the severity of his threatenings?

And as to his threatenings of punishment for the breach of his laws, are they not designed to discourage wickedness, as the promises of reward were designed to encourage goodness? Hath he not multiplied the one, to scare men from sin, as well as the other, to allure men to obedience? Is not the same truth engaged to support the one, as well as the other; and how could he be abundant in goodness, if he were not abundant in truth (Exod. 34:6)? both are linked together; if he neglected his truth, he would be out of love with his own goodness; since it cannot be manifested in performing

the promises to the obedient, if it be not also manifested in executing his threatenings upon the rebellious. Had not God annexed threatenings to his laws, he would have had no care of his own goodness. The order between God and the creature, wherein the declaration of his goodness consisted, might have been easily broken by his creature; man would have freed himself from subjection to God; been unaccountable to him, had this consisted with that infinite goodness whereby he loves himself, and loves his creatures. As therefore the annexing threatenings to his law, was a part of his goodness; the execution of them is so far from being a blemish, that it is the honor of his goodness. The rewards of obedience, and the punishment of disobedience, refer to the same end, *viz.* the due manifestation of the valuation of his own law, the glorifying his own goodness, which enjoined so beneficial a law for man, and the support of that goodness in the creatures, which by that law he demands righteously and kindly of them.

3. Hence it follows, That not to punish evil, would be a want of goodness to himself. The goodness of God is an indulgent goodness, in a way of wisdom and reason; not a fond goodness, in a way of weakness and folly: would it not be a weakness, always to bear with the impenitent? a want of expressing a goodness to goodness itself? Would not goodness have more reason to complain, for a want of justice to rescue it, than men have reason to complain, for the exercise of justice in the vindication of it? If God established all things in order, with infinite wisdom and goodness, and God silently beheld, forever, this order broken, would he not either charge himself with a want of power, or a want of will, to preserve the marks of his own goodness? Would it be a kindness to himself to be careless of the breaches of his own orders? His throne would shake, yea, sink from under him, if justice, whereby he sentenceth, and judgment, whereby he executes his sentence, were not the supports of it (Psalm 89:14). “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne,” חֲכֹךְ, the stability or foundation of thy throne. So, Psalm 92:2. Man would forget his relation to God; God would be unknown to be sovereign of the world, were he careless of the breaches of his own order (Psalm 9:16). “The Lord is known by the judgments which he executes;” is it not a part of his goodness, to preserve the indispensable order between himself and his creatures? His own sovereignty, which is good, and the subjection of the creature to him

as sovereign, which is also good; the one would not be maintained in its due place, nor the other restrained in due limits, without punishment. Would it be a goodness in him to see goodness itself trampled upon constantly, without some time or other appearing for the relief of it? Is it not a goodness to secure his own honor, to prevent further evil? Is it not a goodness to discourage men by judgments, sometimes, from a contempt and ill use of his bounty; as well as sometimes patiently to bear with them, and wait upon them for a reformation? Must God be bad to himself, to be kind to his enemies? And shall it be accounted an unkindness, and a mark of evil in him, not to suffer himself to be always outraged and defied? The world is wronged by sin, as well as God is injured by it. How could God be good to himself, if he righted not his own honor? or be a good governor of the world, if he did not sometimes witness against the injuries it receives sometimes from the works of his hands? Would he be good to himself, as a God, to be careless of his own honor? or good, as the Rector of the world, and be regardless of the world's confusion? That God should give an eternal good to that creature that declines its duty, and despiseth his sovereignty, is not agreeable to the goodness of his wisdom, or that of his righteousness. It is a part of God's goodness to love himself. Would he love his sovereignty, if he saw it daily slighted, without sometimes discovering how much he values the honor of it? Would he have any esteem for his own goodness, if he beheld it trampled upon, without, any will to vindicate it? Doth mercy deserve the name of cruelty, because it pleads against a creature that hath so often abused it, and hath refused to have any pity exercised towards it in a righteous and regular way? Is sovereignty destitute of goodness, because it preserves its honor against one that would not have it reign over him? Would he not seem, by such a regardlessness, to renounce his own essence, undervalue and undermine his own goodness, if he had not an implacable aversion to whatsoever is contrary to it? If men turn grace into wantonness, is it not more reasonable he should turn his grace into justice? All his attributes, which are parts of his goodness, engage him to punish sin; without it, his authority would be vilified, his purity stained, his power derided, his truth disgraced, his justice scorned, his wisdom slighted; he would be thought to have dissembled in his laws; and be judged, according to the rules of reason, to be void of true goodness.

4. Punishment is not the primary intention of God. It is his goodness that he hath no mind to punish; and therefore he hath put a bar to evil, by his prohibitions and threatenings, that he might prevent sin, and, consequently, any occasions of severity against his creature. The principal intention of God, in his law, was to encourage goodness, that he might reward it; and when, by the commission of evil, God is provoked to punish, and takes the sword into his hand, he doth not act against the nature of his goodness, but against the first intention of his goodness in his precepts, which was to reward; as a good judge principally intends, in the exercise of his office, to protect good men from violence, and maintain the honor of the laws, yet, consequently, to punish bad men, without which the protection of the good would not be secured, nor the honor of the law be supported; and a good judge, in the exercise of his office, doth principally intend the encouragement of the good, and wisheth there were no wickedness that might occasion punishment; and, when he doth sentence a malefactor, in order to the execution of him, he doth not act against the goodness of his nature, but pursuant to the duty of his place, but wisheth he had no occasion for such severity. Thus God seems to speak of himself (Isa. 28:21); he calls the act of his wrath his “strange work, his strange act;” a work, not against his nature, as the Governor of the world, but against his first intention, as Creator, which was to manifest his goodness; therefore he moves with a slow pace in those acts, brings out his judgments with relentings of heart, and seems to cast out his thunderbolts with a trembling hand: “He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men” (Lam. 3:33); and therefore he “delights not in the death of a sinner” (Ezek. 33:11); not in death, as death; in punishment, as punishment; but as it reduceth the suffering creature to the order of his precept, or reduceth him into order under his power, or reforms others who are spectators of the punishment upon a criminal of their own nature; God only hates the sin, not the sinner; he desires only the destruction of the one, not the misery of the other; the nature of a man doth not displease him, because it is a work of his own goodness, but the nature of the sinner displeaseth him, because it is a work of the sinner’s own extravagance. Divine goodness pitcheth not its hatred primarily upon the sinner, but upon the sin: but since he cannot punish the sin without punishing the subject to which it cleaves, the sinner falls under his lash. Whoever

regards a good judge as an enemy to the malefactor, but as an enemy to his crime, when he doth sentence and execute him?

5. Judgments in the world have a goodness in them, therefore they are no impeachments of the goodness of God.

(1.) A goodness in their preparations. He sends not judgments without giving warnings; his justice is so far from extinguishing his goodness, that his goodness rather shines out in the preparations of his justice; he gives men time, and sends them messengers, to persuade them to another temper of mind, that he may change his hand, and exercise his liberality where he threatened his severity. When the heathen had presages of some evil upon their persons or countries, they took them for invitations to repentance, excited themselves to many acts of devotion, implored his favor, and often experimented it. The Ninevites, upon the proclamation of the destruction of their city by Jonah, fell to petitioning him, whereby they signified, that they thought him good, though he were just, and more prone to pity than severity; and their humble carriage caused the arrows he had ready against them to drop out of his hands (Jonah 3:9, 10). When he brandisheth his sword, he wishes for some to stand in that gap, to mollify his anger, that he might not strike the fatal blow (Ezek. 32:30); "I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me in the land, that I should not destroy it." He was desirous that his creatures might be in a capacity to receive the marks of his bounty. This he signified, not obscurely, to Moses (Ex. 32:10), when he spoke to him to let him alone, that his anger might wax hot against the people, after they had made a golden calf and worshipped it. "Let me alone," said God: not that Moses restrained him, saith Chrysostom, who spake nothing to him, but stood silent before him, and knew nothing of the people's idolatry; but God would give him an occasion of praying for them, that he might exercise his mercy towards them; yet in such a manner, that the people, being struck with a sense of their crime, and the horror of Divine justice, they might be amended for the future, when they should understand that their death was riot averted by their own merit or intercession, but by Moses, his patronage of them, and pleading for them; as we see sometimes masters and fathers angry with their servants and children, and preparing themselves to punish them, but secretly wish

some friend to intercede for them, and take them out of their hands: there is a goodness shining in the preparations of his judgments.

2. A goodness in the execution of them. They are good, as they chew God disaffected to evil, and conduce to the glory of his holiness, and deter others from presumptuous sins (Lev. 10:3): “I will be glorified in all that draw near unto me;”—in his judgment upon Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, for offering strange fire. By them God preserves the excellent footsteps of his own goodness in his creation and his law, and curbs the licentiousness of men, and contains them within the bounds of their duty. “Thy judgments are good,” saith the Psalmist (119:39); *i. e.* thy judicial proceedings upon the wicked; for he desires God there to turn away, by some signal act, the reproach the wicked cast upon him. Can there be any thing more miserable than to live in a world full of wickedness, and void of the marks of Divine goodness and justice to repress it? Were there not judgments in the world, men would forget God, be insensible of his government of the world, neglect the exercises of natural and christian duties; religion would be at its last gasp, and expire among them, and men would pretend to break God’s precepts by God’s authority. Are they not good, then, as they restrain the creature from further evils; affright others from the same crimes which they were inclinable to commit? He strikes some, to reform others that are spectators; as Apollonius tamed pigeons by beating dogs before them. Punishments are God’s gracious warnings to others, not to venture upon the crimes which they see attended with such judgments. The censers of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, were to be wrought into plates for a covering of the altar, to abide there as a memento to others, not to approach to the exercise of the priestly office without an authoritative call from God (Num. 16:38, 40); and those judgments exercised in the former ages of the world, were intended by Divine goodness for warnings, even in evangelical times. Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt, to prevent men from apostasy; that use Christ himself makes of it, in the exhortation against “turning back” (Luke 17:32, 33). And (Psalm 58:10): “The righteous shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.” When God shall drench his sword in the blood of the wicked, the righteous shall take occasion from thence, to purify themselves, and reform their ways, and look to the paths of their feet. Would not impunity be hurtful to the world, and men receive encouragement to sin, if

severities sometimes did not bridle them from the practice of their inclinations? Sometimes the sinner himself is reformed, and sometimes removed from being an example to others. Though thunder be an affrightening noise, and lightning a scaring flash, yet they have a liberal goodness in them in shattering and consuming those contagious vapors which burden and infect the air, and thereby render it more clear and healthful. Again, there are few acts of Divine justice upon a people, but are in the very execution of them attended with demonstrations of his goodness to others; he is a protector of his own, while he is a revenger on his enemies; when he rides upon his horses in anger against some, his chariots are “chariots of salvation” to others (Hab. 3:8). Terror makes way for salvation; the overthrow of Pharaoh and the strength of his nation, completed the deliverance of the Israelites. Had not the Egyptians met with their destruction, the Israelites had unavoidably met with their ruin, against all the promises God had made to them, and to the defamation of his former justice, in the former plagues upon their oppressors. The death of Herod was the security of Peter, and the rest of the maliced christians. The gracious deliverance of good men is often occasioned by some severe stroke upon some eminent persecutor; the destruction of the oppressor is the rescue of the innocent. Again, where is there a judgment but leaves more criminals behind than it sweeps away, that deserved to be involved in the same fate with the rest? More Egyptians were left behind to possess and enjoy the goodness of their fruitful land, than they were that were hurried into another world by the overflowing waves; is not this a mark of goodness as well as severity? Again, is it not a goodness in Him not to pour out judgments according to the greatness of his power? to go gradually to work with those whom he might in a moment blow to destruction with one breath of his mouth? Again, he sometimes exerciseth judgments upon some, to form a new generation for himself; he destroyed an old world, to raise a new one more righteous, as a man pulls down his old buildings to erect a sounder and more stately fabric. To sum up what hath been said in this particular; how could God be a friend to goodness, if he were not an enemy to evil? how could he shew his enmity to evil, without revenging the abuse and contempt of his goodness? God would rather have the repentance of a sinner than his punishment; but the sinner would rather expose himself to the

severest frowns of God, than pursue those methods wherein he hath settled the conveyances of his kindness; "You will not come to me that you might have life," saith Christ. How is eternity of punishment inconsistent with the goodness of God? nay, how can God be good without it? If wickedness always remain in the nature of man, is it not fit the rod should always remain on the back of men? Is it a want of goodness that keeps an incorrigible offender in chains in a bridewell? While sin remains, it is fit it should be punished; would not God else be an enemy to his own goodness, and shew favor to that which doth abuse it, and is contrary to it? He hath threatened eternal flames to sinners, that he might the more strongly excite them to a reformation of their ways, and a practice of his precepts. In those threatenings he hath manifested his goodness; and can it be bad in him to defend what his goodness hath commanded, and execute what his goodness hath threatened? His truth is also a part of his goodness; for it is nothing but his goodness performing that which it obliged him to do. That is the first thing; severe judgments in the world are no impeachments of his goodness.

Secondly, The afflictions God inflicts upon his servants, are no violations of his goodness. Sometimes God afflicts men for their temporal and eternal good; for the good of their grace, in order to the good of their glory; which is a more excellent good, than afflictions can be an evil. The heathens reflected upon Ulysses' hardship, as a mark of Jupiter's goodness and love to him, that his virtue might be more conspicuous. By strong persecutions brought upon the church, her lethargy is cured, her chaff purged, the glorious fruit of the gospel brought forth in the lives of her children; the number of her proselytes multiply, and the strength of her weak ones is increased, by the testimonies of courage and constancy which the stronger present to them in their sufferings. Do these good effects speak a want of goodness in God, who brings them into this condition? By those he cures his people of their corruptions, and promotes their glory, by giving them the honor of suffering for the truth, and raiseth their spirits to a divine pitch.

The epistles of Paul to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, wrote by him while he was in Nero's chains, seem to have a higher strain than some of those he wrote when he was at liberty. As for afflictions, they are marks of a greater measure of

fatherly goodness than he discovers to those that live in an uninterrupted prosperity, who are not dignified with that glorious title of sons, as those are that “he chasteneth” (Heb. 12:6, 7). Can any question the goodness of the father that corrects his child to prevent his vice and ruin, and breed him up to virtue and honor? It would be a cruelty in a father leaving his child without chastisement, to leave him to that misery an ill education would reduce him to: “God judges us that we might not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:32). Is it not a greater goodness to separate us from the world to happiness by his scourge, than to leave us to the condemnation of the world for our sins? Is it not a greater goodness to make us smart here, than to see us scorched hereafter? As he is our Shepherd, it is no part of his enmity or ill-will to us, to make us feel sometimes the weight of his shepherd’s crook, to reduce us from our struggling. The visiting our transgressions with rods, and our iniquities with stripes, is one of the articles of the covenant of grace, wherein the greatest lustre of his goodness appears (Psalm 89:33). The advantage and gain of our afflictions is a greater testimony of his goodness to us, than the pain can be of his unkindness; the smart is well recompensed by the accession of clearer graces. It is rather a high mark of goodness, than an argument for the want of it, that he treats us as his children, and will not suffer us to run into that destruction we are more ambitious of, than the happiness he hath prepared for us, and by afflictions he fits us for the partaking of, by “imparting his holiness,” together with the inflicting his rod (Heb. 12:10). That is the third thing, God is good.

IV. The fourth thing is the manifestation of this goodness in *Creation, Redemption, and Providence*.

First, In Creation. This is apparent from what hath been said before, that no other attribute could be the motive of his creating, bitt his goodness; his goodness was the cause that he made any thing, and his wisdom was the cause that he made every thing in order and harmony. He pronounced “every thing good,” *i. e.* such as became his goodness to bring forth into being, and rested in them more, as they were stamps of his goodness, than as they were marks of his power, or beams of his wisdom. And if all creatures were able to answer to this question, What that was which created them? the

answer would be, Almighty power, but employed by the motion of infinite goodness. All the varieties of creatures are so many apparitions of this goodness. Though God be one, yet he cannot appear as a God but in variety. As the greatness of power is not manifest but in variety of works, and an acute understanding not discovered but in variety of reasonings, so an infinite goodness is not so apparent as in variety of communications.

1. The creation proceeds from goodness. It is the goodness of God to extract such multitudes of things from the depths of nothing. Because God is good, things have a being; if he had not been good, nothing could have been good: nothing could leave imparted that which it possessed not; nothing but goodness could have communicated to things an excellency, which before they wanted. Being is much more excellent than nothing. By this goodness, therefore, the whole creation was brought out of the dark womb of nothing; this formed their natures, this beautified them with their several ornaments and perfections, whereby everything was enabled to act for the good of the common world. God did not create things because he was a living Being, but because he was a good Being. No creature brought forth anything in the world merely because it is, but because it is good, and by a communicated goodness fitted for such a production. If God had been the creating principle of things only as he was a living Being, or as he was an understanding Being, then all things should have partaken of life and understanding, because all things were to bear some characters of the Deity upon them. If by understanding, solely, God were the Creator of all things, all things should have borne the mark of the Deity upon them, and should have been more or less understanding; but he created things as he was good, and by goodness he renders all things more or less like himself: hence everything is accounted more noble, not in regard of its being, but in regard of the beneficialness of its nature. The being of things was not the end of God in creating, but the goodness of their being. God did not rest from his works because they were his works, *i. e.* because they had a being; but because they had a good being (Gen. 1.); because they were naturally useful to the universe: nothing was more pleasing to him, than to behold those shadows and copies of his own goodness in his works.

2. Creation was the first act of goodness without himself. When

he was alone from eternity, he contented himself with himself, abounding in his own blessedness, delighting in that abundance; he was incomprehensively rich in the possession of an unstained felicity. This creation was the first efflux of his goodness without himself for the work of creation cannot be called a work of mercy. Mercy supposeth a creature miserable, but that which hath no being is subject to no misery; for to be miserable supposeth a nature in being, and deprived of that good which belongs to the pleasure and felicity of nature; but since there was no being, there could be no misery. The creation, therefore, was not an act of mercy, but an act of sole goodness; and, therefore, it was the speech of an heathen, that when God first set upon the creation of the world, he transformed himself into love and goodness, *Εἰρ ἔρωτα μεταβλήθαι τὸν θεὸν μέλλοιτα δημιουργεῖν*. This led forth, and animated his power, the first moment it drew the universe out of the womb of nothing. And,

3. There is not one creature but hath a character of his goodness. The whole world is a map to represent, and a herald to proclaim this perfection. It is as difficult not to see something of it in every creature with the eye of our minds, as it is not to see the beams of the shining sun with those off our bodies. “He is good to all” (Psalm 145:9); he is, therefore, good in all; not a drop of the creation, but is a drop of his goodness. These are the colors worn upon the heads of every creature. As in every spark the light of the fire is manifested, so doth every grain of the creation wear the visible badges of this perfection. In all the lights, the Father of Lights hath made the riches of goodness apparent; no creature is silent in it; it is legible to all nations in every work of his hands. That, as it is said of Christ (Psalm 40:7), “In the volume of thy book it is written of me:” In the volume of the book of the Scripture it is written of me, and my goodness in redemption: so it may be said of God, In the volume of the book of the creature it is written of me, and my goodness in creation. Every creature is a page in this book, whose “line is gone through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Psalm 19:4); though, indeed, the less goodness in some is obscured by the more resplendent goodness he hath imparted unto others. What an admirable piece of goodness is it to communicate life to a fly! How should we stand gazing upon it, till we turn our eye inwards, and view our own frame, which is much

more ravishing!

But let us see the goodness of God in the creation of man,—*in the being and nature of man*. God hath, with a liberal hand, conferred upon every creature the best being it was capable of in that station and order, and conducing to that end and use in the world he intended it for. But when you have run over all the measures of goodness God hath poured forth upon other creatures, you will find a greater fulness of it in the nature of man, whom he hath placed in a more sublime condition, and endued with choicer prerogatives, than other creatures: he was made but little lower than the angels, and much more loftily crowned with glory and honor than other creatures (Psalm 8:5). Had it not been for Divine goodness, that excellent creature had lain wrapt up in the abyss of nothing; or if he had called it out of nothing, there might have been less of skill and less of goodness displayed in the forming of it, and a lesser kind of being imparted to it, than what he hath conferred.

1. How much of goodness is visible in his body! God drew out some part of the dust of the ground, and copied out this perfection, as well as that of his power, on that mean matter, by erecting it into the form of a man, quickening that earth by the inspiration of a “living soul” (Gen. 2:7): of this matter he composed an excellent body, in regard of the majesty of the face, erectness of its stature, and grace of every part. How neatly hath he wrought this “tabernacle of clay, this earthly house,” as the apostle calls it (2 Cor. 5:1)! a curious wrought piece of needle-work, a comely artifice (Psalm 139:10), an embroidered case for an harmonious lute. What variety of members, with a due proportion, without confusion, beautiful to sight, excellent for use, powerful for strength! It hath eyes to conduct its motion, to serve in matter for the food, and delight of the understanding; ears to let in the pleasure of sound, to convey intelligence of the affairs of the world, and the counsels of heaven, to a more noble mind. It hath a tongue to express and sound forth what the learned inhabitant in it thinks; and hands to act what the inward counsellor directs; and feet to support the fabric. It is tempered with a kindly heat, and an oily moisture for motion, and endued with conveyances for air, to qualify the fury of the heat, and nourishment to supply the decays of moisture. It is a cabinet fitted by Divine goodness for the enclosing a rich jewel; a palace made of

dust, to lodge in it the viceroy of the world; an instrument disposed for the operations of the nobler soul which he intended to unite to that refined matter. What is there in the situation of every part, in the proportion of every member, in the usefulness of every limb and string to the offices of the body, and service of the soul; what is there in the whole structure that doth not inform us of the goodness of God?

2. But what is this to that goodness which shines in the nature of the soul? Who can express the wonders of that comeliness that is wrapped up in this mask of clay? A soul endued with a clearness of understanding and freedom of will: faculties no sooner framed, but they were able to produce the operation they were intended for; a soul that excelled the whole world, that comprehended the whole creation; a soul that evidenced the extent of its skill in giving names to all that variety of creatures which had issued out of the hand of Divine Power (Gen. 2:19); a soul able to discover the nature of other creatures, and manage and conduct their motions. In the ruins of a palace we may see the curiosity displayed, and the cost expended in the building of it; in the ruins of this fallen structure, we still find it capable of a mighty knowledge; a reason able to regulate affairs, govern states, order more mighty and massy creatures, find out witty inventions; there is still an understanding to irradiate the other faculties, a mind to contemplate its own Creator, a judgment to discern the differences between good and evil, vice and virtue, which the goodness of God hath not granted to any lower creature. These excellent faculties, together with the power of self-reflection, and the swiftness of the mind in running over the things of the creation, are astonishing gleams of the vast goodness of that Divine Hand which ennobled this frame. To the other creatures of this world, God had given out some small mites from his treasury; but in the perfections of man, he hath opened the more secret parts of his exchequer, and liberally bestowed those doles, which he hath not expended upon the other creatures on earth.

3. Besides this, he did not only make man so noble a creature in his frame, but “he made him after his own image in holiness.” He imparted to him a spark of his own comeliness, in order to a communion with himself in happiness, had man stood his ground in his trial, and used those faculties well, which had been the gift of his

Bountiful Creator: he “made man after his image,” after his own image (Gen. 1:26, 27); that as a coin bears the image of the prince, so did the soul of man the “image of God:” not the image of angels, though the speech be in the plural number: “Let us make man.” It is not to a creature, but to a Creator; let “us,” that are his makers, make him in the image of his makers. God created man, angels did not create him; God created man in his “own” image, not, therefore, in the image of angels: the nature of God, and the nature of angels, are not the same. Where, in the whole Scripture, is man said to be made after the image of angels? God made man not in the image of angels, to be conformed to them as his prototype, but in the image of the blessed God, to be conformed to the Divine nature: that as he, was conformed to the image of his holiness, he might also partake of the image of his blessedness, which, without it, could not be attained: for as the felicity of God could not be clear without an unspotted holiness, so neither can there be a glorious happiness without purity in the creature; this God provided for in his creation of man, giving him such accomplishments in those two excellent pieces of soul and body, that nothing was wanting to him but his own will, to instate him in an invariable felicity. He was possessed with such a nature by the hand of Divine Goodness, such a loftiness of understanding, and purity of faculties, that he might have been for ever happy as well as the standing angels: and he was placed in such a condition, that moved the envy of fallen spirits; he had as much grace bestowed upon him, as was proportionable to that covenant God then made with him: the tenor of which was, that his life should continue so long as his obedience, and his happiness endure so long as his integrity: and as God, by creation, had given him an integrity of nature, so he had given him a power to persist in it, if he would. Herein is the goodness of God displayed, that he made man after his own image.

4. As to the life of man in this world, God, by an immense goodness, copied out in him the whole creation, and made him an abridgment of the higher and lower world,—a little world in a greater one. The link of the two worlds, of heaven and earth, as the spiritual and corporeal natures are united in him, the earth in the dust of his body, and the heavens in the crystal of his soul: he hath the upper springs of the life of angels in his reason, and the nether springs of the life of animals in his sense. God displayed those

virtues in man, which he had discovered in the rest of the lower creation; but, besides the communication which he had with earth in his nature, God gave him a participation with heaven in his spirit. A mere bodily being he hath given to the heavens, earth, elements; a vegetative life, or a life of growth, he hath vouchsafed to the plants of the ground: he hath stretched out his liberality more to animals and beasts, by giving them sense. All these hath his goodness linked in man, being, life, sense, with a richer dole than any of those creatures have received in a rational, intellectual life, whereby he approacheth to the nature of angels. This some of the Jews understood (Gen. 2:7): “God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul,” נְשִׁמַת חַיִּים, breath of lives, in the Hebrew; not one sort of life, but that variety of lives which he had imparted to other creatures: all the perfections scattered in other creatures do unitedly meet in man: so that Philo might well call him “every creature, the model of the whole creation:” his soul is heaven, and his body is earth. So that the immensity of his goodness to man, is as great as all that goodness you behold in sensitive and intelligible things.

5. All this was free goodness. God eternally possessed his own felicity in himself, and had no need of the existence of anything without himself for his satisfaction. Man, before his being, could have no good qualities to invite God to make him so excellent a fabric: for, being nothing, he was as unable to allure and merit, as to bring himself into being; nay, he created a multitude of men, who, he foresaw would behave themselves in as ungrateful a manner, as if they had not been his creatures, but had bestowed that rich variety upon themselves without the hand of a superior Benefactor. How great is this goodness, that hath made us models of the whole creation, tied together heaven and earth in our nature, when he might have ranked us among the lower creatures of the earth, made us mere bodies as the stones, or mere animals as the brutes, and denied us those capacious souls, whereby we might both know him and enjoy him! What could man have been more, unless he had been the original, which was impossible? He could not be greater than to be an image of the Deity, an epitome of the whole. Well may we cry out with the Psalmist (Psalm 8:1, 4), “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name,” the name of thy goodness, “in all the earth!” How, more particularly in man! “What is man that thou art mindful

of him?" What is a little God of earth and dust, that thou shouldst ennoble him with so rich a nature, and engrave upon him such characters of thy immense Being?

6. The goodness of God appears in the conveniences he provided for, and gave to man. As God gave him a being morally perfect in regard of righteousness, so he gave him a being naturally perfect in regard of delightful conveniences, which was the fruit of excellent goodness; since there was no quality in man, to invite God to provide him so rich a world, nor to bestow upon him so comely a being.

(1). The world was made for man. Since angels have not need of anything in this world, and are above the conveniences of earth and air, it will follow, that man, being the noblest creature on the earth, was the more immediate end of the visible creation. All inferior things are made to be subservient to those that have a more excellent prerogative of nature; and, therefore, all things for man, who exceeds all the rest in dignity: as man was made for the honor of God, so the world was made for the support and delight of man, in order to his performing the service due from him to God. The empire God settled man in as his lieutenant over the works of his lands, when he gave him possession of paradise, is a clear manifestation of it: God put all things under his feet, and gave him a deputed dominion over the rest of the creatures under himself, as the absolute sovereign (Psalm 8:6–8); "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen; yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea; yea, and whatsoever passeth over the paths of the sea." What less is witnessed to by the calamity all creatures were subjected to by the corruption of man's nature? Then was the earth cursed, and a black cloud flung upon the beauty of the creation, and the strength and vigor of it languisheth to this day under the curse of God (Gen.2:17, 18), and groans under that vanity the sin of man subjected it to (Rom. 8:20, 22). The treasons of man against God brought misery upon that which was framed for the use of man: as when the majesty of a prince is violated by the treason and rebellion of his subjects, all that which belongs to them, and was, before the free gift of the prince to them, is forfeit; their habitations, palaces, cattle, all that belongs to them bear the marks

of his sovereign fury: had not the delicacies of the earth been made for the use of man, they had not fallen under the indignation of God upon the sin of man. God crowned the earth with his goodness to gratify man; gave man a right to serve himself of the delightful creatures he had provided (Gen. 1:28–30); yea, and after man had forfeited all by sin, and God had washed again the creature in a deluge, he renews the creation, and delivers it again into the hand of man, binding all creatures to pay a respect to him, and recognise him as their Lord, either spontaneously, or by force; and commissions them all to fill the heart of man with “food and gladness” (Gen. 9:2, 3): and he loves all creatures as they conduce to the good of , and are serviceable to, his prime creature, which he set up for his own glory: and therefore, when he loves a person, he loves what belongs to him: he takes care of Jacob and his cattle: of penitent Nineveh and their cattle (Jonah 4:11): as when he sends judgments upon men he destroys their goods.

2. God richly furnished the world for man. He did not only erect a stately palace for his habitation, but provided all kind of furniture as a mark of his goodness, for the entertainment of his creature, man he arched over his habitation with a bespangled heaven, and floored it with a solid earth, and spread a curious wrought tapestry upon the ground where he was to tread, and seemed to sweep all the rubbish of the chaos to the two uninhabitable poles. When at the first creation of the matter the waters covered the earth, and rendered it uninhabitable for man, God drained them into the proper channels he had founded for them, and set a bound that they might not pass over, that they turn not again to “cover the earth” (Gen. 1:9.) They fled and hasted away to their proper stations (Psalm 104:7–9), as if they were ambitious to deny their own nature, and content themselves with an imprisonment for the convenient habitation of Him who was to be appointed Lord of the world. He hath set up standing lights in the heaven, to direct our motion, and to regulate the seasons: the sun was created, that man might see to “go forth to his labor”

(Psalm 104:22, 23): both sun and moon, though set in the heaven, were formed to “give light” on the earth (Gen. 1:1, 17). The air is his aviary, the sea and rivers his fish-ponds, the valleys his granary, the mountains his magazine; the first afford man creatures

for nourishment, the other metals for perfection: the animals were created for the support of the life of man; the herbs of the ground were provided for the maintenance of their lives; and gentle dews, and moistening showers, and, in some places, slimy floods appointed to render the earth fruitful, and capable to offer man and beast what was fit for their nourishment. He hath peopled every element with a variety of creatures both for necessity and delight; all furnished with useful qualities for the service of man. There is not the most despicable thing in the whole creation but it is endued with a nature to contribute something for our welfare: either as food to nourish us when we are healthful; or as medicine to cure us when we are distempered; or as a garment to clothe us when we are naked, and arm us against the cold of the season; or as a refreshment when we are weary; or as a delight when we are sad: all serve for necessity or ornament, either to spread our table, beautify our dwellings, furnish our closets, or store our wardrobes (Psalm 104:24): "The whole earth is full of his riches." Nothing but by the rich goodness of God is exquisitely accommodated, in the numerous brood of things, immediately or mediately for the use of man; all, in the issue, conspire together to render the world a delightful residence for man; and, therefore, all the living creatures were brought by God to attend upon man after his creation, to receive a mark of his dominion over them, by the "imposition of their names" (Gen. 2:19, 20). He did not only give variety of senses to man, but provided variety of delightful objects in the world for every sense; the beauties of light and colors for our eye, the harmony of sounds for our ear, the fragranciness of odors for our nostrils, and a delicious sweetness for our palates: some have qualities to pleasure; all, everything, a quality to pleasure, one or other: he doth not only present those things to our view, as rich men do in ostentation their goods, he makes us the enjoyers as well as the spectators, and gives us the use as well as the sight; and, therefore, he hath not only given us the sight, but the knowledge of them: he hath set up a sun in the heavens, to expose their outward beauty and conveniences to our sight; and the candle of the Lord is in us, to expose their inward qualities and conveniences to our knowledge, that we might serve ourselves of, and rejoice in, all this furniture wherewith he hath garnished the world, and have wherewithal to employ the inquisitiveness of our reason, as well as gratify the pleasures of our sense; and,

particularly, God provided for innocent man a delightful mansion-house, a place of more special beauty and curiosity, the garden of Eden, a delightful paradise, a model of the beauties and pleasures of another world, wherein he had placed whatsoever might contribute to the felicity of a rational and animal life, the life of a creature composed of mire and dust, of sense and reason (Gen.

2:9). Besides the other delicacies consigned, in that place, to the use of man, there was a tree of life provided to maintain his being, and nothing denied, in the whole compass of that territory, but one tree, that of the knowledge of good and evil, which was no mark of an ill-will in his Creator to him, but a reserve of God's absolute sovereignty, and a trial of man's voluntary obedience. What blur was it to the goodness of God, to reserve one tree for his own propriety, when he had given to man, in all the rest, such numerous marks of his rich bounty and goodness? What Israel, after man's fall, enjoyed sensibly, Nehemiah calls "great goodness" (Neh. 9:25). How inexpressible, then, was that goodness manifested to innocent man, when so small a part of it, indulged to the Israelites after the curse upon the ground, is called, as truly it merits, such great goodness! How can we pass through any part of this great city, and cast our eyes upon the well-furnished shops, stored with all kinds of commodities, without reflections upon this goodness of God starting up before our eyes in such varieties, and plainly telling us that he hath accommodated all things for our use, suited things, both to supply our need, content a reasonable curiosity, and delight us in our aims at, and passage to, our supreme end!

(3.) The goodness of God appears in the laws he hath given to man, the covenant he hath made with him. It had not been agreeable to the goodness of God to let a creature, governable by a law, be without a law to regulate him; his goodness then which had broke forth in the creation, had suffered an eclipse and obscurity in his government. As infinite goodness was the motive to create, so infinite goodness was the motive of his government. And this appears,

[1.] In the fitting the law to the nature of man. It was rather below than above his strength; he had an integrity in his nature to answer the righteousness of the precept. God created "man upright" (Eccles.

7:29); his nature was suited to the law, and the law to his nature; it was not above his understanding to know it, nor his will to embrace it, nor his passions to be regulated by it. The law and his nature were like to exact straight lines, touching one another in every part when joined together. God exacted no more by his law than what was written by nature in his heart: he had a knowledge by creation to observe the law of his creation, and he fell not for want of a righteousness in his nature: he was enabled for more than was commanded him, but wilfully indisposed to less than he was able to perform. The precepts were easy, not only becoming the authority of a sovereign to exact, but the goodness of a father to demand, and the ingenuity of a creature and a son to pay. "His commands are not grievous"(1 John 5:3); the observance of them had filled the spirit of man with an extraordinary contentment. It had been no less a pleasure and a delightful satisfaction to have kept the law in a created state, than it is to keep it in some measure in a renewed state. The renewed nature finds a suitableness in the law to kindle a "delight" (Psalm 1:2): it could not then have anywise shook the nature of an upright creature, nor have been a burden too heavy for his shoulders to bear. Though he had not a grace given him above nature, yet he had not a law given him that surmounted his nature: it did not exceed his created strength, and was suited to the dignity and nobility of a rational nature. It was a "just law" (Rom. 7:12), and, therefore, not above the nature of the subject that was bound to obey it. And had it been impossible to be observed, it had been unrighteous to be enacted: it had not been a matter of Divine praise, and that seven times a day; as it is, "Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments" (Psalm 119:164). The law was so righteous, that Adam had every whit as much reason to bless God in his innocence for the righteousness of it, as David had with the relics of enmity against it: his goodness shines so much in his law, as merits our praise of him, as he is a sovereign Lawgiver, as well as a gracious Benefactor, in the imparting to us a being.

[2.] In fitting it for the happiness of man. For the satisfaction of his soul, which finds a reward in the very act of keeping it, (Psalm 119:160), "Great peace in the loving it;" for the preservation of human society, wherein consists the external felicity of man. It had been inconsistent with the Divine goodness to enjoin man anything that should be oppressive and uncomfortable. Bitterness cannot

come from that which is altogether sweet: goodness would not have obliged the creature to anything, but what is not only free from damaging him, but wholly conducing to his welfare, and perfective of his nature. Infinite wisdom could not order anything but what was agreeable to infinite goodness. As his laws are the most rational as being the contrivance of infinite wisdom; so they are the best, as being the fruit of infinite goodness. His laws are not only the acts of his sovereign authority, but the effluxes of his loving-kindness, and the conductors of man to an enjoyment of a greater bounty he minds as well the promotion of his creatures' felicity, as the asserting his own authority; as good princes make laws for their subjects' benefit as well as their own honor. What was said of a more difficult and burdensome law long after man's fall, may much more be said of the easy law of nature in the state of man's innocence, that it was 'for our good' (Deut. 10:12, 13). He never pleaded with the Israelites for the observation of his commands upon the account of his authority, so much as upon the score of their benefit by them (Deut. 4:40; 12:28). And when his precepts were broken, he seems sometimes to be more grieved for men's impairing their own felicity by it, than for their violating his authority: "O, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river!" (Isa. 48:18). Goodness cannot prescribe a thing prejudicial: whatsoever it enjoins, is beneficial to the spiritual and eternal happiness of the rational creature: this was both the design of the law given, and the end of the law. Christ, in his answer to the young man's question, refers him to the moral law, which was the law of nature in Adam, as that whereby eternal life was to be gained: which evidenceth, that when the law was first given as the covenant of works, it was for the happiness of man; and the end of giving it was, that man might have eternal life by it: there would else be no strength or truth in that answer of Christ to that Ruler. And, therefore, Stephen calls the law given by Moses, which was the same with the law of nature in Adam, "the living oracles" (Acts 7:38). He enjoined men's services to them not simply for his own glory, but his glory in men's welfare: as if there were any being better than himself, his goodness and righteousness would guide him to love that better than himself; because it is good and righteous to love that best which is most amiable: so, if there were any that could do us more good, and shower down more happiness upon us than himself, he would be

content we should obey that as sovereign, and steer our course according to his laws: “If God be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21). If the observance of the precepts of Baal be more beneficial to you; if you can advance your nature by his service, and gain a more mighty crown of happiness than by mine, follow him with all my heart: I never intended to enjoin you anything to impair, but increase your happiness. The chief design of God in his law is the happiness of the subject; and obedience is intended by him as a means for the attaining of happiness, as well as preserving his own sovereignty: this is the reason why he wished that Israel had walked in his ways, “that their time might have endured forever” (Psalm 81:13, 15, 16). And by the same reason, this was his intendment in his law given to man, and his covenant made with man at the creation, that he might be fed with the finest part of his bounty, and be satisfied with honey out of the eternal Rock of Ages. To paraphrase his expression there:—The goodness of God appears further,

[3.] In engaging man to obedience by promises and threatenings. A threatening is only mentioned (Gen. 2:17), but a promise is implied: if eternal death were fixed for transgression, eternal life was thereby designed for obedience: and that it was so, the answer of Christ to the Ruler evidenceth, that the first intendment of the precept was the eternal life of the subject, ordered to obey it.

1st. God might have acted, in settling his law, only as a sovereign. Though he might have dealt with man upon the score of his absolute dominion over him as his creature, and signified his pleasure upon the right of his sovereignty, threatening only a penalty if man transgressed, without the promising a bountiful acknowledgment of his obedience by a reward as a benefactor: yet he would treat with man in gentle methods, and rule him in a track of sweetness as well as sovereignty: he would preserve the rights of his dominion in the authority of his commands, and honor the condescensions of his goodness in the allurements of a promise. He that might have solely demanded a compliance with his will, would kindly article with him, to oblige him to observe him out of love to himself as well as duty to his Creator; that he might have both the interest of avoiding the threatened evil to affright him, and the interest of attaining the promised good to allure him to obedience.

How doth he value the title of Benefactor above that of a Lord, when he so kindly solicits, as well as commands; and engageth to reward that obedience which he might have absolutely claimed as his due, by enforcing fears of the severest penalty! His sovereignty seems to stoop below itself for the elevation of his goodness; and he is pleased to have his kindness more taken notice of than his authority. Nothing imported more condescension than his bringing forth his law in the nature of a covenant, whereby he seems to humble himself, and veil his superiority to treat with man as his equal, that the very manner of his treatment might oblige him in the richest promises he made to draw him, and the startling threatenings he pronounced to link him to his obedience: and, therefore, is it observable, that when after the transgression of Adam God comes to deal with him, he doth not do it in that thundering rigor, which might have been expected from an enraged sovereign, but in a gentle examination (Gen. 3:11, 13): “Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?” To the woman, he said no more than, “What is this that thou hast done?” And in the Scripture we find, when he cites the Israelites before him for their sin, he expostulates with them not so much upon the absolute right he had to challenge their obedience, as upon the equity and reasonableness of his law which they had transgressed; that by the same argument of sweetness, wherewith he would attract them to their duty, he might shame them after their offence (Isa. 1:2; Ezek. 18:25).

2d. By the threatenings he manifests his goodness as well as by his promises. He promises that he might be a rewarder, and threatens that he might not be a punisher; the one is to elevate our hope, and the other to excite our fear, the two passions whereby the nature of man is managed in the world. He imprints upon man sentiments of a misery by sin, in his thundering commination, that he might engage him the more to embrace and be guided by the motives of sweetness in his gracious promises. The design of them was to preserve man in his due bounds, that God might not have occasion to blow upon him the flames of his justice; to suppress those irregular passions, which the nature of man (though created without any disorder) was capable of entertaining upon the appearance of suitable objects; and to keep the waves from swelling upon any turning wind, that so man, being modest in the use of the goodness God had allowed him, might still

be capable of fresh streams of Divine bounty, without ever falling under his righteous wrath for any transgression. What a prospect of goodness is in this proceeding, to disclose man's happiness to be as durable as his innocence; and set before a rational creature the extremest misery due to his crime, to affright him from neglecting his Creator, and making unworthy returns to his goodness!

What could be done more by goodness to suit that passion of fear which was implanted in the nature of man, than to assure him he should not degenerate from the righteousness of his nature, and violate the authority of his Creator, without falling from his own happiness, and sinking into the most deplorable calamity!

3d. The reward he promised manifests yet further his goodness to man. It was his goodness to intend a reward to man; no necessity could oblige God to reward man, had he continued obedient in his created state: for in all rewards which are truly merited, beside some kind of equality to be considered between the person doing service and the person rewarding, and also between the act performed and the reward bestowed, there must also be considered the condition of the person doing the service, that he is not obliged to do it as a duty, but is at his own choice whether to offer it or no. But man, being wholly dependent on God in his being and preservation, having nothing of his own, but what he had received from the hands of Divine bounty, his service was due by the strongest obligation to God (1 Cor. 4:7). But there was no natural engagement on God to return a reward to him; for man could return nothing of his own but that only which he had received from his Creator. It must be pure goodness that gives a gracious reward for a due debt, to receive his own from man, and return more than he had received. A Divine reward doth far surmount the value of a rational service. It was, therefore, a mighty goodness to stipulate with man, that upon his obedience he should enjoy an immortality in that nature. The article on man's part was obedience, which was necessarily just, and founded in the nature of man; he had been unjust, ungrateful, and violated all laws of righteousness, had he committed any act unworthy of one that had been so great a subject of Divine liberality. But the article on God's part, of giving a perpetual blessedness to innocent man, was not founded upon rules of strict justice and righteousness, for that would have argued God to be a debtor to

man; but that God cannot be to the work of his hands, that had received the materials of his being and acting from hire, as the vessel doth from the potter. But this was founded only on the goodness of the Divine nature, whereby he cannot but be kind to an innocent and holy creature. The nature of God inclined him to it by the rules of goodness, but the service of man could not claim it by the rules of justice without a stipulation; so that the covenant whereby God obliged himself to continue the happiness of man upon the continuance of his obedience, in the original of it, springs from pure goodness; though the performance of it, upon the fulfilling condition required in the creature, was founded upon the rules of righteousness and truth, after Divine goodness had brought it forth. God did create man for a reward and happiness; now God's implanting in the nature of man a desire after happiness, and some higher happiness than he had in creation invested him in, doth evidence that God did not create man only for his own service, but for his attaining a greater happiness. All rational creatures are possessed with a principle of seeking after good, the highest good, and God did not plant in man this principle in vain; it had not been goodness to put this principle in man, if he had designed never to bestow a happiness on man for his obedience: this had been repugnant to the goodness and wisdom of God; and the Scripture doth very emphatically express the felicity of man to be the design of God in the first forming him and moulding him a creature, as well as working him a new creature; "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God" (2 Cor. 5:1, 5): he framed this earthly tabernacle for a residence in an eternal habitation, and a better habitation than an earthly paradise. What we expect in the resurrection, that very same thing God did in creation intend us for; but since the corruption of our natures, we must undergo a dissolution of our bodies, and may have just reason of a despondency, since sin hath seemed to change the course of God's bounty, and brought us under a curse. He hath given us the earnest of his Spirit, as an assurance that he will perform that very self-same thing, the conferring that happiness upon renewed creatures for which he first formed man in creation, when he compacted his earthly tabernacle of the dust of the ground, and reared it up before him.

4th. It was a mighty goodness that God should give man an

eternal reward. That an eternity of reward was promised, is implied in the death that was threatened upon transgression: whatsoever you conceive the threatened death to be, either for nature, or duration upon transgression; of the same nature and duration you must suppose the life to be, which is implied upon his constancy in his integrity. As sin would render him an eternal object of God's hatred, so his obedience would render him an eternally amiable object to his Creator, as the standing angels are preserved and confirmed in an entire felicity and glory. Though the threatening be only expressed by God (Gen. 2:17), yet the other is implied, and might easily be concluded from it by Adam. And one reason why God only expressed the threatening, and not the promise, was, because man might collect some hopes and expectations of a perpetual happiness from that image of God which he beheld in himself, and from the large provision he had made for him in the world, and the commission given him to increase and multiply, and to rule as a lord over his other works; whereas he could not so easily have imagined himself capable of being exposed to such an extraordinary calamity as an eternal death, without some signification of it from God. It is easily concludable, that eternal life was supposed to be promised, to be conferred upon him if he stood, as well as eternal death to be inflicted on him if he rebelled. Now this eternal life was not due to his nature, but it was a pure beam, and gift of Divine goodness; for there was no proportion between man's service in his innocent estate, and a reward so great both for nature and duration: it was a higher reward than can be imagined either due to the nature of man, or upon any natural right claimable by his obedience. All that could be expected by him was but a natural happiness, not a supernatural: as there was no necessity upon the account of natural righteousness, so there was no necessity upon the account of the goodness of God to elevate the nature of man to a supernatural happiness, merely because he created him: for though it be necessary for God, when he would create, in regard of his wisdom, to create for some end, yet it was not necessary that end should be a supernatural end and happiness, since a natural blessedness had been sufficient for man. And though God, in creating angels and men intellectual and rational creatures, did make them necessary for himself and his own glory, yet it was not necessarily for him to order either angels or men to such a felicity as consists in a clear vision, and so high a

fruition, of himself: for all other things are made by him for himself, and yet not for the vision of himself; God might have created man only for a natural happiness, according to the perfection of his natural faculties, and had dealt bountifully with him, if he had never intended him a supernatural blessedness and an eternal recompense: but what a largeness of goodness is here, to design man, in his creation, for so rich a blessedness as an eternal life, with the fruition of himself! He hath not only given to man all things which are necessary, but designed for man that which the poor creature could not imagine: he garnished the earth for him, and garnished him for an eternal felicity, had he not, by slighting the goodness of God, stripped himself of the present, and forfeited his future blessedness.

Secondly, The manifestation of this goodness in *Redemption*. The whole gospel is nothing but one entire mirror of Divine goodness the whole of redemption is wrapped up in that one expression of the angels' song (Luke 2:14), "Good-will towards men." The angels sang but one song before, which is upon record, but the matter of it seems to be the wisdom of God chiefly in creation (Job 38:7; compare chap.

9:5, 6, 8, 9). The angels are there meant by the "morning stars;" the visible stars of heaven were not distinctly formed when the foundations of the earth were laid: and the title of the sons of God verifies it, since none but creatures of understanding are dignified in Scripture with that title. There they celebrate his wisdom in creation; here his goodness in redemption, which is the entire matter of the song.

i. Goodness was the spring of redemption. All and every part of it owes only to this perfection the appearance of it in the world. This only excited wisdom to bring forth from so great an evil as the apostacy of man, so great a good as the recovery of him. When man fell from his created goodness, God would evidence that he could not fall from his infinite goodness: that the greatest evil could not surmount the ability of his wisdom to contrive, nor the riches of his bounty to present us a remedy for it. Divine Goodness would not stand by a spectator, without being relievener of that misery man had plunged himself into; but by astonishing methods it would recover him to happiness, who had wrested himself out of his hands, to fling himself into the most deplorable calamity: and it was the greater,

since it surmounted those natural inclinations, and those strong provocations which he had to shower down the power of his wrath. What could be the source of such a procedure, but this excellency of Divine nature, since no violence could force him, nor was there any merit to persuade to such a restoration? This, under the name of his “love,” is rendered the sole cause of the redeeming death of the Son: it was to commend his love with the highest gloss, and in so singular a manner that had not its parallel in nature, nor in all his other works, and reaches in the brightness of it beyond the manifested extent of any other attribute (Rom. 5:8). It must be only a miraculous goodness that induced him to expose the life of his Son to those difficulties in the world, and death upon the cross, for the freedom of sordid rebels: his great end was to give such a demonstration of the liberality of his nature, as might be attractive to his creature, remove its shakings and tremblings, and encourage its approaches to him. It is in this he would not only manifest his love, but assume the name of “Love.” By this name the Holy Ghost calls him, in relation to this good will manifested in his Son (1 John 4:8, 9), “God is love.” In this is manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might “live through him.” He would take the name he never expressed himself in before. He was Jehovah, in regard of the truth of his promise; so he would be known of old: he is Goodness, in regard of the grandeur of his affection in the mission of his Son: and, therefore, he would be known by the name of Love now, in the days of the gospel.

ii. It was a pure goodness. He was under no obligation to pity our misery, and repair our ruins: he might have stood to the terms of the first covenant, and exacted our eternal death, since we had committed an infinite transgression: he was under no tie to put off the robes of a judge for the bowels of a father, and erect a mercyseat above his tribunal of justice. The reparation of man had no necessary connexion with his creation; it follows not, that because Goodness had extracted us from nothing by a mighty power, that it must lift us out of wilful misery by a mighty grace. Certainly that God who had no need of creating us, had far less need of redeeming us: for, since he created one world, he could have as easily destroyed it, and reared another. It had not been unbecoming the Divine Goodness or Wisdom, to have let man perpetually wallow in

that sink wherein he had plunged himself, since he was criminal by his own will, and, therefore, miserable by his own fault: nothing could necessitate this reparation. If Divine Goodness could not be obliged by the angelical dignity to repair that nature, he is further from any obligation by the meanness of man to repair human nature. There was less necessity to restore man than to restore the fallen angels. What could man do to oblige God to a reparation of him, since he could not render him a recompense for his goodness manifested in his creation? He must be much more impotent to render him a debtor for the redemption of him from misery. Could it be a salary for anything we had done? Alas! we are so far from meriting it, that by our daily demerits, we seem ambitious to put a stop to any further effusions of it: we could not have complained of him, if he had left us in the misery we had courted, since he was bound by no law to bestow upon us the recovery we wanted. When the apostle speaks of the gospel of “redemption,” he giveth it the title of the “gospel of the blessed God” (2 Tim. 1:11). It was the gospel of a God abounding in his own blessedness, which received no addition by man’s redemption; if he had been blessed by it, it had been a goodness to himself, as well as to the creature: it was not an indigent goodness needing the receiving anything from us; but it was a pure goodness, streaming out of itself, without bringing anything into itself for the perfection of it: there was no goodness in us to be the motive of his love, but his goodness was the fountain of our benefit.

iii. It was a distinct goodness of the whole Trinity. In the creation of man we find a general consultation (Gen. 1:26), without those distinct labors and offices of each person, and without those raised expressions and marks of joy and triumph as at man’s restoration. In this there are distinct functions; the grace of the Father, the merit of the Son, and the efficacy of the Spirit. The Father makes the promise of redemption, the Son seals it with his blood, and the Spirit applies it. The Father adopts us to be his children, the Son redeems us to be his members, and the Spirit renews us to be his temples. In this the Father testifies himself well-pleased in a voice; the Son proclaims his own delight to do the will of God, and the Spirit hastens, with the wing of a dove, to fit him for his work, and afterwards, in his apparition in the likeness of fiery tongues, manifests his zeal for the propagation of the redeeming

gospel.

iv. The effects of it proclaim His great goodness. It is by this we are delivered from the corruption of our nature, the ruin of our happiness, the deformity of our sins, and the punishment of our transgressions; he frees us from the ignorance wherewith we were darkened and from the slavery wherein we were fettered. When he came to make Adam's process after his crime, instead of pronouncing the sentence of death he had merited, he utters a promise that man could not have expected; his kindness swells above his provoked justice, and, while he chaseth him out of paradise, he gives him hopes of regaining the same, or a better habitation; and is, in the whole, more ready to prevent him with the blessings of his goodness, than charge him with the horror of his crimes (Gen. 3:15). It is a goodness that pardons us more transgressions than there are moments in our lives, and overlooks as many follies as there are thoughts in our heart: he doth not only relieve our wants, but restores us to our dignity. It is a greater testimony of goodness to instate a person in the highest honors, than barely to supply his resent necessity: it is an admirable pity whereby he was incline to redeem us, and an incomparable affection whereby he was resolved to exalt us. What can be desired more of him than his goodness hath granted? He hath sought us out when we were lost, and ransomed us when we were captives; he hath pardoned us when we were condemned, and raised us when we were dead. In creation he reared us from nothing, in redemption he delivers our understanding from ignorance and vanity, and our wills from impotence and obstinacy, and our whole man from a death worse than that nothing he drew us from by creation.

v. Hence we may consider the height of this goodness in redemption to exceed that in creation. He gave man a being in creation, but did not draw him from inexpressible misery by that act. His liberality in the gospel doth infinitely surpass what we admire in the works of nature; his goodness in the latter is more astonishing to our belief, than his goodness in creation is visible to our eye. There is more of his bounty expressed in that one verse, "So God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16), than there is in the whole volume of the world: it is an incomprehensible *so*; a *so* that all the angels in heaven cannot analyse; and few comment upon,

or understand, the dimensions of this *so*. In creation he formed an innocent creature of the dust of the ground; in redemption he restores a rebellious creature by the blood of his Son: it is greater than that goodness manifested in creation.

1st. In regard of the difficulty in effecting it. In creation, mere nothing was vanquished to bring us into being; in redemption, sullen enmity was conquered for the enjoyment of our restoration; in creation, he subdued a nullity to make us creatures; in redemption, his goodness overcomes his omnipotent justice to restore us to felicity. A word from the mouth of Goodness inspired the dust of men's bodies with a living soul; but the blood of his Son must be shed, and the laws of natural affection seems to be overturned, to lay the foundation of our renewed happiness. In the first, heaven did but speak, and the earth was formed; in the second, heaven itself must sink to earth, and be clothed with dusty earth, to reduce man's dust to its original state.

2d. This goodness is greater than that manifested in creation, in regard of its cost. This was a more expensive goodness than what was laid out in creation. "The redemption of one soul is precious" (Psalm 49:8), much more costly than the whole fabric of the world, or as many worlds as the understandings of angels in their utmost extent can conceive to be created. For the effecting of this, God parts with his dearest treasure, and his Son eclipses his choicest glory. For this, God must be made man, Eternity must suffer death, the Lord of angels must weep in a cradle, and the Creator of the world must hang like a slave; he must be in a manger in Bethlehem, and die upon a cross on Calvary; unspotted righteousness must be made sin, and unblemished blessedness be made a curse. He was at no other expense than the breath of his mouth to form man; the fruits of the earth could have maintained innocent man without any other cost; but his broken nature cannot be healed without the invaluable medicine of the blood of God. View Christ in the womb and in the manger, in his weary steps and hungry bowels, in his prostrations in the garden, and in his clodded drops of bloody sweat; view his head pierced with a crown of thorns, and his face besmeared with the soldiers' slabber; view him in his march to Calvary, and his elevation on the painful cross, with his head hanged down, and his side streaming blood; view him pelted with the scoffs of the

governors, and the derisions of the rabble; and see, in all this, what cost Goodness was at for man's redemption! In creation, his power made the sun to shine upon us, and, in redemption, his bowels sent a Son to die for us.

3d. This goodness of God in redemption is greater than that manifested in creation, in regard of man's desert of the contrary. In the creation, as there was nothing without him to allure him to the expressions of his bounty, so there was nothing that did damp the inclinations of his goodness: the nothing from whence the world was drawn, could never merit, nor demerit a being, because it was nothing; as there was nothing to engage him, so there was nothing to disoblige him; as his favor could not be merited, so neither could his anger be deserved. But in this he finds ingratitude against the former marks of his goodness, and rebellion against the sweetness of his sovereignty,—crimes unworthy of the dews of goodness, and worthy of the sharpest strokes of vengeance; and therefore the Scripture advanceth the honor of it above the title of mere goodness, to that of "grace" (Rom. 1:2; Titus 2:11); because men were not only unworthy of a blessing, but worthy of a curse. An innocent nothing more deserves creation, than a culpable creature deserves an exemption from destruction. When man fell, and gave occasion to God to repent of his created work, his ravishing goodness surmounted the occasions he had of repenting, and the provocations he had to the destruction of his frame.

4th. It was a greater goodness than was expressed towards the angels.

1. A greater goodness than was expressed towards the standing angels. The Son of God did no more expose his life for the confirmation of those that stood, than for the restoration of those that fell; the death of Christ was not for the holy angels, but for simple man; they needed the grace of God to confirm them, but not the death of Christ to restore or preserve them; they had a beloved holiness to be established by the powerful grace of God, but not any abominable sin to be blotted out by the blood of God; they had no debt to pay but that of obedience; but we had both a debt of obedience to the precepts, and a debt of suffering to the penalty, after the fall. Whether the holy angels were confirmed by Christ, or no, is a question: some think they were, from Col. 1:20, where

“things in heaven” are said to be “reconciled;” but some think, that place signifies no more than the reconciliation of things in heaven, if meant of the angels, to things on earth, with whom they were at enmity in the cause of their Sovereign; or the reconciliation of things in heaven to God, is meant the glorified saints, who were once in a state of sin, and whom the death of Christ upon the cross reached, though dead long before. But if angels were confirmed by Christ, it was by him not as a slain sacrifice, but as a sovereign Head of the whole creation, appointed by God to gather all things into one; which some think to be the intendment of Eph. 1:10, where all things, as well those in heaven, as those in earth, are said to be “gathered together in one, in Christ.” Where is a syllable in Scripture of his being crucified for angels, but only for sinners! Not for the confirmation of the one, but the reconciliation of the other; so that the goodness whereby God continued those blessed spirits in heaven, through the effusions of his grace, is a small thing to the restoring us to our forfeited happiness, through the streams of Divine blood. The preserving a man in life is a little thing, and a smaller benefit than the raising a man from death. The rescuing a man from an ignominious punishment, lays a greater obligation than barely to prevent him from committing a capital crime. The preserving a man standing upon the top of a steep hill, is more easy than to bring a crippled and phthisical man, from the bottom to the top. The continuance God gave to the angels, is not so signal a mark of his goodness as the deliverance he gave to us; since they were not sunk into sin, nor by any crime fallen into misery.

2. His goodness in redemption is greater than any goodness expressed to the fallen angels. It is the wonder of his goodness to us, that he was mindful of fallen man, and careless of fallen angels; that he should visit man, wallowing in death and blood, with the dayspring from on high, and never turn the Egyptian darkness of devils into cheerful day; when they sinned, Divine thunder dashed them into hell; when man sinned, Divine blood wafts the fallen creature from his misery: the angels wallow in their own blood forever, while Christ is made partaker of our blood, and wallows in his blood, that we might not forever corrupt in ours; they tumbled down from heaven, and Divine goodness would not vouchsafe to catch them; man tumbles down, and Divine goodness holds out a hand drenched in the blood of Him, that was from the foundations of

the world, to lift us up (Heb. 2:16). He spared not those dignified spirits, when they revolted; and spared not punishing his Son for dusty man, when he offended; when he might as well forever have let man be in the chains wherein he had entangled himself, as them. We were as fit objects of justice as they, and they as fit objects of goodness as we; they were not more wretched by their fall than we; and the poverty of our nature rendered us more unable to recover ourselves, than the dignity of theirs did them; they were his Reuben, his first-born; they were his might, and the beginning of his strength; yet those elder sons he neglected, to prefer the younger; they were the prime and golden pieces of creation, not laden with gross matter, yet they lie under the ruins of their fall, while man, lead in comparison of them, is refined for another world. They seemed to be fitter objects of Divine goodness, in regard of the eminency of their nature above the human; one angel excelled in endowments of mind and spirit, vastness of understanding, greatness of power, all the sons of men; they were more capable to praise him, more capable to serve him; and because of the acuteness of their comprehension, more able to have a due estimate of such a redemption, had it been afforded them; yet that goodness which had created them so comely, would not lay itself out in restoring the beauty they had defaced. The promise was of bruising the serpent's head for us, not of lifting up the serpent's head with us; their nature was not assumed, nor any command given them to believe or repent; not one devil spared, not one apostate spirit recovered, not one of those eminent creatures restored; every one of them hath only a prospect of misery, without any glimpse of recovery; they were ruined under one sin, and we repaired under many. All His redeeming goodness was laid out upon man (Psalm 144:3); "What is man that thou takest knowledge of him; and the Son of man, that thou makest account of him?" Making account of him above angels; as they fell without any tempting them, so God would leave them to rise, without any assisting them. I know the schools trouble themselves to find out the reasons of this peculiarity of grace to man, and not to them; because the whole human nature fell, but only a part of the angelical; the one sinned by a seduction, and the other by a sullenness, without any tempter; every angel sinned by his own proper will, whereas Adam's posterity sinned by the will of the first man, the common root of all. God would deprive the devil of any glory in the satisfaction of his

envious desire to hinder man from attainment and possession of that happiness which himself had lost. The weakness of man below the angelical nature might excite the Divine mercy; and since all the things of the lower world were created for man, God would not lose the honor of his works, by losing the immediate end for which he framed them. And finally, because in the restoration of angels, there would have been only a restoration of one nature, that was not comprehensive of the nature of inferior things; but after all such conjectures, man must sit down, and acknowledge Divine goodness to be the only spring, without any other motive. Since Infinite Wisdom could have contrived a way for redemption for fallen angels, as well as for fallen man, and restored both the one and the other; why might not Christ have assumed their nature as well as ours, into the unity of the Divine person, and suffered the wrath of God in their nature for them, as well as in his human soul for us? It is as conceivable that two natures might have been assumed by the Son of God, as well as three souls be in man distinct, as some think there are.

3. To enhance this goodness yet higher; it was a greater goodness to us, than was for a time manifested to Christ himself. To demonstrate his goodness to man, in preventing his eternal ruin, he would for a while withhold his goodness from his Son, by exposing his life as the price of our ransom; not only subjecting him to the derisions of enemies, desertions of friends, and malice of devils, but to the inexpressible bitterness of his own wrath in his soul, as made an offering for sin. The particle so (John 3:16), seems to intimate this supremacy of goodness; He “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” He so loved the world, that he seemed for a time not to love his Son in comparison of it, or equal with it. The person to whom a gift is given is, in that regard, accounted more valuable than the gift or present made to him: thus God valued our redemption above the worldly happiness of the Redeemer, and sentenceth him to an humiliation on earth, in order to our exaltation in heaven; he was desirous to hear him groaning, and see him bleeding, that we might not groan under his frowns, and bleed under his wrath; he spared not him, that he might spare us; refused not to strike him, that he might be well pleased with us; drenched his sword in the blood of his Son, that it might not forever be wet with ours, but that his goodness might forever triumph in our salvation;

he was willing to have his Son made man, and die, rather than man should perish, who had delighted to ruin himself; he seemed to degrade him for a time from what he was. But since he could not be united to any but to an intellectual creature, he could not be united to any viler and more sordid creature than the earthly nature of man: and when this Son, in our nature, prayed that the cup might pass from him, Goodness would not suffer it, to show how it valued the manifestation of itself, in the salvation of man, above the preservation of the life of so dear a person.

In particular, wherein this goodness appears:—

1st. The first resolution to redeem, and the means appointed for redemption, could have no other inducement but Divine goodness. We cannot too highly value the merit of Christ; but we must not so much extend the merit of Christ, as to draw a value to eclipse the goodness of God; though we owe our redemption and the fruits of it to the death of Christ, yet we owe not the first resolutions of redemption, and assumption of our nature, the means of redemption, to the merit of Christ. Divine goodness only, without the association of any merit, not only of man, but of the Redeemer himself, beat the first purpose of our recovery; he was singled out, and predestinated to be our Redeemer, before he took our nature to merit our redemption. “God sent his Son,” is a frequent expression in the Gospel of St. John (John 3:34; 5:24; 17:3). To what end did God send Christ, but to redeem? The purpose of redemption, therefore, preceded the pitching upon Christ as the means and procuring cause of it, *i. e.* of our actual redemption, but not of the redeeming purpose; the end is always in intention before the means. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son;” the love of God to the world was first in intention, and the order of nature, before the will of giving his Son to the world. His intention of saving was before the mission of a Saviour; so that this affection rose, not from the merit of Christ, but the merit of Christ was directed by this affection. It was the effect of it, not the cause. Nor was the union of our nature with his merited by him; all his meritorious acts were performed in our nature; the nature, therefore, wherein he performed it, was not merited; that grace which was not, could not merit what it was; he could not merit that humanity, which must be assumed before he could merit anything for us, because all

merit for us must be offered in the nature which had offended. It is true “Christ gave himself,” but by the order of Divine goodness; he that begat him, pitched upon him, and called him to this great work (Heb. 5:5); he is therefore called “the Lamb of God,” as being set apart by God to be a propitiating and appeasing sacrifice. He is the “Wisdom of God,” since from the Father he reveals the counsel and order of redemption. In this regard he calls God “his God” in the prophet (Isa. 49:4), and in the evangelist (John 20:17); though he was big with affection for the accomplishment, yet he came not to do his “own will,” but the will of Divine goodness; his own will it was, too, but not principally, as being the first wheel in motion, but subordinate to the eternal will of Divine bounty. It was by the will of God that he came, and by his will he drank the dreggy cup of bitterness. Divine justice laid “upon him the iniquity of us all,” but Divine goodness intended it for our rescue; Divine goodness singled him out, and set him apart; Divine goodness invited him to it; Divine goodness commanded him to effect it, and put a law into his heart, to bias him in the performing of it; Divine goodness sent him, and Divine goodness moved justice to bruise him; and, after his sacrifice, Divine goodness accepted him, and caressed him for it. So earnest was it for our redemption, as to give out special and irreversible orders: death was commanded to be endured by him for us, and life commanded to be imparted by him to us (John 10:16, 18). If God had not been the mover, but had received the proposal from another, he might have heard it, but was not bound to grant it; his sovereign authority, was not under any obligation to receive another’s sponson for the miserable criminal. As Christ is the head of man, so “God is the head of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:3); he did nothing but by his directions, as he was not a Mediator, but by the constitution of Divine goodness. As a “liberal man deviseth liberal things” (Isa. 2:8), so did a bountiful God devise a bountiful act, wherein his kindness and love as a Saviour appeared: he was possessed with the resolutions to manifest his goodness in Christ, “in the beginning of his way” (Prov. 8:22, 23), before he descended to the act of creation. This intention of goodness preceded his making that creature man, who, he foresaw, would fall, and, by his fall, disjoint and entangle the whole frame of the world, without such a provision.

2d. In God’s giving Christ to be our Redeemer, he gave the

highest gift that it was possible for Divine goodness to bestow. As there is not a greater God than himself to be conceived, so there is not a greater gift for this great God to present to his creatures: never did God go farther, in any of his excellent perfections, than this. It is such a dole that cannot be transcended with a choicer; he is, as it were, come to the last mite of his treasure; and though he could create millions of worlds for us, he cannot give a greater Son to us. He could abound in the expressions of his power, in new creations of worlds, which have not yet been seen, and in the lustre of his wisdom in more stately structures; but if he should frame as many worlds as there are mites of dust and matter in this, and make every one of them as bright and glorious as the sun, though his power and wisdom would be more signalized, yet his goodness could not, since he hath not a choicer gift to bless those brighter worlds withal, than he hath conferred upon this: nor can immense goodness contrive a richer means to conduct those worlds to happiness, than he hath both invented for this world, and presented it with. It cannot be imagined, that it can extend itself farther than to give a gift equal with himself; a gift as dear to him as himself. His wisdom, had it studied millions of eternities (excuse the expression, since eternity admits of no millions, it being an interminable duration), it could have found out no more to give; this goodness could have bestowed no more, and our necessity could not have required a greater offering for our relief. When God intended, in redemption, the manifestation of his highest goodness, it could not be without the donation of the choicest gift; as, when he would insure our comfort, he swears “by himself,” because he cannot swear “by a greater” (Heb. 6:13): so, when we would insure our happiness, he gives us his Son, because he cannot give a greater, being equal with himself. Had the Father given himself in person, he had given one first in order, but not greater in essence and glorious perfections: it could have been no more than the life of God, and should then have been laid down for us; and so it was now, since the human nature did not subsist but in his Divine person.

1. It is a greater gift than worlds, or all things purchased by him. What was this gift but “the image of his person, and the brightness of his glory” (Heb. 1:3)? What was this gift but one as rich as eternal blessedness could make him? What was this gift, but one that possessed the fulness of earth, and the more immense riches

of heaven? It is a more valuable present, than if he presented us with thousands of worlds of angels and inferior creatures, because his person is incomparably greater, not only than all conceivable, but inconceivable, creations; we are more obliged to him for it, than if he had made us angels of the highest rank in heaven, because it is a gift of more value than the whole angelical nature, because he is an infinite person, and therefore infinitely transcends whatsoever is finite, though of the highest dignity. The wounds of an Almighty God for us are a greater testimony of goodness, than if we had all the other riches of heaven and earth. This perfection had not appeared in such an astonishing grandeur, had it pardoned us without so rich a satisfaction; that had been pardon to our sin, not a God of our nature. "God so loved the world" that he pardoned it, had not sounded so great and so good, as God so love the world, that he "gave his only-begotten Son." *Est aliquid in Christo formosius Servatore.* There is something in Christ more excellent and comely than the office of a Saviour; the greatness of his person is more excellent, than the salvation procured by his death: it was a greater gift than was bestowed upon innocent Adam, or the holy angels. In the creation, his goodness gave us creatures for our use: in our redemption, his goodness gives us what was dearest to him for our service, our Sovereign in office to benefit us, as well as in a royalty to govern us.

2. It was a greater gift, because it was his own Son, not an angel. It had been a mighty goodness to have given one of the lofty seraphims; a greater goodness to have given the whole corporation of those glorious spirits for us, those children of the Most High: but he gave that Son, whom he commands "all the angels to worship" (Heb. 1:6), and all men to adore, and pay the "lowest homage to" (Psalm 2:12); that Son that is to be honored by us, as we "honor the Father" (John 5:23); that Son which was his "delight" (Prov. 8:30); his delights in the Hebrew, wherein all the delights of the Father were gathered in one, as well as of the whole creation; and not simply a Son, but an only-begotten Son, upon which Christ lays the stress with an emphasis (1 John 3:16). He had but one Son in heaven or earth, one Son from an unviewable eternity, and that one Son he gave for a degenerate world; this son he consecrated for "evermore a Priest" (Heb. 7:28). "The word of the oath makes the Son;" the peculiarity of his Sonship heightens the goodness of the Donor. It

was no meaner a person that he gave to empty himself of his glory, to fulfil an obedience for us, that we might be rendered happy partakers of the Divine nature. Those that know the natural affection of a father to a son, must judge the affection of God the Father to the Son infinitely greater, than the affection of an earthly father to the son of his bowels. It must be an unparalleled goodness, to give up a Son that he loved with so ardent an affection, for the redemption of rebels: abandon a glorious Son to a dishonorable death, for the security of those that had violated the laws of righteousness, and endeavored to pull the sovereign crown from his head. Besides, being an only Son, all those affections centered in him, which in parents would have been divided among a multitude of children: so, then, as it was a testimony of the highest faith and obedience in “Abraham to offer up his only-begotten son to God” (Heb. 11:17); so it was the triumph of Divine goodness, to give so great, so dear a person, for so little a thing as man; and for such a piece of nothing and vanity, as a sinful world.

3. And this Son given to rescue us by his death. It was a gift to us; for our sakes he descended from his throne, and dwelt on earth; for our sakes he was “made flesh,” and infirm flesh; for our sakes he was “made a curse,” and scorched in the furnace of his Father’s wrath; for our sakes he went naked, armed only with his own strength, into the lists of that combat with the devils, that led us captive. Had he given him to be a leader for the conquest of some earthly enemies, it had been a great goodness to display his banners, and bring us under his conduct; but he sent him to lay down his life in the bitterest and most inglorious manner, and exposed him to a cursed death for our redemption from that dreadful curse, which would have broken us to pieces, and irreparably have crushed us. He gave him to us, to suffer for us as a man, and redeem us as a God; to be a sacrifice to expiate our sin by translating the punishment upon himself, which was merited by us. Thus was he made low to exalt us, and debased to advance us, “made poor to enrich us” (2 Cor. 8:9); and eclipsed to brighten our sullied natures, and wounded, that he might be a physician for our languishments. He was ordered to taste the bitter cup of death, that we might drink of the rivers of immortal life and pleasures: to submit to the frailties of the human nature, that we might possess the glories of the divine: he was ordered to be a sufferer, that we might be no longer captives; and to

pass through the fire of Divine wrath, that he might purge our nature from the dross it had contracted. Thus was the righteous given for sin, the innocent for criminals, the glory of heaven for the dregs of earth, and the immense riches of a Deity expended to restock man.

4. And a Son that was exalted for what he had done for us by the order of Divine goodness. The exaltation of Christ was no less a signal mark of his miraculous goodness to us, than of his affection to him: since he was obedient by Divine goodness to die for us, his advancement was for his obedience to those orders. The name given to him “above every name” (Phil. 2:8, 9), was a repeated triumph of this perfection; since his passion was not for himself, he was wholly innocent, but for us who were criminal.

His advancement was not only for himself as Redeemer, but for us as redeemed: Divine goodness centered in him, both in his cross and in his crown; for it was for the “purging our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3): and the whole blessed society of principalities and powers in heaven admire this goodness of God, and ascribe to him “honor, glory, and power” for advancing the “Lamb slain” (Rev. 5:11–13). Divine goodness did not only give him to us, but gave him power, riches, strength, and honor, for manifesting this goodness to us, and opening the passages for its fuller conveyances to the sons of men. Had not God had thoughts of a perpetual goodness, he would not have settled him so near him, to manage our cause, and testified so much affection to him on our behalf. This goodness gave him to be debased for us, and ordered him to be enthroned for us: as it gave him to us bleeding, so it would give him to us triumphing; that as we have a share by grace in the merits of his humiliation, We might partake also of the glories of his coronation; that, from first to last, we may behold nothing but the triumphs of Divine goodness to fallen man.

5. In bestowing this gift on us, Divine goodness gives whole God to us. Whatsoever is great and excellent in the Godhead, the Father gives us, by giving us his Son: the Creator gives himself to us in his Son Christ. In giving creatures to us, he gives the riches of earth; in giving himself to us, he gives the riches of heaven, which surmount all understanding: it is in this gift he becomes our God, and passeth over the title of all that he is for our use and benefit, that every attribute in the Divine nature may be claimed by us; not to be

imparted to us whereby we may be deified, but employed for our welfare, whereby we may be blessed. He gave himself in creation to us in the image of his holiness; but, in redemption, he gave himself in the image of his person: he would not only communicate the goodness without him, but bestow upon us the infinite goodness of his own nature; that that which was his own end and happiness might be our end and happiness, *viz.* himself. By giving his Son, he hath given himself; and in both gifts he hath given all things to us. The Creator of all things is eminently all things: "He hath given all things into the hands of his Son" (John 3:35); and, by consequence, given all things into the hands of his redeemed creatures, by giving them Him to whom he gave all things; whatsoever we were invested in by creation, whatsoever we were deprived of by corruption, and more, he hath deposited in safe hands for our enjoyment: and what can Divine goodness do more for us? What further can it give unto us, than what it hath given, and in that gift designed for us?

3d. This goodness is enhanced by considering the state of man in the first transgression, and since.

1. Man's first transgression. If we should rip up every vein of that first sin, should we find any want of wickedness to excite a just indignation? What was there but ingratitude to Divine bounty, and rebellion against Divine sovereignty? The royalty of God was attempted; the supremacy of Divine knowledge above man's own knowledge envied; the riches of goodness, whereby he lived and breathed, slighted. There is a discontent with God upon an unreasonable sentiment, that God had denied a knowledge to him which was his right and due, when there should have been an humble acknowledgment of that unmerited goodness, which had not only given him a being above other creatures, but placed him the governor and lord of those that were inferior to him. What alienation of his understanding was there from knowing God, and of his will from loving him! A debauch of all his faculties; a spiritual adultery, in preferring, not only one of God's creatures, but one of his desperate enemies, before him; thinking him a wiser counsellor than Infinite Wisdom, and imagining him possessed with kinder affections to him than that God who had newly created him. Thus he joins in league with hell against heaven, with a fallen spirit against his bountiful Benefactor, and enters into society with rebels that just

before commenced a war against his and their common Sovereign: he did not only falter in, but cast off, the obedience due to his Creator; endeavored to purloin his glory, and actually murdered all those that were virtually in his loins. "Sin entered into the world" by him, "and death by sin, and passed upon all men" (Rom. 5:12), taking them off from their subjection to God, to be slaves to the damned spirits, and heirs of their misery: and, after all this, he adds a foul imputation on God, taxing him as the author of his sin, and thereby stains the beauty of his holiness. But, notwithstanding all this, God stops not up the flood-gates of his goodness, nor doth he entertain fiery resolutions against man, but brings forth a healing promise; and sends not an angel upon commission to reveal it to him, but preaches it himself to this forlorn and rebellious creature (Gen. 3:15).

2. Could there be anything in this fallen creature to allure God to the expression of his goodness? Was there any good action in all his carriage that could plead for a re-admission of him to his former state? Was there one good quality left, that could be an orator to persuade Divine goodness to such a gracious procedure? Was there any moral goodness in man, after this debauch, that might be an object of Divine love? What was there in him, that was not rather a provocation than an allurement? Could you expect that any perfection in God should find a motive in this ungrateful apostate to open a mouth for him, and be an advocate to support him, and bring him off from a just tribunal? or, after Divine goodness had begun to pity and plead for man, is it not wonderful that it should not discontinue the plea, after it found man's excuse to be as black as his crime (Gen. 3:12), and his carriage, upon his examination, to be as disobliging as his first revolt? It might well be expected, that all the perfections in the Divine nature would have entered into an association eternally to treat this rebel according to his deserts. What attractives were there in a silly worm, much less in such complete wickedness, inexcusable enmity, infamous rebellion, to design a Redeemer for him, and such a person as the Son of God to a fleshy body, an eclipse of glory, and an ignominious cross? The meanness of man was further from alluring God to it, than the dignity of angels.

3. Was there not a world of demerit in man, to animate grace as

well as wrath against him? We were so far from deserving the opening any streams of goodness, that we had merited floods of devouring wrath. What were all men but enemies to God in a high manner? Every offence was infinite, as being committed against a being of infinite dignity; it was a stroke at the very being of God, a resistance of all his attributes; it would degrade him from the height and perfection of his nature; it would not, by its good will, suffer God to be God. If he that hates his brother is a murderer of his brother (1 John 3:15), he that hates his Creator is a murderer of the Deity, and every "carnal mind is enmity to God" (Rom. 8:7): every sin envies him his authority, by breaking his precept; and envies him his goodness, by defacing the marks of it: every sin comprehends in it more than men or angels can conceive: that God who only hath the clear apprehensions of his own dignity, hath the sole clear apprehensions of sin's malignity. All men were thus by nature: those that sinned before the coming of the Redeemer had been in a state of sin; those that were to come after him would be in a state of sin by their birth, and be criminals as soon as ever they were creatures. All men, as well the glorified, as those in the flesh at the coming of the Redeemer, and those that were to be born after, were considered in a state of sin by God, when he bruised the Redeemer for them; all were filthy and unworthy of the eye of God; all had employed the faculties of their souls, and the members of their bodies, which they enjoyed by his goodness, against the interest of his glory. Every rational creature had made himself a slave to those creatures over whom he had been appointed a lord, subjected himself as a servant to his inferior, and strutted as a superior against his liberal Sovereign, and by every sin rendered himself more a child of Satan, and enemy of God, and more worthy of the curses of the law, and the torments of hell. Was it not, now, a mighty goodness that would surmount those high mountains of demerit, and elevate such creatures by the depression of his Son? Had we been possessed of the highest holiness, a reward had been the natural effect of goodness. It was not possible that God should be unkind to a righteous and innocent creature; his grace would have crowned that which had been so agreeable to him. He had been a denier of himself, had he numbered innocent creatures in the rank of the miserable; but to be kind to an enemy, to run counter to the vastness of demerit in man, was a superlative goodness, a goodness

triumphing above all the provocations of men, and pleas of justice: it was an abounding goodness of grace; “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20), *ὑπερπερίσσευσεν*; it swelled above the heights of sin, and triumphed more than all his other attributes.

4. Man was reduced to the lowest condition. Our crimes had brought us to the lowest calamity; we were brought to the dust, and prepared for hell. Adam had not the boldness to request, and therefore we may judge he had not the least hopes of pardon; he was sunk under wrath, and could have expected no better an entertainment than the tempter, whose solicitations he submitted to. We had cast the diadem from our heads, and lost all our original excellency; we were lost to our own happiness, and lost to our Creator’s service, when he was so kind as to send his Son to seek us (Matt. 18:11), and so liberal as to expend his blood for our cure and preservation. How great was that goodness that would not abandon us in our misery, but remit our crimes, and rescue our persons, and ransom our souls by so great a price from the rights of justice, and horrors of hell, we were so fitted for?

5. Every age multiplied provocations; every age of the world proved more degenerate. The traditions, which were purer and more lively among Adam’s immediate posterity, were more dark among his further descendants; idolatry, whereof we have no marks in the old world before the deluge, was frequent afterwards in every nation: not only the knowledge of the true God was lost, but the natural reverential thoughts of a Deity were expelled. Hence gods were dubbed according to men’s humors; and not only human passions, but brutish vices, ascribed to them: as by the fall we were become less than men, so we would fancy God no better than a beast, since beasts were worshipped as gods (Rom. 1:21); yea, fancied God no better than a devil, since that destroyer was worshipped instead of the Creator, and a homage paid to the powers of hell that had ruined them, which was due to the goodness of that Benefactor, who had made them and preserved them in the world. The vilest creatures were deified; reason was debased below common sense; and men adored one end of a “log,” while they “warmed themselves with the other” (Isa. 44:14, 16, 17); as if that which was ordained for the kitchen were a fit representation for God

in the temple. Thus were the natural notions of a Deity depraved; the whole world drenched in idolatry; and though the Jews were free from that gross abuse of God, yet they were sunk also into loathsome superstitions, when the goodness of God brought in his designed Redeemer and redemption into the world.

6. The impotence of man enhanceth this goodness. Our own eye did scarce pity us, and it was impossible for our own hands to relieve us; we were insensible of our misery, in love with our death; we courted our chains, and the noise of our fettering lusts were our music, “serving divers lusts and pleasures” (Tit. 3:3). Our lusts were our pleasures; Satan’s yoke was as delightful to us to bear, as to him to impose: instead of being his opposers in his attempts against us, we were his voluntary seconds, and every whit as willing to embrace, as he was to propose, his ruining temptations. As no man can recover himself from death, so no man can recover himself from wrath; he is as unable to redeem, as to create himself; he might as soon have stripped himself of his being, as put an end to his misery; his captivity would have been endless, and his chains remediless, for anything he could do to knock them off; and deliver himself; he was too much in love with the sink of sin, to leave wallowing in it, and under too powerful a hand, to cease frying in the flames of wrath. As the law could not be obeyed by man, after a corrupt principle had entered into him, so neither could justice be satisfied by him after his transgression. The sinner was indebted, but bankrupt; as he was unable to pay a mite of that obedience he owed to the precept, because of his enmity, so he was unable to satisfy what he owed to the penalty, because of his feebleness: he was as much without love to observe the one, as “without strength” to bear the other: he could not, because of his “enmity, be subject to the law” (Rom. 8:7), or compensate for his sin, because he was “without strength” (Rom. 5:6). His strength to offend was great; but to deliver himself a mere nothing. Repentance was not a thing known by man after the fall, till he had hopes of redemption; and if he had known and exercised it, what compensation are the tears of a malefactor for an injury done to the crown, and attempting the life of his prince? How great was Divine goodness, not only to pity men in this state, but to provide a strong Redeemer for them! “O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer!” said the Psalmist (Psalm 19:14): when he found out a Redeemer for our misery, he found out a strength for our impotency.

To conclude this: behold the “goodness of God,” when we had thus unhandsomely dealt with him; had nothing to allure his goodness, multitudes of provocations to incense him, were reduced to a condition as low as could be, fit to be the matter of his scoffs, and the sport of Divine justice, and so weak that we could not repair our own ruins; then did he open a fountain of fresh goodness in the death of his Son, and sent forth such delightful streams, as in our original creation we could never have tasted; not only overcame the resentments of a provoked justice, but magnified itself by our lowness, and strengthened itself by our weakness. His goodness had before created an innocent, but here it saves a malefactor; and sends his Son to die for us, as if the Holy of holies were the criminal, and the rebel the innocent. It had been a pompous goodness to have given him as a king; but a goodness of greater grandeur to expose him as a sacrifice for slaves and enemies. Had Adam remained innocent, and proved thankful for what he had received, it had been great goodness to have brought him to glory; but to bring filthy and rebellious Adam to it, surmounts, by inexpressible degrees, that sort of goodness he had experimented before; since it was not from a light evil, a tolerable curse unawares brought upon us, but from the yoke we had willingly submitted to, from the power of darkness we had courted, and the furnace of wrath we had kindled for ourselves. What are we dead dogs, that he should behold us with so gracious an eye? This goodness is thus enhanced, if you consider the state of man in his first transgression, and after.

4th. This goodness further appears in the high advancement of our nature, after it had so highly offended. By creation, we had an affinity with animals in our bodies, with angels in our spirits, with God in his image; but not with God in our nature, till the incarnation of the Redeemer. Adam, by creation, was the son of God (Luke 3:38), but his nature was not one with the person of God: he was his son, as created by him, but had no affinity to him by virtue of union with him: but now man doth not only see his nature in multitudes of men on earth, but, by an astonishing goodness, beholds his nature united to the Deity in heaven: that as he was the son of God by creation, he is now the brother of God by redemption; for with such a title doth that Person, who was the Son of God as well as the Son of man, honor his disciples (John 20:17): and because he is of the same nature with them, he “is not ashamed to call them brethren”

(Heb.

2:11). Our nature, which was infinitely distant from, and below the Deity, now makes one person with the Son of God. What man sinfully aspired to, God hath graciously granted, and more: man aspired to a likeness in knowledge, and God hath granted him an affinity in union. It had been astonishing goodness to angelize our natures; but in redemption Divine goodness hath acted higher, in a sort to deify our natures. In creation, our nature was exalted above other creatures on earth; in our redemption, our nature is exalted above all the host of heaven: we were higher than the beasts, as creatures, but “lower than the angels” (Psalm 8:5); but, by the incarnation of the Son of God, our nature is elevated many steps above them.

After it had sunk itself by corruption below the bestial nature, and as low as the diabolical, the “fulness of the Godhead dwells in our nature bodily” (Col. 2:9), but never in the angels, angelically. The Son of God descended to dignify our nature, by assuming it; and ascended with our nature to have it crowned above those standing monuments of Divine power and goodness (Eph. 1:20, 21). That Person that descended in our nature into the grave, and in the same nature was raised up again, is, in that same nature, set at the right hand of God in heaven, “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.” Our refined clay, by an indissoluble union with this Divine Person, is honored to sit forever upon a throne above all the tribes of seraphims and cherubims; and the Person that wears it, is the head of the good angels, and the conqueror of the bad; the one are put under his feet, and the other commanded to adore him, “that purged our sins in our nature” (Heb. 1:3, 6): that Divine Person in our nature receives adoration from the angels; but the nature of man is not ordered to pay any homage and adorations to the angels. How could Divine goodness, to man, more magnify itself? As we could not have a lower descent than we had by sin, how could we have a higher ascent than by a substantial participation of a divine life, in our nature, in the unity of a Divine Person? Our earthly nature is joined to a heavenly Person; our undone nature united to “one equal with God” (Phil. 2:6). It may truly be said, that man is God, which is infinitely more glorious for us, than if it could be said, man is an

angel. If it were goodness to advance our innocent nature above other creatures, the advancement of our degenerate nature above angels deserves a higher title than mere goodness. It is a more gracious act, than if all men had been transformed into the pure spiritual nature of the loftiest cherubims.

5th. This goodness is manifest in the covenant of grace made with us, whereby we are freed from the rigor of that of works. God might have insisted upon the terms of the old covenant, and required of man the improvement of his original stock; but God hath condescended to lower terms, and offered man more gracious methods, and mitigated the rigor of the first, by the sweetness of the second.

1. It is goodness, that he should condescend to make another covenant with man. To stipulate with innocent and righteous Adam for his obedience, was a stoop of his sovereignty; though he gave the precept as a sovereign Lord, yet in his covenanting, he seems to descend to some kind of equality with that dust and ashes with whom the treated. Absolute sovereigns do not usually covenant with their people, but exact obedience and duty, without binding themselves to bestow a reward; and if they intend any, they reserve the purpose in their own breasts, without treating their subjects with a solemn declaration of it.

There was no obligation on God to enter into the first covenant, much less, after the violation of the first, to the settlement of a new. If God seemed in some sort to equal himself to man in the first, he seemed to descend below himself in treating with a rebel upon more condescending terms in the second. If his covenant with innocent Adam was a stoop of his sovereignty, this with rebellious Adam seems to be a stripping himself of his majesty in favor of his goodness; as if his happiness depended upon us, and not ours upon him. It is a humiliation of himself to behold the things in heaven, the glorious angels, as well as things on earth, mortal men (Psalm 113:6); much more to bind himself in gracious bonds to the glorious angels; and much more if to rebel man. In the first covenant there was much of sovereignty as well as goodness; in the second there is less of sovereignty, and more of grace: in the first there was a righteous man for a holy God; in the second a polluted creature for a pure and provoked God: in the first he holds his sceptre in his hand,

to rule his subjects; in the second he seems to lay by his sceptre, to court and espouse a beggar (Hosea 2:18–20): in the first he is a Lord; in the second a husband; and binds himself upon gracious conditions to become a debtor. How should this goodness fill us with an humble astonishment, as it did Abraham, when he “fell on his face,” when he heard God speaking of making a covenant with him! (Gen. 17:2, 3). And if God speaking to Israel out of the fire, and making them to hear his voice out of heaven, that he might instruct them, was a consideration whereby Moses would heighten their admiration of Divine goodness, and engage their affectionate obedience to him (Deut. 4:32, 36, 40), how much more admirable is it for God to speak so kindly to us through the pacifying blood of the covenant, that silenced the terrors of the old, and settled the tenderness of the new!

2. His goodness is seen in the nature and tenor of the new covenant. There are in this richer streams of love and pity. The language of one was, Die, if thou sin; that of the other, Live, if thou believest: the old covenant was founded upon the obedience of man; the new one is not founded upon the inconstancy of man’s will, but the firmness of Divine love, and the valuable merit of Christ. The head of the first covenant was human and mutable; the Head of the second is divine and immutable. The curse due to us by the breach of the first, is taken off by the indulgence of the second: we are by it snatched from the jaws of the law, to be wrapped up in the bosom of grace (Rom. 8:1). “For you are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14); from the curse and condemnation of the law, to the sweetness and forgiveness of grace. Christ bore the one, being “made a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13), that we might enjoy the sweetness of the other; by this we are brought from Mount Sinai, the mount of terror, to Mount Sion, the mount of sacrifice, the type of the great Sacrifice (Heb. 12:18, 22). That covenant brought in death upon one offence, this covenant offers life after many offences (Rom. 5:16, 17): that involves us in a curse, and this enricheth us with a blessing; the breaches of that expelled us out of Paradise, and the embracing of this admits us into heaven. This covenant demands, and admits of that repentance whereof there was no mention in the first; that demanded obedience, not repentance upon a failure; and though the exercise of it had been never so deep in the fallen creature, nothing of the law’s severity had been remitted by any virtue of it. Again,

the first covenant demanded exact righteousness, but conveyed no cleansing virtue, upon the contracting any filth. The first demands a continuance in the righteousness conferred in creation; the second imprints a gracious heart in regeneration. "I will pour clean water upon you; I will put a new spirit within you," was the voice of the second covenant, not of the first. Again, as to pardon Adam's covenant was to punish him, not to pardon him, if he fell; that threatened death upon transgression, this remits it; that was an act of Divine sovereignty, declaring the will of God; this is an act of Divine grace, passing an act of oblivion on the crimes of the creature: that, as it demanded no repentance upon a failure, so it promised no mercy upon guilt; that convence our sin, and condemned us for it; this clears our guilt, and comforts us under it. The first covenant related us to God as a Judge; every transgression against it forfeited his indulgence as a Father: the second delivers us from God as a condemning Judge, to bring us under his wing, as an affectionate Father; in the one there was a dreadful frown to scare us; in the other, a healing wing to cover and relieve us. Again, in regard of righteousness: that demanded our performance of a righteousness in and by ourselves, and our own strength; this demands our acceptance of a righteousness higher than ever the standing angels had; the righteousness of the first covenant was the righteousness of a man, the righteousness of the second is the righteousness of a God (2 Cor. 5:21).

Again, in regard of that obedience it demands: it exacts not of us, as a necessary condition, the perfection of obedience, but the sincerity of obedience; an uprightness in our intention, not an unspottedness in our action; an integrity in our aims, and an industry in our compliance with divine precepts: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1); *i. e.* sincere. What is hearty in our actions, is accepted; and what is defective, is overlooked, and not charged upon us, because of the obedience and righteousness of our Surety. The first covenant rejected all our services after sin; the services of a person under the sentence of death, are but dead services: this accepts our imperfect services, after faith in it; that administered no strength to obey, but supposed it; this supposeth our inability to obey, and confers some strength for it: "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezek. 36:27). Again, in regard of the promises: the old covenant had good, but the new hath

“better promises” (Heb. 8:6), of justification after guilt and sanctification after filth, and glorification at last of the whole man. In the first, there was provision against guilt, but none for the removal of it: provision against filth, but none for the cleansing of it; promise of happiness implied, but not so great a one as that “life and immortality” in heaven, “brought to light by the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). Why said to be “brought to light by the gospel?” because it was not only buried, upon the fall of man under the curses of the law, but it was not so obvious to the conceptions of man in his innocent state. Life indeed was implied to be promised upon his standing, but not so glorious an immortality disclosed, to be reserved for him, if he stood: as it is a covenant of better promises, so a covenant of sweeter comforts; comforts more choice, and comforts more durable; an “everlasting consolation, and a good hope” are the fruits of “grace,” *i. e.* the covenant of grace (2 Thess. 2:16). In the whole there is such a love disclosed, as cannot be expressed; the apostle leaves it to every man’s mind to conceive it, if he could, “What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1). It instates us in such a manner of the love of God as he bears to his Son, the image of his person (John 17:23): “That the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

3. This goodness appears in the choice gift of himself which he hath made over in this covenant (Gen. 17:7). You know how it runs in Scripture: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 32:38): a propriety in the Deity is made over by it. As he gave the blood of his Son to seal the covenant, so he gave himself as the blessing of the covenant; “He is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb. 11:16). Though he be environed with millions of angels, and presides over them in an inexpressible glory, he is not ashamed of his condescensions to man, and to pass over himself as the propriety of his people, as well as to take them to be his. It is a diminution of the sense of the place, to understand it of God, as Creator; what reason was there for God to be ashamed of the expressions of his power, wisdom, goodness, in the works of his hands? But we might have reason to think there might be some ground in God to be ashamed of making himself over in a deed of gift to a mean worm and filthy rebel; this might seem a disparagement to his majesty; but God is not ashamed of a title so mean, as the God of his despised

people; a title below those others, of the “Lord of hosts, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders, riding on the wings of the wind, walking in the circuits of heaven.” He is no more ashamed of this title of being our God, than he is of those other that sound more glorious; he would rather have his greatness veil to his goodness, than his goodness be confined by his majesty; he is not only our God, but our God as he is the God of Christ: he is not ashamed to be our propriety, and Christ is not ashamed to own his people in a partnership with him in this propriety (John 20:17): “I ascend to my God, and your God.” This of God’s being our God, is the quintessence of the covenant, the soul of all the promises: in this he hath promised whatsoever is infinite in him, whatsoever is the glory and ornament of his nature, for our use; not a part of him, or one single perfection, but the whole vigor and strength of all. As he is not a God without infinite wisdom, and infinite power, and infinite goodness, and infinite blessedness, &c., so he passes over, in this covenant, all that which presents him as the most adorable Being to his creatures; he will be to them as great, as wise, as powerful, as good as he is in himself; and the assuring us, in this covenant, to be our God, imports also that he will do as much for us, as we would do for ourselves, were we furnished with the same goodness, power, and wisdom: in being our God, he testifies it is all one, as if we had the same perfections in our own power to employ for our use; for he being possessed with them, it is as much as if we ourselves were possessed with them, for our own advantage, according to the rules of wisdom, and the several conditions we pass through for his glory. But this must be taken with a relation to that wisdom, which he observes in his proceedings with us as creatures, and according to the several conditions we pass through for his glory. Thus God’s being ours is more than if all heaven and earth were ours besides; it is more than if we were fully our own, and at our own dispose; it makes “all things that God hath ours” (1 Cor. 3:22); and therefore, not only all things he hath created, but all things that he can create; not only all things that he hath contrived, but all things that he can contrive: for in being ours, his power is ours, his possible power as well as his active power; his power, whereby he can effect more than he hath done, and his wisdom, whereby he can contrive more than he hath done; so that if there were need of employing his power to create many worlds for our

good, he would not stick at it; for if he did, he would not be our God, in the extent of his nature, as the promise intimates. What a rich goodness, and a fulness of bounty, is there in this short expression, as full as the expression of a God can make it, to be intelligible, to such creatures as we are!

4. This goodness is further manifest in the confirmation of the covenant. His goodness did not only condescend to make it for our happiness, after we had made ourselves miserable, but further condescended to ratify it in the solemnest manner for our assurance, to overrule all the despondencies unbelief could raise up in our souls. The reason why he confirmed it by an oath, was to show the immutability of his glorious counsel, not to tie himself to keep it, for his word and promise is in itself as immutable as his oath; they were “two immutable things, his word and his oath,” one as unchangeable as the other; but for the strength of our consolation, that it might have no reason to shake and totter (Heb. 6:17, 18): he would condescend as low as was possible for a God to do for the satisfaction of the dejected creature. When the first covenant was broken, and it was impossible for man to fulfil the terms of it, and mount to happiness thereby, he makes another; and, as if we had reason to distrust him in the first, he solemnly ratifies it in a higher manner than he had done the other, and swears by himself that he will be true to it, not so much out of an election of himself, as the object of the oath (Heb. 6:13): “Because he could not swear by a greater, he swears by himself;” whereby the apostle clearly intimates, that Divine goodness was raised to such a height for us, that if there had been anything else more sacred than himself, or that could have punished him if he had broken it, that he would have sworn by, to silence any diffidence in us, and confirm us in the reality of his intentions. Now if it were a mighty mark of goodness for God to stoop to a covenanting with us, it was more for a sovereign to bind himself so solemnly to be our debtor in a promise, as well as he was our sovereign in the precept, and stoop so low in it to satisfy the distrust of that creature, that deserved for ever to be soaking in his own ruins, for not believing his bare word. What absolute prince would ever stoop so low as to article with rebellious subjects, whom he could in a moment set his foot upon and crush; much less countenance a causeless distrust of his goodness by the addition of his oath, and thereby bind his own hands, which were

unconfined before, and free to do what he pleased with them?

5. This goodness of God is remarkable also in the condition of this covenant which is faith. This was the easiest condition, in its own nature, that could be imagined; no difficulty in it but what proceeds from the pride of man's nature, and the obstinacy of his will. It was not impossible in itself; it was not the old condition of perfect obedience. It had been mighty goodness to set us up again upon our old stock, and restore us to the tenor and condition of the covenant of works, or to have required the burdensome ceremonies of the law. Nor is it an exact knowledge he requires of us; all men's understandings being of a different size, they had not been capable of this. It was the most reasonable condition, in regard of the excellency of the things proposed, and the effects following upon it; nay, it was necessary. It had been a want of goodness to himself and his own honor; he had cast that off, had he not insisted on this condition of faith, it being the lowest he could condescend to with a salvo for his glory. And it was a goodness to us; it is nothing else he requires, but a willingness to accept what he hath contrived and acted for us: and no man can be happy against his will; without this belief, at least, man could never voluntarily have arrived to his happiness. The goodness of God is evidenced in that.

[1st.] It is an easy condition, not impossible. 1. It was not the condition of the old covenant. The condition of that was an entire obedience to every precept with a man's whole strength, and without any flaw or crack. But the condition of the evangelical covenant is a sincere, though weak, faith; He hath suited this covenant to the misery of man's fallen condition; he considers our weakness, and that we are but dust, and therefore exacts not of us an entire, but a sincere, obedience. Had God sent Christ to expiate the crime of Adam, restore him to his paradise estate, and repair in man the ruined image of holiness, and after this to have renewed the covenant of works for the future, and settled the same condition in exacting a complete obedience for the time to come; Divine goodness had been above any accusation, and had deserved our highest admiration in the pardon of former transgressions, and giving out to us our first stock. But Divine goodness took larger strides: he had tried our first condition, and found his mutable creature quickly to violate it: had he demanded the same now, it is

likely it had met with the same issue as before, in man's disobedience and fall; we should have been as men, as Adam (Hos. 6:7), "transgressing the covenant;" and then we must have lain groaning under our disease, and wallowing in our blood, unless Christ had come to die for the expiation of our new crimes; for every transgression had been a violation of that covenant, and a forfeiture of our right to the benefits of it. If we had broke it but in one tittle, we had rendered ourselves incapable to fulfil it for the future; that one transgression had stood as a bar against the pleas of after-obedience. But God hath wholly laid that condition aside as to us, and settled that of faith, more easy to be performed, and to be renewed by us. It is infinite grace in him, that he will accept of faith in us, instead of that perfect obedience he required of us in the covenant of works. 2. It is easy, not like the burdensome ceremonies appointed under the law. He exacts not now the legal obedience, expensive sacrifices, troublesome purifications, and abstinences, that "yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1) which they were "not able to bear" (Acts 15:10). He treats us not as servants, or children, in their nonage, under the elements of the world, nor requires those innumerable bodily exercises that he exacted of them: he demands not "a thousand of lambs," and "rivers of oil;" but he requires a sincere confession and repentance, in order to our absolution; an "unfeigned faith," in order to our blessedness, and elevation to a glorious life. He requires only that we should believe what he saith, and have so good an opinion of his goodness and veracity, as to persuade ourselves of the reality of his intentions, confide in his word, and rely upon his promise, cordially embrace his crucified Son, whom he hath set forth as the means of our happiness, and have a sincere respect to all the discoveries of his will. What can be more easy than this?

Though some in the days of the apostles, and others since have endeavored to introduce a multitude of legal burdens, as if they envied God the expressions of his goodness, or thought him guilty of too much remissness, in taking off the yoke, and treating man too favorably. 3. Nor is it a clear knowledge of every revelation, that is the condition of this covenant. God in his kindness to man hath made revelations of himself, but his goodness is manifested in obliging us to believe him, not fully to understand him. He hath made them, by sufficient testimonies, as clear to our faith, as they

are incomprehensible to our reason: he hath revealed a Trinity of Persons, in their distinct offices, in the business of redemption, without which revelation of a Trinity we could not have a right notion and scheme of redeeming grace. But since the clearness of men's understanding is sullied by the fall, and hath lost its wings to fly up to a knowledge of such sublime things as that of the Trinity, and other mysteries of the Christian religion, God hath manifested his goodness in not obliging us to understand them but to believe them; and hath given us reason enough to believe it to be his revelation, (both from the nature of the revelation itself, and the way and manner of propagating it, which is wholly divine, exceeding all the methods of human art,) though he hath not extended our understandings to a capacity to know them, and render a reason of every mystery. He did not require of every Israelite, or of any of them that were stung by the fiery serpents, that they should understand, or be able to discourse of the nature and qualities of that brass of which the serpent upon the pole was made, or what art that serpent was formed, or in what manner the sight of it did operate in them for their cure; it was enough that they did believe the institution and precept of God, and that their own cure was assured by it: it was enough if they cast their eyes upon it according to the direction. The understandings of men are of several sizes and elevations, one higher than another: if the condition of this covenant had been a greatness of knowledge, the most acute men had only enjoyed the benefits of it. But it is "faith," which is as easy to be performed by the ignorant and simple, as by the strongest and most towering mind: it is that which is within the compass of every man's understanding. God did not require that every one within the verge of the covenant should be able to discourse of it to the reasons of men; he required not that every man should be a philosopher, or an orator, but a believer. What could be more easy than to lift up the eye to the brazen serpent, to be cured of a fiery sting? What could be more facile than a glance, which is done without any pain, and in a moment? It is a condition may be performed by the weakest as well as the strongest: could those that were bitten in the most vital part cast up their eyes, though at the last gasp, they would arise to health by the expulsion of the venom.

[2d.] As it is easy, so it is reasonable. Repent and believe, is that which is required by Christ and the apostles for the enjoyment of the

kingdom of heaven. It is very reasonable that things so great and glorious, so beneficial to men, and revealed to them by so sound an authority, and an unerring truth, should be believed. The excellency of the thing disclosed could admit of no lower a condition than to be believed and embraced. There is a sort of faith, that is a natural condition in everything: all religion in the world, though never so false, depends upon a sort of it; for unless there be a belief of future things, there would never be a hope of good, or a fear of evil, the two great hinges upon which religion moves. In all kinds of learning, many things must be believed before a progress can be made. Belief of one another is necessary in all acts of human life; without which human society would be unlinked and dissolved. What is that faith that God requires of us in this covenant, but a willingness of soul to take God for our God, Christ for our Mediator, and the procurer of our happiness (Rev. 22:17)? What prince could require less upon any promise he makes his subjects, than to be believed as true, and depended on as good; that they should accept his pardon, and other gracious offers, and be sincere in their allegiance to him, avoiding all things that may offend him, and pursuing all things that may please him? Thus God, by so small and reasonable a condition as faith, lets in the fruits of Christ's death into our soul, and wraps us up in the fruition of all the privileges purchased by it. So much he hath condescended in his goodness, that upon so slight a condition we may plead his promise, and humbly challenge, by virtue of the covenant, those good things he hath promised in his word. It is so reasonable a condition, that if God did not require it in the covenant of grace, the creature were obliged to perform it: for the publishing any truth from God, naturally calls for credit to be given it by the creature, and an entertainment of it in practice. Could you offer a more reasonable condition yourselves, had it been left to your choice? Should a prince proclaim a pardon to a profligate wretch, would not all the world cry shame of him, if he did not believe it upon the highest assurances? and if ingenuity did not make him sorry for his crimes, and careful in the duty of a subject, surely the world would cry shame of such a person.

[3d.] It is a necessary condition. 1. Necessary for the honor of God. A prince is disparaged if his authority in his law, and if his graciousness in his promises, be not accepted and believed. What physician would undertake a cure, if his precepts may not be

credited? It is the first thing in the order of nature, that the revelation of God should be believed, that the reality of his intentions in inviting man to the acceptance of those methods he hath prescribed for their attaining their chief happiness, should be acknowledged. It is a debasing notion of God, that he should give a happiness, purchased by Divine blood, to a person that hath no value for it, nor any abhorreny of those sins that occasioned so great a suffering, nor any will to avoid them: should he not vilify himself, to bestow a heaven upon that man that will not believe the offers of it, nor walk in those ways that lead to it? that walks so, as if he would declare there was no truth in his word, nor holiness in his nature? Would not God by such an act verify a truth in the language of their practice, *viz.* that he were both false and impure, careless of his word, and negligent of his holiness? As God was so desirous to ensure the consolation of believers, that if there had been a greater Being than himself to attest, and for him to be responsible to, for the confirmation of his promise, he would willingly have submitted to him, and have made him the umpire, "He swore by himself, because he could not swear by a greater" (Heb. 6:19); by the same reason, had it stood with the majesty and wisdom of God to stoop to lower conditions in this covenant, for the reducing of man to his duty and happiness, he would have done it; but his goodness could not take lower steps, with the preservation of the rights of his majesty, and the honor of his wisdom. Would you have had him wholly submitted to the obstinate will of a rebellious creature, and be ruled only by his terms? Would you have had him received men to happiness, after they had heightened their crimes by a contempt of his grace, as well as of his creating goodness, and have made them blessed under the guilt of their crimes without an acknowledgment? Should he glorify one that will not believe what he hath revealed, nor repent of what himself hath committed; and so save a man after a repeated unthankfulness to the most immense grace that ever was, or can be, discovered and offered, without a detestation of his ingratitude, and a voluntary acceptance of his offers? It is necessary, for the honor of God, that man should accept of his terms, and not give laws to him to whom he is obnoxious as a guilty person, as well as subject as a creature. Again, it was very equitable and necessary for the honor of God, that since man fell by an unbelief of his precept and threatening, he should not rise again without a belief of his promise,

and casting himself upon his truth in that: since he had vilified the honor of his truth in the threatening; since man in his fall would lean to his own understanding against God, it is fit that, in his recovery, the highest powers of his soul, his understanding and will, should be subjected to him in an entire resignation. Now, whereas knowledge seems to have a power over its object, faith is a full submission to that which is the object of it. Since man intended a glorying in himself, the evangelical covenant directs its whole battery against it, that men may “glory in nothing but Divine goodness” (1 Cor. 1:29–31). Had man performed exact obedience by his own strength, he had had something in himself as the matter of his glory. And though, after the fall, grace had made itself illustrious in setting him up upon a new stock, yet had the same condition of exact obedience been settled in the same manner, man would have had something to glory in, which is struck off wholly by faith; whereby man in every act must go out of himself for a supply, to that Mediator which Divine goodness and grace hath appointed. 2. It is necessary for the happiness of man. That can be no contenting condition wherein the will of man doth not concur. he that is forced to the most delicious diet, or to wear the bravest apparel, or to be stored with abundance of treasure, cannot be happy in those things without an esteem of them, and delight in them: if they be nauseous to him, the indisposition of his mind is a dead fly in those boxes of precious ointment. Now, faith being a sincere willingness to accept of Christ, and to come to God by him, and repentance being a detestation of that which made man’s separation from God, it is impossible he could be voluntarily happy without it: man cannot attain and enjoy a true happiness without an operation of his understanding about the object proposed, and the means appointed to enjoy it. There must be a knowledge of what is offered, and of the way of it, and such a knowledge as may determine the will to affect that end, and embrace those means; which the will can never do, till the understanding be fully persuaded of the truth of the offerer, and the goodness of the proposal itself, and the conveniency of the means for the attaining of it. It is necessary, in the nature of the thing, that what is revealed should be believed to be a Divine revelation. God must be judged true in the promising justification and sanctification, the means of happiness; and if any man desires to be partaker of those promises, he must desire to be sanctified; and how can he desire that which is

the matter of those, promises, if he wallow in his own lusts, and desire to do so, a thing repugnant to the promise itself?

Would you have God force man to be happy against his will? Is it not very reasonable he should demand the consent of his reasonable creature to that blessedness he offers him? The new covenant is a “marriage covenant” (Hos. 2:16, 19, 20), which implies a consent on our parts, as well as a consent on God’s part that is no marriage that hath not the consent of both parties. Now faith is our actual consent, and repentance and sincere obedience are the testimonies of the truth and reality of this consent.

6th. Divine goodness is eminent in his methods of treating with men to embrace this covenant. They are methods of gentleness and sweetness: it is a wooing goodness, and a bewailing goodness; his expressions are with strong motions of affection: he carrieth not on the gospel by force of arms: he doth not solely menace men into it, as worldly conquerors have done; he doth not, as Mahomet, plunder men’s estates, and wound their bodies, to imprint a religion on their souls: he doth not erect gibbets, and kindle faggots, to scare men to an entering into covenant with him. What multitudes might he have raised by his power, as well as others! What legions of angels might he have rendezvoused from heaven, to have beaten men into a profession of the gospel! Nor doth he only interpose his sovereign authority in the precept of faith, but useth rational expostulations, to move men voluntarily to comply with his proposals (Isa. 1:18), “Come now, and let us reason together,” saith the Lord. He seems to call heaven and earth to be judge, whether he had been wanting in any reasonable ways of goodness, to overcome the perversity of the creature; (Isa. 1:2), “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, I have nourished and brought up children.” What various encouragements doth he use agreeable to the nature of men, endeavoring to persuade them with all tenderness, not to despise their own mercies, and be enemies to their own happiness! He would allure us by his beauty, and win us by his mercy. He uses the arms of his own excellency and our necessity to prevail upon us, and this after the highest provocations. When Adam had trampled upon his creating goodness, it was not crushed; and when man had cast it from him, it took the higher rebound: when the rebel’s provocation was fresh in his mind, he sought him out with a promise in his hand, though

Adam fled from him out of enmity as well as fear (Gen. 3.). And when the Jews had outraged his Son, whom he loved from eternity, and made the Lord of heaven and earth bow down his head like a slave on the cross, yet in that place, where the most horrible wickedness had been committed, must the gospel be preached: the law must go forth out of that Sion, and the apostles must not stir from thence till they had received the promise of the Spirit, and published the word of grace in that ungrateful city, whose inhabitants yet swelled with indignation against the Lord of Life, and the doctrine he had preached among them (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:4, 5). He would overlook their indignities out of tenderness to their souls, and expose the apostles to the peril of their lives, rather than expose his enemies to the fury of the devil.

1. How affectionately doth he invite men! What multitudes of alluring promises and pressing exhortations are there everywhere sprinkled in the Scripture, and in such a passionate manner, as if God were solely concerned in our good, without a glance on his own glory! How tenderly doth he woo flinty hearts, and express more pity to them than they do to themselves! With what affection do his bowels rise up to his lips in his speech in the prophet, Isa. 51:4: "Hearken to me, O my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation!" "My people," "my nation!"—melting expressions of a tender God soliciting a rebellious people to make their retreat to him. He never emptied his hand of his bounty, nor divested his lips of those charitable expressions. He sent Noah to move the wicked of the old world to an embracing of his goodness, and frequent prophets to the provoking Jews; and as the world continued, and grew up to a taller stature in sin, he stoops more in the manner of his expressions. Never was the world at a higher pitch of idolatry than at the first publishing the gospel; yet, when we should have expected him to be a punishing, he is a beseeching God. The apostle fears not to use the expression for the glory of livine goodness; "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us" (2 Cor. 5:20). The beseeching voice of God is in the voice of the ministry, as the voice of the prince is in that of the herald: it is as if Divine goodness did kneel down to a sinner with ringed hands and blubbered cheeks, entreating him not to force him to re-assume a tribunal of justice in the nature of a Judge, since he would treat with man upon a throne of grace in the nature of a Father; yea, he seems to put himself into

the posture of the criminal, that the offending creature might not feel the punishment due to a rebel. It is not the condescension, but the interest, of a traitor to creep upon his knees in sackcloth to his sovereign, to beg his life; but it is a miraculous goodness in the sovereign to creep in the lowest posture to the rebel, to importune him, not only for an amity to him, but a love for his own life and happiness: this He doth, not only in his general proclamations, but in his particular wooings, those inward courtings of his Spirits, soliciting them with more diligence (if they would observe it) to their happiness, than the devil tempts them to the ways of their misery: as he was first in Christ, reconciling the world, when the world looked not after him, so he is first in his Spirit, wooing the world to accept of that reconciliation, when the world will not listen to him. How often doth he flash up the light of nature and the light of the word in men's hearts, to move them not to lie down in sparks of their own kindling, but to aspire to a better happiness, and prepare them to be subject to a higher mercy, if they would improve his present entreaties to such an end! And what are his threatenings designed for, but to move the wheel of our fears, that the wheel of our desire and love might be set on motion for the embracing his promise? They are not so much the thunders of his justice, as the loud rhetoric of his good will, to prevent men's misery under the vials of wrath: it is his kindness to scare men by threatenings, that justice might not strike them with the sword: it is not the destruction, but the preserving reformation, that he aims at: he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked; this he confirms by his oath. His threatenings are gracious expostulations with them: "Why will ye die, O house of Israel" (Ezek. 33:11)? They are like the noise a favorable officer makes in the street, to warn the criminal he comes to seize upon, to make his escape: he never used his justice to crush men, till he had used his kindness to allure them. All the dreadful descriptions of a future wrath, as well as the lively descriptions of the happiness of another world, are designed to persuade men; the honey of his goodness is in the bowels of those roaring lions: such pains doth Goodness take with men, to make them candidates for heaven.

2. How readily doth he receive men when they do return! We have David's experience for it (Psalm 32:5); "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of

my sin.

.” A sincere look from the creature draws out his arms, and opens his bosom; he is ready with his physic to heal us, upon a resolution to acquaint him with our disease, and by his medicines prevents the putting our resolution into a petition. The Psalmist adds a “ ” to it, as a special note of thankfulness for Divine goodness. He doth not only stand ready to receive our petitions while we are speaking, but answers us before we call (Isa. 65:24); listening to the motions of our heart, as well as to the supplications of our lips. He is the true Father, that hath a quicker pace in meeting, than the prodigal hath in returning; who would not have his embraces and caresses interrupted by his confession (Luke 15:20–22); the confession follows, doth not precede, the Father’s compassion. How doth he rejoice in having an opportunity to express his grace, when he hath prevailed with a reel to throw down his arms, and lie at his feet; and this because “he delights in mercy” (Micah 7:18)! He delights in the expressions of it from himself, and the acceptance of it by his creature.

3. How meltingly doth he bewail man’s wilful refusal of his goodness! It is a mighty goodness to offer grace to a rebel; a mighty goodness to give it him after he hath a while stood off from the terms; an astonishing goodness to regret and lament his wilful perdition. He seems to utter those words in a sigh, “O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my way” (Psalm 81:13)! It is true, God hath not human passions, but his affections cannot be expressed otherwise in a way intelligible to us; the excellency of his nature is above the passions of men; but such expressions of himself manifest to us the sincerity of his goodness: and that, were he capable of our passions, he would express himself in such a manner as we do: and we find incarnate Goodness bewailing with tears and sighs the ruin of Jerusalem (Luke 19:42). By the same reason that when a sinner returns there is joy in heaven, upon his obstinacy there is sorrow in earth. The one is, as if a prince should clothe all his court in triumphant scarlet, upon a rebel’s repentance; and the other, as if a prince put himself and his court in mourning for a rebel’s obstinate refusal of a pardon, when he lies at his mercy. Are not now these affectionate invitations, and deep bewailings of their perversity, high testimonies of Divine goodness?

Do not the unwearied repetitions of gracious encouragements deserve a higher name than that of mere goodness? What can be a stronger evidence of the sincerity of it, than the sound of his saving voice in our enjoyments, the motion of his Spirit in our hearts, and his grief for the neglect of all? These are not testimonies of any want of goodness in his nature to answer us, or unwillingness to express it to his creature. Hath he any mind to deceive us, that thus intreats us? The majesty of his nature is too great for such shifts; or, if it were not, the despicableness of our condition would render him above the using any. Who would charge that physician with want of kindness, that freely offers his sovereign medicine, importunes men, by the love they have to their health, to take it, and is dissolved into tears and sorrow when he finds it rejected by their peevish and conceited humor?

7th. Divine goodness is eminent in the sacraments he hath affixed to this covenant, especially the Lord's supper. As he gave himself in his Son, so he gives his Son in the sacrament; he doth not only give him as a sacrifice upon the cross for the expiation of our crimes, but as a feast upon the table for the nourishment of our souls: in the one he was given to be offered; in this he gives him to be partaken of, with all the fruits of his death; under the image of the sacramental signs, every believer doth eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the great Mediator of the covenant. The words of Christ, "This is my body, and this is my blood," are true to the end of the world (Matt. 26:26, 28). This is the most delicious viand of heaven, the most exquisite dainty food God can feed us with: the delight of the Deity, the admiration of angels; a feast with God is great, but a feast on God is greater. Under those signs that body is presented; that which was conceived by the Spirit, inhabited by the Godhead, bruised by the Father to be our food, as well as our propitiation, is presented to us on the table. That blood which satisfied justice, washed away our guilt on the cross, and pleads for our persons at the throne of grace; that blood which silenced the curse, pacified heaven, and purged earth, is given to us for our refreshment. This is the bread sent from heaven, the true manna; the cup is "the cup of blessing," and, therefore, a cup of goodness (1 Cor. 10:15). It is true, bread doth not cease to be bread, nor the wine cease to be wine; neither of them lose their substance, but both acquire a sanctification, by the relation they have to that which they represent,

and give a nourishment to that faith that receives them. In those God offers us a remedy for the sting of sin, and troubles of conscience; he gives us not the blood of a mere man, or the blood of an incarnate angel, but of God blessed forever; a blood that can secure us against the wrath of heaven, and the tumults of our consciences; a blood that can wash away our sins, and beautify our souls; a blood that hath more strength than our filth, and more prevalency than our accuser; a blood that secures us against the terrors of death, and purifies us for the blessedness of heaven. The goodness of God complies with our senses, and condescends to our weakness; he instructs us by the eye, as well as by the ear; he lets us see, and taste, and feel him, as well as hear him; he veils his glory under earthly elements, and informs our understanding in the mysteries of salvation by signs familiar to our senses; and because we cannot with our bodily eyes behold him in his glory, he presents him to the eyes of our minds in elements, to affect our understandings in the representations of his death. The body of Christ crucified is more visible to our spiritual sense, than the invisible Deity could be visible in his flesh upon earth; and the power of his body and blood is as well experimented in our souls, as the power of his Divinity was seen by the Jews in his miraculous actions in his body in the world. It is the goodness of God, to mind us frequently of the great things Christ hath purchased; that as himself would not let them be out of his mind, to communicate them to us, so he would give us means to preserve them in our minds, to adore him for them, and request them of him; whereby he doth evidence his own solicitousness, that we should not be deprived by our own forgetfulness of that grace Christ hath purchased for us; it was to remember the Redeemer, “and show his death till he came” (1 Cor. 11:25, 26).

1. His goodness is seen in the end of it, which is a sealing the covenant of grace. The common nature and end of sacraments is to seal the covenant they belong to, and the truths of the promises of it. The legal sacraments of circumcision and the passover sealed the legal promises and the covenant in the Judicial administration of it; and the evangelical sacraments seal the evangelical promises, as a ring confirms a contract of marriage, and a seal the articles of a compact; by the same reason, circumcision is called a “seal of the righteousness of faith” (Rom. 4:11); other sacraments may have the same title; God doth attest, that he will remain firm in his promise,

and the receiver attests he will remain firm in his faith. In all reciprocal covenants, there are mutual engagements, and that which serves for a seal on the part of the one, serves for a seal also on the part of the other; God obligeth himself to the performance of the promise, and man engageth himself to the performance of his duty. The thing confirmed by this sacrament is the perpetuity of this covenant in the blood of Christ, whence it is called “the New Testament,” or covenant “in the blood of Christ” (Luke 22:20). In every repetition of it, God, by presenting, confirms his resolution to us, of sticking to this covenant for the merit of Christ’s blood; and the receiver, by eating the body and drinking the blood, engageth himself to keep close to the condition of faith, expecting a full salvation and a blessed immortality upon the merit of the same blood alone. This sacrament could not be called the “New Testament, or Covenant,” if it had not some relation to the covenant; and what it can be but this, I do not understand. The covenant itself was confirmed “by the death of Christ” (Heb. 9:15), and thereby made unchangeable both in the benefits to us, and the condition required of us; but he seals it to our sense in a sacrament, to give us strong consolation; or, rather, the articles of the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, agreed on from eternity, were accomplished on Christ’s part by his death, on the Father’s part by his resurrection; Christ performed what he promised in the one, and God acknowledgeth the validity of it, and performs what he had promised in the other. The covenant of grace, founded upon this covenant of redemption, is sealed in the sacrament; God owns his standing to the terms of it, as sealed by the blood of the Mediator, by presenting him to us under those signs, and gives us a right upon faith to the enjoyment of the fruits of it. As the right of a house is made over by the delivery of the key, and the right of land translated by the delivery of a turf; whereby he gives us assurance of his reality, and a strong support to our confidence in him; not that there is any virtue and power of sealing in the elements themselves, no more than there is in a turf to give an enfeoffment in a parcel of land; but as the power of one is derived from the order of the law, so the confirming power of the sacrament is derived from the institution of God; as the oil wherewith kings were annointed, did not of itself confer upon them that royal dignity, but it was a sign of their investiture into office, ordered by Divine institution. We can

with no reason imagine, that God intended them as naked signs or pictures, to please our eyes with the image of them, to represent their own figures to our eyes, but to confirm something to our understanding by the efficacy of the Spirit accompanying them: they convey to the believing receiver what they represent, as the great seal of a prince, fixed to the parchment, doth the pardon of a rebel as well as its own figure. Christ's death, and the grace of the covenant is not only signified, but the fruits and merit of that death communicated also. Thus doth Divine goodness evidence itself, not only in making a gracious covenant with us, but fixing seals to it; not to strengthen his own obligation, which stood stronger than the foundations of heaven and earth, upon the credit of his word, but to strengthen our weakness, and support our security, by something which might appear more formal and solemn than a bare word. By this, the Divine goodness provides against our spiritual faintings, and shows us by real signs as well as verbal declarations, that the covenant sealed by the blood of Christ, is unalterable; and thereby would fortify and mount our hopes to degrees in some measure suitable to the kindness of the covenant, and the dignity of the Redeemer's blood. And it is yet a further degree of this goodness, that he hath appointed us so often to celebrate it, whereby he shows how careful he is to keep up our tottering faith, and preserve us constant in our obedience; obliging himself to the performance of his promise, and obliging us to the payment of our duty.

2. His goodness is seen in the sacrament in giving us in it an union and communion with Christ. There is not only a commemoration of Christ dying, but a communication of Christ living. The apostle strongly asserts it by way of interrogation (1 Cor. 10:16), "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" In the cup there is a communication of the blood of Christ, a conveyance of a right to the merits of his death, and the blessedness of his life: we are not less by this made one body with Christ than we are by baptism (1 Cor. 12:13): and "put on Christ" living in this, as well as in baptism (Gal. 3:27); that as his taking our infirm flesh was a real incarnation, so the giving us his flesh to eat is a mystical incarnation in believers, whereby they become one body with him as crucified, and one body with him as risen; for if Christ himself be received by faith in the

word (Col. 2:6), he is no less received by faith in the sacrament. When the Holy Ghost is said to be received, the graces or gifts of the Holy Ghost are received; so when Christ is received, the fruits of his death are really partaken of. The Israelites that ate of the sacrifices, did “partake of the altar” (1 Cor. 10:18), *i. e.* had a communion with the God of Israel, to whom they had been sacrificed; and those that “ate of the sacrifices” offered to idols, had a “fellowship with devils,” to whom those sacrifices were offered (ver. 20). Those that partake of the sacraments in a due manner, have a communion with that God to whom it was sacrificed, and a communion with that body which was sacrificed to God; not that the substance of that body and blood is wrapped up in the elements, or that the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, but as they represent him, and by virtue of the institution are, in estimation himself, his own body and blood; by the same reason as he is called “Christ our passover,” he may be called “Christ our supper” (1 Cor. 5:7): for as they are so reckoned to an unworthy receiver, as if they were the real body and blood of Christ, because by his not discerning the Lord’s body in it, or making light of it as common bread, he is judged “guilty of the body and blood of Christ,” guilty of treating him in as base a manner as the Jews did when they crowned him with thorns (1 Cor. 11:27, 29): by the same reason they must be reckoned to a worthy receiver, as the very body and blood of Christ so that as the unworthy receiver “eats and drinks damnation,” the worthy receiver “eats and drinks” salvation. It would be an empty mystery, and unworthy of an institution by Divine goodness, if there were not some communion with Christ in it: there would be some kind of deceit in the precept, “Take, eat, and drink, this is my body and blood,” if there were not a conveyance of spiritual vital influences to our souls: for the natural end of eating and drinking is the nourishment and increase of the body, and preservation of life, by that which we eat and drink. The infinite wise, gracious, and true God, would never give us empty figures without accomplishing that which is signified by them, and suitable to them. How great is this goodness of God! he would have his Son in us, one with us, straitly joined to us, as if we were his proper flesh and blood: in the incarnation Divine goodness united him to our nature; in the sacrament, it doth in a sort unite him with his purchased privileges to our persons; we have not a communion with

a part or a member of his body, or a drop of his blood, but with his whole body and blood, represented in every part of the elements. The angels in the heaven enjoy not so great a privilege; they have the honor to be under him as their Head, but not that of having him for their food; they behold him, but they do not taste him. And, certainly, that goodness that hath condescended so much to our weakness, would impart it to us in a very glorious manner, were we capable of it. But, because a man cannot behold the light of the sun in its full splendor by reason of the infirmities of his eyes, he must behold it by the help of a glass, and such a communication through a colored and opaque glass, is as real from the sun itself, though not so glorious, but more shrouded and obscure; it is the same light that shines through that medium, as spreads itself gloriously in the open air, though the one be masked, and the other open-faced. To conclude this, by the way, we may take notice of the neglect of this ordinance: if it be a token of Divine goodness to appoint it, it is no sign of our estimation of Divine goodness to neglect it. He that values the kindness of his friend, will accept of his invitation, if there be not some strong impediments in the way, or so much familiarity with him that his refusal upon a light occasion would not be unkindly taken. But though God put on the disposition of a friend to us, yet he looseth not the authority of a sovereign; and the humble familiarity he invites us to, doth not diminish the condition and duty of a subject. A sovereign prince would not take it well, if a favorite should refuse the offered honor of his table. The viands of God are not to be slighted. Can we live better upon our poor pittance than upon his dainties? Did not Divine goodness condescend in it to the weakness of our faith, and shall we conceit our faith stronger than God thinks it? If he thought fit by those seals to make a deed of gift to us, shall we be so unmannerly to him, and such enemies to the security he offers us over and above his word, as not to accept it? Are we unwilling to have our souls inflamed with love, our hearts filled with comfort, and armed against the attempts of our enemies? It is true, there is a guilt of the body and blood of Christ contracted by a slightness in the manner of attending; is it not also contracted by a refusal and neglect?

What is the language of it? If it speaks not the death of Christ in vain; it speaks the institution of this ordinance as a remembrance of his death, to be a vanity, and no mark of Divine goodness. Let us,

therefore, put such a value upon Divine goodness in this affair, as to be willing to receive the conveyances of his love, and fresh engagements of our duty; the one is due from us to the kindness of our friend, and the other belongs to our duty as his subjects.

vi. By this redemption God restores us to a more excellent condition than Adam had in innocence. Christ was sent by Divine goodness, not only to restore the life Adam's sin had stripped us of, but to give it more abundantly than Adam's standing could have conveyed it to us (John 10:10), "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." More abundantly for strength, more abundantly for duration, a life abounding with greater felicity and glory: the substance of those better promises of the new covenant than what attended the old. There are fuller streams of grace by Christ than flowed to Adam, or could flow from Adam. As Christ never restored any to health and strength while he was in the world, but he gave them a greater measure of both than they had before; so there is the same kindness, no question, manifested in our spiritual condition. Adam's life might have preserved us, but Adam's death could not have rescued either himself or his posterity; but, in our redemption, we have a Redeemer, who hath "died to expiate our sins," and so crowned with life to save, and forever preserve our persons (Rom. 5:10), "Because I live, ye shall live also:" so that by redeeming goodness the life of a believer is as perpetual as the life of the Redeemer Christ (John 14:19). Adam, though innocent, was under the danger of perishing; a believer, though culpable, is above the fears of mutability. Adam had a holiness in his nature, but capable of being lost; by Christ believers have a holiness bestowed, not capable of being rifled, but which will remain till it be at last fully perfected: though they have a power to change in their nature, yet they are above an actual final change by the indulgence of Divine grace. Adam stood by himself; believers stand in a root, impossible to be shaken or corrupted: by this means the "promise is sure to all the seed" (Rom. 4:16). Christ is a stronger person than Adam, who can never break covenant with God, and the truth of God will never break covenant with him. We are united to a more excellent Head than Adam: instead of a root merely human, we have a root Divine as well as human. In him we had the righteousness of a creature merely human; in this we have a righteousness divine, the righteousness of God-man; the stock is no

longer in our own hands, but in the hands of One that cannot embezzle it, or forfeit it: Divine goodness hath deposited it strongly for our security. The stamp we receive, by the Divine goodness, from the second Adam, is more noble than that we should have received from the first, had he remained in his created state Adam was formed of the dust of the earth, and the new man is formed by the incorruptible seed of the word; and at the resurrection, the body of man shall be endued with better qualities than Adam had at creation: they shall be like that glorious Body which is in heaven, in union with the person of the “Son of God” (Phil. 3:21). Adam, at the best, had but an earthly body, but the Lord from heaven hath a “heavenly body,” the image of which shall be borne by the redeemed ones, as they have borne the image of the earthly (1 Cor. 15:47–49). Adam had the society of beasts; redeemed ones expect, by Divine goodness in redemption, a commerce with angels; as they are reconciled to them by his death, they shall certainly come to converse with them at the consummation of their happiness; as they are made of one family, so they will have a peculiar intimacy: Adam had a paradise, and redeemed ones a heaven provided for them; a happier place with a richer furniture. It is much to give so complete a paradise to innocent Adam; but more to give heaven to an ungrateful Adam, and his rebellious posterity: it had been abundant goodness to have restored us to the same condition in that paradise from whence we were ejected; but a superabundant goodness to bestow upon us a better habitation in heaven, which we could never have expected. How great is that goodness, when by sin we were fallen to be worse than nothing, that He should raise us to be more than what we were; that restored us, not to the first step of our creation; but to many degrees of elevation beyond it! not only restores us, but prefers us; not only striking off our chains, to set us free, but clothing us with a robe of righteousness, to render us honorable; not only quenching our hell, but preparing a heaven; not re-garnishing an earthly, but providing a richer palace: his goodness was so great, that, after it had rescued us, it would not content itself with the old furniture, but makes all new for us in another world; a new wine to drink; a new heaven to dwell in; a more magnificent structure for our habitation: thus hath Goodness prepared for us a straiter union, a stronger life, a purer righteousness, an unshaken standing, and a fuller glory; all more excellent than was within the

compass of innocent Adam's possession.

vii. This goodness in redemption extends itself to the lower creation. It takes in, not only man, but the whole creation, except the fallen angels, and gives a participation of it to insensible creatures; upon the account of this redemption the sun, and all kind of creatures, were preserved, which otherwise had sunk into destruction upon the sin of man, and ceased from their being, as man had utterly ceased from his happiness (Col. 1:17): "By him all things consist." The fall of man brought, not only a misery upon himself, but a vanity upon the creature; the earth groaned under a curse for his sake. They were all created for the glory of God, and the support of man in the performance of his duty, who was obliged to use them for the honor of Him that created them both. Had man been true to his obligations, and used the creatures for that end to which they were dedicated by the Creator; as God would have then rejoiced in his works, so his works would have rejoiced in the honor of answering so excellent an end: but when man lost his integrity, the creatures lost their perfection; the honor of them was stained when they were debased to serve the lusts of a traitor, instead of supporting the duty of a subject, and employed in the defence of the vices of men against the precepts and authority of their common Sovereign. This was a vilifying the creature, as it would be a vilifying the sword of a prince, which is, for the maintenance of justice, to be used for the murder of an innocent; and a dishonoring a royal mansion, to make it a storehouse for a dunghill. Had those things the benefit of sense, they would groan under this disgrace, and rise up in indignation against them that offered them this affront, and turned them from their proper end. When sin entered, the heavens that were made to shine upon man, and the earth that was made to bear and nourish an innocent creature, were now subjected to serve a rebellious creature; and as man turned against God, so he made those instruments against God, to serve his enmity, luxury, sensuality. Hence the creatures are said to groan (Rom. 8:22); "The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." They would really groan, had they understanding to be sensible of the outrage done them. "The whole creation."—It is the pang of universal nature, the agony of the whole creation, to be alienated from the original use for which they were intended, and be disjointed from their end to serve the disloyalty of a rebel. The

drunkard's cup, and the glutton's table, the adulterer's bed, and the proud man's purple, would groan against the abuser of them. But when all the fruits of redemption shall be completed, the goodness of God shall pour itself upon the creatures, deliver them from the "bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21); they shall be reduced to their true end, and returned in their original harmony. As the creation doth passionately groan under its vanity, so it doth "earnestly expect and wait for its deliverance at the time of the manifestation of the sons of God" (ver. 19). The manifestation of the sons of God is the attainment of the liberty of the creature. They shall be freed from the vanity under which they are enslaved; as it entered by sin, it shall vanish upon the total removal of sin. What use they were designed for in paradise they will have afterwards, except that of the nourishment of men, who shall be as "angels, neither eating nor drinking:" the glory of God shall be seen and contemplated in them. It can hardly be thought that God made the world to be little a moment after he had reared it, sullied by the sin of man, and turned from its original end, without thoughts of a restoration of it to its true end, as well as man to his lost happiness. The world was made for man: man hath not yet enjoyed the creature in the first intention of them; sin made an interruption in that fruition. As redemption restores man to his true end, so it restores the creatures to their true use. The restoration of the world to its beauty and order was the design of the Divine goodness in the coming of Christ, as it is intimated in Isa. 11:6-9; as he "came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it," so he came not to destroy the creatures, but to repair them: to restore to God the honor and pleasure of the creation, and restore to the creatures their felicity in restoring their order: the fall corrupted it, and the full redemption of men restores it. The last time is called, not a time of destruction, but a "time of restitution," and that "of all things" (Acts 3:21) of universal nature, the main part of the creation at least. All those things which were the effects of sin will be abolished; the removal of the cause beats down the effect. The disorder and unruliness of the creature, arising from the venom of man's transgression, all the fierceness of one creature against another shall vanish. The world shall be nothing but an universal smile; nature shall put on triumphant vestments: there shall be no affrighting thunders, choking mists, venomous vapors, or poisonous plants. It would not

else be a restitution of all things. They are now subject to be wasted by judgments for the sin of their possessor, but the perfection of man's redemptions shall free them from every misery. They have an advancement at the present, for they are under a more glorious Head, as being the possession of Christ, the heavenly Adam, much superior to the first: as it is the glory of a person to be a servant to a prince, rather than a peasant. And afterwards, they shall be elevated to a better state, sharing in man's happiness, as well as they did in his misery: as servants are interested in the good fortune of their master, and bettered by his advance in his prince's favor. As man in his first creation was mutable and liable to sin, so the creatures were liable to vanity; but as man by grace shall be freed from the mutability, so shall the creatures be freed from the fears of an invasion, by the vanity that sullied them before. The condition of the servants shall be suited to that of their Lord, for whom they were designed: hence, all creatures are called upon to rejoice upon the perfection of salvation, and the appearance of Christ's royal authority in the world. If they were to be destroyed, there would be no ground to invite them to triumph (Psalm 96:11, 12; 118:7, 8). Thus doth Divine goodness spread its kind arms over the whole creation.

Thirdly. The third thing is the goodness of God in his *Government*. That goodness that despised not their creation, doth not despise their conduct. The same goodness that was the head that framed them, is the helm that guides them; his goodness hovers over the whole frame, either to prevent any wild disorders unsuitable to his creating end, or to conduct them to those ends which might illustrate his wisdom and goodness to his creatures. His goodness doth no less incline him to provide for them, than to frame them. It is the natural inclination of man to love what is purely the birth of his own strength or skill. He is fond of preserving his own inventions, as well as laborious in inventing them. It is the glory of a man to preserve them, as well as to produce them. God loves everything which he hath made, which love could not be without a continued diffusiveness to them suitable to the end for which he made them. It would be a vain goodness, if it did not interest itself in managing the world, as well as erecting it: without his government everything in the world would jostle against one another: the beauty of it would be more defaced, it would be an unruly mass, a confused

chaos rather than a *Κόσμος*, a comely world. If Divine goodness respected it when it was nothing, it would much more respect it when it was something, by the sole virtue of his power and goodwill to it, without any motive from anything else than himself, because there was nothing else but himself. But since he sees his own stamp in things without himself in the creature, which is a kind of motive or moving object to Divine goodness to preserve it, when there was nothing without himself that could be any motive to Him to create it: as when God hath created a creature, and it falls into misery, that misery of the creature, though it doth not necessitate his mercy, yet meeting with such an affection as mercy in his nature, is a moving object to excite it; as the repentance of Nineveh drew forth the exercise of his pity and preserving goodness. Certainly, since God is good, he is bountiful; and if bountiful, he is provident. He would seem to envy and malign his creatures, if he did not provide for them, while he intends to use them: but infinite goodness cannot be effected with envy; for all envy implies a want of that good in ourselves, which we regard with so evil an eye in another. But God, being infinitely blessed, hath not the want of any good that can be a rise to such an uncomely disposition. The Jews thought that Divine goodness extended only to them in an immediate and particular care, and left all other nations and things to the guidance of angels. But the Psalmist (Psalm 107, a psalm calculated for the celebration of this perfection, in the continued course of his providence throughout all ages of the world) ascribes to Divine goodness immediately all the advantages men meet with. He helps them in their actions, presides over their motions, inspects their several conditions, labors day and night in a perpetual care of them. The whole life of the world is linked together by Divine goodness. Everything is ordered by him in the place where he hath set it, without which the world would be stripped of that excellency it hath by creation.

1st. This goodness is evident in the care he hath of all creatures. There is a peculiar goodness to his people; but this takes not away his general goodness to the world: though a master of a family hath a choicer affection to those that have an affinity to him in nature, and stand in a nearer relation, as his wife, children, servants; yet he hath a regard to his cattle, and other creatures he nourisheth in his house. All things are not only before his eyes; but in his bosom; he is the nurse of all creatures, supplying their wants, and sustaining

them from that nothing they tend to. The “earth is full of his riches” (Psalm 104:24); not a creek or cranny but partakes of it. Abundant goodness daily hovers over it, as well as hatched it. The whole world swims in the rich bounty of the Creator, as the fish do in the largeness of the sea, and birds in the spaciousness of the air. The goodness of God is the river that waters the whole earth. As a lifeless picture casts its eye upon every one in the room, so doth a living God upon everything in the world. And as the sun illuminates all things which are capable of partaking of its light, and diffuseth its beams to all things which are capable of receiving them, so doth God spread his wings over the whole creation, and neglects nothing, wherein he sees a mark of his first creating goodness.

1. His goodness is seen, in preserving all things. “O Lord, thou preservest man and beast” (Psalm 36:6). Not only man, but beasts, and beasts as well as men; man, as the most excellent creature, and beasts as being serviceable to man, and instruments of his worldly happiness. He continues the species of all things, concurs with them in their distinct offices, and quickens the womb of nature. He visits man every day, and makes him feel the effects of his providence, in giving him “fruitful seasons, and filling his heart with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17), as witnesses of his liberality and kindness to man. “The earth is visited and watered by the river of God. He settles the furrows of the earth, and makes it soft with showers,” that the corn may be nourished in its womb, and spring up to maturity. “He crowns the year with his goodness, and his paths drop fatness. The little hills rejoice on every side; the pastures are clothed with flocks, and the valleys are covered over with corn,” as the Psalmist elegantly says (Psalm 65:9, 10; 107:35, 36). He waters the ground by his showers, and preserves the little seed from the rapine of animals. “He draws not out the evil arrows of famine,” as the expression is (Ezek. 5:16). Every day shines with new beams of his Divine goodness. The vastness of this city, and the multitudes of living souls in it, is an astonishing argument. What streams of nourishing necessaries are daily conveyed to it! Every mouth hath bread to sustain it; and among all the number of poor in the bowels and skirts of it, how rare is it to hear of any starved to death for want of it! Every day he “spreads a table” for us, and that with varieties, and “fills our cups” (Psalm 23:5). He shortens not his hand, nor withdraws his bounty: the increase of one year by his blessing,

restores what was spent by the former. He is the “strength of our life” (Psalm 27:1), continuing the vigor of our limbs, and the health of our bodies; secures us from “terrors by night, and the arrows of diseases that fly by day” (Psalm 91:5); “sets a hedge about our estates” (Job 1:10), and defends them against the attempts of violence; preserves our houses from flames that might consume them, and our persons from the dangers that lie in wait for them; watcheth over us “in our goings out, and our comings in” (Psalm 121:8), and way-lays a thousand dangers we know not of: and employs the most glorious creatures in heaven in the service of mean “men upon earth” (Psalm 91:11): not by a faint order, but a pressing charge over them, to “keep them in all his ways.” Those that are his immediate servants before his throne, he sends to minister to them that were once his rebels. By an angel he conducted the affairs of Abraham (Gen. 24:7): and by an angel secured the life of Ishmael (Gen.

21:17): glorious angels for mean man, holy angels for impure man, powerful angels for weak man. How in the midst of great dangers, doth his sudden light dissipate our great darkness, and create a deliverance out of nothing! How often is he found a present help in time of trouble! When all other assistance seems to stand at a distance, he flies to us beyond our expectations, and raises us up on the sudden from the pit of our dejectedness, as well as that of our danger, exceeding our wishes, and shooting beyond our desires as well as our deserts. How often, in the time of confusion, doth he preserve an indefensible place from the attacks of enemies, like a bark in the midst of a tempestuous sea! the rage falls upon other places round about them, and, by a secret efficacy of Divine goodness, is not able to touch them. He hath peculiar preservations for his Israel in Egypt, and his Lots in Sodom, his Daniels in the lions’ dens, and his children in a fiery furnace. He hath a tenderness for all, but a peculiar affection to those that are in covenant with him.

2. The goodness of God is seen in taking care of the animals and inanimate things. Divine goodness embraceth in its arms the lowest worm as well as the loftiest cherubim: he provides food for the “crying ravens” (Psalm 147:9), and a prey for the appetite of the “hungry lion” (Psalm 104:21): “He opens his hand, and fills with

good those innumerable creeping things, both small and great beasts; they are all waiters upon him, and all are satisfied by their bountiful Master” (Psalm 104:25–28). They are better provided for by the hand of heaven, than the best favorite is by an earthly prince: for “they are filled with good.” He hath made channels in the wildest deserts, for the watering of beasts, and trees for the nests and “habitation of birds” (Psalm 104:10, 12, 17). As a Lawgiver to the Jews, he took care that the poor beast should not be abused by the cruelty of man: he provided for the ease of the laboring beast in that command of the Sabhath, wherein he provided for his own service: the cattle was to do “no work” on it (Exod. 20:10). He ordered that the mouth of the ox should not be muzzled while it trod out the corn (Deut. 25:4, it being the manner of those countries to separate the corn from the stalk by that means, as we do in this by thrashing), regarding it as a part of cruelty to deprive the poor beast of tasting, and satisfying itself with that which he was so officious by his labor to prepare for the use of man. And when any met with a nest of young birds, though they might take the young to their use, they were forbidden to seize upon the dam, that she might not lose the objects of her affection and her own liberty in one day (Deut. 22:6).

And see how God enforceth this precept with a threatening of a shortness of life, if they transgressed it (Deut. 22:7)! “Thou shalt let the dam go, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.” He would revenge the cruelty to dumb creatures with the shortness of the oppressor’s life: nor would he have cruelty used to creatures that were separated for his worship: he therefore provides that a cow, or an ewe, and their young ones, should “not be killed for sacrifice in one day” (Lev. 22:28). All which precepts, say the Jews, are to teach men mercifulness to their beasts; so much doth Divine goodness bow down itself, to take notice of those mean creatures, which men have so little regard to, but for their own advantage; yea, he is so good, that he would have worship declined for a time in favor of a distressed beast; the “helping a sheep, or an ox, or an ass, out of a pit,” was indulged them even “on the Sabhath-day,” a day God had peculiarly sanctified and ordered for his service (Matt. 12:11; Luke 14:5): in this case he seems to remit for a time the rights of the Deity for the rescue of a mere animal. His goodness extends not only to those kind of creatures that have life, but to the insensible ones; he clothes the grass, and “arrays the lilies of the

field” with a greater glory than Solomon had upon his throne (Matt. 6:28, 29); and such care he had of those trees which bore fruit for the maintenance of man or beast, that he forbids any injury to be offered to them, and bars the rapine and violence, which by soldiers used to be practised (Deut. 20:19), though it were to promote the conquest of their enemy. How much goodness is it, that he should think of so small a thing as man! How much more that he should concern himself in things that seem so petty as beasts and trees! Persons seated in a sovereign throne, think it a debasing of their dignity to regard little things: but God, who is infinitely greater in majesty above the mightiest potentate, and the highest angel, yet is so infinitely good, as to employ his divine thoughts about the meanest things. He who possesses the praises of angels, leaves not off the care of the meanest creatures: and that majesty that dwells in a pure heaven, and an inconceivable light, stoops to provide for the ease of those creatures that he and lodge in the dirt and dung of the earth. How should we be careful not to use those unmercifully, which God takes such care of in his law, and not to distrust that goodness, that opens his hand so liberally to creatures of another rank!

3. The goodness of God is seen in taking care of the meanest rational creatures; as servants and criminals. He provided for the liberty of slaves, and would not have their chains continue longer than the seventh year, unless they would voluntarily continue under the power of their masters; and that upon pain of his displeasure, and the withdrawing his blessing (Deut. 15:18). And though, by the laws of many nations, masters had an absolute power of life and death over their servants, yet God provided that no member should be lamed, not an eye, no, nor a tooth, struck out, but the master was to pay for his folly and fury the price of the “liberty of his servant” (Exod. 21:26, 27): he would not suffer the abused servant to be any longer under the power of that man that had not humanity to use him as one of the same kindred and blood with himself. And though those servants might be never so wicked, yet, when unjustly afflicted, God would interest himself as their guardian in their protection and delivery. And when a poor slave had been provoked, by the severity of his master’s fury, to turn fugitive from him, he was, by Divine order, not to be delivered up again to his master’s fury, but dwell in that city, and with that person, to whom he had

“fled for refuge” (Deut. 23:15, 16). And when public justice was to be administered upon the lesser sort of criminals, the goodness of God ordered the “number of blows” not to exceed forty, and left not the fury of man to measure out the punishment to excess (Deut. 25:3). And in any just quarrel against a provoking and injuring enemy, he ordered them not to ravage with the sword till they had summoned a rendition of the place (Deut. 20:10). And as great a care he took of the poor, that they should have the gleanings both of the vineyard and field (Lev. 19:10; 23:22), and not be forced to pay “usury for the money lent them” (Exod. 22:25).

4. His goodness is seen in taking care of the wickedest persons. “The earth is full of his goodness” (Psalm 37:5). The wicked as well as the good enjoy it; they that dare lift up their hands against heaven in the posture of rebels, as well as those that lift up their eyes in the condition of suppliants. To do good to a criminal, far surmounts that goodness that flows down upon an innocent object: now God is not only good to those that have some degrees of goodness, but to those that have the greatest degrees of wickedness, to men that turn his liberality into affronts of him, and have scarce an appetite to anything but the violation of his authority and goodness. Though, upon the fall of Adam, we have lost the pleasant habitation of paradise, and the creatures made for our use are fallen from their original excellency and sweetness; yet he hath not left the world utterly incommodious for us, but yet stores it with things not only for the preservation, but delight of those that make their whole lives invectives against this good God. Manna fell from heaven for the rebellious as well as for the obedient Israelites. Cain as well as Abel, and Esau as well as Jacob, had the influences of his sun, and the benefits of his showers. The world is yet a kind of paradise to the veriest beasts among mankind; the earth affords its riches, the heavens its showers, and the sun its light, to those that injure and blaspheme him: “He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45). The wickedest breathe in his air, walk upon his earth, and drink of his water, as well as the best. The sun looks with as pleasant and bright an eye upon a rebellious Absalom, as a righteous David; the earth yields its plants and medicines to one as well as to the other; it is seldom that He deprives any of the faculties of their souls, or any members of their bodies. God distributes his blessings where he

might shoot his thunders; and darts his light on those who deserve an eternal darkness; and presents the good things of the earth to those that merit the miseries of hell; for “the earth, and the fulness thereof, is the Lord’s” (Psalm 24:1); everything in it is his in propriety, ours in trust; it is his corn, his wine (Hos. 2:8); he never divested himself of the propriety, though he grants us the use; and by those good things he supports multitudes of wicked men, not one or two, but the whole shoal of them in the world; for he is “the Saviour of all men,” *i. e.* is the preserver of all men (1 Tim. 4:10). And as he created them, when he foresaw they would be wicked; so he provides for them, when he beholds them in their ungodliness. The ingratitude of men stops not the current of his bounty, nor tires his liberal hand; howsoever unprofitable and injurious men are to him, he is liberal to them; and his goodness is the more admirable, by how much the more the unthankfulness of men is provoking: he sometimes affords to the worst a greater portion of these earthly goods; they often swim in wealth, when others pine away, their lives in poverty. And the silk-worm yields its bowels to make purple for tyrants, while the oppressed scarce have from the sheep wool enough to cover their nakedness; and though he furnish men with those good things, upon no other account than what princes do, when they nourish criminals in a prison till the time of their execution, it is a mark of his goodness. Is it not the kindness of a prince to treat his rebels deliciously? to give them the liberty of the prison, and the enjoyments of the delights of the place, rather than to load their legs with fetters, and lodge them in a dark and loathsome dungeon, till he orders them, for their crime, to be conducted to the scaffold or gibbet? Since God is thus kind to the vilest men, whose meanness, by reason of sin, is beyond that of any other creature, as to shoot such rays of goodness upon them; how inexpressible would be the expressions of his goodness, if the Divine image were as pure and bright upon them as it was upon innocent Adam!

2d. His goodness is evident in the preservation of human society. It belongs to his power that he is able to do it, but to his goodness that he is willing to do it.

1. This goodness appears in prescribing rules for it. The moral law consists but of ten precepts, and there are more of them ordered for the support of human society, than for the adoration and honor of

himself (Exod. 20:1, 2); four for the rights of God, and six for the rights of man, and his security in his authority, relations, life, goods, and reputation; superiors not to be dishonored, life not to be invaded, chastity not to be stained, goods not to be filched, good name not to be cracked by false witness, nor anything belonging to our neighbor to be coveted; and in the whole Scripture, not only that which was calculated for the Jews, but compiled for the whole world; he hath fixed rules for the ordering all relations, magistrates, and subjects; parents and children; husbands and wives; masters and servants; rich and poor, find their distinct qualifications and duties. There would be a paradisiacal state, if men had a goodness to observe what God hath had a goodness to order for the strengthening the sinews of human society; the world would not groan under oppressing tyrants, nor princes tremble under discontented subjects, or mighty rebels; children would not be provoked to anger by the unreasonableness of their parents, nor parents sink under grief by the rebellion of their children; masters would not tyrannize over the meanest of their servants, nor servants invade the authority of their masters.

2. The goodness of God in the preserving human society, is seen in setting a magistracy to preserve it. Magistracy is from God in its original; the charter was drawn up in paradise; civil subordination must have been had had man remained in innocence; but the charter was more explicitly renewed and enlarged at the restoration of the world after the deluge, and given out to man under the broad seal of heaven; "Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). The command of shedding the blood of a murderer was a part of his goodness, to secure the lives of those that bore his image. Magistrates are "the shields of the earth," but they "belong to God" (Psalm 47:9). They are fruits of his goodness in their original, and authority; were there no magistracy, there would be no government, no security to any man under his own vine and fig tree; the world would be a den of wild beasts preying upon one another; every one would do what seems good in his eyes; the loss of government is a judgment God brings upon a nation when men become "as the fishes of the sea," to devour one another, because they "have no ruler over them" (Hab. 1:14). Private dissensions will break out into public disorders and combustions.

3. The goodness of God in the preservation of human society, is seen in the restraints of the passions of men. He sets bounds to the passions of men as well as to the rollings of the sea; "He stilleth the noise of the waves, and the tumults of the people" (Psalm 65:7). Though God hath erected a magistracy to stop the breaking out of those floods of licentiousness, which swell in the hearts of men; yet, if God should not hold stiff reins on the necks of those tumultuous and foaming passions, the world would be a place of unruly confusion, and hell triumph upon earth; a crazy state would be quickly broke in pieces by boisterous nature. The tumults of a people could no more be quelled by the force of man, than the rage of the sea by a puff of breath; without Divine goodness, neither the wisdom nor watchfulness of the magistrates, nor the industry of officers, could preserve a state. The laws of men would be too slight to curb the lusts of men, if the goodness of God did not restrain them by a secret hand, and interweave their temporal security with observance of those laws. The sons of Belial did murmur when Saul was chosen king; and that they did no more was the goodness of God, for the preservation of human society. If God did not restrain the impetuosity of men's lusts, they would be the entire ruin of human society; their lusts would render them as bad as beasts, and change the world into a savage wilderness.

4. The goodness of God is seen in the preservation of human society, in giving various inclinations to men for public advantage. If all men had an inclination to one science or art, they would all stand idle spectators of one another; but God hath bestowed various dispositions and gifts upon men, for the promoting the common good, that they may not only be useful to themselves, but to society. He will have none idle, none unuseful, but every one acting in a due place, according to their measures, for the good of others.

5. The goodness of God is seen in the witness he bears against those sins that disturb human society. In those cases he is pleased to interest himself in a more signal manner, to cool those that make it their business to overturn the order he hath established for the good of the earth. He doth not so often in this world punish those faults committed immediately against his own honor, as those that put the world into a hurry and confusion: as a good governor is more merciful to crimes against himself, than those against his

community. It is observed that the most turbulent seditious persons in a state come to most violent ends, as Corah, Adonijah, Zimri: Ahithopel draws Absalom's sword against David and Israel, and the next is, he twists a halter for himself: Absalom heads a party against his father, and God, by a goodness to Israel, hangs him up, and prevents not its safety by David's indulgence, and a future rebellion, had life been spared by the fondness of his father. His providence is more evident in discovering disturbers, and the causes that move them, in defeating their enterprises, and digging the contrivers out of their caverns and lurking holes: in such cases, God doth so act, and use such methods, that he silenceth any creature from challenging any partnership with him in the discovery. He doth more severely in this world correct those actions that unlink the mutual assistance between man and man, and the charitable and kind correspondence he would have kept up. The sins for which the "wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience" (Col. 3:5, 6) in this world are of this sort; and when princes will be oppressing the people, God will be "pouring contempt on the princes, and set the poor on high from affliction" (Psalm 107:40, 41). An evidence of God's care and kindness in the preserving human society, is those strange discoveries of murders, though never so clandestine and subtilly committed, more than of any other crime among men: Divine care never appears more than in bringing those hidden and injurious works of darkness to light, and a due punishment.

6. His goodness is seen in ordering mutual offices to one another against the current of men's passions. Upon this account he ordered, in his laws for the government of the Israelites, that a man should reduce the wandering beast of his enemy to the hand of his rightful proprietor, though he were a provoking enemy; and also "help the poor beast that belonged to one that hated him, when he saw him sink under his burden" (Exod. 23:4, 5). When mutual assistance was necessary, he would not have men considered as enemies, or considered as wicked, but as of the same blood with ourselves, that we might be serviceable to one another for the preservation of life and goods.

7. His goodness is seen in remitting something of his own right, for the preserving a due dependence and subjection. He declines the right he had to the vows of a minor, or one under the power of

another, waving what he might challenge by the voluntary obligation of his creature, to keep up the due order between parents and children, husbands and wives, superiors and inferiors; those that were under the power of another, as a child under his parents, or a wife under her husband, if they had [vowed a vow unto the Lord,] which concerned his honor and worship, it was void without the approbation of that person under whose charge they were (Num. 30:3, 4, &c.). Though God was the Lord of every man's goods, and men but his stewards; and though he might have taken to himself what another had offered by a vow, since whatsoever could be offered was God's own, though it was not the parties' own who offered it; yet God would not have himself adored by his creature to the prejudice of the necessary ties of human society; he lays aside what he might challenge by his sovereign dominion, that there might not be any breach of that regular order which was necessary for the preservation of the world. If Divine goodness did not thus order things, he would not do the part of a Rector of the world; the beauty of the world would be much defaced, it would be a confused mass of men and women, or rather, beasts and bedlams. Order renders every city, every nation, yea, the whole earth, beautiful: this is an effect of Divine goodness.

3d. His goodness is evident in encouraging anything of moral goodness in the world. Though moral goodness cannot claim an eternal reward, yet it hath been many times rewarded with a temporal happiness; he hath often signally rewarded acts of honesty, justice, and fidelity, and punished the contrary by his judgments, to deter man from such an unworthy practice, and encourage others to what was comely, and of a general good report in the world. Ahab's humiliation put a demurrer to God's judgments intended against him; and some ascribe the great victories and success of the Romans to that justice which was observed among themselves. Baruch was but an amanuensis to the Prophet Jeremy to write his prophecy, and very despondent of his own welfare (Jer. 45:13); God upon that account provides for his safety, and rewards the industry of his service with the security of his person; he was not a statesman, to declare against the corrupt counsels of them that sat at the helm, nor a prophet, to declare against their profane practices, but the prophet's scribe; and as he writes in God's service the prophecies revealed to the prophet, God writes his name in the roll of those that

were designed for preservation in that deluge of judgments which were to come upon that nation. Epicurus complained of the administration of God, that the virtuous moralist had not sufficient smiles of Divine favor, nor the swinish sensualist frowns of Divine indignation. But what if they have not always that confluence of outward wealth and pleasures, but remain in the common level? yet they have the happiness and satisfaction of a clear reputation, the esteem of men, and the secret applauses of their very enemies, besides the inward ravishments upon an exercise of virtue, and the commendatory subscription of their own hearts, a dainty the vicious man knows not of; they have an inward applause from God as a reward of Divine goodness, instead of those racks of conscience upon which the profane are sometimes stretched. He will not let the worst men do him any service (though they never intended in the act of service him, but themselves) without giving them their wages: he will not let them hit him in the teeth as if he were beholden to them. If Nebuchadnezzar be the instrument of God's judgments against Tyrus and Israel, he will not only give him that rich city, but a richer country, Egypt, the granary for her neighbors, a wages above his work. In this is Divine goodness eminent, since, in the most moral actions, as there is something beautiful, so there is something mixed, hateful to the infinitely exact holiness of the Divine nature; yet he will not let that which is pleasing to him go unrewarded, and defeat the expectations of men, as men do with those they employ, when, for one flaw in an action, they deny them the reward due for the other part. God encouraged and kept up morality in the cities of the Gentiles for the entertainment of a further goodness in the doctrine of the gospel when it should be published among them.

4th. Divine goodness is eminent in providing a Scripture as a rule to guide us, and continuing it in the world. If man be a rational creature, governable by a law, can it be imagined there should be no revelation of that law to him? Man, by the light of reason, must needs confess himself to be in another condition than he was by creation, when he came first out of the hands of God; and can it be thought, that God should keep up the world under so many sins against the light of nature, and bestow so many providential influences, to invite men to return to him, and acquaint no men in the world with the means of that return? Would he exact an obedience of men, as their consciences witness he doth, and furnish

them with no rules to guide them in the darkness they cannot but acknowledge that they have contracted? No; Divine goodness hath otherwise provided: this Bible we have is his word and rule. Had it been a falsity and imposture, would that goodness, that watches over the world, have continued it so long? That goodness that overthrew the burdensome rites of Moses, and expelled the foolish idolatry of the Pagans, would have discovered the imposture of this, had it not been a transcript of his own will. Whatever mistakes he suffers to remain in the world, what goodness had there been to suffer this anciently amongst the Jews, and afterwards to open it to the whole worlds, to abuse men in religion and worship, which so nearly concerned himself and his own honor, that the world should be deceived by the devil without a remedy in the morning of its appearance? It hath been honored and admired by some heathens, when they have cast their eyes upon it, and their natural light made them behold some footsteps of a Divinity in it. If this, therefore, be not a Divine prescript, let any that deny it, bring as good arguments for any book else, as can be brought for this. Now, the publishing this is an argument of Divine goodness: it is designed to win the affections of beggarly man, to be espoused to a God of eternal blessedness and immense riches. It speaks words in season: no doubts but it resolves; no spiritual distemper but it cures; no condition but it hath a comfort to suit it. It is a garden which the hand of Divine bounty hath planted for us; in it he condescends to shadow himself in those expressions that render him in some manner intelligible to us. Had God wrote in a loftiness of style suitable to the greatness of his majesty, his writing had been as little understood by us, as the brightness of his glory can be beheld by us. But he draws phrases from our affairs, to express his mind to us; he incarnates himself in his word to our minds, before his Son was incarnate in the flesh to the eyes of men: he ascribes to himself eyes, ears, hands, that we might have, from the consideration of ourselves, and the whole human nature, a conception of his perfections: he assumes to himself the members of our bodies, to direct our understandings in the knowledge of his Deity; this is his goodness.

Again, though the Scripture was written upon several occasions, yet in the dictating of it, the goodness of God cast his eye upon the last ages of the world (1 Cor. 10:11): "They are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." It was

given to the Israelites, but Divine goodness intended it for the future Gentiles. The old writings of the prophets were thus designed, much more the later writings of the apostles. Thus did Divine goodness think of us, and prepare his records for us, before we were in the world: these he hath written plain for our instruction, and wrapped up in them what is necessary for our salvation: it is clear to inform our understanding, and rich to comfort us in our misery; it is a light to guide us, and a cordial to refresh us; it is a lamp to our feet, and a medicine for our diseases; a purifier of our filth, and a restorer of us in our faintings. He hath by his goodness sealed the truth of it, by his efficacy on multitudes of men: he hath made it the “word of regeneration” (James 1:18). Men, wilder and more monstrous than beasts, have been tamed and changed by the power of it: it hath raised multitudes of dead men from a grave fuller of horror than any earthly one. Again, Goodness was in all ages sending his letters of advice and counsel from heaven, till the canon of the Scripture was closed; sometimes he wrote to chide a froward people, sometimes to cheer up an oppressed and disconsolate people, according to the state wherein they were; as we may observe by the several seasons wherein parts of Scripture were written. It was His goodness that he first revealed anything of his will after the fall; it was a further degree of goodness, that he would add more cubits to its stature; before he would lay aside his pencil, it grew up to that bulk wherein we have it. And his goodness is further seen in the preserving it; he hath triumphed over the powers that opposed it, and showed himself good to the instruments that propagated it: he hath maintained it against the blasts of hell, and spread it in all languages against the obstructions of men and devils. The sun of his word is by his kindness preserved in our horizon, as well as the sun in the heavens. How admirable is Divine goodness! He hath sent his Son to die for us, and his written word to instruct us, and his Spirit to edge it for an entrance into our souls: he hath opened the womb of the earth to nourish us, and sent down the records of heaven to direct us in our pilgrimage: he hath provided the earth for our habitation, while we are travellers, and sent his word to acquaint us with a felicity at the end of our journey, and the way to attain in another world what we want in this, *viz.* a happy immortality.

5th. His goodness in his government is evident, in conversions of men. though this work be wrought by his power, yet his power

was first solicited by his goodness. It was his rich goodness that he would employ his power to pierce the scales of a heart as hard as those of the “leviathan.” It was this that opened the ears of men to hear him, and draws them from the hurry of worldly cares, and the charms of sensual pleasures, and, which is the top of all, the impostures and cheats of their own hearts. It is this that sends a spark of his wrath into men’s consciences, to put them to a stand in sin, that he might not send down a shower of brimstone eternally to consume their persons. This it was that first showed you the excellency of the Redeemer, and brought you to taste the sweetness of his blood, and find your security in the agonies of his death. It is his goodness to call one man and not another, to turn Paul in his course, and lay hold of no other of his companions. It is his goodness to call any, when he is not bound to call one.

1. It is his goodness to pitch upon mean and despicable men in the eye of the world; to call this poor publican, and overlook that proud Pharisee, this man that sits upon a dunghill, and neglect him that glisters in his purple. His majesty is not enticed by the lofty titles of men, nor, which is more worth, by the learning and knowledge of men. “Not many wise, not many mighty,” not many doctors, not many lords, though some of them; but his goodness condescends to the “base things” of the world, and things which are “despised” (1 Cor. 1:26–28). “The poor receive the gospel” (Matt. 11:5), when those that are more acute, and furnished with a more apprehensive reason, are not touched by it.

2. The worst men. He seizeth sometimes upon men most soiled, and neglects others that seem more clean and less polluted. He turns men in their course in sin, that, by their infernal practices, have seemed to have gone to school to hell, and to have sucked in the sole instructions of the devil. He lays hold upon some when they are most under actual demerit, and snatches them as fire-brands out of the fire, as upon Paul when fullest of rage against him; and shoots a beam of grace, where nothing could be justly expected but a thunderbolt of wrath. It is his goodness to visit any, when they he putrefying in their loathsome lusts; to draw near to them who have been guilty of the greatest contempt of God, and the light of nature; the murdering Manassehs, the persecuting Sauls, the Christ-crucifying Jews,—persons in whom lusts had had a peaceable

possession and empire for many years.

3. His goodness appears in converting men possessed with the greatest enmity against him, while he was dealing with them. All were in such a state, and framing contrivances against him, when Divine goodness knocked at the door (Col. 1:21). He looked after us when our backs were turned upon him, and sought us when we slighted him, and were a “gainsaying people” (Rom. 10:21); when we had shaken off his convictions, and contended with our Maker, and mustered up the powers of nature against the alarms of conscience; struggled like wild bulls in a net, and blunted those darts that stuck in our souls. Not a man that is turned to him, but had lifted up the heel against his gospel grace, as well as made light of his creating goodness. Yet it hath employed itself about such ungrateful wretches, to polish those knotty and rugged pieces for heaven; and so invincibly, that he would not have his goodness defeated by the fierceness and rebellion of the flesh. Though the thing was more difficult in itself (if anything may be said to have a difficulty to omnipotency) than to make a stone live, or to turn a straw into a marble pillar. The malice of the flesh makes a man more unfit for the one, than the nature of the straw unfits it for the other.

4. His goodness appears in turning men, when they were pleased with their own misery, and unable to deliver themselves; when they preferred a hell before him, and were in love with their own vileness; when his call was our torment, and his neglect of us had been accounted our felicity. Was it not a mighty goodness to keep the light close to our eyes, when we endeavored to blow it out; and the corrosive near to our hearts, when we endeavored to tear it off, being more fond of our disease than the remedy? We should have been scalded to death with the Sodomite, had not God laid his good hand upon us, and drawn us from the approaching ruin we affected, and were loath to be freed from. And had we been displeased with our state, yet we had been as unable spiritually to raise ourselves from sin to grace, as to raise ourselves naturally from nothing to being. In this state we were when his goodness triumphed over us; when he put a hook into our nostrils, to turn us in order to our salvation; and drew us out of the pit which we had digged, when he might have left us to sink under the rigors of his justice we had merited. Now this goodness in conversion is greater than that in

creation; as in creation there is nothing to oppose him, so there was nothing to disoblige him; creation was terminated to the good of a mutable nature, and conversion tends to a supernatural good. God pronounced all creatures good at first, and man among the rest, but did not pronounce any of them, or man himself, his “portion,” his “inheritance,” his “*segullah*,” his “house,” his “diadem.” He speaks slightly of all those things which he made, the noblest heavens, as well as the lowest earth, in comparison of a true convert: “All those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been: but to this man will I look, to him that is of a contrite spirit” (Isa. 66:1, 2). It is more goodness to give the espousing grace of the covenant, than the completing glory of heaven; as it is more for a prince to marry a beggar, than only to bring her to live deliciously in his courts. All other benefits are of a meaner strain, if compared with this; there is little less of goodness in imparting the holiness of his nature, than imputing the righteousness of his Son.

6th. The Divine goodness doth appear in answering prayers. He delights to be familiarly acquainted with his people, and to hear them call upon him. He indulgeth them a free access to him, and delights in every address of an “upright man” (Prov. 15:8). The wonderful efficacy of prayer depends not upon the nature of our petitions or the temper of our soul, but the goodness of God to whom we address. Christ establisheth it upon this bottom: when he exhorts to ask in his name, he tells them the spring of all their grants is the Father’s love: “I say not, I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loves you” (John 16:26, 27). And since it is of itself incredible, that a Majesty, exalted above the cherubims, should stoop so low as to give a miserable and rebellious creature admittance to him, and afford him a gracious hearing, and a quick supply, Christ ushers in the promise of answering prayer with a note of great assurance: “I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you” (Luke 11:9, 10). I, that know the mind of my Father, and his good disposition, assure you your prayer shall not be in vain. Perhaps you will not be so ready of yourselves to imagine so great a liberality; but take it upon my word, it is true, and so you will find it. And his bounty travels, as it were, in birth, to give the greatest blessings, upon our asking, rather than the smallest: “your heavenly Father shall give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him” (ver. 13): which in Matt. 7:11, is called, “good things.” Of all the good and rich things

Divine goodness hath in his treasury, he delights to give the best upon asking, because God doth act so as to manifest the greatness of his bounty and magnificence to men; and, therefore, is delighted when men, by their petitioning him, own such a liberal disposition in him, and put him upon the manifesting it. He would rather you should ask the greatest things heaven can afford, than the trifles of this world; because his bounty is not discovered in meaner gifts: he loves to have an opportunity to manifest his affection above the liberality and tenderness of worldly fathers. He doth more wait to give in a way of grace, than we to beg; and, “therefore, will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you” (Isa. 30:18). He stands expecting your suits, and employs his wisdom in pitching upon the fittest seasons, when the manifestation of his goodness may be most gracious in itself, and the mercy you want most welcome to you; as it follows, “for the Lord is a God of judgment.” He chooseth the time wherein his doles may be most acceptable to his suppliants; “In an acceptable time have I heard thee” (Isa. 49:8). He often opens his hand while we are opening our lips, and his blessings meet our petitions at the first setting out upon their journey to heaven: “While they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isa. 65:24). How often do we hear a secret voice within us, while we are praying, saying, “Your prayer is granted;” as well as hear a voice behind us, while we are erring, saying, “This is the way, walk in it!” And his liberality exceeds often our desires, as well as our deserts; and gives out more than we had the wisdom or confidence to ask. The apostle intimates it in that doxology, “Unto Him who is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20). This power would not have been so strong an argument of comfort, if it were never put in practice: he is more liberal than his creatures are craving. Abraham petitioned for the life of Ishmael, and God promiseth him the “birth of Isaac” (Gen.

17:18, 19). Isaac asks for a “child,” and God gives him “two” (Gen.25:21, 22). Jacob desires “food” to eat, and “raiment” to put on; God confines not his bounty within the narrow limits of his petition, but instead of a “staff,” wherewith he passed Jordan, makes him repass it with “two bands” (Gen. 28:20). David asked life of God, and he gave him “life,” and a “crown” to boot (Psalm 21:2–5). The Israelites would have been contented with a free life in Egypt; they only cried to have their chains struck off; God gave them that,

and adopts them to be his “peculiar people,” and raises them into a famous state. It is a wonder that God should condescend so much, that he should hear prayers so weak, so cold, so wandering, and gather up our sincere petitions from the dung of our distractions and diffidence. David vents his astonishment at it; “Blessed be God, for he hath shown me marvellous kindness. I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless, thou heardest the voice of my supplication” (Psalm 31:21, 22). How do we wonder at the goodness of a petty man, in granting our desires; how much more should we at the humility and goodness of the most sovereign Majesty of heaven and earth!

7th. The goodness of God is seen in bearing with the infirmities of his people, and accepting imperfect obedience. Though Asa had many blots in his escutcheon, yet they are overlooked, and this note set upon record by Divine goodness, that his heart was perfect towards the Lord all his days; “But the high places were not removed: nevertheless, Asa’s heart was perfect with the Lord all his days” (1 Kings 15:14). He takes notice of a sincere, though chequered obedience, to reward it, which could claim nothing but a slight from him, if he were extreme to mark what is done amiss. When there is not an opportunity to work, but only to will, he accepts the will, as if it had passed into work and act. He sees no iniquity in Jacob (Num. 23:21), *i. e.* He sees it not so as to cast off a respect to their persons, and the acceptance of their services: his omniscience knows their sins, but his goodness doth not reject their persons. He is of so good a disposition, that he delights in a weak obedience of his servants, not in the imperfection, but in the obedience (Psalm 37:23); “He delights in the way of a good man,” though he sometimes slips in it: he accepts a poor man’s pigeon, as well as a rich man’s ox: he hath a bottle for the tears, and a book for the “services of the upright,” as well as for the most perfect obedience of angels (Psalm 56:8): he preserves their tears, as if they were a rich and generous wine, as the vine-dresser doth the expressions of the grape.

8th. The goodness of God is seen in afflictions and persecutions. If it be “good for us to be afflicted,” for which we have the psalmist’s vote (Psalm 119:71:), then goodness in God is the principal cause and orderer of the afflictions. It is his goodness to

snatch away that whence we fetch supports for our security, and encouragements for our insolence against him: he takes away the thing which we have some value for, but such as his infinite wisdom sees inconsistent with our true happiness. It is no ill-will in the physician to take away the hurtful matter the patient loves, and prescribe bitter potions, to advance that health which the other impaired; nor any mark of unkindness in a friend, to wrest a sword out of a madman's hand, wherewith he was about to stab himself, though it were beset with the most orient pearls.

To prevent what is evil, is to do us the greatest good. It is a kindness to prevent a man from falling down a precipice, though it be with a violent blow, that lays him flat upon the ground at some distance from the edge of it. By afflictions he often snaps asunder those chains which fettered us, and quells those passions which ravaged us: he sharpens our faith, and quickens our prayers; he brings us in the secret chamber of our own heart, which we had little mind before to visit by a self-examination. It is such a goodness that he will vouchsafe to correct man in order to his eternal happiness, that Job makes it one part of his astonishment (Job 7:17); "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him? and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" His strokes are often the magnifyings and exaltings of man. He sets his heart upon man, while he inflicts the smart of his rod: he shows thereby, what a high account he makes of him, and what a special affection he bears to him. When he might treat us with more severity after the breach of his covenant, and make his jealousy flame out against us in furious methods, he will not destroy his relation to us, and leave us to our own inclinations, but deal with us as a father with his children; and when he takes this course with us, it is when it cannot be avoided without our ruin: his goodness would not suffer him to do it, if our badness did not force him to it (Jer. 9:7), "I will melt them and try them, for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?" What other course can I take but this, according to the nature of man? The goldsmith hath no other way to separate the dross from the metal, but by melting it down. And when the impurities of his people necessitate him to this proceeding, "he sits as a refiner" (Matt. 3:3): he watches for the purifying the silver, not for his own profit as the goldsmith, but out of a care of them, and good will to them; as himself speaks

(Isa. 48:10), "I have refined thee, but not with silver;" or, as some read it, "not for silver." As when he scatters his people abroad for their sin, he will not leave them without his presence for their "sanctuary" (Ezek. 11:16): he would by his presence with them supply the place of ordinances, or be an ark to them in the midst of the deluge: his hand that struck them, is never without a goodness to comfort them and pity them. When Jacob was to go into Egypt, which was to prove a furnace of affliction to his offspring, God promises to go down with him, and to "bring him up again" (Gen. 46:4): a promise not only made to Jacob in his person, but to Jacob in his posterity. He returned not out of Egypt in his person, but as the father of a numerous posterity. He that would go down with their root, and afterwards bring up the branches, was certainly with them in all their oppressions: "I will go down with thee." "Down," saith one; what a word is that for a Deity! into Egypt, idolatrous Egypt; what a place is that for his holiness!

Yet O, the goodness of God! He never thinks himself low enough to do his people good, nor any place too bad for his society with them. So when he had sent away into captivity the people of Israel by the hand of the Assyrian, his bowels yearn after them in their affliction (Isa. 52:4, 5); the Assyrian "oppressed them without cause," *i. e.* without a just cause in the conqueror to inflict so great an evil upon them, but not without cause from God, whom they had provoked. "Now, therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord?" What do I here? I will not stay behind them. What do I longer here? for I will redeem again those jewels the enemy hath carried away. That chapter is a prophecy of redemption: God shows himself so good to his people in their persecutions, that he gives them occasion to glorify him in the very fires, as the Divine order is (Isa. 24:15), "Wherefore glorify the Lord in the fires."

9th. The goodness of God is seen in temptations. In those he takes occasion to show his care and watchfulness, as a father uses the distress of a child as an opportunity for manifesting the tenderness of his affection. God is at the beginning and end of every temptation; he measures out both the quality and quantity: he exposeth them not to temptation beyond the ability he had already granted them, or will at the time, or afterwards multiply in them. He hath promised his people that "the gate of hell shall not prevail

against them” (1 Cor. 10:13): that “in all things” they shall be “more than conquerors through Him that loved them.” that the most raging malice of hell shall not wrest them out of his hands. His goodness is not less in performing than it was in promising and as the care of his providence extends to the least as well as the greatest, so the watchfulness of his goodness extends to us in the least as well as in the greatest temptations.

1. The goodness of God appears in shortening temptations. None of them can go beyond their “appointed times” (Dan. 11:35): the strong blast Satan breathes cannot blow, nor the waves he raises rage one minute beyond the time God allows them; when they have done their work, and come to the period of their time, God speaks the word, and the wind and sea of hell must obey him, and retire into their dens. The more violent temptations are, the shorter time doth God allot to them. The assaults Christ had at the time of his death were of the most pressing and urging nature: the powers of darkness were all in arms against him; the reproaches and scorns put upon him, questioning his sonship, were very sharp; yet a little before his suffering he calls it but an hour (Luke 22:53), “This is your hour, and the power of darkness.” A short time that men and devils were combined against him; and the time of temptation that is to come upon all the world for their trial, is called but an “hour” (Rev. 3:10). In all such attempts, the greatness of the rage is a certain prognostic of the shortness of the season (Rev. 12:12).

2. The goodness of God appears in strengthening his people under temptations. If he doth not restrain the arm of Satan from striking, he gives us a sword to manage the combat, and a shield to bear off the blow (Eph. 6:16, 17). If he obscures his goodness in one part, he clears and brightens it in another: he either binds the strong man that he shall not stir, or gives us armor to render us victorious. If we fall, it is not for want of provision from him, but for want of our “putting on the armor of God” (Eph. 6:11, 13). When we have not a strength by nature, he gives it us by grace: he often quells those passions within which would join hands with, and second the temptation without. He either qualifies the temptation suitably to the force we have, or else supplies us with a new strength to mate the temptation he intends to let loose against us; he knows we are but dust, and his goodness will not have us unequally matched. The

Jews that in Antiochus' time were under great temptation to apostasy by reason of the violence of their persecutions, were, "out of weakness, made strong" for the combat (Heb. 11:34). The Spirit came more strongly upon Sampson when the Philistines most furiously and confidently assaulted him. His Spirit is sent to strengthen his people before the devil is permitted to tempt them (Matt. 4:2; "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit." Then; When? When the Spirit had in an extraordinary manner descended upon him (Matt. 3:16), "then," and not before. As the angels appeared to Christ, after his temptation, to minister to him, so they appeared to him before his passion, the time of the strongest powers of darkness, to strengthen him for it: he is so good, that when he knows our potsherd strength too weak, he furnisheth our recruits from his own omnipotence (Eph. 6:10); "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." He doth, as it were, breathe in something of his own almightiness, to assist us in our wrestling against principalities and powers, and make us capable to sustain the violent storms of the enemies.

3. The goodness of God is seen in temptations, in giving great comforts in or after them. The Israelites had a more immediate provision of manna from heaven when they were in the wilderness. We read not that the Father spake audibly to the Son, and gave him so loud a testimony, that he was his "beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased," till he was upon the brink of strong temptations (Matt. 3:17): nor sent angels to minister immediately to his person, till after his success (Matt. 4:11). Job never had such evidences of Divine love till after he had felt the sharp strokes of Satan's malice; he had heard of God before, by the "hearing of the ear," but afterwards is admitted into greater familiarity (Job 42:5): he had more choice appearances, clearer illuminations, and more lively instructions. And, though his people fall into temptation, yet, after their rising, they have more signal marks of his favor than others have, or themselves, before they fell. Peter had been the butt of Satan's rage, in tempting him to deny Christ, and he had shamefully complied with the temptation; yet, to him particularly, must the first news of the Redeemer's resurrection be carried, by God's order, in the mouth of an angel (Mark 16:7); "Go your ways, tell his disciples, and Peter." We have the greatest communion with God after a victory; the most refreshing truths after the devil hath done his

worst. God is ready to furnish us with strength in a combat, and cordials after it.

4. The goodness of God is seen in temptations, in discovering and advancing inward grace by this means. The issue of a temptation of a Christian is often like that of Christ's, the manifesting a greater vigor of the Divine nature, in affections to God, and enmity to sin. Spices perfume not the air with their scent till they are invaded by the fire: the truth of grace is evidenced by them. The assault of an enemy revives, and actuates that strength and courage which is in a man, perhaps unknown to himself, as well as others, till he meets with an adversary: many seem good, not that they are so in themselves, but for want of a temptation: this many times verifies a virtue, which was owned upon trust before, and discovers that we had more grace than we thought we had. The solicitations of Joseph's mistress cleared up his chastity: we are many times under temptation, as a candle under the snuffer; it seems to be out, but presently burns the clearer. Afflictions are like those clouds which look black, and eclipse the sun from the earth, but yet, when they drop, refresh that ground they seem to threaten, and multiply the grain on the earth, to serve for our food; and so our troubles, while they wet us to the skin, wash much of that dust from our graces which in a clearer day had been blown upon us. Too much rest corrupts; exercise teacheth us to manage our weapons: the spiritual armor would grow rusty, without opportunity to furbish it up; faith receives a new heart by every combat, and by every victory; like a fire, it spreads itself further, and gathers strength by the blowing of the wind. While the gardener commands his servant to shake the tree, he intends to fasten its roots, and settle it firmer in its place; and is this an ill-will to the plant?

5. His goodness is seen in temptations, in preventing sin which we were likely to fall into. Paul's thorn in the flesh was to prevent the pride of his spirit, and let out the windiness of his heart (2 Cor. 12:7), lest it should be exalted above measure. The goodness of God makes the devil a polisher, while he intends to be a destroyer. The devil never works, but suitably to some corruption lurking in us: Divine goodness makes his fiery darts a means to discover, and so to prevent the treachery of that perfidious inmate in our hearts; humility is a greater benefit than a putrefying pride; if God brings us

into a wilderness to be tempted of the evil, it is to bring down our loftiness, to starve our carnal confidence, and expel our rusting “security” (Deut. 8:2); we many times fly under a temptation to God, from whom we sat too loose before. Is it not goodness to use those means that may drive us into his own arms? It is not a want of goodness to soap the garment, in order to take away the spots; we have reason to bless God for the assaults from hell, as well as pure mercies from heaven; and it is a sin to overlook the one as well as the other, since Divine goodness shines in both.

8. The goodness of God is seen in temptations, in fitting us more for his service. Those whom God intends to make choice instruments in his service, are first seasoned with strong temptations, as timber reserved for the strong beams of a building is first exposed to sun and wind, to make it more compact for its proper use. By this men are brought to answer the end of their creation, the service of God, which is their proper goodness. Peter was, after his foil by a temptation, more courageous in his Master’s cause than before, and the more fitted to strengthen his brethren.

Thus the goodness of God appears in all parts of his government.

V. I shall now come to the *Use*. First, Of instruction.

1. If God be so good, how unworthy is the contempt or abuse of his goodness! (1.) The contempt and abuse of Divine goodness is frequent and common; it began in the first ages of the world, and commenced a few moments after the creation; it hath not to this day diminished its affronts; Adam began the dance, and his posterity have followed him; the injury was directed against this, when he entertained the seducer’s notion of God’s being an envious Deity, in not indulging such a knowledge as he might have afforded him (Gen. 3:5): “God doth know, that you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” The charge of envy is utterly inconsistent with pure goodness. What was the language of this notion, so easily entertained by Adam, but that the tempter was better than God, and the nature of God as base and sordid as the nature of a devil! Satan paints God with his own colors, represents him as envious and malicious as himself; Adam admires, and believes the picture to be true, and hangs it up as a beloved one in the closet of his heart. The devil still drives on the same game, fills men’s hearts with the same

sentiments, and by the same means he murdered our first parents, he redoubles the stabs to his posterity. Every violation of the Divine law is a contempt of God's goodness, as well as his sovereignty, because his laws are the products both of the one and the other. Goodness animates them, while sovereignty enjoys them: God hath commanded nothing but what doth conduce to our happiness. All disobedience implies, that his law is a snare to entrap us, and make us miserable, and not an act of kindness, to render us happy, which is a disparagement to this perfection, as if he had commanded what would promote our misery, and prohibited what would conduce to our blessedness: to go far from him, and walk after vanity, is to charge him with our iniquity, and unrighteousness, baseness, and cruelty, in his commands: God implies it by his speech (Jer. 2:5), "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and walked after vanity?" as if, like a tyrant, he had consulted cruelty in the composure of them, and designed to feast himself with the blood and misery of his creatures. Every sin is, in its own nature, a denial of God to be the chiefest good and happiness, and implies that it is no great matter to lose him: it is a forsaking him as the Fountain of Life, and a preferring a "cracked and empty cistern" as the chief happiness before him (Jer. 2:13). Though sin is not so evil as God is good, yet it is the greatest evil, and stands in opposition to God as the greatest good. Sin disorders the frame of the world; it endeavored to frustrate all the communications of Divine goodness in creation, and to stop up the way of any further streams of it to his creatures.

(2.) The abuse and contempt of the Divine goodness is base and disingenuous. It is the highest wickedness, because God is the highest goodness, pure goodness that cannot have anything in him worthy of our contempt. Let men injure God under what notion they will, they injure his goodness; because all his attributes are summed up in this one, and all, as it were, deified by it. For whatsoever power or wisdom he might have, if he were destitute of this he were not God: the contempt of his goodness implies him to be the greatest evil, and worst of beings. Badness, not goodness, is the proper object of contempt: as respect is a propension of mind to something that is good, so contempt is an alienation of the mind from something as evil, either simply or supposedly evil in its nature, or base or unworthy in its action towards that person that contemns it.

As men desire nothing but what they apprehend to be good, so they slight nothing but what they apprehend to be evil: since nothing, therefore, is more contemned by us than God, nothing more spurned at by us than God, it will follow that we regard him as the most loathsome and despicable being, which is the greatest baseness. And our contempt of him is worse than that of the devils; they injure him under the inevitable strokes of his justice, and we slight him when we are surrounded with the expressions of his bounty; they abuse him under vials of wrath, and we under a plenteous liberality: they malice him, because he inflicts on them what is hurtful; and we despise him, because he commands what is profitable, holy, and honorable, in its own nature, though not in our esteem. They are not under those high obligations as we; they abuse his creating, and we his redeeming goodness: he never sent his Son to shed a drop of blood for their recovery; they can expect nothing but the torment of their persons, and the destruction of their works; but we abuse that goodness that would rescue us since we are miserable, as well as that righteousness which created us innocent. How base is it to use him so ill, that is not once or twice, but a daily, hourly Benefactor to us; whose rain drops upon the earth for our food, and whose sun shines upon the earth for our pleasure as well as profit such a Benefactor as is the true Proprietor of what we have, and thinks nothing too good for them that think everything too much for his service! How unworthy is it to be guilty of such base carriage towards him, whose benefits we cannot want, nor live without! How disingenuous both to God and ourselves, to “despise the riches of his goodness, that are designed to lead us to repentance” (Rom. 2:4), and by that to happiness! And more heinous are the sins of renewed men upon this account, because they are against his “goodness” not only offered to them, but tasted by them; not only against the notion of goodness, but the experience of goodness, and the relished sweetness of choicest bounty.

(3). God takes this contempt of his goodness heinously. He never upbraids men with anything in the Scripture, but with the abuse of the good things he hath vouchsafed them, and the unmindfulness of the obligations arising from them. This he bears with the greatest regret and indignation. Thus he upbraids Eli with the preference of him to the priesthood above other families (1 Sam. 2:28); and David with his exaltation to the crown of Israel (2 Sam.

12:7–9), when they abused those honors to carelessness and licentiousness. All sins offend God, but sins against his goodness do more disparage him; and, therefore, his fury is the greater, by how much the more liberally his benefits have been dispensed. It was for abuse of Divine goodness, as soon as it was tasted, that some angels were hurled from their blessed habitation and more happy nature: it was for this Adam lost his present enjoyments, and future happiness, for the abuse of God's goodness in creation. For the abuse of God's goodness the old world fell under the fury of the flood; and for the contempt of the Divine goodness in redemption, Jerusalem, once the darling city of the infinite Monarch of the world, was made an Aeldema, a field of blood. For this cause it is, that candlesticks have been removed, great lights put out, nations overturned, and ignorance hath triumphed in places bright before with the beams of heaven. God would have little care of his own goodness, if he always prostituted the fruits of it to our contempt. Why should we expect he should always continue that to us which he sees we will never use to his service? When the Israelites would dedicate the gifts of God to the service of Baal, then he would return, and take away his corn, and his wine, and make them know by the loss, that those things were his in dominion, which they abused, as if they had been sovereign lords of them (Hos. 2:8, 9). Benefits are entailed upon us no longer than we obey (Josh. 24:20): "If you forsake the Lord, he will do you hurt, after he hath done you good." While we obey, his bounty shall shower upon us: and when we revolt, his justice shall consume us. Present mercies abused, are no bulwarks against independent judgments. God hath curses as well as blessings; and they shall light more heavy when his blessings have been more weighty: justice is never so severe as when it comes to right goodness, and revenge its quarrel for the injuries received.

A convenient inquiry may be here, How God's goodness is contemned or abused?

1st. By a forgetfulness of his benefits. We enjoy the mercies, and forget the Donor; we take what he gives, and pay not the tribute he deserves; the "Israelites forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt" (Psalm 106:21). We send God's mercies where we would have God send our sins, into the land of forgetfulness, and write his benefits where himself will write the

names of the wicked, in the dust, which every wind defaceth: the remembrance soon wears out of our minds, and we are so far from remembering what we had before, that we scarce think of that hand that gives, the very instant wherein his benefits drop upon us. Adam basely forgot his Benefactor, presently after he had been made capable to remember him, and reflect upon him; the first remark we hear of him, is of his forgetfulness, not a syllable of his thankfulness. We forget those souls he hath lodged in us, to acknowledge his favors to our bodies; we forget that image wherewith he beautified us, and that Christ he exposed as a criminal to death for our rescue, which is such an act of goodness as cannot be expressed by the eloquence of the tongue, or conceived by the acuteness of the mind. Those things which are so common, that they cannot be invisible to our eyes, are unregarded by our minds; our sense prompts our understanding, and our understanding is deaf to the plain dictates of our sense. We forget his goodness in the sun, while it warms us, and his showers while they enrich us; in the corn, while it nourisheth us, and the wine while it refresheth us; “She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil” (Hos. 2:8): she that might have read my hand in every bit of bread, and every drop of drink, did not consider this. It is an injustice to forget the benefits we receive from man; it is a crime of a higher nature to forget those dispensed to us by the hand of God, who gives us those things that all the world cannot furnish us with, without him. The inhabitants of Troas will condemn us, who worshipped mice, in a grateful remembrance of the victory they had made easy for them, by gnawing their enemies’ bow-strings. They were mindful of the courtesy of animals, though unintended by those creatures; and we are regardless of the fore-meditated bounty of God. It is in God’s judgment a brutishness beyond that of a stupid ox, or a duller ass; “The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider” (Isa. 1:3). The ox knows his owner that pastures him, and the ass his master that feeds him; but man is not so good as to be like to them, but so bad as to be inferior to them: he forgets Him that sustains him, and spurns at him, instead of valuing him for the benefits conferred by him. How horrible is it, that God should lose more by his bounty, than he would do by his parsimony! If we had blessings more sparingly, we should remember him more gratefully. If he had sent us a bit of

bread in a distress by a miracle, as he did to Elijah by the ravens, it would have stuck longer in our memories; but the sense of daily favors soonest wears out of our minds, which are as great miracles as any in their own nature, and the products of the same power; but the wonder they should beget in us, is obscured by their frequency.

2d. The goodness of God is contemned by an impatient murmuring. Our repinings proceed from an inconsideration of God's free liberality, and an ungrateful temper of spirit. Most men are guilty of this. It is implied in the commendation of Job under his pressures (Job 1:22): "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly," as if it were a character peculiar to him, whereby he verified the eulogy God had given of him before (ver. 8), that there was "none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man." What is implied by the expression? but that scarce a man is to be found without unjust complaints of God, and charging him under their crosses with cruelty; when in the greatest they have much more reason to bless him for his bounty in the remainder. Good men have not been innocent. Baruch complains of God for adding grief to his sorrow, not furnishing him with those "great things" he expected (Jer. 45:3, 4); whereas, he had matter of thankfulness in God's gift of his life as a prey. But his master chargeth God in a higher strain: "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: I am in derision daily" (Jer. 20:7).

When he met with reproach instead of success in the execution of his function, he quarrels with God, as if he had a mind to cheat him into a mischief, when he had more reason to bless him for the honor of being employed in his service. Because we have not what we expect, we slight his goodness in what we enjoy. If he cross us in one thing, he might have made us successful in more: if he take away some things, he might as well have taken away all. The unmerited remainder, though never so little, deserves our acknowledgements more than the deserved loss can justify our repining. And for that which is snatched from us, there is more cause to be thankful, that we have enjoyed it so long, than to murmur that we possess it no longer. Adam's sin implies a repining: he imagined God had been short in his goodness, in not giving him a knowledge he foolishly conceived himself capable of, and would venture a forfeiture of what already had been bountifully bestowed

upon him. Man thought God had envied him, and ever since man studies to be even with God; and envies him the free disposal of his own doles: all murmuring, either in our own cause or others, charges God with a want of goodness, because there is a want of that which he foolishly thinks would make himself or others happy. The language of this sin is, that man thinks himself better than God; and if it were in his power, would express a more plentiful goodness than his Maker. As man is apt to think himself “more pure than God” (Job 4:17), so of a kinder nature also than an infinite goodness. The Israelites are a wonderful example of this contempt of Divine goodness; they had been spectators of the greatest miracles, and partakers of the choicest deliverance: he had solicited their redemption from captivity; and when words would not do, he came to blows for them, musters up his judgments against their enemies, and, at last, as the Lord of hosts and God of battles, totally defeats their pursuers, and drowns them and their proud hopes of victory in the Red Sea. Little account was made of all this by the redeemed ones; “they lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation,” and launch into greater unworthiness, instead of being thankful for the breaking their yoke: they are angry with him, that he had done so much for them: they repented that ever they had complied with him, for their own deliverance, and had a regret that they had been brought out of Egypt: they were angry that they were freemen, and that their chains had been knocked off: they were more desirous to return to the oppression of their Egyptian tyrants, than have God for their governor and caterer, and be fed with his manna. “It was well with us in Egypt: Why came we forth out of Egypt?” which is called a “despising the Lord” (Num. 9:18, 20). They were so far from rejoicing in the expectation of the future benefits promised them, that they murmured that they had not enjoyed less; they were so sottish, as to be desirous to put themselves into the irons whence God had delivered them: they would seek a remedy in that Egypt, which had been the prison of their nation, and under the successors of that Pharaoh, who had been the invader of their liberties; they would snatch Moses from the place where the Lord, by an extraordinary providence, hath established him; they would stone those that minded them of the goodness of God to them, and thereupon of their crime and their duty (Num. 16:3, 9–11); they rose against their benefactors, and “murmured against God,” that had

strengthened the hands of their deliverers; they “despised the manna” he had sent them, and “despised the pleasant land” he intended them (Psalm 106:24): all which was a high contempt of God and his unparalleled goodness and care of them. All murmuring is an accusation of Divine goodness.

3d. By unbelief and impenitency. What is the reason we come not to Him when he calls us; but some secret imagination that he is of an ill nature, means not as he speaks, but intends to mock us, instead of welcoming us? When we neglect his call, spurn at his bowels, slight the riches of his grace; as it is a disparagement to his wisdom to despise his counsel, so it is to his goodness to slight his offers, as though you could make better provision for yourselves than he is able or willing to do. It disgraceth that which is designed to the praise of the glory of his grace, and renders God cruel to his own Son, as being an unnecessary shedder of his blood. As the devil by his temptation of Adam, envied God the glory of his creating goodness, so unbelief envies God the glory of his redeeming grace: it is a bidding defiance to him, and challenging him to muster up the legions of his judgments, rather than have sent his Son to suffer for us, or his Spirit to solicit us. Since the sending his Son was the greatest act of goodness that God could express, the refusal of him must be the highest reproach of that liberality God designed to commend to the world in so rare a gift: the ingratitude in this refusal must be as high in the rank of sins, as the person slighted is in the rank of beings, or rank of gifts. Christ is a gift (Rom. 5:16), the royalest gift, an unparalleled gift, springing from inconceivable treasures of goodness (John 3:16). What is our turning our backs upon this gift but a low opinion of it? as though the richest jewel of heaven were not so valuable as a swinish pleasure on earth, and deserved to be treated at no other rate than if mere offals had been presented to us. The plain language of it is, that there were no gracious intentions for our welfare in this present; and that he is not as good, in the mission of his Son, as he would induce us to imagine.

Impenitence is also an abuse of this goodness, either by presumption, as if God would entertain rebels that bid defiance against him with the same respect that he doth his prostrate and weeping suppliants; that he will have the same regard to the swine as to the children, and lodge them in the same habitation; or it

speaks a suspicion of God as a deceitful Master, one of a pretended, not a real goodness, that makes promises to mock men, and invitations to delude them: that he is an implacable tyrant, rather than a good Father; a rigid, not a kind Being, delightful only to mark our faults, and overlook our services.

4th. The goodness of God is contemned by a distrust of his providence. As all trust in him supposeth him good, so all distrust of him supposeth him evil; either without goodness to exert his power, or without power to display his goodness. Job seems to have a spice of this in his complaint (Job 30:20), "I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me; I stand up, and thou regardest me not." It is a fume of the serpent's venom, first breathed into man, to suspect him of cruelty, severity, regardlessness, even under the daily evidences of his good disposition: and it is ordinary not to believe him when he speaks, nor credit him when he acts; to question the goodness of his precepts, and misinterpret the kindness of his providence; as if they were designed for the supports of a tyranny, and the deceit of the miserable. Thus the Israelites thought their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, and the placing them in security in the wilderness, was intended only to pound them up for a slaughter (Num. 14:3): thus they defiled the lustre of Divine goodness which they had so highly experimented, and placed not that confidence in him which was due to so frequent a Benefactor, and thereby crucified the rich kindness of God, as Genebrard translates the word "limited" (Psalm 78:41). It is also a jealousy of Divine goodness, when we seek to deliver ourselves from our straits by unlawful ways, as though God had not kindness enough to deliver us without committing evil. What! did God make a world, and all creatures in it, to think of them no more, not to concern himself in their affairs? If he be good, he is diffusive, and delights to communicate himself; and what subjects should there be for it, but those that seek him, and implore his assistance? It is an indignity to Divine bounty to have such mean thoughts of it, that it should be of a nature contrary to that of his works, which, the better they are, the more diffusive they are. Doth a man distrust that the sun will not shine any more, or the earth not bring forth its fruit? Doth he distrust the goodness of an approved medicine for the expelling his distemper? If we distrust those things, should we not render ourselves ridiculous and sottish? and if we distrust the Creator of those things, do we not make ourselves contemners of his

goodness? If his caring for us be a principal argument to move us to cast our care upon him, as it is 1 Pet. 5:7, "Casting your care upon him, for he cares for you;" then, if we cast not our care upon him, it is a denial of his gracious care of us, as if he regarded not what becomes of us.

5th. We do contemn or abuse his goodness by omissions of duty. These sometimes spring from injurious conceits of God, which end in desperate resolutions. It was the crime of a good prophet in his passion (2 Kings 6:33): "This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait on the Lord any longer?" God designs nothing but mischief to us, and we will seek him no longer. And the complaint of those in Malachi (Mal. 3:14) is of the same nature; "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?" We have all this while served a hard Master, not a Benefactor, and have not been answered with advantages proportionable to our services; we have met with a hand too niggardly to dispense that reward which is due to the largeness of our offerings. When men will not lift up their eyes to heaven, and solicit nothing but the contrivance of their own brain, and the industry of their own heads, they disown Divine goodness, and approve themselves as their own gods, and the spring of their own prosperity. Those that run not to God in their necessity, to crave his support, deny either the arm of his power, or the disposition of his will, to sustain and deliver them: they must have very mean sentiments, or none at all, of this perfection, or think him either too empty to fill them, or too churlish to relieve them; that he is of a narrow and contracted temper, and that they may sooner expect to be made better and happier by anything else than by him: and as we contemn his goodness by a total omission of those duties which respect our own advantage and supply, as prayer; so we contemn him as the chiefest good, by an omission of the due manner of any act of worship which is designed purely for the acknowledgment of him. As every omission of the material part of a duty is a denial of his sovereignty as commanding it, so every omission of the manner of it, not performing it with due esteem and valuation of him, a surrender of all the powers of our soul to him, is a denial of him as the most amiable object. But certainly to omit those addresses to God which his precept enjoins, and his excellency deserves, speaks this language, that they can be well enough, and do well enough,

without God, and stand in no need of his goodness to maintain them. The neglect or refusal in a malefactor to supplicate for his pardon, is a wrong to, and contempt of, the prince's goodness: either implying that he hath not a goodness in his nature worthy of an address, or that he scorns to be obliged to him for any exercise of it.

6th. The goodness of God is contemned, or abused, in relying upon our services to procure God's good will to us. As, when we stand in need either of some particular mercy, or special assistance; when pressures are heavy, and we have little hopes of ease in an ordinary way; when the devotions in course have not prevailed for what we want; we engage ourselves by extraordinary vows and promises to God, hereby to open that goodness which seems to be locked up from us. Sometimes, indeed, vows may proceed from a sole desire to engage ourselves to God, from a sense of the levity and inconstancy of our spirits; binding ourselves to God by something more sacred and inviolable than a common resolution. But many times the vowing the building of a temple, endowing a hospital, giving so much in alms if God will free them from a fit of sickness, and spin out the thread of their lives a little longer (as hath been frequent among the Romanists), arises from an opinion of laziness and a selfishness in the Divine goodness; that it must be squeezed out by some solemn promises of returns to him, before it will exercise itself to take their parts. Popular vows are often the effects of an ignorance of the free and bubbling nature of this perfection of the generousness and royalty of Divine goodness: as if God were of a mean and mechanic temper, not to part with anything unless he were in some measure paid for it; and of so bad a nature as not to give passage to any kindness to his creature without a bribe. It implies also that he is of an ignorant as well as contracted goodness; that he hath so little understanding, and so much weakness of judgment, as to be taken with such trifles, and ceremonial courtships, and little promises; and meditated only low designs, in imparting his bounty: it is just as if a malefactor should speak to a prince,—Sir, if you will but bestow a pardon upon me, and prevent the death I have merited for this crime, I will give you this rattle. All vows made with such a temper of spirit to God, are as injurious and abusive to his goodness, as any man will judge such an offer to be to a majestic and gracious prince; as if it were a trading, not a free and royal goodness.

7th. The goodness of God is abused when we give up our souls and affections to those benefits we have from God; when we make those things God's rivals, which were sent to woo us for him, and offer those affections to the presents themselves, which they were sent to solicit for the Master. This is done, when either we place our trust in them, or glue our choicest affections to them. This charge God brings against Jerusalem, the trusting in her own beauty, glory, and strength, though it was a comeliness put upon her by God (Ezek. 16:14, 15). When a little sunshine of prosperity breaks out upon us, we are apt to grasp it with so much eagerness and closeness, as if we had no other foundation to settle ourselves upon, no other being that might challenge from us our sole dependence. And the love of ourselves, and of creatures above God, is very natural to us: "Lovers of themselves, and lovers of pleasure more than of God" (2 Tim. 3:2, 4). Self love is the root, and the love of pleasures the top branch, that mounts its head highest against heaven. It is for the love of the world that the dangers of the sea are passed over, that men descend into the bowels of the earth, pass nights without sleep, undertake suits without intermission, wade through many inconveniences, venture their souls, and contemn God; in those things men glory, and foolishly grow proud by them, and think themselves safe and happy in them. Now to love ourselves above God, is to own ourselves better than God, and that we transcend him in an amiable goodness; or, if we love ourselves equal with God, it at least manifests that we think God no better than ourselves; and think ourselves our own chief good, and deny anything above us to outstrip us in goodness, whereby to deserve to be the centre of our affections and actions, and to love any other creature above him, is to conclude some defect in God; that he hath not so much goodness in his own nature as that creature hath, to complete our felicity; that God is a slighter thing than that creature. It is to account God, what all the things in the world are,—an imaginary happiness, a goodness of clay; and them what God is,—a Supreme Goodness. It is to value the goodness of a drop above that of the spring, and the goodness of the spark above that of the sun. As if the bounty of God were of a less alloy than the advantages we immediately receive from the hands of a silly worm. By how much the better we think a creature to be, and place our affections chiefly upon it, by so much the more deficient and indigent we conclude God; for God wants so much in

our conception, as the other thing hath goodness above him in our thoughts. Thus is God lessened below the creature, as if he had a mixture of evil in him, and were capable of an imperfect goodness. He that esteems the sun that shines upon him, the clothes that warm him, the food that nourisheth him, or any other benefit above the Donor, regards them as more comely and useful than God himself; and behaves himself as if he were more obliged to them than to God, who bestowed those advantageous qualities upon them.

8th. The Divine goodness is contemned, in sinning more freely upon the account of that goodness, and employing God's benefits in a drudgery for our lusts. This is a treachery to his goodness, to make his benefits serve for an end quite contrary to that for which he sent them. As if God had been plentiful in his blessings, to hire them to be more fierce in their rebellions, and fed them to no other purpose, but that they might more strongly kick against him; this is the fruit which corrupt nature produceth. Thus the Egyptians, who had so fertile a country, prove unthankful to the Creator, by adoring the meanest creatures, and putting the sceptre of the Monarch of the world into the hands of the sottishest and cruellest beasts. And the Romans multiply their idols, as God multiplied their victories. This is also the complaint of God concerning Israel: "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal" (Hos. 2:8). They ungratefully employed the blessings of God in the worship of an idol against the will of the Donor. So in Hos. 10:1; "According to the multitude of his fruit, he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land, they have made goodly images." They followed their own inventions with the strength of my outward blessings; as their wealth increased, they increased the ornaments of their images; so that what were before of wood and stone, they advanced to gold and silver. And the like complaint you may see Ezek. 16, 17. Thus,

[1.] The benefits of God are abused to pride, when men standing upon a higher ground of outward prosperity, vaunt it loftily above their neighbors; the common fault of those that enjoy a worldly sunshine, which the apostle observes in his direction to Timothy; "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded" (1 Tim. 6:17). It is an ill use of Divine blessings to be filled by them with pride and wind. Also,

[2.] When men abuse plenty to ease; because they have abundance, spend their time in idleness, and make no other use of Divine benefits than to trifle away their time, and be utterly useless to the world.

[3.] When they also abuse peace and other blessing to security, as they which would not believe the threatenings of judgment, and the storm coming from a far country, because the Lord was in Sion, and her King in her; “Is not the Lord in Sion, is not her King in her” (Jer. 8:19)? thinking they might continue their progress in their sin, because they had the temple, the seat of the Divine glory, Sion, and the promise of an everlasting kingdom to David; abusing the promise of God to presumption and security, and turning the grace of God into wantonness.

[4.] Again, when they abuse the bounty of God to sensuality and luxury, misemploying the provisions God gives them, in resolving to live like beasts, when by a good improvement of them, they might attain the life of angels. Thus is the light of the sun abused to conduct them, and the fruits of the earth abused to enable them to their roidigious debauchery: as we do, saith one, with the Thames, which rings us in provision, and we soil it with our rubbish. The more God sows his gifts, the more we sow our cockle and darnel. Thus we make our outward happiness the most unhappy part of our lives, and by the strength of Divine blessings, exceed all laws of reason and religion too. How unworthy a carriage is this, to use the expressions of Divine goodness as occasions of a greater outrage and affront of him; when we stab his honor by those instruments he puts into our hands to glorify him! as if a favorite should turn that sword into the bowels of his prince, wherewith he knighted him; and a servant, enriched by a lord, should hire by that wealth, murderers to take away his life! How brutish is it, the more God courts us with his blessings, the more to spurn at him with our feet; like the mule that lifts up his heel against the dam, as soon as ever it hath sucked her! We never beat God out of our hearts, but by his own gifts; he receives no blows from men, but by those instruments he gave them to promote their happiness. While man is an enjoyer, he makes God a loser, by his own blessings; inflames his rebellion by those benefits which should kindle his love; and runs from him by the strength of those favors which should endear the donor to him: “Do

you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise?" is the expostulation (Deut. 32:6.) Divine goodness appears in the complaint of the abuse of it, in giving them titles below their crime, and complaining more of their being unfaithful to their own interest, than enemies to his glory: "foolish and unwise" in neglecting their own happiness; a charge below the crime, which deserved to be "abominable , ungrateful people to a prodigy." All this carriage towards God, is as if a man should knock the chirurgeon on the head, as soon as he hath set and bound up his dislocated members. So God compares the ungrateful behavior of the Israelites against him: "Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me" (Hos. 7:15): a metaphor taken from a chirurgeon that applies corroborating plasters to a broken limb.

9th. We contemn the goodness of God, in ascribing our benefits to other causes than Divine goodness. Thus Israel ascribed her felicity, plenty, and success, to her idols, as "rewards which her lovers had given her" (Hos. 2:5, 12). And this charge Daniel brought home upon Belshazzar: "Thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, and brass, and iron; and the God in whose hand is thy breath, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (Dan. 5:23). The God who hath given success to the arms of thy ancestors, and conveyed by their hands so large a dominion to thee, thou hast not honored in the same rank with the sordidest of thy idols. It is the same case, when we own him not as the author of any success in our affairs, but by an overweening conceit of our own sagacity, applaud and admire ourselves, and overlook the hand that conducted us, and brought our endeavors to a good issue. We eclipse the glory of Divine goodness, by setting the crown that is due to it upon the head of our own industry; a sacrilege worse than Belshazzar's drinking of wine with his lords and concubines in the sacred vessels pilfered from the temple; as in that place of Daniel. This was the proud vaunt of the Assyrian conqueror, for which God threatens to punish the fruit of his stout heart: "By the strength of my hand, I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent;" and, "I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures;" and, "I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man" (Isa. 10:12-14). Not a word of Divine goodness and assistance in all this, but applauding his own courage and conduct. This is a robbing of God, to set up ourselves, and making Divine goodness a footstool, to ascend into

his throne. And as it is unjust, so it is ridiculous, to ascribe to ourselves, or instruments, the chief honor of any work; as ridiculous as if a soldier, after a victory, should erect an altar to the honor of his sword; or an artificer offer sacrifices to the tools whereby he completed some excellent and useful invention: a practice that every rational man would disdain, where he should see it. It is a discarding any thoughts of the goodness of God, when we imagine, that we chiefly owe anything in this world to our own industry or wit, to friends or means, as though Divine goodness did not open its hand to interest itself in our affairs, support our ability, direct our counsels, and mingle itself with anything we do. God is the principal author of any advantage that accrues to us, of any wise resolution we fix upon, or any proper way we take to compass it; no man can be wise in opposition to God, act wisely, or well without him; his goodness inspires men with generous and magnificent counsels, and furnisheth them with fit and proportionable means; when he withdraws his hand, men's heads grow foolish, and their hands feeble; folly and weakness drop upon them, as darkness upon the world upon the removal of the sun; it is an abuse of Divine goodness not to own it, but erect an idol in its place. Ezra was of another mind when he ascribed to the good hand of God the "providing ministers for the temple," and not to his own care and diligence (chap. 8:18); and Nehemiah, the "success he had with the king" in the behalf of his nation, and not solely to his favor with the prince, or the arts he used to please him (chap. 2:8).

2. The second information is this: If God be so good, it is a certain argument that man is fallen from his original state. It is the complaint of man, sometimes, that other creatures have more of earthly happiness than men have; live freer from cares and trouble, and are not racked with that solicitousness and anxiety as man is: have not such distempers to embitter their lives. It is a good ground for man to look into himself, and consider whether he hath not, some ways or other, disobliged God more than other creatures can possibly do. We often find that the creatures men have need of in this state, do not answer the expectation of man: "Cursed be the ground for thy sake" (Gen. 3:17). A fruitful land is made barren; thorns and thistles triumph upon the face of the earth, instead of good fruit. Is it likely that that goodness, which is as infinite as his power, and knows no more limits than his Almightyness, should

imprint so many scars upon the world, if he had not been heinously provoked by some miscarriage of his creature? Infinite Goodness could never move Infinite Justice to inflict punishment upon creatures, if they had not highly merited it; we cannot think that any creature was blemished with a principle of disturbance, as it came first out of the hand of God. All things were certainly settled in a due order and dependence upon one another; nothing could be ungrateful and unuseful to man by the original law of their creation; if there had, it had not been goodness, but evil and baseness, that had created the world. When we see, therefore, the course of nature overturned, the order Divine goodness had placed, disturbed; and the creatures pronounced good and useful to man, employed as instruments of vengeance against him; we must conclude some horrible blot upon human nature, and very odious to a God of infinite goodness; and that this blot was dashed upon man by himself, and his own fault; for it is repugnant to the infinite goodness of God to put into the creature a sinning nature, to hurry him into sin, and then punish him for that which he had impressed upon him. The goodness of God inclines him to love goodness wherever he finds it; and not to punish any that have not deserved it by their own crimes. The curse we therefore see the creatures groan under, the disorders in nature, the frustrating the expectations of man in the fruits of the earth and plentiful harvests, the trouble he is continually exposed to in the world, which tadders down his spirit from more generous employments, shows that man is not what he was when Divine goodness first erected him; but hath admitted into his nature something more uncomely in the eye of God; and so heinous, that it puts his goodness sometimes to a stand, and makes him lay aside the blessings his hand was filled with, to take up the arms of vengeance, wherewith to fight against the world. Divine goodness would have secured his creatures from any such invasions, and never used those things against man, which he designed in the first frame for man's service, were there not some detestable disorder risen in the nature of man which makes God withhold his liberality and change the dispensation of his numerous benefits into legions of judgments. The consideration of the Divine goodness, which is a notion that man naturally concludes to be inseparable from the Deity, would, to an unbiassed reason, verify the history of those punishments settled upon man in the third chapter of Genesis,

and make the whole seem more probable to reason at the first relation. This instruction naturally flows from the doctrine of Divine goodness: if God be so good, it is a certain argument that man is fallen from his original state.

3. The third information is this: If God be infinitely good, there can be no just complaint against God, if men be punished for abusing his goodness. Man had nothing, nay, it was impossible he could have anything, from Infinite Goodness to disoblige him, but to engage him. God never did, nay, never could, draw his sword against man, till man had slighted him and affronted him by the strength of his own bounty. It is by this God doth justify his severest proceedings against men, and very seldom charges them with any else as the matter of their provocations (Hos. 2:9): “Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax.” And in Ezek. 16., after he had drawn out a bill of complaint against them, and inserted only the abuse of his benefits, as a justification of what he intended to do; he concludes (ver. 27), “Behold, therefore, I have stretched out my hand over thee, and diminished thy ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee.” When men suffer, they suffer justly; they were not constrained by any violence, or forced by any necessity, nor provoked by any ill usage, to turn head against God, but broke the bands of the strongest obligations and most tender allurements. What man, what devil, can justly blame God for punishing them, after they had been so intolerably bold, as to fly in the face of that goodness that had obliged them, by giving them beings of a higher elevation than to inferior creatures, and furnishing them with sufficient strength to continue in their first habitation? Man seems to have less reason to accuse God of rigor than devils; since, after his unreasonable revolt, a more express goodness than that which created him hath solicited him to repentance, courted him by melting promises and expostulations, added undeniable arguments of bounty, and drawn out the choicest treasures of heaven, in the gift of his Son, to prevail over men’s perversity. And yet man, after he might arrive to the height and happiness of an angel, will be fond of continuing in the meanness and misery of a devil; and more strongly link himself to the society of the damned spirits, wherein, by his first rebellion, he had incorporated himself. Who can blame God for vindicating his own

goodness from such desperate contempts, and the extreme ingratitude of man? If God be good, it is our happiness to adhere to him; if we depart from him, we depart from goodness; and if evil happen to us, we cannot blame God, but ourselves, for our departure. Why are men happy? because they cleave to God. Why are men miserable? because they recede from God. It is then our own fault that we are miserable; God cannot be charged with any injustice if we be miserable, since his goodness gave means to prevent it, and afterwards added means to recover us from it, but all despised by us. The doctrine of Divine goodness justifies every stone laid in the foundation of hell, and every spark in that burning furnace, since it is for the abuse of infinite goodness that it was kindled.

4. The fourth information: Here is a certain argument, both for God's fitness to govern the world, and his actual government of it.

(1.) This renders him fit for the government of the world, and gives him a full title to it. This perfection doth the Psalmist celebrate throughout the 107th Psalm, where he declares God's works of providence (ver. 8, 15, 21, 32). Power without goodness would deface, instead of preserving; ruin is the fruit of rigor without kindness; but God, because of his infinite and immutable goodness, cannot do anything unworthy of himself, and uncomely in itself, or destructive to any moral goodness in the creature. It is impossible he should do anything that is base, or act anything but for the best, because he is essentially and naturally, and, therefore, necessarily good. As a good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, so a good God cannot produce evil acts, no more than a pure beam of the sun can engender so much as a mite of darkness, or infinite heat produce any particle of cold. As God is so much light, that he can be no darkness, so he is so much good, that he can have no evil; and because there is no evil in him, nothing simply evil can be produced by him. Since he is good by nature, all evil is against his nature, and God can do nothing against his nature; it would be a part of impotence in him to will that which is evil; and, therefore, the misery man feels, as well as the sin whereby he deserves that misery, are said to be from himself (Hos. 13:9): "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" And though God sends judgments upon the world, we have shown these to be intended for the support and vindication of his goodness. And

Hezekiah judged no otherwise, when, after the threatening of the devastation of his house, the plundering his treasures, and captivity of his posterity, he replies, "Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken" (Isa. 39:8). God cannot act anything that is base and cruel, because his goodness is as infinite as his power, and his power acts nothing but what his wisdom directs, and his goodness moves him to.

Wisdom is the head in government, omniscience the eye, power the arm, and goodness the heart and spirit in them, that animates all.

(2.) As goodness renders Him fit to govern the world, so God doth actually govern the world. Can we understand this perfection aright, and yet imagine that he is of so morose a disposition as to neglect the care of his creatures? that his excellency, which was displayed in framing the world, should withdraw and wrap up itself in his own bosom, without looking out, and darting itself out in the disposal of them? Can that which moved him first to erect a world, suffer him to be unmindful of his own work? Would he design first to display it in creation, and afterwards obscure the honor of it? That cannot be entitled an infinite permanent goodness, which should be so indifferent as to let the creatures tumble together as they please, without any order, after he had moulded them in his hand. If goodness be diffusive and communicative of itself, can it consist with the nature of it, to extend itself to the giving the creatures being, and then withdraw and contract itself, not caring what becomes of them? It is the nature of goodness, after it hath communicated itself, to enlarge its channels; that fountain that springs up in a little hollow part of the earth, doth in a short progress increase its streams, and widen the passages through which it runs; it would be a blemish to Divine goodness, if it did desert what it made, and leave things to wild confusions, which would be, if a good hand did not manage them, and a good mind preside over them. This is the lesson intended to us by all his judgments (Dan. 4:17), "That the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men." If he doth not actually govern the world, he must have devolved it somewhere, either to men or angels; not to men, who naturally want a goodness and wisdom to govern themselves, much more to govern others exactly. And, besides the misinterpretations of actions, they are liable to the want of patience, to bear with the provocations of

the world; since some of the best at one time in the world, and, in the greatest example of meekness and sweetness, would have kindled a fire in heaven to have consumed the Samaritans, for no other affront than a non-entertainment of their Master and themselves (Luke 9:54). Nor hath he committed the disposal of things to angels, either good or bad; though he useth them as instruments in his government, yet they are not the principal pilots to steer the world. Bad angels certainly are not; they would make continual ravages, meditate ruin, never defeat their own counsels, which they manage by the wicked as the instruments in the world, nor fill their spirits with disquiet and restlessness when they are engaged in some ruinous design, as often is experienced: nor hath he committed it to the good angels, who, for aught we know, are not more numerous than the evil ones are; but besides, we can scarcely think their finite nature capable of so much goodness, as to bear the innumerable debaucheries, villanies, blasphemies, vented in one year, one week, one day, one hour, throughout the world; their zeal for their Creator might well be supposed to move them to testify their affection to him in a constant and speedy righting of his injured honor upon the heads of the offenders. The evil angels have too much cruelty, and would have no care of justice, but take pleasure in the blood of the most innocent, as well as the most criminal; and the good angels have too little tenderness to suffer so many crimes: since the world, therefore, continues without those floods of judgments, which it daily merits; since, notwithstanding all the provocations, the order of it is preserved; it is a testimony that an Infinite Goodness holds the helm in his hands, and spreads its warm wings over it.

5. The fifth information is this: Hence we may infer the ground of all religion; it is this perfection of goodness. As the goodness of God is the lustre of all his attributes, so it is the foundation and link of all true religious worship: the natural religion of the heathens was introduced by the consideration of Divine goodness, in the being he had bestowed upon them, and the provisions that were made for them. Divine bounty was the motive to erect altars, and present sacrifices, though they mistook the object of their worship, and offered the dues of the Creator to the instruments whereby he conveyed his benefits to them: and you find, that the religion instituted by him among the Jews, was enforced upon them by the

consideration of their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, the preservation of them in the wilderness, and the enfeoffing them in a land flowing with milk and honey. Every act of bounty and success the heathens received, moved them to appoint new deities, and repeat their adorations of those deities they thought the authors and promoters of their victories and welfare. The devil did not mistake the common sentiment of the world in Divine service, when he alleged to God, that "Job did not fear him for nought," *i. e.* worship him for nothing (Job 1:9). All acts of devotion take their rise from God's liberality, either from what they have or from what they hope; praise speaks the possession, and prayer the expectation, of some benefit from his hand: though some of the heathens made fear to be the prime cause of the acknowledgment and worship of a deity, yet surely something else besides and beyond this established so great a thing as religion in the world; an ingenuous religion could never have been born into the world without a notion of goodness, and would have gaped its last as soon as this notion should have expired in the minds of men. What encouragement can fear of power give, without sense of goodness? just as much as thunder hath, to invite a man to the place where it is like to fall, and crush him. The nature of "fear" is to drive from, and the nature of "goodness" to allure to, the object: the Divine thunders, prodigies, and other armies of his justice in the world, which are the marks of his power, could conclude in nothing but a slavish worship: fear alone would have made men blaspheme the Deity; instead of serving him, they would have fretted against him; they might have offered him a trembling worship; but they could never have, in their minds, thought him worthy of an adoration; they would rather have secretly complained of him, and cursed him in their heart, than inwardly have admired him: the issue would have been the same, which Job's wife advised him to, when God withdrew his protection from his goods and body: "Curse God, and die" (Job 2:9). It is certainly the common sentiment of men, that he that acts cruelly and tyrannically, is not worthy of an integrity to be retained towards him in the hearts of his subjects; but Job fortifies himself against this temptation from his bosom friend, by the consideration of the good he had received from God, which did more deserve a worship from him than the present evil had reason to discourage it. Alas! what is only feared, is hated, not adored. Would any seek to an irreconcilable enemy? would any

person affectionately list himself in the service of a man void of all good disposition? would any distressed person put up a petition to that prince, who never gave any experiment of the sweetness of his nature, but always satiated himself with the blood of the meanest criminals? All affection to service is rooted up when hopes of receiving good are extinguished: there could not be a spark of that in the world, which is properly called religion, without a notion of goodness; the existence of God is the first pillar, and the goodness of God in rewarding the next, upon which coming to him (which includes all acts of devotion) is established (Heb. 11:6); “He that comes unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him:” if either of those pillars be not thought to stand firm, all religion falls to the ground. It is this, as the most agreeable motive, that the apostle James uses, to encourage men’s approach to God, because “he gives liberally, and upbraideth not” (James 1:5). A man of a kind heart and a bountiful hand shall have his gate thronged with suppliants, who sometimes would be willing to lay down their lives; “for a good man one would even dare to die:” when one of a niggardly or tyrannical temper shall be destitute of all free and affectionate applications. What eyes would be lifted up to heaven? what hands stretched out, if there were not a knowledge of goodness there to enliven their hopes of speeding in their petitions? Therefore Christ orders our prayers to be directed to God as a Father, which is a title of tenderness, as well as a “Father in heaven,” a mark of his greatness; the one to support our confidence, as well as the other to preserve our distance. God could not be ingenuously adored and acknowledged, if he were not liberal as well as powerful; the goodness of God is the foundation of all ingenuous religion, devotion and worship.

6. The sixth instruction: The goodness of God renders God amiable. His goodness renders him beautiful, and his beauty renders him lovely; both are linked together (Zech. 9:17): “How great is his goodness! and how great is his beauty!” This is the most powerful attractive, and masters the affections of the soul: it is goodness only supposed, or real, that is thought worthy to demerit our affections to anything. If there be not a reality of this, or at least an opinion and estimation of it in an object, it would want a force and vigor to allure our will. This perfection of God is the loadstone to draw us, and the centre for our spirits to rest in.

1. This renders God amiable to himself. His goodness is his "Godhead" (Rom. 1:20): by his Godhead is meant his goodness; if he loves his Godhead for itself, he loves his goodness for itself; he would not be good, if he did not love himself; and if there were anything more excellent, and had a greater goodness than himself, he would not be good if he did not love that greater goodness above himself; for not only a hatred of goodness is evil, but an indifferent or cold affection to goodness hath a tincture of evil in it. If God were not good, and yet should love himself in the highest manner, he would be the greatest evil, and do the greatest evil in that act; for he would set his love upon that which is not the proper object of such an affection, but the object of aversion: his own infinite excellency, and goodness of his nature, renders him lovely and delightful to himself; without this he could not love himself in a commendable and worthy way, and becoming the purity of a Deity; and he cannot but love himself for this; for, as creatures, by not loving him as the supreme good, deny him to be the choicest good, so God would deny himself, and his own goodness, if he did not love himself, and that for his goodness. But the apostle tells us, that "God cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). Self-love, upon this account, is the only prerogative of God, because there is not anything better than himself that can lay any just claim to his affections: he only ought to love himself, and it would be an injustice in him to himself, if he did not. He only can love himself for this: an infinite goodness ought to be infinitely loved, but he only being infinite, can only love himself according to the due merit of his own goodness. He cannot be so amiable to any man, to any angel, to the highest seraphim, as he is to himself; because he is only capable in regard of his infinite wisdom, to know the infiniteness of his own goodness. And no creature can love him as he ought to be loved, unless it had the same infinite capacity of understanding to know him, and of affection to embrace him. This first renders God amiable to himself.

2. It ought therefore to render him amiable to us. What renders him lovely to his own eye, ought to render him so to ours; and since, by the shortness of our understandings, we cannot love him as he merits, yet we should be induced by the measures of his bounty, to love him as we can. If this do not present him lovely to us, we own him rather a devil than a God: if his goodness moved him to frame creatures, his goodness moved him also to frame creatures for

himself and his own glory. It is a mighty wrong to him not to look with a delightful eye upon the marks of it, and return an affection to God in some measure suitable to his liberality to us; we are descended as low as brutes, if we understand him not to be the perfect good; and we are descended as low as devils, if our affections are not attracted by it.

(1.) If God were not infinitely good, he could not be the object of supreme love. If he were finitely good, there might be other things as good as God, and then God in justice could not challenge our choicest affections to him above anything else: it would be a defect of goodness in him to demand it, because he would despoil that which were equally good with him, of its due and right to our affections, which it might claim from us upon the account of its goodness: God would be unjust to challenge more than was due to him; for he would claim that chiefly to himself which another had a lawful share in.

Nothing can be supremely loved that hath not a triumphant excellency above all other things; where is an equality of goodness, neither can justly challenge a supremacy, but only an equality of affection.

(2.) This attribute of goodness renders him more lovely than any other attribute. He never requires our adoration of him so much as the strongest or wisest, but as the best of beings: he uses this chiefly to constrain and allure us. Why would he be feared or worshipped, but because “there is forgiveness with him” (Psalm 130:4)? it is for his goodness’ sake that he is sued to by his people in distress (Psalm 25:7), “For thy goodness’ sake, O Lord.” Men may be admired because of their knowledge, but they are affected because of their goodness: the will, in all the variety of objects it pursues, centres in this one thing of good as the term of its appetite. All things are beloved by men, because they have been bettered by them.

Severity can never conquer enmity, and kindle love: were there nothing but wrath in the Deity, it would make him be feared, but render him odious, and that to an innocent nature. As the spouse speaks of Christ (Cant. 5:10, 11), so we may of God: though she commends him for his head, the excellency of his wisdom; his eyes, the extent of his omniscience; his hands, the greatness of his power;

and his legs, the swiftness of his motions and ways to and for his people; yet the “sweetness of his mouth,” in his gracious words and promises, closes all, and is followed with nothing but an exclamation, that “he is altogether lovely” (ver. 16). His mouth, in pronouncing pardon of sin, and justification of the person, presents him most lovely. His power to do good is admirable, but his will to do good is amiable: this puts a gloss upon all his other attributes. Though he had knowledge to understand the depth of our necessities, and power to prevent them, or rescue us from them, yet his knowledge would be fruitless, and his power useless, if he were of a rigid nature, and not touched with any sentiments of kindness.

(3.) This goodness therefore lays a strong obligation upon us. It is true he is lovely in regard of his absolute goodness, or the goodness of his nature, but we should hardly be persuaded to return him an affection without his relative goodness, his benefits to his creatures; we are obliged by both to love him.

[1.] By his absolute goodness, or the goodness of his nature. Suppose a creature had drawn its original from something else wherein God had no influx, and had never received the least mite of a benefit from him, but from some other hand, yet the infinite excellency and goodness of his nature would merit the love of that creature, and it would act sordidly and disingenuously if it did not discover a mighty respect for God: for what ingenuity could there be in a rational creature, that were possessed with no esteem for any nature filled with unbounded goodness and excellency, though he had never been obliged to him for any favor? That man is accounted odious, and justly despicable by man, that reproaches and disesteems, nay, that doth not value a person of a high virtue in himself, and an universal goodness and charity to others, though himself never stood in need of his charity, and never had any benefit conveyed from his hands, nor ever saw his face, or had any commerce with him: a value of such a person is but a just due to the natural claim of virtue. And, indeed, the first object of love is God in the excellency of his own nature, as the first object of love in marriage is the person; the portion is a thing consequent upon it. To love God only for his benefits, is to love ourselves first, and him secondarily: to love God for his own goodness and excellency, is a true love of God; a love of him for himself. That flaming fire in his

own breast, though we have not a spark of it, hath a right to kindle one in ours to him.

[2.] By his relative goodness, or that of his benefits. Though the excellency of his own nature, wherein there is a combination of goodness, must needs ravish an apprehensive mind; yet a reflection upon his imparted kindness, both in the beings we have from him, and the support we have by him, must enhance his estimation. When the excellency of his nature, and the expressions of his bounty are in conjunction, the excellency of his own nature renders him estimable in a way of justice, and the greatness of his benefits renders him valuable in a way of gratitude: the first ravisheth, and the other allures and melts: he hath enough in his nature to attract, and sufficient in his bounty to engage our affections. The excellency of his nature is strong enough of itself to blow up our affections to him, were there not a malignity in our hearts that represents him under the notion of an enemy; therefore in regard of our corrupt state, the consideration of Divine largesses comes in for a share in the elevation of our affections. For, indeed, it is a very hard thing for a man to love another, though never so well qualified, and of an eminent virtue, while he believes him to be his enemy, and one that will severely handle him, though he hath before received many good turns from him; the virtue, valor, and courtesy of a prince, will hardly make him affected by those against whom he is in arms, and that are daily pilfered by his soldiers, unless they have hopes of a reparation from him, and future security from injuries. Christ, in the repetition of the command to “love God with all our mind, with all our heart, and with all our soul,” *i. e.*, with such an ardency above all things which glitter in our eye, or can be created by him, considers him as “our God” (Matt. 22:37). And the Psalmist considers him as one that had kindly employed his power for him, in the eruption of his love (Psalm 18:1), “I will love thee, O Lord, my strength;” and so in Psalm 116:1, “love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.” An esteem of the benefactor is inseparable from gratitude for the received benefits: and should not then the unparalleled kindness of God advance him in our thoughts, much more than slighter courtesies do a created benefactor in ours? It is an obligation on every man’s nature to answer bounty with gratitude, and goodness with love. Hence you never knew any man, nor can the records of eternity produce any man, or devil, that ever hated

any person, or anything as good in itself: it is a thing absolutely repugnant to the nature of any rational creature. The devils hate not God because he is good, but because he is not so good to them as they would have him; because he will not unlock their chains, turn them into liberty, and restore them to happiness; *i. e.* because he will not desert the rights of abused goodness. But how should we send up flames of love to that God, since we are under his direct beams, and enjoy such plentiful influences! If the sun is comely in itself, yet it is more amiable to us, by the light we see, and the warmth we feel.

1st. The greatness of his benefits have reason to affect us with a love to him. The impress he made upon our souls when he extracted us from the darkness of nothing; the comeliness he hath put upon us by his own breath; the care he took of our recovery, when we had lost ourselves; the expense he was at for our regaining our defaced beauty; the gift he made of his Son; the affectionate calls we have heard to over-master our corrupt appetites, move us to repentance, and make us disaffect our beloved misery; the loud sound of his word in our ears, and the more inward knockings of his Spirit in our heart; the offering us the gift of himself, and the everlasting happiness he courts us to, besides those common favors we enjoy in the world, which are all the streams of his rich bounty: the voice of all is loud enough to solicit our love, and the merit of all ought to be strong enough to engage our love: “there is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky” (Deut. 33:26).

2d. The unmeritedness of them doth enhance this. It is but reason to love him who hath loved us first (1 John 4:19). Hath he placed his delight upon any when they were nothing, and after they were sinful; and shall he set his delight upon such vile persons, and shall not we set our love upon so excellent an object as himself? How base are we, if his goodness doth not constrain us to affect him who hath been so free in his favor to us, who have merited the quite contrary at his hands? If “his tender mercies are over all his works” (Psalm 145:9), he ought for it to be esteemed by all his works that are capable of a rational estimation.

3d. Goodness in creatures makes them estimable, much more should the goodness of God render him lovely to us. If we love a little spark of goodness in this or that creature, if a drop be so

delicious to us, shall not the immense Sun of goodness, the ever-flowing Fountain of all, be much more delightful? The original excellency always outstrips what is derived from it; if so mean and contracted an object as a little creature deserves estimation for a little mite communicated to it, so great and extended a goodness as is in the Creator much more merits it at our hands: he is good after the infinite methods of a Deity: a weak resemblance is lovely; much more amiable, then, must be the incomprehensible original of that beauty.

We love creatures for what we think to be good in them, though it may be hurtful; and shall we not love God, who is a real and unblemished goodness, and from whose hand are poured out all those blessings that are conveyed to us by second causes? The object that delights us, the capacity we have to delight in it, are both from him; our love, therefore, to him should transcend the affection we bear to any instruments he moves for our welfare. "Among the gods, there is none like thee, O Lord, neither are there any works like unto thy works" (Psalm 86:8): among the pleasantest creatures there is none like the Creator, nor any goodness like unto his goodness. Shall we love the food that nourisheth us, and the medicine that cures us, and the silver whereby we furnish ourselves with useful commodities? Shall we love a horse, or dog, for the benefits we have by them? and shall not the spring of all those draw our souls after it, and make us aspire to the honor of loving and embracing Him who hath stored every creature with that which may pleasure us? But, instead of endeavoring to parallel our affection with his kindness, we endeavor to make our disingenuity as extensive and towering as his Divine goodness.

4th. This is the true end of the manifestation of his goodness, that he might appear amiable, and have a return of affection. Did God display his goodness only to be thought of, or to be loved? It is the want of such a return, that he hath usually aggravated, from the benefits he hath bestowed upon men. Every thought of him should be attended with a motion suitable to the excellency of his nature and works. Can we think those nobler spirits, the angels, look upon themselves, or those frames of things in the heavens and earth, without starting some practical affection to him for them? Their knowledge of his excellency and works cannot be a lazy

contemplation: it is impossible their wills and affections should be a thousand miles distant from their understandings in their operations. It is not the least part of his condescending goodness to court in such methods the affections of us worms, and manifest his desire to be beloved by us. Let us give him, then, that affection he deserves, as well as demands, and which cannot be withheld from him without horrible sacrilege. There is nothing worthy of love besides him; let no fire be kindled in our hearts, but what may ascend directly to him.

7. The seventh instruction is this: This renders God a fit object of trust and confidence. Since none is good but God, none can be a full and satisfactory ground or object of confidence but God: as all things derive their beings, so they derive their helpfulness to us from God; they are not, therefore, the principal objects of trust, but that goodness alone that renders them fit instruments of our support; they can no more challenge from us a stable confidence, than they can a supreme affection. It is by this the Psalmist allures men to a trust in him; "Taste and see how good the Lord is:" what is the consequence? "Blessed is the man that trusts in thee" (Psalm 34:8), The voice of Divine goodness sounds nothing more intelligibly, and a taste of it produceth nothing more effectually, than this. As the vials of his justice are to make us fear him, so the streams of his goodness are to make us rely on him: as his patience is designed to broach our repentance, so his goodness is most proper to strengthen our assurance in him: that goodness which surmounted so many difficulties, and conquered so many motions that might be made against any repeated exercise of it, after it had been abused by the first rebellion of man; that goodness that after so much contempt of it, appeared in such a majestic tenderness, and threw aside those impediments which men had cast in the way of Divine inclinations this goodness is the foundation of all reliance upon God. Who is better than God? and, therefore, who more to be trusted than God? As his power cannot act anything weakly, so his goodness cannot act anything unbecomingly, and unworthy of his infinite majesty. And here consider,

(1.) Goodness is the first motive of trust. Nothing but this could be the encouragement to man, had he stood in a state of innocence, to present himself before God; the majesty of God would have

constrained him to keep his due distance, but the goodness of God could only hearten his confidence: it is nothing else now that can preserve the same temper in us in our lapsed condition. To regard him only as the Judge of our crimes, will drive us from him; but only the regard of him as the Donor of our blessings, will allure us to him. The principal foundation of faith is not the word of God, but God himself, and God as considered in this perfection. As the goodness of God in his invitations and providential blessings “leads us to repentance” (Rom. 2:4), so, by the same reason, the goodness of God by his promises leads us to reliance. If God be not first believed to be good, he would not be believed at all in anything that he speaks or swears: if you were not satisfied in the goodness of a man, though he should swear a thousand times, you would value neither his word nor oath as any security. Many times, where we are certain of the goodness of a man, we are willing to trust him without his promise. This Divine perfection gives credit to the Divine promises; they of themselves would not be a sufficient ground of trust, without an apprehension of his truth; nor would his truth be very comfortable without a belief of his good will, whereby we are assured that what he promises to give, he gives liberally, free, and without regret. The truth of the Promiser makes the promise credible, but the goodness of the promiser makes it cheerfully relied on. In Psalm 73. (Asaph’s penitential psalm for his distrust of God,) he begins the first verse with an assertion of this attribute (ver. 1), “Truly God is good to Israel;” and ends with this fruit of it (ver. 28), “I will put my trust in the Lord God.” It is a mighty ill nature that receives not with assurance the dictates of Infinite Goodness, (that cannot deceive or frustrate the hopes we conceive of him) that is inconceivably more abundant in the breast and inclinations of the promiser, than expressible in the words of his promise, “All true faith works by love” (Gal. 5:6), and, therefore, necessarily includes a particular eyeing of this excellency in the Divine nature, which renders him amiable, and is the motive and encouragement of a love to him. His power indeed is a foundation of trust, but his goodness is the principal motive of it. His power without good-will would be dangerous, and could not allure affection; and his good will without power would be useless; and though it might merit a love, yet could not create a confidence; both in conjunction are strong grounds of hope, especially since his goodness is of the same infinity with his

wisdom and power; and that he can be no more wanting in the effusions of this upon them that seek him, than in his wisdom to contrive, or his power to effect, his designs and works.

(2.) This goodness is more the foundation and motive of trust under the gospel, than under the law.

They under the law had more evidences of Divine power, and their trust eyed that much; though there was an eminency of goodness in the frequent deliverances they had, yet the power of God had a more glorious dress than his goodness, because of the extraordinary and miraculous ways where by he brought those deliverances about. Therefore, in the catalogue of believers in Heb. 11. you shall find the power of God to be the centre of their rest and trust; and their faith was built upon the extraordinary marks of Divine power, which were frequently visible to them. But under the gospel, goodness and love was intended by God to be the chief object of trust; suitable to the excellency of that dispensation, he would have an exercise of more ingenuity in the creatures: therefore, it is said (Hos. 3:5), a promise of gospel times, "They shall fear God and his goodness in the latter days," when they shall return to "seek the Lord, and David their king." It is not said, they shall fear God, and his power, but the Lord and: his goodness, or the Lord for his goodness: fear is often in the Old Testament taken for faith, or trust. This Divine goodness the object of faith, is that goodness discovered in David their king; the Messiah, our Jesus. God, in this dispensation, recommends his goodness and love, and reveals it more clearly than other attributes, that the soul might have more prevailing and sweeter attractives to confide in him.

(3.) A confidence in him gives him the glory of his goodness. Most nations that had nothing but the light of nature, thought it a great part of the honor that was due to God, to implore his goodness, and cast their cares upon it. To do good, is the most honorable thing in the world, and to acknowledge a goodness in a way of confidence, is as high an honor as we can give to it, and a great part of gratitude for what it hath already expressed. Therefore we find often, that an acknowledgment of one benefit received, was attended with a trust in him for what they should in the future need (Psalm 56:13): "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling?" So, 2 Cor. 1:10: and they who have

been most eminent for their trust in him, have had the greatest eulogies and commendations from him. As a diffidence doth disparage this perfection, thinking it meaner and shallower than it is so confidence highly honors it. We never please him more, than when we trust in him; “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy” (Psalm 147:11). He takes: it for an honor to have this attribute exalted by such a carriage of his creature. He is no less offended when we think his heart straitened, as if he were a parsimonious God; than when we think his arm shortened, as if he were an impotent and feeble God. Let us, therefore, make this use of his goodness, to hearten our faith. When we are scared by the terrors of his justice, when we are dazzled by the arts of his wisdom, and confounded by the splendor of his majesty, we may take refuge in the sanctuary of his goodness; this will encourage us, as well as astonish us; whereas, the consideration of his other attributes would only amaze us, but can never refresh us, but when they are considered marching under the conduct and banners of this. When all the other perfections of the Divine nature are looked upon in conjunction with this excellency, each of them send forth ravishing and benign influences upon the applying creature. It is more advantageous to depend upon Divine bounty, than our own cares; we may have better assurance upon this account in his cares for us, than in ours for ourselves. Our goodness for ourselves is finite; and besides, we are too ignorant: his goodness is infinite, and attended with an infinite wisdom; we have reason to distrust ourselves, not God. We have reason to be at rest, under that kind influence we have so often experimented; he hath so much goodness, that he can have no deceit: his goodness in making the promise, and his goodness in working the heart to a reliance on it, are grounds of trust in him; “Remember thy word to thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope” (Psalm 119:49). If his promise did not please him, why did he make it? If reliance on the promise did not please him, why did his goodness work it? It would be inconsistent with his goodness to mock his creature, and it would be the highest mockery to publish his word, and create a temper in the heart of his supplicant, suited to his promise which he never intended to satisfy. He can as little wrong his creature, as wrong himself; and, therefore, can never disappoint that faith which in his own methods casts itself into the arms of his kindness, and is his

own workmanship, and calls him Author. That goodness that imparted itself so freely in creation, will not neglect those nobler creatures that put their trust in him. This renders God a fit object for trust and confidence.

8. The eighth instruction: This renders God worthy to be obeyed and honored. There is an excellency in God to allure, as well as sovereignty to enjoin obedience: the infinite excellency of his nature is so great, that if his goodness had promised us nothing to encourage our obedience, we ought to prefer him before ourselves, devote ourselves to serve him, and make his glory our greatest content; but much more when he hath given such admirable expressions of his liberality, and stored us with hopes of richer and fuller streams of it. When David considered the absolute goodness of his nature, and the relative goodness of his benefits, he presently expresseth an ardent desire to be acquainted with the Divine statutes, that he might make ingenious returns in a dutiful observance; “Thou art good, and thou dost good; teach me thy statutes” (Psalm 119:68). As his goodness is the original, so the acknowledgment of it is the end on all, which cannot be without an observance of his will. His goodness requires of us an ingenuous, not a servile obedience. And this is established upon two foundations.

[1.] Because the bounty of God hath laid upon us the strongest obligations. The strength of an obligation depends upon the greatness and numerousness of the benefits received. The more excellent the favors are which are conferred upon any person, the more right hath the benefactor to claim an observance from the person bettered by him. Much of the rule and empire which hath been in several ages conferred by communities upon princes, hath had its first spring from a sense of the advantages they have received by them, either in protecting them from their enemies, or rescuing them from an ignoble captivity; in enlarging their territories, or increasing their wealth. Conquest hath been the original of a constrained, but beneficence always the original of a voluntary and free subjection. Obedience to parents is founded upon their right, because they are instrumental in bestowing upon us being and life; and because this of life is so great a benefit, the law of nature never dissolves this obligation of obeying and honoring parents; it is as long-lived as the law of nature, and hath an universal practice, by

the strength of that law, in all parts of the world: and those rightful chains are not unlocked, but by that which unties the knot between soul and body: much more hath God a right to be obeyed and revered, who is the principal Benefactor, and moved all those second causes to impart to us, what conduced to our advantage. The just authority of God over us results from the superlativeness of his blessings he hath poured down upon us, which cannot be equalled, much less exceeded, by any other. As therefore upon this account he hath a claim to our choicest affections, so he hath also to most exact obedience; and neither one nor other can be denied him, without a sordid and disingenuous ingratitude; God therefore aggravates the rebellion of the Jews from the cares he had in the bringing them up (Isa. 2:2), and the miraculous deliverance from Egypt (Jer. 11:7, 8); implying that those benefits were strong obligations to an ingenuous observance of him.

[2.] It is established upon this, that God can enjoin the observance of nothing but what is good. He may by the right of his sovereign dominion, command that which is indifferent in its own nature: as in positive laws, the not eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which had not been evil in itself, set aside the command of God to the contrary; and likewise in those ceremonial laws he gave the Jews: but in regard to the transcendent goodness and righteousness of his nature, he will not, he cannot command anything that is evil in itself, or repugnant to the true interest of his creature; and God never obliged the creature to anything but what was so free from damaging it, that it highly conduced to its good and welfare: and therefore it is said, that “his commands are not grievous” (1 John 5:3): not grievous in their own nature, nor grievous to one possessed with a true reason. The command given to Adam in Paradise was not grievous in itself, nor could he ever have thought it so, but upon a false supposition instilled into him by the tempter. There is a pleasure results from the law of God to a holy rational nature, a sweetness tasted both by the understanding and by the will, for they both “rejoice the heart and enlighten the eyes” of the mind (Psalm 19:8). God being essentially wisdom and goodness, cannot deviate from that goodness in any orders he gives the creature; whatsoever he enacts must be agreeable to that rule, and therefore he can will nothing but what is good and excellent, and what is good for the creature; for since he hath put

originally into man a natural instinct to desire that which is good, he would never enact any thing for the creature's observance, that might control that desire imprinted by himself, but what might countenance that impression of his own hand; for if God did otherwise, he would contradict his own natural law, and be a deluder of his creatures, if he impressed upon them desires one way, and ordered directions another. The truth is, all his moral precepts are comely in themselves, and they receive not their goodness from God's positive command, but that command supposeth their goodness; if everything were good because God loves it, or because God wills it, *i. e.* that God's loving it or willing it made that good which was not good before, then, as Camero well argues somewhere, God's goodness would depend upon his loving himself; he was good because he loved himself, and was not good till he loved himself; whereas, indeed, God's loving himself, doth not make him good, but supposeth him good: he was good in the order of nature before he love himself; and his being good was the ground of his loving himself, because, as was said before, if there were anything better than God, God would love that; for it is inconsistent with the nature of God and infinite goodness not to love that which is good, and not to love that supremely which is the supreme good. Further to understand it, you may consider, if the question be asked, why God loves himself? You would think it a reasonable answer to say, because he is good. But if the question be asked, why God is good? you would think that answer, because he loves himself, would be destitute of reason; but the true answer would be, because his nature is so, and he could not be God if he were not good: therefore God's goodness is in order of our conception before his self-love, and not his self-love before his goodness; so the moral things God commands, are good in themselves before God commands them; and such, that if God should command the contrary, it would openly speak him evil and unrighteous. Abstract from Scripture, and weigh things in your own reason; could you conceive God good, if he should command a creature not to love him? could you preserve the notion of a good nature in him, if he did command murder, adultery, tyranny, and cutting of throats? You would wonder to what purpose he made the world, and framed it for society, if such things were ordered, that should deface all comeliness of society: the moral commands given in the word, appeared of themselves very beautiful

to mere reason, that had no knowledge of the written law; they are good, and because they are so, his goodness had moved his sovereign authority strictly to enjoin them. Now this goodness, whereby he cannot oblige a creature to anything that is evil, speaks him highly worthy of our observance, and our disobedience to his law to be full of inconceivable malignity: that is the last thing.

Second Use is of comfort. He is a good without mixture, good without weariness—none good but God, none good purely, none good inexhaustibly, but God; because he is good, we may, upon our speaking, expect his instruction; “Good is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in his way” (Psalm 25:8). His goodness makes him stoop to be the tutor to those worms that he prostrate before him; and though they are sinners full of filth, he drives them not from his school, nor denies them his medicines, if they apply themselves to him as a physician. He is good in removing the punishment due to our crimes, and good in bestowing benefits not due to our merits; because he is good, penitent believers may expect forgiveness; “Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive” (Psalm 86:5). He acts not according to the rigor of the law, but willingly grants his pardon to those that fly into the arms of the Mediator; his goodness makes him more ready to forgive, than our necessities make us desirous to enjoy; he charged not upon Job his impatient expressions in cursing the day of his birth; his goodness passed that over in silence, and extols him for speaking the thing that is right, right in the main, when he charges his friends for not speaking of him the thing that is right, as his servant Job had done (Job 42:7). He is so good, that if we offer the least thing sincerely, he will graciously receive it; if we have not a lamb to offer, a pigeon or turtle shall be accepted upon his altar; he stands not upon costly presents, but sincerely tendered services. All conditions are sweetened by it; whatsoever any in the world enjoy, is from a redundancy of this goodness; but whatsoever a good man enjoys, is from a propriety in this goodness.

1. Here is comfort in our addresses to him. If he be a fountain and sea of goodness, he cannot be weary of doing good, no more than a fountain or sea are of flowing. All goodness delights to communicate itself; infinite goodness hath then an infinite delight in expressing itself; it is a part of his goodness not to be weary of showing it; he can never, then, be weary of being solicited for the

effusions of it; if he rejoices over his people to do them good, he will rejoice in any opportunities offered to him to honor his goodness, and gladly meet with a fit subject for it; he therefore delights in prayer. Never can we so delight in addressing, as he doth in imparting; he delights more in our prayers than we can ourselves; goodness is not pleased with shyness. To what purpose did his immense bounty bestow his Son upon us, but that we should be “accepted” both in our persons and petitions (Eph. 1:6)? “His eyes are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry” (Psalm 34:15); he fixes the eye of his goodness upon them, and opens the ears of his goodness for them; he is pleased to behold them, and pleased to listen to them, as if he had no pleasure in anything else; he loves to be sought to, to give a vent to his bounty; “Acquaint thyself with God, and thereby good shall come unto thee” (Job 22:21). The word signifies. to accustom ourselves to God; the more we accustom ourselves in speaking, the more he will accustom himself in giving; he loves not to keep his goodness close under lock and key, as men do their treasures. If we knock, he opens his exchequer (Matt. 7:7); his goodness is as flexible to our importunities, as his power is invincible by the arm of a silly worm; he thinks his liberality honored by being applied to, and your address to be a recompense for his expense. There is no reason to fear, since he hath so kindly invited us, but he will as heartily welcome us; the nature of goodness is to compassionate and communicate, to pity and relieve, and that with a heartiness and cheerfulness; man is weary of being often solicited, because he hath a finite, not a bottomless, goodness: he gives sometimes to be rid of his suppliant, not to encourage him to a second approach. But every experience God gives us of his bounty, is a motive to solicit him afresh, and a kind of obligation he hath laid upon himself to “renew it” (1 Sam. 17:37): it is one part of his goodness that it is boundless and bottomless; we need not fear the wasting of it, nor any weariness in him to bestow it. The stock cannot be spent, and infinite kindness can never become niggardly; when we have enjoyed it, there is still an infinite ocean in Him to refresh us, and as full streams as ever to supply us.

What an encouragement have we to draw near to God! We run in our straits to those that we think have most good will, as well as power to relieve and protect us. The oftener we come to him, and the

nearer we approach to him, the more of his influences we shall feel: as the nearer the sun, the more of its heat insinuates itself into us. The greatness of God, joined with his goodness, hath more reason to encourage our approach to him, than our flight from him, because his greatness never goes unattended with his goodness; and if we were not so good, he would not be so great in the apprehensions of any creature. How may his goodness, in the great gift of his Son, encourage us to apply to him since he hath set him as a day's man between himself and us, and appointed him an Advocate to present our requests for us, and speed them at the throne of grace; and he never leaves till Divine goodness subscribes a fiat to our believing and just petitions!

2. Here is comfort in afflictions. What can we fear from the conduct of Infinite Goodness? Can his hand be heavy upon those that are humble before him? They are the hands of Infinite Power indeed, but there is not any motion of it upon his people, but is ordered by a goodness as infinite as his power, which will not suffer any affliction to be too sharp or too long. By what ways soever he conveys grace to us here, and prepares us for glory hereafter, they are good, and those are the good things he hath chiefly obliged himself to give (Psalm 84:11): "Grace and glory" will he "give, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." This David comforted himself with, in that which his devout soul accounted the greatest calamity, his absence from the courts and house of God (ver. 2). Not an ill will, but a good will, directs his scourges; he is not an idle spectator of our combats; his thoughts are fuller of kindness than ours, in any case, can be of trouble: and because he is good, he wills the best good in everything he acts; in exercising virtue, or correcting vice. There is no affliction without some apparent mixtures of goodness; when he speaks how he had smitten Israel (Jer. 2:30), he presently adds (ver. 31), "Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness?" Though he led them through a desert, yet he was not a desert to them; he was no land of darkness to them; while they marched through a land of barrenness, he was a caterer to provide them "manna," and a place of "broad rivers" and streams. How often hath Divine goodness made our afflictions our consolations; our diseases, our medicines, and his gentle strokes, reviving cordials! How doth he provide for us above our deserts, even while he doth punish us beneath our merits! Divine

goodness can no more mean ill, than Divine wisdom can be mistaken in its end, or Divine power overruled in its actions. "Charity thinks no evil" (1 Cor. 13:5); charity in the stream doth not, much less doth charity in the fountain. To be afflicted by a hand of goodness hath something, comfortable in it, when to be afflicted by an evil hand is very odious. Elijah, who was loth to die by the hand of a whorish idolatrous Jezebel, was very desirous to die by the hand of God (1 Kings 19:2–4). He accounted it a misery to have died by her hand, who hated him, and had nothing but cruelty; and, therefore, fled from her, when he wished for death, as a desirable thing by the hand of that God who had been good to him, and could not but be good in whatsoever he acted.

3. The third comfort flowing from this doctrine of the goodness of God, is, it is a ground of assurance of happiness. If God be so good, that nothing is better, and loves himself, as he is good, he cannot be wanting in love to those that resemble his nature, and imitate his goodness: he cannot but love his own image of goodness; wherever he finds it, he cannot but be bountiful to it; for it is impossible there can be any love to any object, without wishing well to it, and doing well for it. If the soul loves God as its chiefest good, God will love the soul as his pious servant: as he hath offered to them the highest allurements, so he will not withhold the choicest communications. Goodness cannot be a deluding thing: it cannot consist with the nobleness and largeness of this perfection to invite the creature to him, and leave the creature empty of him when it comes. It is inconsistent with this perfection to give the creature a knowledge of himself, and a desire of enjoyment larger than that knowledge; a desire to know, and enjoy him perpetually, yet never intend to bestow an eternal communication of himself upon it. The nature of man was erected by the goodness of God, but with an enlarged desire for the highest good, and a capacity of enjoying it. Can goodness be thought to be deceitful, to frustrate its own work, be tired with its own effusions, to let a gracious soul groan under its burden, and never resolve to ease him of it; to see delightfully the aspirings of the creature to another state, and resolve never to admit him to a happy issue of those desires? It is not agreeable to this inconceivable perfection to be unconcerned in the longings of his creature, since their first longings were placed in them by that goodness which is so free from mocking the creature, or falling

short of its well-grounded expectations or desires, that it infinitely exceeds them. If man had continued in innocence, the goodness of God, without question, would have continued him in happiness: and, since he hath had so much goodness to restore man, would it not be dishonorable to that goodness to break his own conditions, and defeat the believing creature of happiness, after it hath complied with his terms? He is a believer's God in covenant, and is a God in the utmost extent of this attribute, as well as of any other; and, therefore, will not communicate mean and shallow benefits, but according to the grandeur of it, sovereign and divine, such as the gift of a happy immortality. Since he had no obligation upon him, to make any promise, but the sweetness of his own nature, the same is as strong upon him to make all the words of his grace good; they cannot be invalid in any one tittle of them as long as his nature remains the same; and his goodness cannot be diminished without the impairing of his Godhead, since it is inseparable from it. Divine goodness will not let any man serve God for nought; he hath promised our weak obedience more than any man in his right wits can say it merits (Matt. 10:42): "A cup of cold water shall not lose its reward." He will manifest our good actions as he gave so high a testimony to Job, in the face of the devil, his accuser: it will not only be the happiness of the soul, but of the body, the whole man, since soul and body were in conjunction in the acts of righteousness; it consists not with the goodness of God to reward the one, and to let the other lie in the ruins of its first nothing: to bestow joy upon the one for its being principal, and leave the other without any sentiments of joy, that was instrumental in those good works, both commanded and approved by God: he that had the goodness to pity our original dust, will not want a goodness to advance it: and if we put off our bodies, it is but afterwards to put them on repaired and fresher. From this goodness, the upright may expect all the happiness their nature is capable of.

4. It is a ground of comfort in the midst of public dangers. This hath more sweetness in it to support us, than the malice of enemies hath to deject us; because he is "good," he is "a stronghold in the day of trouble" (Nah. 1:7). If his goodness extends to all his creatures, it will much more extend to those that honor him: if the earth be full of his goodness, that part of heaven which he hath upon earth shall not be empty of it. He hath a goodness often to deliver

the righteous, and a justice to put the wicked in his stead (Prov. 11:8). When his people have been under the power of their enemies, he hath changed the scene, and put the enemies under the power of his people: he hath clapped upon them the same bolts which they did upon his servants. How comfortable is this goodness that hath yet maintained us in the midst of dangers, preserved us in the mouth of lions, quenched kindled fire; hitherto rescued us from designed ruin subtilly hatched, and supported us in the midst of men very passionate for our destruction; how hath this watchful goodness been a sanctuary to us in the midst of an upper hell!

Third Use is of exhortation.

1. How should we endeavor after the enjoyment of God as good! How earnestly should we desire him! As there is no other goodness worthy of our supreme love, so there is no other goodness worthy our most ardent thirst. Nothing deserves the name of a desirable good, but as it tends to the attainment of this: here we must pitch our desires, which otherwise will terminate in nullities or inconceivable disturbances.

(1.) Consider, nothing but good can be the object of a rational appetite. The will cannot direct its motion to anything under the notion of evil, evil in itself, or evil to it; whatsoever courts it must present itself in the quality of a good in its own nature, or in its present circumstances to the present state and condition of the desire; it will not else touch or affect the will. This is the language of that faculty: "Who will show me any good?" (Psalm 4:6), and good is as inseparably the object of the will's motion, as truth is of the understanding's inquiry. Whatsoever a man would allure another to comply with, he must propose to the person under the notion of some beneficialness to him in point of honor, profit, or pleasure.

To act after this manner is the proper character of a rational creature; and though that which is evil is often embraced instead of that which is good, and what we entertain as conducing to our felicity proves our misfortune, yet that is from our ignorance, and not from a formal choice of it as evil; for what evil is chosen it is not possible to choose under the conception of evil, but under the appearance of a good, though it be not so in reality. It is inseparable from the wills of all men to propose to themselves that which in the

opinion and judgment of their understandings or imagination is good, though they often mistake and cheat themselves.

(2.) Since that good is the object of a rational appetite, the purest, best, and most universal good, such as God is, ought to be most sought after. Since good only is the object of a rational appetite, all the motions of our souls should be carried to the first and best good: a real good is most desirable; the greatest excellency of the creatures cannot speak them so, since, by the corruption of man, they are “subjected to vanity” (Rom. 8:20). God is the most excellent good without any shadow; a real something without that nothing which every creature hath in its nature (Isa. 40:17). A perfect good can only give us content: the best goodness in the creature is but slender and imperfect; had not the venom of corruption infused a vanity into it, the make of it speaks it finite, and the best qualities in it are bounded, and cannot give satisfaction to a rational appetite which bears in its nature an imitation of Divine infiniteness, and therefore can never find an eternal rest in mean trifles. God is above the imperfection of all creatures; creatures are but drops of goodness, at best but shallow streams; God is like a teeming ocean, that can fill the largest as well as the narrowest creek. He hath an accumulative goodness; several creatures answer several necessities, but one God can answer all our wants: he hath an universal fulness, to overtop our universal emptiness: he contains in himself the sweetness of all other goods, and holds in his bosom plentifully what creatures have in their natures sparingly. Creatures are uncertain goods; as they begin to exist, so they may cease to be; they may be gone with a breath, they will certainly languish if God owes upon them (Isa. 40:24): the same breath that raised them can blast them; but who can rifle God of the least part of his excellency? Mutability is inherent in the nature of every creature, as a creature. All sublunary things are as gourds, that refresh us one moment with their presence, and the next fret us with their absence; like fading flowers, strutting to-day, and drooping to-morrow (Isa. 40:6): while we possess them, we cannot clip their wings, that may carry them away from us, and may make us vainly seek what we thought we firmly held. But God is as permanent a good as he is a real one: he hath wings to fly to them that seek him, but no wings to fly from them forever, and leave them. God is an universal good; that which is good to one may be evil to another; what is desirable by one may

be refused as inconvenient for another: but God being an universal, unstained good, is useful for all, convenient to the natures of all but such as will continue in enmity against him. There is nothing in God can displease a soul that desires to please him; when we are in darkness, he is a light to scatter it; when we are in want, he hath riches to relieve us; when we are in spiritual death, he is a Prince of life to deliver us; when we are defiled, he is holiness to purify us: it is in vain to fix our hearts anywhere but on him, in the desire of whom there is a delight, and in the enjoyment of whom there is an inconceivable pleasure.

(3.) He is most to be sought after, since all things else that are desirable had their goodness from him.

If anything be desirable because of its goodness, God is much more desirable because of his, since all things are good by a participation, and nothing good but by his print upon it: as what being creatures have was derived to them by God, so what goodness they are possessed with they were furnished with it by God; all goodness flowed from him, and all created goodness is summed up in him. The streams should not terminate our appetite without aspiring to the fountain. If the waters in the channel, which receive mixture, communicate a plea, sure, the taste of the fountain must be much more delicious; that original Perfection of all things hath an inconceivable beauty above those things it hath framed. Since those things live not by their own strength, nor nourish us by their own liberality, but by the “word of God” (Matt.

4:4), that God that speaks them into life, and speaks them into usefulness, should be most ardently desired as the best. If the sparkling glory of the visible heavens delight us, and the beauty and bounty of the earth please and refresh us, what should be the language of our souls upon those views and tastes but that of the Psalmist, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I can desire beside thee” (Psalm 73:25). No greater good can possibly be desired, and no less good should be ardently desired. As he is the supreme good, so we should bear that regard to him as supremely, and above all, to thirst for him: as he is good, he is the object of desire; as the choicest and first goodness, he is desirable with the greatest vehemency. “Give me children, or else I die” (Gen. 30:1), was an uncomely speech; the one was granted, and the other

inflicted; she had children, but the last cost her her life: but, Give me God, or I will not be content, is a gracious speech, wherein we cannot miscarry; all that God demands of us is, that we should long for him, and look for our happiness only in him. That is the first thing, endeavor after the enjoyment of God as good.

2. Often meditate on the goodness of God. What was man produced for, but to settle his thoughts upon this? What should have been Adam's employment in innocence, but to read over all the lines of nature, and fix his contemplations on that good hand that drew them? What is man endued with reason for, above all other animals, but to take notice of this goodness spread over all the creatures, which they themselves, though they felt it, could not have such a sense of as to make answerable returns to their Benefactor? Can we satisfy ourselves in being spectators of it, and enjoyers of it, only in such a manner as the brutes are? The beasts behold things as well as we, they feel the warm beams of this goodness as well as we, but without any reflection upon the Author of them. Shall Divine blessings meet with no more from us but a brutish view and beholding of them? What is more just, than to spend a thought upon Him who hath enlarged his hand in so many benefits to us? Are we indebted to any more than we are to him? Why should we send our souls to visit anything more than him in his works? That we are able to meditate on him is a part of his goodness to us, who hath bestowed that capacity upon us; and, if we will not, it is a great part of our ingratitude. Can anything more delightful enter into us, than that of the kind and gracious disposition of that God who first brought us out of the abyss of an unhappy nothing, and hath hitherto spread his wings over us? Where can we meet with a nobler object than Divine goodness? and what nobler work can be practised by us than to consider it? What is more sensible in all the operations of his hands than his skill, as they are considered in themselves, and his goodness, as they are considered in relation to us? It is strange that we should miss the thoughts of it; that we should look upon this earth, and everything in it, and yet overlook that which it is most full of, *viz.* Divine goodness (Psalm 33:5); it runs through the whole web of the world; all is framed and diversified by goodness; it is one entire single goodness, which appears in various garbs and dresses in every part of the creation. Can we turn our eyes inward, and send our eyes outward, and see nothing of a Divinity in both worthy of

our deepest and serious thoughts? Is there anything in the world we can behold, but we see his bounty, since nothing was made but is one way or other beneficial to us? Can we think of our daily food, but we must have some reflecting thoughts on our great Caterer? Can the sweetness of the creature to our palate obscure the sweetness of the Provider to our minds? It is strange that we should be regardless of that wherein every creature without us, and every sense within us and about us, is a tutor to instruct us! Is it not reason we should think of the times wherein we were nothing, and from thence run back to a never-begun eternity, and view ourselves in the thoughts of that goodness, to be in time brought forth upon this stage, as we are at present? Can we consider but one act of our understandings, but one thought, one blossom, one spark of our souls mounting upwards, and not reflect upon the goodness of God to us, who, in that faculty that sparkles out rational thoughts, has advanced us to a nobler state, and endued us with a nobler principle, than all the creatures we see on earth, except those of our own rank and kind?

Can we consider but one foolish thought, one sinful act, and reflect upon the guilt and filth of it, and not behold goodness in sparing us, and miracles of goodness in sending his Son to die for us, for the expiation of it? This perfection cannot well be out of our thoughts, or at least it is horrible it should, when it is writ in every line of the creation, and in a legible rubric, in bloody letters, in the cross of his Son. Let us think with ourselves, how often he hath multiplied his blessings, when we did deserve his wrath! how he hath sent one unexpected benefit upon the heel of another, to bring us with a swift pace the tidings of good-will to us! how often hath he delivered us from a disease that had the arrows of death in its hand ready to pierce us! how often hath he turned our fears into joys, and our distempers into promoters of our felicity! how often hath he mated a temptation, sent seasonable supplies in the midst of a sore distress, and prevented many dangers which we could not be so sensible of, because we were, in a great measure, ignorant of them! How should we meditate upon his goodness to our souls, in preventing some sins, in pardoning others, in darting upon us the knowledge of his gospel, and of himself, in the face of his Son Christ! This seems to stick much upon the spirit of Paul, since he doth so often sprinkle his epistles with the titles of the “grace of

God, riches of grace, unsearchable riches of God, riches of glory,” and cannot satisfy himself, with the extolling of it. Certainly, we should bear upon our heart a deep and quick sense of this perfection; as it was the design of God to manifest it, so it would be acceptable to God for us to have a sense of it: a dull receiver of his blessings is no less nauseous to him than a dull dispenser of his alms; he loves a “cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7); he doth himself what he loves in others; he is cheerful in giving, and he loves we should be serious in thinking of him, and have a right apprehension and sense of his goodness.

(1.) A right sense of his goodness would dispose us to an ingenuous worship of God. It would damp our averseness to any act of religion; what made David so resolute and ready to “worship towards his holy temple” but the sense of his “loving kindness?” (Psalm 138:2). This would render him always in our mind a worthy object of our devotion, a stable prop of our confidence. We should then adore him, when we consider him as “our God,” and ourselves as “the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand” (Psalm 95:7): we should send up prayers with strong faith and feeling, and praises with great joy and pleasure.

The sense of his goodness would make us love him, and our love to him would quicken our adoration of him; but if we regard not this, we shall have no mind to think of him, no mind to act anything towards him; we may tremble at his presence, but not heartily worship him; we shall rather look upon him as a tyrant, and think no other affection due to him than what we reserve for an oppressor, *viz.* hatred and ill- will.

(2.) A sense of it will keep us humble. A sense of it would effect that for which itself was intended; *viz.* bring us to a repentance for our crimes, and not suffer us to harden ourselves against him. When we should deeply consider how he hath made the sun to shine upon us, and his rain to fall upon the earth for our support; the one to supple the earth, and the other to assist the juice of it to bring forth fruits; how would it reflect upon us our ill requitals, and make us hang down our heads before him in a low posture, pleasing to him, and advantageous to ourselves! What would the first charge be upon ourselves, but what Moses brings in his expostulation against the Israelites (Deut. 32:6): “Do I thus requite the Lord?” What is this

goodness for me, who am so much below him; for me, who have so much incensed him; for me, who have so much abused what he hath allowed? It would bring to remembrance the horror of our crimes, and set us a blushing before him, when we should consider the multitude of his benefits, and our unworthy behaviour, that hath not constrained him even against the inclination of his goodness, to punish us: how little should we plead for a further liberty in sin, or palliate our former faults! When we set Divine goodness in one column, and our transgressions in another, and compare together their several items, it would fill us with a deep consciousness of our own guilt, and divest us of any worth of our own in our approaches to him; it would humble us, that we cannot love so obliging a God as much as he deserves to be loved by us; it would make us humble before men. Who would be proud of a mere gift which he knows he hath not merited? How ridiculous would that servant be, that should be proud of a rich livery, which is a badge of his service, not a token of his merit, but of his master's magnificence and bounty, which, though he wear this day, he may be stripped of to-morrow, and be turned out of his master's family!

(3.) A sense of the Divine goodness would make us faithful to him. The goodness of God obligeth us to serve him, not to offend him; the freeness of his goodness should make us more ready to contribute to the advancement of his glory. When we consider the benefits of a friend proceed out of kindness to us, and not out of self ends and vain applause, it works more upon us, and makes us more careful of the honor of such a person. It is a pure bounty God hath manifested in creation and providence, which could not be for himself, who, being blessed forever, wanted nothing from us: it was not to draw a profit from us, but to impart an advantage to us; "Our goodness extends not to him" (Psalm 16:2). The service of the benefactor is but a rational return for benefits; whence Nehemiah aggravates the sins of the Jews (Neh. 9:35): "They have not served thee in thy great goodness that thou gavest them;" *i. e.* which thou didst freely bestow upon them. How should we dare to spend upon our lusts that which we possess, if we considered by whose liberality we came by it? how should we dare to be unfaithful in the goods he hath made us trustees of? A deep sense of Divine goodness will ennoble the creature, and make it act for the most glorious and noble end; it would strike Satan's temptation dead at a blow; it would pull

off the false mask and vizard from what he presents to us, to draw us from the service of our Benefactor; we could not, with a sense of this, think him kinder to us than God hath, and will be, which is the great motive of men to join hands with him, and turn their backs upon God.

(4.) A sense of the Divine goodness would make us patient under our miseries. A deep sense of this would make us give God the honor of his goodness in whatsoever he doth, though the reason of his actions be not apparent to us, nor the event and issue of his proceedings foreseen by us. It is a stated case, that goodness can never intend ill, but designs good in all its acts “to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28): nay, he always designs the best; when he bestows anything upon his people, he sees it best they should have it; and when he removes anything from them, he sees it best they should lose it. When we have lost a thing we loved, and refuse to be comforted, a sense of this perfection, which acts God in all, would keep us from misjudging our sufferings, and measuring the intention of the hand that sent them, by the sharpness of what we feel. What patient, fully persuaded of the affection of the physician, would not value him, though that which is given to purge out the humors, racks his bowels? When we lose what we love, perhaps it was some outward lustre tickled our apprehensions, and we did not see the viper we would have harmed ourselves by; but God seeing it, snatched it from us, and we mutter as if he had been cruel, and deprived us of the good we imagined, when he was kind to us, and freed us from the hurt we should certainly have felt. We should regard that which in goodness he takes from us, at no other rate than some gilded poison and lurking venom; the sufferings of men, though upon high provocations, are often followed with rich mercies, and many times are intended as preparations for greater goodness. When God utters that rhetoric of his bowels, “How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim, I will not execute the fierceness of my anger!” (Hos. 11:8), he intended them mercy in their captivity, and would prepare them by it, to walk after the Lord. And it is likely the posterity of those ten tribes were the first that ran to God, upon the publishing the gospel in the places where they lived; he doth not take away himself when he takes away outward comforts; while he snatcheth away the rattles we play with, he hath a breast in himself for us to suck. The consideration of his goodness would dispose us

to a composed frame of spirit. If we are sick, it is goodness, it is a disease, and not a hell. It is goodness, that it is a cloud, and not a total darkness. What if he transfers from us what we have? he takes no more than what his goodness first imparted to us; and never takes so much from his people as his goodness leaves them if he strips them of their lives, he leaves them their souls, with those faculties he furnished them with at first, and removes them from those houses of clay to a richer mansion. The time of our sufferings here, were it the whole course of our life, bears not the proportion of a moment to that endless eternity wherein he hath designed to manifest his goodness to us. The consideration of Divine goodness would teach us to draw a calm even from storms, and distil balsam from rods. If the reproofs of the righteous be an excellent oil (Psalm 145:5), we should not think the corrections of a good God to have a less virtue.

(5.) A sense of the Divine goodness would mount us above the world. It would damp our appetites after meaner things; we should look upon the world not as a God, but a gift from God, and never think the present better than the Donor. We should never be soaking in muddy puddles were we always filled with a sense of the richness and clearness of this Fountain, wherein we might hate ourselves; little petty particles of good would give us no content, when we were sensible of such an unbounded ocean. Infinite goodness, rightly apprehended, would dull our desires after other things, and sharpen them with a keener edge after that which is best of all. How earnestly do we long for the presence of a friend, of whose good will towards us we have full experience.

(6.) It would check any motions of envy: it would make us joy in the prosperity of good men, and hinder us from envying the outward felicity of the wicked. We should not dare with an evil eye to censure his good hand (Matt. 20:15), but approve of what he thinks fit to do, both in the matter of his liberality and the subjects he chooseth for it. Though if the disposal were in our hands, we should not imitate him, as not thinking them subjects fit for our bounty; yet since it is in his hands, we be to approve of his actions and not have an ill will towards him for his goodness, or towards those he is pleased to make the subject of it. Since all his doles are given to “invite man to repentance” (Rom. 2:4), to envy them those goods God hath bestowed upon them, is to envy God the glory of his own

goodness, and then the felicity those things might move them to aspire to; it is to wish God more contracted, and thy neighbor more miserable: but a deep sense of his sovereign goodness would make us rejoice in any marks of it upon others, and move us to bless him instead of censuring him.

(7.) It would make us thankful. What can be the most proper, the most natural reflection, when we behold the most magnificent characters he hath imprinted upon our souls; the conveniency of the members he hath compacted in our bodies, but a praise of him? Such motion had David upon the first consideration: “I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). What could be the most natural reflection, when we behold the rich prerogatives of our natures above other creatures, the provision he hath made for us for our delight in the beauties of heaven, for our support in the creatures on earth? What can reasonably be expected from uncorrupted man, to be the first motion of his soul, but an extolling the bountiful hand of the invisible donor, whoever he be? This would make us venture at some endeavors of a grateful acknowledgment, though we should despair of rendering anything proportionable to the greatness of the benefit; and such an acknowledgment of our own weakness would be an acceptable part of our gratitude. Without a due and deep sense of Divine goodness, our praise of it, and thankfulness for it, will be but cold, formal, and customary; our tongues may bless him, and our heart slight him: and this will lead us to the third exhortation:

3. Which is that of thankfulness for Divine goodness. The absolute goodness of God, as it is the excellency of his nature, is the object of praise: the relative goodness of God, as he is our benefactor, is the object of thankfulness. This was always a debt due from man to God; he had obligations in the time of his integrity, and was then to render it; he is not less, but more obliged to it in the state of corruption; the benefits being the greater, by how much the more unworthy he is of them by reason of his revolt. The bounty bestowed upon an enemy that merits the contrary, ought to be received with a greater resentment than that bestowed on a friend, who is not unworthy of testimonies of respect. Gratitude to God is the duty of every creature that hath a sense of itself; the more excellent being any enjoy the more devout ought to be the acknowledgment. How

often doth David stir up, not only himself, but summon all creatures, even the insensible ones, to join in the concert! He calls to the “deeps, fire, hail, snow, mountains and hills,” to bear a part in this work of praise (Psalm 148); not that they are able to do it actively, but to show that man is to call in the whole creation to assist him passively, and should have so much charity to all creatures, as to receive what they offer, and so much affection to God, as to present to him what he receives from him. Snow and hail cannot bless and praise God, but man ought to praise God for those things wherein there is a mixture of trouble and inconvenience, something to molest our sense, as well as something that improves the earth for fruit. This God requires of us: for this he instituted several offerings, and required a little portion of fruits to be presented to him, as an acknowledgment they held the whole from his bounty.

And the end of the festival days among the Jews was to revive the memory of those signal acts wherein his power for them, and his goodness to them, had been extraordinarily evident; it is no more but our mouths to praise him, and our hand to obey him, that he exacts at our hands. He commands us not to expend what he allows us in the erecting stately temples to his honor; all the coin he requires to be paid with for his expense is the “offering of thanksgiving” (Psalm 50:14): and this we ought to do as much as we can, since we cannot do it as much as he merits, for “who can show forth all his praise?” (Psalm 106:2.) If we have the fruit of his goodness, it is fit he should have the “fruit of our lips” (Heb. 13:15): the least kindness should inflame our souls with a kindly resentment. Though some of his benefits have a brighter, some a darker, aspect towards us, yet they all come from this common spring; his goodness shines in all; there are the footsteps of goodness in the least, as well as the smiles of goodness in the greatest; the meanest therefore is not to pass without a regard of the Author. As the glory of God is more illustrious in some creatures than in others, yet it glitters in all, and the lowest as well as the highest administers matter of praise; but they are not only little things, but the choicer favors he has bestowed upon us. How much doth it deserve our acknowledgment, that he should contrive our recovery, when we had plotted our ruin! that when he did from eternity behold the crimes wherewith we would incense him, he should not, according to the rights of justice, cast us into hell, but prize us at the rate of the blood and life of his only Son, in

value above the blood of men and lives of angels!

How should we bless that God, that we have yet a gospel among us, that we are not driven into the utmost regions, that we can attend upon him in the face of the sun, and not forced to the secret obscurities of the night! Whatsoever we enjoy, whatsoever we receive, we must own him as the Donor, and read his hand in it. Rob him not of any praise to give to an instrument. No man hath wherewithal to do us good, nor a heart to do us good, nor opportunities of benefitting us without him. When the cripple received the soundness of his limbs from Peter, he praised the hand that sent it, not the hand that brought it (Acts 3:6): he “praised God” (ver. 8). When we want anything that is good, let the goodness of Divine nature move us to David’s practice, to “thirst after God” (Psalm 42:1): and when we feel the motions of his goodness to us, let us imitate the temper of the same holy man (Psalm 103:2): “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” It is an unworthy carriage to deal with him as a traveller doth with a fountain, kneel down to drink of it when he is thirsty, and turn his back upon it, and perhaps never think of it more after he is satisfied.

4. And, lastly, Imitate this goodness of God. If his goodness hath such an influence upon us as to make us love him, it will also move us with an ardent zeal to imitate him in it. Christ makes this use from the doctrine of Divine goodness (Matt. 5:44, 45): “Do good to them that hate you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.” As holiness is a resemblance of God’s purity, so charity is a resemblance of God’s goodness; and this our Saviour calls perfection (ver. 48): “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect.” As God would not be a perfect God without goodness, so neither can any be a perfect Christian without kindness; charity and love being the splendor and loveliness of all Christian graces, as goodness is the splendor and loveliness of all Divine attributes. This and holiness are ordered in the Scripture to be the grand patterns of our imitation. Imitate the goodness of God in two things.

(1.) In relieving and assisting others in distress. Let our heart be as large in the capacity of creatures, as God’s is in the capacity of a Creator. A large heart from him to us, and a strait heart from us to

others, will not suit: let us not think any so far below us as to be unworthy of our care, since God thinks none that are infinitely distant from him too mean for his. His infinite glory mounts him above the creature, but his infinite goodness stoops him to the meanest works of his hands. As he lets not the transgressions of prosperity pass without punishment, so he lets not the distress of his afflicted people pass him without support. Shall God provide for the ease of beasts, and shall not we have some tenderness towards those that are of the same blood with ourselves, and have as good blood to boast of as runs in the veins of the mightiest monarch on earth; and as mean, and as little as they are, can lay claim to as ancient a pedigree as the stateliest prince in the world, who cannot ascend to ancestors beyond Adam? Shall we glut ourselves with Divine beneficence to us, and wear his livery only on our own backs, forgetting the afflictions of some dear Joseph; when God, who hath an unblemished felicity in his own nature, looks out of himself to view and relieve the miseries of poor creatures? Why hath God increased the doles of his treasures to some more than others? Was it merely for themselves, or rather that they might have a bottom to attain the honor of imitating him? Shall we embezzle his goods to our own use, as if we were absolute proprietors, and not stewards entrusted for others? Shall we make a difficulty to part with something to others, out of that abundance he hath bestowed upon any of us? Did not his goodness strip his Son of the glory of heaven for a time to enrich us? and shall we shrug when we are to part with a little to pleasure him? It is not very becoming for any to be backward in supplying the necessities of others with a few morsels, who have had the happiness to have had their greatest necessities supplied with his Son's blood.

He demands not that we should strip ourselves of all for others, but of a pittance, something of superfluity, which will turn more to our account than what is vainly and unprofitably consumed on our backs and bellies. If he hath given much to any of us, it is rather to lay aside part of the income for his service; else we would monopolize Divine goodness to ourselves, and seem to distrust under our present experiments his future kindness, as though the last thing he gave us was attended with this language, Hoard up this, and expect no more from me; use it only to the glutting your avarice, and feeding your ambition: which would be against the whole scope of

Divine goodness. If we do not endeavor to write after the comely copy he hath set us, we may provoke him to harden himself against us, and in wrath bestow that on the fire, or on our enemies, which his goodness hath imparted to us for his glory, and the supplying the necessities of poor creatures. And, on the contrary, he is so delighted with this kind of imitation of him, that a cup of cold water, when there is no more to be done, shall not be unrewarded.

(2.) Imitate God in his goodness, in a kindness to our worst enemies. The best man is more unworthy to receive anything from God than the worst can be to receive from us. How kind is God to those that blaspheme him, and gives them the same sun, and the same showers, that he doth to the best men in the world! Is it not more our glory to imitate God in “doing good to those that hate us,” than to imitate the men of the world in requiting evil, by a return of a sevenfold mischief? This would be a goodness which would vanquish the hearts of men, and render us greater than Alexanders and Cæsars, who did only triumph over miserable carcasses; yea, it is to triumph over ourselves in being good against the sentiments of corrupt nature. Revenge makes us slaves to our passions, as much as the offenders, and good returns render us victorious over our adversaries (Rom. 12:21): “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” When we took up our arms against God, his goodness contrived not our ruin, but our recovery: This is such a goodness of God as could not be discovered in an innocent state; while man had continued in his duty, he could not have been guilty of an enmity; and God could not but affect him, unless he had denied himself: so this of being good to our enemies could never have been practised in a state of rectitude; since, where was a perfect innocence, there could be no spark of enmity to one another. It can be no disparagement to any man’s dignity to cast his influences on his greatest opposers, since God, who acts for his own glory, thinks not himself disparaged by sending forth the streams of his bounty on the wickedest persons, who are far meaner to him than those of the same blood can be to us. Who hath the worse thoughts of the sun, for shining upon the earth, that sends up vapors to cloud it? it can be no disgrace to resemble God; if his hand and bowels be open to us, let not ours be shut to any.

DISCOURSE XIII - ON GOD'S DOMINION

PSALM 103:19.—*The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens: and his kingdom ruleth over all.*

THE Psalm begins with the praise of God, wherein the penman excites his soul to a right and elevated management of so great a duty (ver. 1): “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name:” and because himself and all men were insufficient to offer up a praise to God answerable to the greatness of his benefits, he summons in the end of the psalm the angels, and all creatures, to join in concert with him. Observe,

1. As man is too shallow a creature to comprehend the excellency of God, so he is too dull and scanty a creature to offer up a due praise to God, both in regard of the excellency of his nature, and the multitude and greatness of his benefits.

2. We are apt to forget Divine benefits: our souls must therefore be often jogged, and roused up. “All that is within me,” every power of my rational, and every affection of my sensitive part: all his faculties, all his thoughts. Our souls will hang back from God in every duty, much more in this, if we lay not a strict charge upon them. We are so void of a pure and entire love to God, that we have no mind to those duties. Wants will spur us on to prayer, but a pure love to God can only spirit us to praise. We are more ready, to reach out a hand to receive his mercies, than to lift up our hearts to recognize them after the receipt. After the Psalmist had summoned his own soul to this task, he enumerates the Divine blessings received by him, to awaken his soul by a sense of them to so noble a work. He begins at the first and foundation mercy to himself, the pardon of his sin and justification of his person, the renewing of his sickly and languishing nature (ver. 3): “Who forgives all thy iniquities, and heals all thy diseases.” His redemption from death, or eternal destruction; his expected glorification thereupon, which he speaks of with that certainty, as if it were present (ver. 4): “Who redeems thy life from destruction, who crowns thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.” He makes his progress to the mercy manifested to the church in the protection of it against, or delivery of it from, oppressions (ver. 6): “The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.” In the discovery of his will and

law, and the glory of his merciful name to it (ver. 7, 8): “He made known his ways unto Moses, and his acts unto the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy:” which latter words may refer also to the free and unmerited spring of the benefits he had reckoned up: *viz.*, the mercy of God, which he mentions also (ver. 10): “He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities;” and then extols the perfection of Divine mercy, in the pardoning of sin (ver. 11, ver. 12); the paternal tenderness of God (ver. 13); the eternity of his mercy (ver. 17); but restrains it to the proper object (ver. 11, 17), “to them that fear him;” *i. e.* to them that believe in him. *Fear* being the word commonly used for *faith* in the Old Testament, under the legal dispensation, wherein the spirit of bondage was more eminent than the spirit of adoption, and their fear more than their confidence. Observe,

1. All true blessings grow up from the pardon of sin (ver. 3): “Who forgives all thine iniquities.” That is the first blessing, the top and crown of all other favors, which draws all other blessings after it, and sweetens all other blessings with it. The principal intent of Christ was expiation of sin, redemption from iniquity; the purchase of other blessings was consequent upon it. Pardon of sin is every blessing virtually, and in the root and spring it flows from the favor of God, and is such a gift as cannot be tainted with a curse, as outward things may.

2. Where sin is pardoned, the soul is renewed (ver. 3): “Who heals all thy diseases.” Where guilt is remitted, the deformity and sickness of the soul is cured. Forgiveness is a teeming mercy; it never goes single; when we have an interest in Christ, as bearing the chastisement of our peace, we receive also a balsam from his blood, to heal the wounds we feel in our nature. (Isa.3:5): “The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” As there is a guilt in sin, which binds us over to punishment, so there is a contagion in sin, which fills us with pestilent diseases; when the one is removed, the other is cured. We should not know how to love the one without the other. The renewing the soul is necessary for a delightful relish of the other blessings of God. A condemned malefactor, infected with a leprosy, or any other loathsome distemper, if pardoned, could take little

comfort in his freedom from the gibbet without a cure of his plague.

3. God is the sole and sovereign Author of all spiritual blessings: “Who forgives all thy iniquities, and heals all thy diseases.” He refers all to God, nothing to himself in his own merit and strength. All, not the pardon of one sin merited by me, not the cure of one disease can I owe to my own power, and the strength of my freewill, and the operations of nature. He, and he alone is the Prince of pardon, the Physician that restores me, the Redeemer that delivers me; it is a sacrilege to divide the praise between God and ourselves. God only can knock off our fetters, expel our distempers, and restore a deformed soul to its decayed beauty.

4. Gracious souls will bless God as much for sanctification as for justification. The initials of sanctification (and there are no more in this life) are worthy of solemn acknowledgment. It is a sign of growth in grace when our hymns are made up of acknowledgments of God’s sanctifying, as well as pardoning grace. In blessing God for the one, we rather show a love to ourselves; in blessing God for the other, we cast out a pure beam of love to God: because, by purifying grace, we are fitted to the service of our Maker, prepared to every good work which is delightful to him; by the other, we are eased in ourselves. Pardon fills us with inward peace, but sanctification fills us with an activity for God. Nothing is so capable of setting the soul in a heavenly tune, as the consideration of God as a pardoner and as a healer.

5. Where sin is pardoned, the punishment is remitted (ver. 3, 4): “Who forgives all thy iniquities, and redeems thy life from destruction.” A malefactor’s pardon puts an end to his chains, frees him from the stench of the dungeon, and fear of the gibbet. Pardon is nothing else but the remitting of guilt, and guilt is nothing else but an obligation to punishment as a penal debt for sin. A creditor’s tearing a bond frees the debtor from payment and rigor.

6. Growth in grace is always annexed to true sanctification. So that “thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (ver. 5). Interpreters trouble themselves much about the manner of the eagle’s renewing its youth, and regaining its vigor: he speaks best that saith, the Psalmist speaks only according to the opinion of the vulgar, and his design was not to write a natural history. Growth always

accompanies grace, as well as it doth nature in the body; not that it is without its qualms and languishing fits, as children are not, but still their distempers make them grow. Grace is not an idle, but an active principle. It is not like the Psalmist means it of the strength of the body, or the prosperity and stability of his government, but the vigor of his grace and comfort, since they are spiritual blessings here that are the matter of his song. The healing the disease conduceth to the sprouting up and flourishing of the body. It is the nature of grace to go from strength to strength.

7. When sin is pardoned, it is perfectly pardoned. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us” (ver. 11, 12). The east and west are the greatest distance in the world; the terms can never meet together. When sin is pardoned, it is never charged again; the guilt of it can no more return, than east can become west, or west become east.

8. Obedience is necessary to an interest in the mercy of God. “The mercy of the Lord is to them that fear him, to them that remember his commandments, to do them” (ver. 17). Commands are to be remembered in order to practice; a vain speculation is not the intent of the publication of them.

After the Psalmist had enumerated the benefits of God, he reflects upon the greatness of God, and considers him on his throne encompassed with the angels, the ministers of his providence. “The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens and his kingdom rules over all” (ver. 19). He brings in this of his dominion just after he had largely treated of his mercy. Either,

1. To signify, That God is not only to be praised for his mercy, but for his majesty, both for the height and extent of his authority.

2. To extol the greatness of his mercy and pity. What I have said now, O my soul, of the mercy of God, and his paternal pity, is commended by his majesty; his grandeur hinders not his clemency though his throne be high, his bowels are tender. He looks down upon his meanest servants from the height of his glory. Since his majesty is infinite, his mercy must be as great as his majesty. It must be a greater pity lodging in his breast, than what is in any creature, since it is not damped by the greatness of his sovereignty.

3. To render his mercy more comfortable. The mercy I have

spoken of, O my soul, is not the mercy of a subject, but of a sovereign. An executioner may torture a criminal, and strip him of his life, and a vulgar pity cannot relieve him, but the clemency of the prince can perfectly pardon him. It is that God who hath none above him to control him, none below him to resist him, that hath performed all the acts of grace to thee. If God by his supreme authority pardons us, who can reverse it? If all the subjects of God in the world should pardon us, and God withhold his grant, what will it profit us? Take comfort, O my soul, since God from his throne in the highest, and that God who rules over every particular of the creation, hath granted and sealed thy pardon to thee. What would his grace signify, if he were not a monarch, extending his royal empire over everything, and swaying all by his sceptre?

4. To render the Psalmist's confidence more firm in any pressures. Ver. 15, 16. He had considered the misery of man in the shortness of his life; his place should know him no more; he should never return to his authority, employ men, opportunities, that death would take from him; but, howsoever, the mercy and majesty of God were the ground of his confidence. He draws himself from poring upon any calamities which may assault him, to heaven, the place where God orders all things that are done on the earth. He is able to protect us from our dangers, and to deliver us from our distresses; whatsoever miseries thou mayest be under, O my soul, cast thy eye up to heaven, and see a pitying God in a majestic authority: a God who can perform what he hath promised to them that fear him, since he hath a throne above the heavens, and bears sway over all that envy thy happiness, and would stain thy felicity: a God whose authority cannot be curtailed and dismembered by any. When the prophet solicits the sounding of the Divine bowels, he urgeth him by his dwelling in heaven, the habitation of his holiness (Isa. 63:15). His kingdom ruleth over all: there is none therefore hath any authority to make him break his covenant, or violate his promise.

5. As an incentive to obedience. The Lord is merciful, saith he, to them "that remember his commandments to do them" (ver. 17, 18): and then brings in the text as an encouragement to observe his precepts. He hath a majesty that deserves it from us, and an authority to protect us in it. If a king in a small spot of earth is to be

obeyed by his subjects, how much more is God, who is more majestic than all the angels in heaven, and monarchs on earth; who hath a majesty to exact our obedience, and a mercy to allure it! We should not set upon the performance of any duty, without an eye lifted up to God as a great king. It would make us willing to serve him; the more noble the person, the more honorable and powerful the prince, the more glorious is his service. A view of God upon his throne will make us think his service our privilege, his precepts our ornaments, and obedience to him the greatest honor and nobility. It will make us weighty and serious in our performances: it would stake us down to any duty. The reason we are so loose and unmannerly in the carriage of our souls before God, is because we consider him not as a “great King” (Mal. 1:14). “Our Father, which art in heaven,” in regard of his majesty, is the preface to prayer.

Let us now consider the words in themselves. “The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.”

The Lord hath prepared.—The word signifies “established,” as well as “prepared,” and might so be rendered. Due preparation is a natural way to the establishment of a thing: hasty resolves break and moulder. This notes, 1. The infiniteness of his authority. He prepares it, none else for him. It is a dominion that originally resides in his nature, not derived from any by birth or commission; he alone prepared it. He is the sole cause of his own kingdom; his authority therefore is unbounded, as infinite as his nature: none can set laws to him, because none but himself prepared his throne for him. As he will not impair his own happiness, so he will not abridge himself of his own authority. 2. Readiness to exercise it upon due occasions. He hath prepared his throne: he is not at a loss; he needs not stay for a commission or instructions from any how to act. He hath all things ready for the assistance of his people; he hath rewards and punishments; his treasures and axes, the great marks of authority lying by him, the one for the good, the other for the wicked. His “mercy he keeps by him for thousands” (Exod. 34:7). His “arrows” he hath prepared by him for rebels (Psalm 7:13). 3. Wise management of it. It is prepared; preparations imply prudence; the government of God is not a rash and heady authority. A prince upon his throne, a judge upon the bench, manages things with the greatest discretion, or should be supposed so to do. 4.

Successfulness and duration of it. He hath prepared or established. It is fixed, not tottering; it is an immovable dominion; all the strugglings of men and devils cannot overturn it, nor so much as shake it. It is established above the reach of obstinate rebels; he cannot be deposed from it, he cannot be mated in it. His dominion, as himself, abides forever. And as his counsel, so his authority, shall stand, and “he will do all his pleasure” (Isa. 46:10).

His throne in the heavens.—This is an expression to signify the authority of God; for as God hath no member properly, though he be so represented to us, so he hath properly no throne. It signifies his power of reigning and judging. A throne is proper to royalty, the seat of majesty in its excellency, and the place where the deepest respect and homage of subjects is paid, and their petitions presented. That the throne of God is in the heavens, that there he sits as Sovereign, is the opinion of all that acknowledge a God; when they stand in need of his authority to assist them, their eyes are lifted up, and their heads stretched out to heaven; so his Son Christ prayed; he “lifted up his eyes to heaven,” as the place where his Father sat in majesty, as the most adorable object (John 17:1). Heaven hath the title of his “throne,” as the earth hath that of his “footstool” (Isa. 64:1.) And, therefore, heaven is sometimes put for the authority of God (Dan. 4:26). “After that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule,” *i. e.* that God, who hath his throne in the heavens, orders earthly princes and sceptres as he pleases, and rules over the kingdoms of the world.

His throne in the heavens notes, 1. The glory of his dominion. The heavens are the most stately and comely pieces of the creation. His majesty is there most visible, his glory most splendid (Psalm 19:1). The heavens speak out with a full mouth his glory. It is therefore called “the habitation” of his “holiness and of his glory” (Isa. 63:15). There is the greater glister and brightness of his glory. The whole earth, indeed, is full of his glory, full of the beams of it; the heaven is full of the body of it; as the rays of the sun reach the earth, but the full glory of it is in the firmament. In heaven his dominion is more acknowledged by the angels standing at his beck, and by their readiness and swiftness obeying his commands, going and returning as a flash of lightning (Ezek. 1:14). His throne may well be said to be in the heavens, since his dominion is not disputed

there by the angels that attend him, as it is on earth by the rebels that arm themselves against him. 2. The supremacy of his empire. The heavens are the loftiest part of the creation, and the only fit palace for him; it is in the heavens his majesty and dignity are so sublime, that they are elevated above all earthly empires. 3. Peculiarity of this dominion.. He rules in the heavens alone. There is some shadow of empire in the world. Royalty is communicated to men as his substitutes. He hath disposed a vicarious dominion to men in his footstool, the earth; he gives them some share in his authority; and, therefore, the title of his name (Psalm 82:6): "I have said, ye are gods;" but in heaven he reigns alone without any substitutes; his throne is there. He gives out his orders to the angels himself; the marks of his immediate sovereignty are there most visible. He hath no vicars-general of that empire. His authority is not delegated to any creature; he rules the blessed spirits by himself; but he rules men that are on his footstool by others of the same kind, men of their own nature. 4. The vastness of his empire. The earth is but a spot to the heavens; what is England in a map to the whole earth, but a spot you may cover with your finger? much less must the whole earth be to the extended heavens; it is but a little point or atom to what is visible; the sun is vastly bigger than it, and several stars are supposed to be of a greater bulk than the earth; and how many, and what heavens are beyond, the ignorance of man cannot understand. If the "throne" of God be there, it is a larger circuit he rules in than can well be conceived.

You cannot conceive the many millions of little particles there are in the earth; and if all put together be but as one point to that place where the throne of God is seated, how vast must his empire be! He rules there over the angels, which "excel in strength" those "hosts" of his "which do his pleasure," in comparison of whom all the men in the world, and the power of the greatest potentates, is no more than the strength of an ant or fly; multitudes of them encircle his throne, and listen to his orders without roving, and execute them without disputing. And since his throne is in the heavens, it will follow, that all things under the heaven are parts of his dominion; his throne being in the highest place, the inferior things of earth cannot but be subject to him; and it necessarily includes his influence on all things below: because the heavens are the cause of all the motion in the world, the immediate thing the earth doth naturally address to for

corn, wine, and oil, above which there is no superior but the Lord (Hos. 2:21, 22): “The earth hears the corn, wine, and oil; the heavens hear the earth, and the Lord hears the heavens.” 5. The easiness of managing this government. His throne being placed on high, he cannot but behold all things that are done below; the height of a place gives advantage to a pure and clear eye to beholy things below it. Had the sun an eye, nothing could be done in the open air out of its ken. The “throne” of God being in heaven, he easily looks from thence upon all the children of men (Psalm 14:2): “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand.” He looks not down from heaven as if he were in regard of his presence confined there: but he looks down majestically, and by way of authority, not as the look of a bare spectator, but the look of a governor, to pass a sentence upon them as a judge. His being in the heavens renders him capable of doing “whatsoever he pleases” (Psalm 114:3). His “throne” being there, he can by a word, in stopping the motions of the heavens, turn the whole earth into confusion. In this respect, it is said, “He rides upon the heaven in thy help” (Deut. 33:26); discharges his thunders upon men, and makes the influences of it serve his people’s interest. By one turn of a cock, as you see in grottoes, he can cause streams from several parts of the heavens to refresh, or ruin the world. 6. Duration of it. The heavens are incorruptible; his throne is placed there in an incorruptible state. Earthly empires have their decays and dissolutions. The throne of God outlives the dissolution of the world.

His kingdom rules over all.—He hath an absolute right over all things within the circuit of heaven and earth; though his throne be in heaven, as the place where his glory is most eminent and visible, his authority most exactly obeyed, yet his kingdom extends itself to the lower parts of the earth. He doth not muffle and cloud up himself in heaven, or confine his sovereignty to that place, his royal power extends to all visible, as well as invisible things: he is proprietor and possessor of all (Deut. 10:14): “The heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord’s thy God, the earth also, with all that is there.” He hath right to dispose of all as he pleases. He doth not say, his kingdom rules all that fear him, but, “over all;” so that it is not the kingdom of grace he here speaks of, but his natural and universal kingdom. Over angels and men; Jews and Gentiles; animate and

inanimate things. The Psalmist considers God here as a great monarch and general, and all creatures as his hosts and regiments under him, and takes notice principally of two things. 1. The establishment of his throne together with the seat of it. *He hath prepared his throne in the heavens.* 2. The extent of his empire.—*His kingdom rules over all.* This text, in all the parts of it, is a fit basis for a discourse upon the dominion of God, and the observation will be this.

Doctrine.—God is sovereign Lord and King, and exerciseth a dominion over the whole world, both heaven and earth. This is so clear, that nothing is more spoken of in Scripture. The very name, “Lord,” imports it; a name originally belonging to gods, and from them translated to others. And he is frequently called “the Lord of Hosts,” because all the troops and armies of spiritual and corporeal creatures are in his hands, and at his service: this is one of his principal titles. And the angels are called his “hosts” (ver. 21, following the text) his camp and militia: but more plainly (1 Kings 22:19), God is presented upon his throne, encompassed with all the “hosts of heaven” standing on his right hand and on his left, which can be understood of no other than the angels, that wait for the commands of their Sovereign, and stand about, not to counsel him, but to receive his orders. The sun, moon, and stars, are called his “hosts” (Deut. 4:19); appointed by him for the government of inferior things: he hath an absolute authority over the greatest and the least creatures; over those that are most dreadful, and those that are most beneficial; over the good angels that willingly obey him, over the evil angels that seem most incapable of government. And as he is thus “Lord of hosts,” he is the “King of glory,” or a glorious King (Psalm 24:10). You find him called a “great King,” the “Most High” (Psalm 92:1), the Supreme Monarch, there being no dignity in heaven or earth but what is dim before him, and infinitely inferior to him; yea, he hath the title of “Only King” (1 Tim. 6:15). The title of royalty truly and properly only belongs to him: you may see it described very magnificently by David, at the free-will offering for the building of the temple (1 Chron. 29:11, 12): “Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; thine is the kingdom, O God, and thou art exalted as Head above all: both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand it is to

make great, and to give strength to all.” He hath an eminency of power or authority above all: all earthly princes received their diadems from him, yea, even those that will not acknowledge him, and he hath a more absolute power over them than they can challenge over their meanest vassals: as God hath a knowledge infinitely above our knowledge, so he hath a dominion incomprehensibly above any dominion of man; and, by all the shadows drawn from the authority of one man over another, we can have but weak glimmerings of the authority and dominion of God.

There is a threefold dominion of God. 1. Natural, which is absolute over all creatures, and is founded in the nature of God as Creator. 2. Spiritual, or gracious, which is a dominion over his church as redeemed, and founded in the covenant of grace. 3. A glorious kingdom, at the winding up of all, wherein he shall reign over all, either in the glory of his mercy, as over the glorified saints, or in the glory of his justice, in the condemned devils and men. The first dominion is founded in nature; the second in grace; the third in regard of the blessed in grace; in regard of the damned, in demerit in them, and justice in him. He is Lord of all things, and always in regard of propriety (Psalm 24:1): “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and all that dwell therein.” The earth, with the riches and treasures in the bowels of it; the habitable world, with everything that moves upon it, are his; he hath the sole right, and what right soever any others have is derived from him. In regard also of possession (Gen. 14:22): “The Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth:” in respect of whom, man is not the proprietary nor possessor, but usufructuary at the will of this grand Lord.

In the prosecution of this, I. I shall lay down some general propositions for the clearing and confirming it. II. I shall show wherein this right of dominion is founded. III. What the nature of it is. IV. Wherein it consists; and how it is manifested.

I. Some general propositions for the clearing and confirming of it.

1. We must know the difference between the might or power of God and his authority. We commonly mean by the power of God the strength of God, whereby he is able to effect all his purposes; by the authority of God, we mean the right he hath to act what he pleases:

omnipotence is his physical power, whereby he is able to do what he will; dominion is his moral power, whereby it is lawful for him to do what he will. Among men, strength and authority are two distinct things; a subject may be a giant, and be stronger than his prince, but he hath not the same authority as his prince: worldly dominion may be seated, not in a brawny arm, but a sickly and infirm body. As knowledge and wisdom are distinguished; knowledge respects the matter, being, and nature of a thing; wisdom respects the harmony, order, and actual usefulness of a thing; knowledge searcheth the nature of a thing, and wisdom employs that thing to its proper use: a man may have much knowledge, and little wisdom; so a man may have much strength, and little or no authority; a greater strength may be settled in the servant, but a greater authority resides in the master; strength is the natural vigor of a man: God hath an infinite strength, he hath a strength to bring to pass whatsoever he decrees; he acts without fainting and weakness (Isa. 40:28), and impairs not his strength by the exercise of it: as God is Lord, he hath a right to enact; as he is almighty, he hath a power to execute; his strength is the executive power belonging to his dominion: in regard of his sovereignty, he hath a right to command all creatures; in regard of his almightiness, he hath power to make his commands be obeyed, or to punish men for the violation of them: his power is that whereby he subdues all creatures under him; his dominion is that whereby he hath a right to subdue all creatures under him. This dominion is a right of making what he pleases, of possessing what he made, of disposing of what he doth possess; whereas his power is an ability to make what he hath a right to create, to hold what he doth possess, and to execute the manner wherein he resolves to dispose of his creatures.

2. All the other attributes of God refer to this perfection of dominion. They all bespeak him fit for it, and are discovered in the exercise of it (which hath been manifested in the discourses of those attributes we have passed through hitherto). His goodness fits him for it, because he can never use his authority but for the good of the creatures, and conducting them to their true end: his wisdom can never be mistaken in the exercise of it; his power can accomplish the decrees that flow from his absolute authority. What can be more rightful than the placing authority in such an infinite Goodness, that hath bowels to pity, as well as a sceptre to sway his subjects? that

hath a mind to contrive, and a will to regulate his contrivances for his own glory and his creatures' good, and an arm of power to bring to pass what he orders? Without this dominion, some perfections, as justice and mercy, would lie in obscurity, and much of his wisdom would be shrouded from our sight and knowledge.

3. This of dominion, as well as that of power, hath been acknowledged by all. The high priest was to "waive the offering," or shake it to and fro (Exod. 29:24), which the Jews say was customarily from east to west, and from north to south, the four quarters of the world, to signify God's sovereignty over all the parts of the world; and some of the heathens, in their adorations, turned their bodies to all quarters, to signify the extensive dominion of God throughout the whole earth. That dominion did of right pertain to the Deity, was confessed by the heathen in the name "Baal," given to their idols, which signifies Lord; and was not a name of one idol, adored for a god, but common to all the eastern idols. God hath interwoven the notion of his sovereignty in the nature and constitution of man, in the noblest and most inward acts of his soul,—in that faculty or act which is most necessary for him, in his converse in this world, either with God or man: it is stamped upon the conscience of man, and flashes in his face in every act of self judgment conscience passes upon a man: every reflection of conscience implies an obligation of man to some law "written in his heart" (Rom. 2:15). This law cannot be without a legislator, nor this legislator without a sovereign dominion; these are but natural and easy consequences in the mind of man from every act of conscience. The indelible authority of conscience in man, in the whole exercise of it, bears a respect to the sovereignty of God, clearly proclaims not only a supreme Being, but a supreme Governor, and points man directly to it, that a man may as soon deny his having such a reflecting principle within him, as deny God's dominion over him, and consequently over the whole world of rational creatures.

4. This notion of sovereignty is inseparable from the notion of a God. To acknowledge the existence of a God, and to acknowledge him a rewarder, are linked together (Heb. 6:6). To acknowledge him a rewarder, is to acknowledge him a governor; rewards being the marks of dominion. The very name of God includes in it a supremacy and an actual rule. He cannot be conceived as God, but

he must be conceived as the highest authority in the world. It is as possible for him not to be God as not to be supreme. Wherein can the exercise of his excellencies be apparent, but in his sovereign rule? To fancy an infinite power without a supreme dominion, is to fancy a mighty senseless statue, fit to be beheld, but not fit to be obeyed; as not being able or having no right to give out orders, or not caring for the exercise of it.

God cannot be supposed to be the chief being, but he must be supposed to give laws to all, and receive laws from none. And if we suppose him with a perfection of justice and righteousness (which we must do, unless we would make a lame and imperfect God) we must suppose him to have an entire dominion, without which he could never be able to manifest his justice. And without a supreme dominion he could not manifest the supremacy and infiniteness of his righteousness.

(1.) We cannot suppose God a Creator, without supposing a sovereign dominion in him. No creature can be made without some law in its nature; if it had not law, it would be created to no purpose, to no regular end. It would be utterly unbecoming an infinite wisdom to create a lawless creature, a creature wholly vain; much less can a rational creature be made without a law: if it had no law, it were not rational: for the very notion of a rational creature implies reason to be a law to it, and implies an acting by rule. If you could suppose rational creatures without a law, you might suppose that they might blaspheme their Creator, and murder their fellow-creatures, and commit the most abominable villainies destructive to human society, without sin; for “where there is no law, there is no transgression.” But those things are accounted sins by all mankind, and sins against the Supreme Being: so that a dominion, and the exercise of it, is so fast linked to God, so entirely in him, so intrinsic in his nature, that it cannot be imagined that a rational creature can be made by him, without a stamp and mark of that dominion in his very nature and frame; it is so inseparable from God in his very act of creation.

(2.) It is such a dominion as cannot be renounced by God himself. It is so intrinsic and connatural to him, so inlaid in the nature of God, that he cannot strip himself of it, nor of the exercise of it, while any creature remains. It is preserved by him, for it could

not subsist of itself; it is governed by him, it could not else answer its end. It is impossible there can be a creature, which hath not God for its Lord. Christ himself, though in regard of his Deity equal with God, yet in regard of his created state, and assuming our nature, was God's servant, was governed by him in the whole of his office, acted according to his command and directions; God calls him his servant (Isa. 42:1): and Christ, in that prophetic psalm of him, calls God his Lord (Psalm 16:2): "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord." It was impossible it should be otherwise; justice had been so far from being satisfied, that it had been highly incensed if the order of things in the due subjection to God had been broke, and his terms had not been complied with. It would be a judgment upon the world if God should give up the government to any else, as it is when he gives "children to be princes" (Isa. 3:4); *i. e.* children in understanding.

(3.) It is so inseparable, that it cannot be communicated to any creature. No creature is able to exercise it; every creature is unable to perform all the offices that belong to this dominion. No creature can impose laws upon the consciences of men: man knows not the inlets into the soul, his pen cannot reach the inwards of man. What laws he hath power to propose to conscience, he cannot see executed; because every creature wants omniscience; he is not able to perceive all those breaches of the law which may be committed at the same time in so many cities, so many chambers. Or, suppose an angel, in regard to the height of his standing, and the insufficiency of walls, and darkness, and distance to obstruct his view, can behold men's actions, yet he cannot know the internal acts of men's minds and wills, without some outward eruption and appearance of them. And if he be ignorant of them, how can he execute his laws? If he only understand the outward fact without the inward thought, how can he dispense a justice proportionable to the crime? he must needs be ignorant of that which adds the greatest aggravation sometimes to a sin, and inflicts a lighter punishment upon that which receives a deeper tincture from the inward posture of the mind, than another fact may do, which in the outward act may appear more base and unjust; and so while he intends righteousness, may act a degree of injustice. Besides, no creature can inflict a due punishment for sin; that which is due to sin, is a loss of the vision and sight of God; but none can deprive any of that but God himself; nor can a creature

reward another with eternal life, which consists in communion with God, which none but God can bestow.

II. Wherein the dominion of God is founded.

1. On the excellency of his nature. Indeed, a bare excellency of nature bespeaks a fitness for government, but doth not properly convey a right of government. Excellency speaks aptitude, not title: a subject may have more wisdom than the prince, and be fitter to hold the reins of government, but he hath not a title to royalty. A man of large capacity and strong virtue is fit to serve his country in parliament, but the election of the people conveys a title to him. Yet a strain of intellectual and moral abilities beyond others, is a foundation for dominion. And it is commonly seen that such eminences in men, though they do not invest them with a civil authority, or an authority of jurisdiction, yet they create a veneration in the minds of men; their virtue attracts reverence, and their advice is regarded as an oracle. Old men by their age, when stored with more wisdom and knowledge by reason of their long experience, acquire a kind of power over the younger in their dictates and councils, so that they gain, by the strength of that excellency, a real authority in the minds of those men they converse with, and possess themselves of a deep respect for them. God therefore being an incomprehensible ocean of all perfection, and possessing infinitely all those virtues that may lay a claim to dominion, hath the first foundation of it in his own nature. His incomparable and unparalleled excellency, as well as the greatness of his work, attracts the voluntary worship of him as a sovereign Lord (Psalm 86:8): "Among the gods, there is none like unto thee; neither are there any works like unto thy work. All nations shall come and worship before thee." Though his benefits are great engagements to our obedience and affection, yet his infinite majesty and perfection requires the first place in our acknowledgements and adorations. Upon this account God claims it (Isa.

46:9): "I am God, and there is none like me; I will do all my pleasure:" and the prophet Jeremiah upon the same account acknowledgeth it (Jer. 10:7): "Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is great in might: who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as there is none like unto thee." And this is a more noble

title of dominion, it being an uncreated title, and more eminent than that of creation or preservation. This is the natural order God hath placed in his creatures, that the more excellent should rule the inferior. He committed not the government of lower creatures to lions and tigers, that have a delight in blood, but no knowledge of virtue; but to man, who had an eminence in his nature above other creatures, and was formed with a perfect rectitude, and a height of reason to guide the reins over them. In man, the soul being of a more sublime nature, is set of right to rule over the body; the mind, the most excellent faculty of the soul, to rule over the other powers of it: and wisdom, the most excellent habit of the mind, to guide and regulate that in its determinations; and when the body and sensitive appetite control the soul and mind, it is an usurpation against nature, not a rule according to nature. The excellency, thereof, of the Divine nature is the natural foundation for his dominion. He hath wisdom to know what is fit for him to do, and an immutable righteousness whereby he cannot do any thing base and unworthy: he hath a foreknowledge whereby he is able to order all things to answer his own glorious designs and the end of his government, that nothing can go awry, nothing put him to a stand, and constrain him to meditate new counsels. So that if it could be supposed that the world had not been created by him, that the parts of it had met together by chance, and been compacted into such a body, none but God, the supreme and most excellent Being in the world, could have merited, and deservedly challenged the government of it; because nothing had an excellency of nature to capacitate it for it, as he hath, or to enter into a contest with him for a sufficiency to govern.

2. It is founded in his act of creation. He is the sovereign Lord, as he is the almighty Creator. The relation of an entire Creator induceth the relation of an absolute Lord; he that gives being, motion, that is the sole cause of the being of a thing, which was before nothing, that hath nothing to concur with him, nothing to assist him, but by his sole power commands it to stand up into being, is the unquestionable Lord and proprietor of that thing that hath no dependence but upon him; and by this act of creation, which extended to all things, he became universal Sovereign over all things and those that waive the excellency of his nature as the foundation of his government, easily acknowledge the sufficiency of it upon his actual creation. His dominion of jurisdiction results from creation.

When God himself makes an oration in defence of his sovereignty (Job 38.). his chief arguments are drawn from creation; and (Psalm 95:3, 5), “The Lord is a great King above all gods; the sea is his, and he made it:” and so the apostle, in his sermon to the Athenians. As he “made the world, and all things therein,” he is styled, “Lord of heaven and earth” (Acts 17:24). His dominion, also, of property stands upon this basis: “The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world, and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them” (Psalm 89:11). Upon this title of forming Israel as a creature, or rather as a church, he demands their service to him as their Sovereign: “O Jacob and Israel, thou art my servant, I have formed thee: thou art my servant, O Israel” (Isa. 44:21). The sovereignty of God naturally ariseth from the relation of all things to himself as their entire Creator, and their natural and inseparable dependence upon him in regard of their being and well-being. It depends not upon the election of men; God hath a natural dominion over us as creatures, before he hath a dominion by consent over us as converts: as soon as ever anything began to be a creature, it was a vassal to God, as a Lord. Every man is acknowledged to have a right of possessing what he hath made, and a power of dominion over what he hath framed: he may either cherish his own work, or dash it in pieces; he may either add a greater comeliness to it, or deface what he hath already imparted. He hath a right of property in it: no other man can, without injury, pilfer his own work from him. The work hath no propriety in itself; the right must be in the immediate framer, or in the person that employed him. The first cause of everything hath an unquestionable dominion of propriety in it upon the score of justice. By the law of nations, the first finder of a country is esteemed the rightful possessor and lord of that country, and the first inventor of an art hath a right of exercising it. If a man hath a just claim of dominion over that thing whose materials were not of his framing, but from only the addition of a new figure from his skill; as a limner over his picture, the cloth whereof he never made, nor the colors wherewith he draws it were never endued by him with their distinct qualities, but only he applies them by his art, to compose such a figure; much more hath God a rightful claim of dominion over his creatures, whose entire being, both in matter and form, and every particle of their excellency, was breathed out by the word of his mouth. He did not only give the matter a form, but bestowed

upon the matter itself a being; it was formed by none to his hand, as the matter is on which an artist works. He had the being of all things in his own power, and it was at his choice whether he would impart it or no; there can be no juster and stronger ground of a claim than this. A man hath a right to a piece of brass or gold by his purchase, but when by his engraving he hath formed it into an excellent statue, there results an increase of his right upon the account of his artifice. God's creation of the matter of man gave him a right over man; but his creation of him in so eminent an excellency, with reason to guide him, a clear eye of understanding to discern light from darkness, and truth from falsehood, a freedom of will to act accordingly, and an original righteousness as the varnish and beauty of all; here is the strongest foundation, for a claim of authority over man, and the strongest obligation on man for subjection to God. If all those things had been past over to God by another hand, he could not be the supreme Lord, nor could have an absolute right to dispose of them at his pleasure: that would have been the invasion of another's right. Besides, creation is the only first discovery of his dominion. Before the world was framed there was nothing but God himself, and, properly, nothing is said to have dominion over itself; this is a relative attribute, reflecting on the works of God. He had a right of dominion in his nature from eternity, but before creation he was actually Lord only of a nullity; where there is nothing it can have no relation; nothing is not the subject of possession nor of dominion.

There could be no exercise of this dominion without creation: what exercise can a sovereign have without subjects? Sovereignty speaks a relation to subjects, and none is properly a sovereign without subjects. To conclude: from hence doth result God's universal dominion; for being Maker of all, he is the ruler of all, and his perpetual dominion; for as long as God continues in the relation of Creator, the right of his sovereignty as Creator cannot be abolished.

3. As God is the final cause, or end of all, he is Lord of all. The end hath a greater sovereignty in actions than the actor itself: the actor hath a sovereignty over others in action, but the end for which any one works hath a sovereignty over the agent himself: a limner hath a sovereignty over the picture he is framing, or hath framed, but the end for which he framed it, either his profit he designed from it,

or the honor and credit of skill he aimed at in it, hath a dominion over the limner himself: the end moves and excites the artist to work; it spirits him in it, conducts him in his whole business, possesses his mind, and sits triumphant in him in all the progress of his work; it is the first cause for which the whole work is wrought. Now God, in his actual creation of all, is the sovereign end of all; “for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4:11); “The Lord hath made all things for himself” (Prov. 16:4). Man, indeed, is the subordinate and immediate end of the lower creation, and therefore had the dominion over other creatures granted to him: but God being the ultimate and principal end, hath the sovereign and principal dominion; all things as much refer to him, as the last end, as they flow from him as the first cause. So that, as I said before, if the world had been compacted together by a jumbling chance, without a wise hand, as some have foolishly imagined, none could have been an antagonist with God for the government of the world; but God, in regard of the excellency of his nature, would have been the Rector of it, unless those atoms that had composed the world had had an ability to govern it. Since there could be no universal end of all things but God, God only can claim an entire right to the government of it; for though man be the end of the lower creation, yet man is not the end of himself and his own being; he is not the end of the creation of the supreme heavens; he is not able to govern them; they are out of his ken, and out of his reach. None fit in regard of the excellency of nature, to be the chief end of the whole world but God; and therefore none can have a right to the dominion of it but God: in this regard God’s dominion differs from the dominion of all earthly potentates. All the subjects in creation were made for God as their end, so are not people for rulers, but rulers made for people for their protection, and the preservation of order in societies.

4. The dominion of God is founded upon his preservation of things. (Psalm 95:3, 4); “The Lord is a great King above all gods:” why? “In his hand are all the deep places of the earth.” While his hand holds things, his hand hath a dominion over them. He that holds a stone in the air, exerciseth a dominion over its natural inclination in hindering it from falling. The creature depends wholly upon God in its preservation; as soon as that Divine hand which sustains everything were withdrawn, a languishment and swooning would be the next turn in the creature. He is called Lord, *Adonai*, in

regard of his sustentation of all things by his continual influx; the word coming of $\pi\tau\lambda$, which signifies a basis or pillar, that supports a building.

God is the Lord of all, as he is the sustainer of all by his power, as well as the Creator of all by his word. The sun hath a sovereign dominion over its own beams, which depend upon it, so that if he withdraws himself, they all attend him, and the world is left in darkness. God maintains the vigor of all things, conducts them in their operations; so that nothing that they are, nothing that they have, but is owing to his preserving power. The Master of this great family may as well be called the Lord of it, since every member of it depends upon him for the support of that being he first gave them, and holds of his empire. As the right to govern resulted from creation, so it is perpetuated by the preservation of things.

5. The dominion of God is strengthened by the innumerable benefits he bestows upon his creatures: the benefits he confers upon us after creation, are not the original ground of his dominion. A man hath not authority over his servant from the kindness he shows to him, but his authority commenceth before any act of kindness, and is founded upon a right of purchase, conquest, or compact. Dominion doth not depend upon mere benefits; then inferiors might have dominions over superiors. A peasant may save the life of a prince to whom he was not subject; he hath not therefore a right to step up into his throne and give laws to him: and children that maintain their parents in their poverty, might then acquire an authority over them which they can never climb to; because the benefits they confer cannot parallel the benefits they have received from the authors of their lives. The bounties of God to us add nothing to the intrinsic right of his natural dominion; they being the effects of that sovereignty, as he is a rewarder and governor; as the benefits a prince bestows upon his favorite increases not that right of authority which is inherent in the crown, but strengthens that dominion as it stands in relation to the receiver, by increasing the obligation of the favorite to an observance of him, not only as his natural prince, but his gracious benefactor. The beneficence of God adds, though not an original right of power, yet a foundation of a stronger upbraiding the creature, if he walks in a violation and forgetfulness of those benefits, and pull in pieces the links of that ingenuous duty they call

for; and an occasion of exercising of justice in punishing the delinquent, which is a part of his empire (Isa. 1:2): "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished children, and they have rebelled against me." Thus the fundamental right as Creator is made more indisputable by his relation as a benefactor, and more as being so after a forfeiture of what was enjoyed by creation. The benefits of God are innumerable, and so magnificent that they cannot meet with any compensation from the creature; and, therefore, do necessarily require a submission from the creature, and an acknowledgment of Divine authority. But that benefit of redemption doth add a stronger right of dominion to God; since he hath not only as a Creator given them being and life as his creatures, but paid a price, the price of his Son's blood, for their rescue from captivity; so that he hath a sovereignty of grace as well as nature, and the ransomed ones belong to him as Redeemer as well as Creator (1 Cor. 6:19, 20): "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price;" therefore your body and your spirit are God's. By this he acquired a right of another kind, and bought us from that uncontrollable lordship we affected over ourselves by the sin of Adam, that he might use us as his own peculiar for his own glory and service. By this redemption there results to God a right over our bodies, over our spirits, over our services, as well as by creation; and to show the strength of this right, the apostle repeats it, "you are bought;" a purchase cannot be without a price paid; but he adds price also, "bought with a price." To strengthen the title, purchase gave him a new right, and the greatness of the price established that right.

The more a man pays for a thing, the more usually we say, he deserves to have it, he hath paid enough for it; it was, indeed, price enough, and too much for such vile creatures as we are.

III. he third thing is, The nature of this dominion.

1. This dominion is independent. His throne is in the heavens; the heavens depend not upon the earth, nor God upon his creatures. Since he is independent in regard of his essence, he is so in his dominion, which flows from the excellency and fulness of his essence; as he receives his essence from none, so he derives his dominion from none; all other dominion except paternal authority is rooted originally in the wills of men. The first title was the consent

of the people, or the conquest of others by the help of those people that first consented; and in the exercise of it, earthly dominion depends upon assistance of the subjects, and the members being joined with the head carry on the work of government, and prevent civil dissensions; in the support of it, it depends upon the subjects' contributions and taxes; the subjects in their strength are the arms, and in their purses the sinews of government; but God depends upon none in the foundation of his government; he is not a Lord by the votes of his vassals. Nor is it successively handed to him by any predecessor, nor constituted by the power of a superior; nor forced he his way by war and conquest, nor precariously attained it by suit or flattery, or bribing promises. He holds not the right of his empire from any other; he hath no superior to hand him to his throne, and settle him by commission; he is therefore called "King of kings, and Lord of lords," having none above him; "A great King above all gods" (Psalm 95:3): needing no license from any when to act, nor direction how to act, or assistance in his action; he owes not any of those to any person; he was not ordered by any other to create, and therefore received not orders from any other to rule over what he hath created. He received not his power and wisdom from another, and therefore is not subject to any for the rule of his government. He only made his own subjects, and from himself hath the sole authority; his own will was the cause of their beings, and his own will is the director of their actions. He is not determined by his creatures in any of his motions, but determines the creatures in all; his actions are not regulated by any law without him, but by a law within him, the law of his own nature. It is impossible he can have any rule without himself, because there is nothing superior to himself, nor doth he depend upon any in the exercise of his government; he needs no servants in it, when he uses creatures: it is not out of want of their help, but for the manifestation of his wisdom and power. What he doth by his subjects, he can do by himself: "The government is upon his shoulder" (Isa. 9:6), to show that he needs not any supporters. All other governments flow from him, all other authorities depend upon him; *Dei Gratiâ*, or *Dei Providentiâ*, is in the style of princes. As their being is derived from his power, so their authority is but a branch of his dominion. They are governors by Divine providence; God is governor by his sole nature. All motions depend upon the first heaven, which moves all; but that

depends upon nothing. The government of Christ depends upon God's uncreated dominion, and is by commission from him; Christ assumed not this honor to himself, "But he that said unto him, Thou art my Son," bestowed it upon him. "He put all things under his feet," but not himself (1 Cor. 15:27). "When he saith, All things are put under him, he is excepted, which did put all things under him." He sits still as an independent governor upon his throne.

2. This dominion is absolute. If his throne be in the heavens, there is nothing to control him. If he be independent, he must needs be absolute; since he hath no cause in conjunction with him as Creator, that can share with him in his right, or restrain him in the disposal of his creature. His authority is unlimited; in this regard the title of "Lord" becomes not any but God properly. Tiberius, though none of the best, though one of the subtlest princes, accounted the title of "Lord" a reproach to him: since he was not "absolute."

1st. Absolute in regard of freedom and liberty. (1.) Thus creation is a work of his mere sovereignty; he created, because it was his pleasure to create (Rev. 4:11). He is not necessitated to do this or that. He might have chosen whether he would have framed an earth and heavens, and laid the foundations of his chambers in the waters. He was under no obligation to reduce things from nullity to existence. (2.) Preservation is the fruit of his sovereignty. When he had called the world to stand out, he might have ordered it to return into its dark den of nothingness, ripped up every part of its foundation, or have given being to many more creatures than he did. If you consider his absolute sovereignty, why might he not have divested Adam presently of those rational perfections wherewith he had endowed him? And might he not have metamorphosed him into some beast, and elevated some beast into a rational nature? Why might he not have degraded an angel to a worm, and advanced a worm to the nature and condition of an angel? Why might he not have revoked that grant of dominion, which he had passed to man over all creatures? It was free to him to permit sin to enter into the earth, or to have excluded it out of the earth, as he doth out of heaven. (3.) Redemption is a fruit of his sovereignty. By his absolute sovereignty he might have confirmed all the angels in their standing by grace, and prevented the revolt of any of their members from him; and when there was a revolt both in heaven and earth, it was

free to him to have called out his Son to assume the angelical, as well as the human, nature, or have exercised his dominion in the destruction of men and devils, rather than in the redemption of any; he was under no obligation to restore either the one or the other. (4.) May he not impose what terms he pleases? May he not impose what laws he pleases, and exact what he will of his creature without promising any rewards? May he not use his own for his own honor, as well as men use for their credit what they do possess by his indulgence? (5.) Affliction is an act of his sovereignty. By this right of sovereignty, may not God take away any man's goods, since they were his doles? As he was not indebted to us when he bestowed them, so he cannot wrong us when he removes them. He takes from us what is more his own than it is ours, and was never ours but by his gift, and that for a time only, not forever. By this right he may determine our times, put a period to our days when he pleases, strip us of one member, and lop off another. Man's being was from him, and why should he not have a sovereignty to take what he had a sovereignty to give? Why should this seem strange to any of us, since we ourselves exercise an absolute dominion over those things in our possession, which have sense and feeling, as well as over those that want it? Doth not every man think he hath an absolute authority over the utensils of his house, over his horse, his dog, to preserve or kill him, to do what he please with him, without rendering any other reason than, *It is my own*? May not God do much more? Doth not his dominion over the work of his hands transcend that which a man can claim over his beast that he never gave life unto? He that dares dispute against God's absolute right, fancies himself as much a god as his Creator: understands not the vast difference between the Divine nature and his own; between the sovereignty of God and his own, which is all the theme God himself discourseth upon in those stately chapters (Job. 38; 39, &c.); not mentioning a word of Job's sin, but only vindicating the rights of his own authority. Nor doth Job, in his reply (Job 40:4), speak of his sin, but of his natural vileness as a creature in the presence of his Creator. By this right, God unstops the bottles of heaven in one place, and stops them in another, causing it "to rain upon one city, and not upon another" (Amos 4:7); ordering the clouds to move to this or that quarter where he hath a mind to be a benefactor or a judge. (6.) Unequal dispensations are acts of his sovereignty. By this

right he is patient toward those whose sins, by the common voice of men, deserve speedy judgments, and pours out pain upon those that are patterns of virtue to the world. By this he gives sometimes the worst of men an ocean of wealth and honor to swim in, and reduceth an useful and exemplary grace to a scanty poverty. By this he “rules the kingdoms of men,” and sets a crown upon the head of the basest of men (Dan. 4:17), while he deposeth another that seemed to deserve a weightier diadem. This is, as he is the Lord of the ammunition of his thunders, and the treasures of his bounty. (7.) He may inflict what torments he pleases. Some say, by this right of sovereignty he may inflict what torments he pleaseth upon an innocent person; which, indeed, will not bear the nature of a punishment as an effect of justice, without the supposal of a crime; but a torment, as an effect of that sovereign right he hath over his creature, which is as absolute over his work as the “potter’s” power is “over his own clay” (Jer. 18:6; Rom. 9:21). May not the potter, after his labor, either set his “vessel” up to adorn his house, or knock it in pieces, and fling it upon the dunghill; separate it to some noble use, or condemn it to some sordid service? Is the right of God over his creatures less than that of the potter over his vessel, since God contributed all to his creature, but the potter never made the clay, which is the substance of the vessel, nor the water which was necessary to make it tractable, but only moulded the substance of it into such a shape? The vessel that is framed, and the potter that frames it, differ only in life: the body of the potter, whereby he executes his authority, is of no better a mould than the clay, the matter of his vessel. Shall he have so absolute a power over that which is so near him, and shall not God over that which is so infinitely distant from him? The “vessel,” perhaps, might plead for itself that it was once part of the body of a man, and as good as the “potter” himself; whereas no creature can plead it was part of God, and as good as God himself. Though there be no man in the world but deserves affliction, yet the Scripture sometimes lays affliction upon the score of God’s dominion, without any respect to the sin of the afflicted person. Speaking of a sick person (James 5:10), “If he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him;” whereby is implied, that he might be struck into sickness by God, without any respect to a particular sin, but in a way of trial; and that his affliction sprung not from any exercise of Divine justice, but from his absolute

sovereignty; and so, in the case of the blind man, when the disciples asked for what sin it was, whether for his “own,” or his “parents sin,” he was born blind? (John 9:3), “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents;” which speaks, in itself, not against the whole current of Scripture; but the words import thus much, that God, in this blindness from the birth, neither respected any sin of the man’s own, nor of his parents, but he did it as an absolute sovereign, to manifest his own glory in that miraculous cure which was wrought by Christ. Though afflictions do not happen without the desert of the creature, yet some afflictions may be sent without any particular respect to that desert, merely for the manifestation of God’s glory, since the creature was made for God himself, and his honor, and therefore may be used in a serviceableness to the glory of the Creator.

2d. His dominion is absolute in regard of unlimitedness by any law without him. He is an absolute monarch that makes laws for his subjects, but is not bound by any himself, nor receives any rules and laws from his subjects, for the management of his government. But most governments in the world are bounded by laws made by common consent. But when kings are not limited by the laws of their kingdoms, yet they are bounded by the law of nature, and the providence of God. But God is under no law without himself, his rule is within him, the rectitude and righteousness of his own nature; he is not under that law he hath prescribed to man. The law was not made for a “righteous man” (1 Tim. 1:9), much less for a righteous God. God is his own law; his own nature is his rule, as his own glory is his end; himself is his end, and himself is his law. He is moved by nothing without himself; nothing hath the dominion of a motive over him but his own will, which is his rule for all his actions in heaven and earth. (Dan. 4:32), “He rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will.” And, (Rom. 9:18,) “He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy;” as all things are wrought by him according to his own eternal ideas in his own mind, so all is wrought by him according to the inward motive in his own will, which was the manifestation of his own honor. The greatest motives, therefore, that the best persons have used, when they have pleaded for any grant from God, was his own glory, which would be advanced by an answer of their petition.

3d. His dominion is absolute in regard of supremacy and uncontrollableness. None can implead him, and cause him to render a reason of his actions. He is the sovereign King, “Who may say unto him, What dost thou?” (Eccles. 8:4.) It is an absurd thing for any to dispute with God. (Rom. 11:20), “Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?” Thou, a man, a piece of dust, to argue with a God incomprehensibly above thy reason, about the reason of his works! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, but “not with Him that fashioned them” (Isa. 45:9). In all the desolations he works, he asserts his own supremacy to silence men. (Psalm 46:10), “Be still, and know that I am God!” Beware of any quarrelling motions in your minds; it is sufficient that I am God, that is supreme, and will not be impleaded, and censured, or worded with by any creature about what I do. He is not bound to render a reason of any of his proceedings. Subjects are accountable to their princes, and princes to God, God to none; since he is not limited by any superior, his prerogative is supreme.

4th. His dominion is absolute in regard of irresistibleness. Other governments are bounded by law; so that what a governor hath strength to do, he hath not a right to do; other governors have a limited ability, that what they have a right to do, they have not always a strength to do; they may want a power to execute their own counsels. But God is destitute of neither; he hath an infinite right, and an infinite strength; his word is a law; he commands things to stand out of nothing, and they do so. “He commanded,” or spake, *ὁ εἰπὼν*, “light to shine out of darkness” (2 Cor. 4:6). There is no distance of time between his word: “Let there be light; and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). Magistrates often use not their authority, for fear of giving occasion to insurrections, which may overturn their empire. But if the Lord will work, “who shall let it?” (Isa. 43:19): and if God will not work, who shall force him? He can check and overturn all other powers; his decrees cannot be stopped, nor his hand held back by any: if he wills to dash the whole world in pieces, no creature can maintain its being against his order. He sets the ordinances of the heavens, and the dominion thereof in the earth; and sends lightnings, that they may go, and say unto him, “Here we are” (Job 38:33, 34).

3. Yet this dominion, though it be absolute, is not tyrannical,

but it is managed by the rules of wisdom, righteousness, and goodness. If his throne be in the heavens, it is pure and good: because the heavens are the purest parts of the creation, and influence by their goodness the lower earth. Since he is his own rule, and his nature is infinitely wise, holy, and righteous, he cannot do a thing but what is unquestionably agreeable with wisdom, justice, and purity. In all the exercises of his sovereign right, he is never unattended with those perfections of his nature. Might not God, by his absolute power, have pardoned men's guilt, and thrown the invading sin out of his creatures? But in regard of his truth pawned in his threatening, and in regard of his justice, which demanded satisfaction, he would not. Might not God, by his absolute sovereignty, admit a man into his friendship, without giving him any grace? but in regard of the incongruity of such an act to his wisdom and holiness, he will not. May he not, by his absolute power, refuse to accept a man that desires to please him, and reject a purely innocent creature? but in regard of his goodness and righteousness, he will not. Though innocence be amiable in its own nature, yet it is not necessary in regard of God's sovereignty, that he should love it; but in regard of his goodness it is necessary, and he will never do otherwise. As God never acts to the utmost of his power, so he never exerts the utmost of his sovereignty: because it would be inconsistent with those other properties which render him perfectly adorable to the creature. As no intelligent creature, neither angel nor man, can be framed without a law in his nature, so we cannot imagine God without a law in his own nature, unless we would fancy him a rude, tyrannical, foolish being, that hath nothing of holiness, goodness, righteousness, wisdom. If he "made the heavens in wisdom" (Psalm 136:5), he made them by some rule, not by a mere will, but a rule within himself, not without. A wise work is never the result of an absolute unguided will.

(1.) This dominion is managed by the rule of wisdom. What may appear to us to have no other spring than absolute sovereignty, would be found to have a depth of amazing wisdom, and accountable reason, were our short capacities long enough to fathom it. When the apostle had been discoursing of the eternal counsels of God, in seizing upon one man, and letting go another, in neglecting the Jews, and gathering in the Gentiles, which appears to us to be results only of an absolute dominion, yet he resolves not those

amazing acts into that, without taking it for granted that they, were governed by exact wisdom, though beyond his ken to see and his line to sound. “O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out” (Rom. 2:33)!

There are some things in matters of state, that may seem to be acts of mere will, but if we were acquainted with the *arcana imperii*, the inward engines which moved them, and the ends aimed at in those undertakings, we might find a rich vein of prudence in them, to incline us to judge otherwise than bare arbitrary proceedings. The other attributes of power and goodness are more easily perceptible in the works of God than his wisdom. The first view of the creation strikes us with this sentiment, that the Author of this great fabric was mighty and beneficial; but his wisdom lies deeper than to be discerned at the first glance, without a diligent inquiry; as at the first casting our eyes upon the sea, we behold its motion, color, and something of its vastness, but we cannot presently fathom the depth of it, and understand those lower fountains that supply that great ocean of waters. It is part of God’s sovereignty, as it is of the wisest princes, that he hath a wisdom beyond the reach of his subjects; it is not for a finite nature to understand an Infinite Wisdom, nor for a foolish creature that hath lost his understanding by the fall, to judge of the reason of the methods of a wise Counsellor. Yet those actions that savor most of sovereignty, present men with some glances of his wisdom. Was it mere will, that he suffered some angels to fall? But his wisdom was in it for the manifestation of his justice, as it was also in the case of Pharaoh. Was it mere will, that he suffered sin to be committed by man? Was not his wisdom in this for the discovery of his mercy, which never had been known without that, which should render a creature miserable? “He hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all” (Rom. 11:32). Though God had such an absolute right, to have annihilated the world as soon as ever he had made it, yet how had this consisted with his wisdom, to have erected a creature after his own image one day, and despised it so much the next, as to cashier it from being? What wisdom had it been to make a thing only to destroy it; to repent of his work as soon as ever it came out of his hands, without any occasion offered by the creature? If God be supposed to be Creator, he must be supposed to have an end in creation; what end

can that be but himself and his own glory, the manifestation of the perfections of his nature? What perfection could have been discovered in so quick an annihilation, but that of his power in creating, and of his sovereignty in snatching away the being of his rational creature, before it had laid the methods of acting What wisdom to make a world, and a reasonable creature for no use; not to praise and honor him, but to be broken in pieces, and destroyed by him?

(2.) His sovereignty is managed according to the rule of righteousness. Worldly princes often fancy tyranny and oppression to be the chief marks of sovereignty, and think their sceptres not beautiful till died in blood, nor the throne secure till established upon slain carcasses. But “justice and judgment” are the foundation of the throne of God (Psalm 89:14); alluding perhaps to the supporters of arms and thrones, which among princes are the figures of lions, emblems of courage, as Solomon had (1 Kings 10:19). But God makes not so much might, as right, the support of his. He sits on a “throne of holiness” (Psalm 47:8). As he reigns over the heathens, referring to the calling of the Gentiles after the rejecting of the Jews; the Psalmist here praising the righteousness of it, as the Apostle had the unsearchable wisdom of it (Rom.

11:33). “In all his ways he is righteous” (Psalm 145:17): in his ways of terror as well as those of sweetness; in those works wherein little else but that of his sovereignty appears to us. It is always linked with his holiness, that he will not do by his absolute right anything but what is conformable to it: since his dominion is founded upon the excellency of his nature, he will not do anything but what is agreeable to it, and becoming his other perfections. Though he be an absolute sovereign, he is not an arbitrary governor; “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right” (Gen. 18:25)? *i. e.* it is impossible but he should act righteously in every punctilio of his government, since his righteousness capacitates him to be a judge, not a tyrant, of all the earth. The heathen poets represented their chief god Jupiter with Themis, or Right, sitting by him upon his throne in all his orders. God cannot by his absolute sovereignty command some things, because they are directly against unchangeable righteousness; as to command a creature to hate or blaspheme the Creator, not to own him nor praise him. It would be a

manifest unrighteousness to order the creature not to own him, upon whom he depends both in its being and well-being; this would be against that natural duty which is indispensably due from every rational creature to God. This would be to order him to lay aside his reason, while he retains it; to disown him to be the Creator, while man remains his creature. This is repugnant to the nature of God, and the true nature of the creature; or to exact anything of man, but what he had given him a capacity, in his original nature, to perform. If any command were above our natural power, it would be unrighteous; as to command a man to grasp the globe of the earth, to stride over the sea, to lave out the waters of the ocean; these things are impossible, and become not the righteousness and wisdom of God to enjoin. There can be no obligation on man to an impossibility. God had a free dominion over nullity before the creation; he could call it out into the being of man and beast, but he could not do anything in creation foolishly, because of his infinite wisdom; nor could he by the right of his absolute sovereignty make man sinful, because of his infinite purity. As it is impossible for him not to be sovereign, it is impossible for him to deny his Deity and his purity. It is lawful for God to do what he will, but his will being ordered by the righteousness of his nature, as infinite as his will, he cannot do anything but what is just; and therefore in his dealing with men, you find him in Scripture submitting the reasonableness and equity of his proceedings to the judgment of his depraved creatures, and the inward dictates of their own conscience. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard" (Isa. 5:3). Though God be the great Sovereign of the world, yet he acts not in a way of absolute sovereignty. He rules by law; he is a "Lawgiver" as well as a "King" (Isa. 33:22). It had been repugnant to the nature of a rational creature to be ruled otherwise; to be governed as a beast, this had been to frustrate those faculties of will and understanding which had been given him. To conclude this: when we say, God can do this or that, or command this or that, his authority is not bounded and limited properly. Who can reasonably detract from his almightiness, because he cannot do anything which savors of weakness; and what detracting is it from his authority, that he cannot do anything unseemly for the dignity of his nature? It is rather from the infiniteness of his righteousness than the straitness of his authority;

at most it is but a voluntary bounding his dominion by the law of his own holiness.

(3.) His sovereignty is managed according to the rule of goodness. Some potentates there have been in the world, that have loved to suck the blood, and drink the tears, of their subjects; that would rule more by fear than love; like Clearchus, the tyrant of Heraclea, who bore the figure of a thunderbolt instead of a sceptre, and named his son Thunder, thereby to tutor him to terrify his subjects. But as God's throne is a throne of holiness, so it is a "throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16), a throne encircled with a rainbow: "In sight like to an emerald" (Rev. 4:23): an emblem of the covenant, that hath the pleasantness of a green color, delightful to the eye, betokening mercy. Though his nature be infinitely excellent above us, and his power infinitely transcendent over us, yet the majesty of his government is tempered with an unspeakable goodness. He acts not so much as an absolute Lord, as a gracious Sovereign and obliging Benefactor. He delights not to make his subjects slaves; exacts not from them any servile and fearful, but a generous and cheerful, obedience. He requires them not to fear, or worship him so much for his power, as his goodness. He requires not of a rational creature anything repugnant to the honor, dignity, and principles of such a nature; not anything that may shame, disgrace it, and make it weary of its own being, and the service it owes to its Sovereign. He draws by the cords of a man; his goodness renders his laws as sweet as honey or the honey-comb to an unvitiated palate and a renewed mind.

And though it be granted he hath a full dispose of his creature, as the potter of his vessel, and might by his absolute sovereignty inflict upon an innocent an eternal torment, yet his goodness will never permit him to use this sovereign right to the hurt of a creature that deserves it not. If God should cast an innocent creature into the furnace of his wrath, who can question him? But who can think that his goodness will do so, since that is as infinite as his authority? As not to punish the sinner would be a denial of his justice, so to torment an innocent would be a denial of his goodness. A man hath an absolute power over his beast, and may take away his life, and put him to a great deal of pain; but that moral virtue of pity and tenderness would not permit him to use this right, but when it

conduceth to some greater good than that can be evil; either for the good of man, which is the end of the creature, or for the good of the poor beast itself, to rid him of a greater misery; none but a savage nature, a disposition to be abhorred, would torture a poor beast merely for his pleasure. It is as much against the nature of God to punish one eternally, that hath not deserved it, as it is to deny himself, and act anything foolishly and unbeseeming his other perfections, which render him majestic and adorable. To afflict an innocent creature for his own good, or for the good of the world, as in the case of the Redeemer, is so far from being against goodness, that it is the highest testimony of his tender bowels to the sons of men. God, though he be mighty, “withdraws not his eyes,” *i. e.* his tender respect, “from the righteous” (Job 36:5, 7–10). And if he “bind them in fetters,” it is to “show them their transgressions,” and “open their ear to discipline,” and renewing commands, in a more sensible strain, “to depart from iniquity.” What was said of Fabritius, “You may as soon remove the sun from its course, as Fabritius from his honesty,” may be of God: you may as soon dash in pieces his throne, as separate his goodness from his sovereignty.

4. This sovereignty is extensive over all creatures. He rules all, as the heavens do over the earth. He is “King of worlds, King of ages,” as the word translated “eternal” signifies (1 Tim. 1:17), *Τῷ θεῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων*: and the same word is so translated (Heb. 1:2), “By whom also he made the worlds.” The same word is rendered “worlds” (Heb. 11:3): “The worlds were framed by the Word of God.” God is King of ages or worlds, of the invisible world and the sensible; of all from the beginning of their creation, of whatsoever is measured by a time. It extends over angels and devils, over wicked and good, over rational and irrational creatures; all things bow down under his hand; nothing can be exempted from him: because there is nothing but was extracted by him from nothing into being. All things essentially depend upon him; and, therefore, must be essentially subject to him; the extent of his dominion flows from the perfection of his essence; since his essence is unlimited, his royalty cannot be restrained. His authority is as void of any imperfection as his essence is; it reaches out to all points of the heaven above, and the earth below. Other princes reign in a spot of ground. Every worldly potentate hath the confines of his dominions. The Pyrenean mountains divide France from Spain, and the Alps,

Italy from France. None are called kings absolutely, but kings of this or that place. But God is the King; the spacious firmament limits not his dominion; if we could suppose him bounded by any place, in regard of his presence, yet he could never be out of his own dominion; whatsoever he looks upon, wheresoever he were, would be under his rule. Earthly kings may step out of their own country into the territory of a neighbor prince; and as one leaves his country, so he leaves his dominion behind him; but heaven and earth, and every particle of both, is the territory of God. "He hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all."

(1.) The heaven of angels, and other excellent creatures, belong to his authority. He is principally called "The Lord of Hosts," in relation to his entire command over the angelical legions: therefore, ver. 21, following the text, they are called his "hosts," and "ministers that do his pleasure." Jacob called him so before (Gen. 32:1, 2). When he met the angels of God, he calls them "the host of God;" and the Evangelist, long after, calls them so (Luke 2:13): "A multitude of the heavenly host, praising God;" and all this host he commands (Isa. 45:12): "My hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded." He employs them all in his service; and when he issues out his orders to them to do this or that, he finds no resistance of his will. And the inanimate creatures in heaven are at his beck; they are his armies in heaven, disposed in an excellent order in their several ranks (Psalm 147:4): "He calls the stars by name;" they render a due obedience to him as servants to their master, when he singles them out, "and calls them by name," to do some special service; he calls them out to their several offices, as the general of an army appoints the station of every regiment in a battalia. Or "he calls them by name," *i. e.* he imposeth names upon them, a sign of dominion: the giving names to the inferior creatures being the first act of Adam's derivative dominion over them. These are under the sovereignty of God. The stars, by their influences, fight against Sisera (Judges 5:20). And the sun holds in its reins, and stands stone still, to light Joshua to a complete victory (Josh. 10:12). They are all marshalled in their ranks to receive his word of command, and fight in close order, as being desirous to have a share in the ruin of the enemies of their Sovereign. And those creatures which mount up from the earth, and take their place in the lower heavens, vapors, whereof hail and snow are formed, are part of the

army, and do not only receive, but fulfil, his word of command (Psalm 148:8). These are his stores and magazines of judgment against a time of trouble, and “a day of battle and war” (Job 38:22, 23). The sovereignty of God is visible in all their motions, in their going and returning. If he says, Go, they go; if he say, Come, they come; if he say, do this, they gird up their loins, and stand stiff to their duty.

(2.) The hell of devils belong to his authority. They have cast themselves out of the arms of his grace into the furnace of his justice; they have, by their revolt, forfeited the treasure of his goodness, but cannot exempt themselves from the sceptre of his dominion; when they would not own him as a Lord Father, they are under him as a Lord Judge; they are cast out of his affection, but not freed from his yoke. He rules over the good angels as his subjects, over the evil ones as his rebels. In whatsoever relation he stands, either as a friend or enemy, he never loses that of a Lord. A prince is the lord of his criminals as well as of his loyalest subjects. By this right of his sovereignty, he uses them to punish some, and be the occasion of benefit to others: on the wicked he employs them as instruments of vengeance; towards the godly, as in the case of Job, as an instrument of kindness for the manifestation of his sincerity against the intention of that malicious executioner. Though the devils are the executioners of his justice, it is not by their own authority, but God’s; as those that are employed either to rack or execute a malefactor, are subjects to the prince not only in the quality of men, but in the execution of their function. The devil, by drawing men to sin, acquires no right to himself over the sinner: for man by sin offends not the devil, but God, and becomes guilty of punishment under God. When, therefore, the devil is used by God for the punishment of any, it is an act of his sovereignty for the manifestation of the order of his justice. And as most nations use the vilest persons in offices of execution, so doth God those vile spirits. He doth not ordinarily use the good angels in those offices of vengeance, but in the preservation of his people. When he would solely punish, he employs “evil angels” (Psalm 78:49), a troop of devils. His sovereignty is extended over the “deceiver and the deceived” (Job 12:16); over both the malefactor and the executioner, the devil and his prisoner. He useth the natural malice of the devils for his own just ends, and by his sovereign authority orders them to

be the executioners of his judgments upon their own vassals, as well as sometimes inflictors of punishments upon his own servants.

(3.) The earth of men and other creatures belongs to his authority (Psalm 47:7). God is King of “all the earth,” and rules to the “ends” of it (Psalm 59:13). Ancient atheists confined God’s dominion to the heavenly orbs, and bounded it within the circuit of the celestial sphere (Job 22:14): “He walks in the circuit of heaven,” *i. e.* he exerciseth his dominion only there. *Pedum positio* was the sign of the possession of a piece of land, and the dominion of the possessor of it; and land was resigned by such a ceremony, as now, by the delivery of a twig or turf. But his dominion extends,

1st. Over the least creatures. All the creatures of the earth are listed in Christ’s muster-roll, and make up the number of his regiments. He hath an host on earth as well as in heaven (Gen. 2:1): “The heavens and earth were finished, and all the host of them.” And they are “all his servants” (Psalm 114:91), and move at his pleasure. And he vouchsafes the title of his army to the locust, caterpillar, and palmer worm (Joel 2:25); and describes their motions by military words, “climbing the walls, marching, not breaking their ranks” (ver. 7). He hath the command, as a great general, over the highest angel and the meanest worm; all the kinds of the smallest insects he presseth for his service. By this sovereignty he muzzled the devouring nature of the fire to preserve the three children, and let it loose to consume their adversaries; and if he speaks the word, the stormy waves are hushed, as if they had no principle of rage within them (Psalm 89:9). Since the meanest creature attains its end, and no arrow that God hath by his power shot into the world but hits the mark he aimed at, we must conclude, that there is a sovereign hand that governs all: not a spot of earth, or air, or water in the world, but is his possession; not a creature in any element but is his subject.

2d. His dominion extends over men. It extends over the highest potentate, as well as the meanest peasant; the proudest monarch is no more exempt than the most languishing beggar. He lays not aside his authority to please the prince, nor strains it up to terrify the indigent. “He accepts not the persons of princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of his hand” (Job 34:19). Both the powers and weaknesses, the gallantry and peasantry

of the earth, stand and fall at his pleasure. Man, in innocence, was under his authority as his creature; and man, in his revolt, is further under his authority as a criminal: as a person is under the authority of a prince, as a governor, while he obeys his laws; and further under the authority of the prince, as a judge, when he violates his laws. Man is under God's dominion in everything, in his settlement, in his calling, in the ordering his very habitation (Acts 17:26): "He determines the bounds of their habitations." He never yet permitted any to be universal monarch in the world, nor over the fourth part of it, though several, in the pride of their heart, have designed and attempted it: the pope, who hath bid the fairest for it in spirituals, never attained it; and when his power was most flourishing, there were multitudes that would never acknowledge his authority.

3d. But especially this dominion, in the peculiarity of its extent, is seen in the exercise of it over the spirits and hearts of men. Earthly governors have, by his indulgence, a share with him in a dominion over men's bodies, upon which account he graceth princes and judges with the title of "gods" (Psalm 82:6); but the highest prince is but a prince "according to the flesh," as the apostle calls masters in relation to their servants (Col. 3:22).

God is the sovereign; man rules over the beast in man, the body; and God rules over the man in man, the soul. It sticks not in the outward surface, but pierceth to the inward marrow. It is impossible God should be without this; if our wills were independent of him, we were in some sort equal with himself, in part gods, as well as creatures. It is impossible a creature, either in whole or in part, can be exempted from it; since he is the fashioner of hearts as well as of bodies. He is the Father of spirits, and therefore hath the right of a paternal dominion over them. When he established man lord of the other creatures, he did not strip himself of the propriety; and when he made man a free agent, and lord of the acts of his will, he did not divest himself of the sovereignty. His sovereignty is seen,

[1.] In gifting the spirits of men. Earthly magistrates have hands too short to inspire the hearts of their subjects with worthy sentiments: when they confer an employment, they are not able to convey an ability with it fit for the station: they may as soon frame a statue of liquid water, and gild, or paint it over with the costliest colors, as impart to any, a state-head for a state-ministry. But when

God chooseth a Saul from so mean an employment as seeking of asses, he can treasure up in him a spirit fit for government; and fire David, in age a stripling, and by education a shepherd, with courage to encounter, and skill to defeat, a massy Goliath. And when he designs a person for glory, to stand before his throne, he can put a new anal a royal spirit into him (Ezek. 36:26). God only can infuse habits into the soul, to capacitate it to act nobly and generously.

[2.] His sovereignty is seen in regard of the inclinations of men's wills. No creature can immediately work upon the will, to guide it to what point he pleaseth, though mediately it may, by proposing reasons which may master the understanding, and thereby determine the will. But God bows the hearts of men, by the efficacy of his dominion, to what centre he pleaseth. When the more overweening sort of men, that thought their own heads as fit for a crown as Saul's, scornfully despised him; yet God touched the hearts of a band of men to follow and adhere to him (1 Sam. 10:26, 27). When the anti-christian whore shall be ripe for destruction, God shall "put it into the heart" of the ten horns or kings, "to hate the whore, burn her with fire, and fulfil his will" (Rev. 17:16, 17). He "fashions the hearts" alike, and tunes one string to answer another, and both to answer his own design (Psalm 33:15). And while men seem to gratify their own ambition and malice, they execute the will of God, by his secret touch upon their spirits, guiding their inclinations to serve the glorious manifestation of truth. While the Jews would, in a reproachful disgrace to Christ, crucify two thieves with him, to render him more incapable to have any followers, they accomplished a prophecy, and brought to light a mark of the Messiah, whereby he had been charactered in one of their prophets, that he should be "numbered among transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). He can make a man of not willing, willing; the wills of all men are in his hand; *i. e.* under the power of his sceptre, to retain or let go upon this or that errand, to bend this or that way; as water is carried by pipes to what house or place the owner of it is pleased to order. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of waters; he turns it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1) without any limitation. He speaks of the heart of princes; because, in regard of their height, they seem to be more absolute, and impetuous as waters; yet God holds them in his hand, under his dominion; turns them to acts of clemency or severity, like waters, either to overflow and damage, or

to refresh and fructify. He can convey a spirit to them, or “cut it off” from them (Psalm 76:12). It is with reference to his efficacious power, in graciously turning the heart of Paul, that the apostle breaks off his discourse of the story of his conversion, and breaks out into a magnifying and glorifying of God’s dominion. “Now unto the King eternal,” &c. “be honor and glory forever and ever” (1 Tim. 1:17). Our hearts are more subject to the Divine sovereignty than our members in their motions are subject to our own wills. As we can move our hand east or west to any quarter of the world, so can God bend our wills to what mark he pleases. The second cause in every motion depends upon the first; and that will, being a second cause, may be furthered or hindered in its inclinations or executions by God; he can bend or unbend it, and change it from one actual inclination to another. It is as much under his authority and power to move, or hinder, as the vast engine of the heavens is in its motion or standing still, which he can affect by a word. The work depends upon the workman; the clock upon the artificer for the motions of it.

[3.] His dominion is seen in regard of terror or comfort. The heart or conscience is God’s special throne on earth, which he hath reserved to himself, and never indulged human authority to sit upon it. He solely orders this in ways of conviction or comfort. He can flash terror into men’s spirits in the midst of their earthly jollities, and put death into the pot of conscience, when they are boiling up themselves in a high pitch of worldly delights, and can raise men’s spirits above the sense of torment under racks and flames. He can draw a hand-writing not only in the outward chamber, but the inward closet; bring the rack into the inwards of a man. None can infuse comfort when he writes bitter things, nor can any fill the heart with gall, when he drops in honey. Men may order outward duties, but they cannot unlock the conscience, and constrain men to think them duties which they are forced, by human laws, outwardly to act: and as the laws of earthly princes are bounded by the outward man, so do their executions and punishments reach no further than the case of the body: but God can run upon the inward man, as a giant, and inflict wounds and gashes there.

5. It is an eternal dominion. In regard of the exercise of it, it was not from eternity, because there was not from eternity any creature under the government of it; but in regard of the foundation

of it, his essence, his excellency, it is eternal; as God was from eternity almighty, but there was no exercise or manifestation of it till he began to create. Men are kings only for a time; their lives expire like a lamp, and their dominion is extinguished with their lives; they hand their empire by succession to others, but many times it is snapped off before they are cold in their graves. How are the famous empires of the Chaldeans, Medes, Persians, and Greeks, mouldered away, and their place knows them no more! and how are the wings of the Roman eagle cut, and that empire which overspread a great part of the world, hath lost most of its feathers, and is confined to a narrower compass! The dominion of God flourisheth from one generation to another: "He sits King forever" (Psalm 29:10). His "session" signifies the establishment, and "forever" the duration; and he "sits now," his sovereignty is as absolute, as powerful as ever. How many lords and princes hath this or that kingdom had! in how many families hath the sceptre lodged! when as God hath had an uninterrupted dominion; as he hath been always the same in his essence, he hath been always glorious in his sovereignty: among men, he that is lord to-day, may be stripped of it to-morrow; the dominions in the world vary; he that is a prince may see his royalty upon the wings, and feel himself laden with fetters; and a prisoner may be "lifted from his dungeon" to a throne. But there can be no diminution of God's government; "His throne is from generation to generation" (Lam. 5:19); it cannot be shaken: his sceptre, like Aaron's rod, is always green; it cannot be wrested out of his hands; none raised him to it, none therefore can depose him from it; it bears the same splendor in all human affairs; he is an eternal, an "immortal King" (1 Tim. 1:17); as he is eternally mighty, so he is eternally sovereign; and, being an eternal King, he is a King that gives not a momentary and perishing, but a durable and everlasting life, to them that obey him: a durable and eternal punishment to them that resist him.

IV. Wherein this dominion and sovereign consists, and how it is manifested.

First. The first act of sovereignty is the making laws. This is essential to God; no creature's will can be the first rule to the creature, but only the will of God: he only can prescribe man his duty, and establish the rule of it; hence the law is called "the royal

law” (James 2:8): it being the first and clearest manifestation of sovereignty, as the power of legislation is of the authority of a prince. Both are joined together in Isa. 53:22: “The Lord is our Lawgiver; the Lord is our King;” legislative power being the great mark of royalty. God, as King, enacts his laws by his own proper authority, and his law is a declaration of his own sovereignty, and of men’s moral subjection to him, and dependence on him. His sovereignty doth not appear so much in his promises as in his precepts: a man’s power over another is not discovered by promising, for a promise doth not suppose the promiser either superior or inferior to the person to whom the promise is made. It is not an exercising authority over another, but over a man’s self; no man forceth another to the acceptance of his promise, but only proposeth and encourageth to an embracing of it. But commanding supposeth always an authority in the person giving the precept; it obhgeth the person to whom the command is directed; a promise obligeth the person by whom the promise is made. God, by his command, binds the creature; by his promise he binds himself; he stoops below his sovereignty, to lay obligations upon his own majesty; by a precept he binds the creature, by a promise he encourageth the creature to an observance of his precept: what laws God makes, man is bound, by virtue of his creation, to observe; that respects the sovereignty of God: what promises God makes, man is bound to believe; but that respects the faithfulness of God. God manifested his dominion more to the Jews than to any other people in the world; he was their Lawgiver, both as they were a church and a commonwealth: as a church, he gave them ceremonial laws for the regulating their worship; as a state, he gave them judicial laws for the ordering their civil affairs; and as both, he gave them moral laws, upon which both the laws of the church and state were founded. This dominion of God, in this regard, will be manifest,

(1.) In the supremacy of it. The sole power of making laws doth originally reside in him (James 4:12); “There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy.” By his own law he judges of the eternal states of men, and no law of man is obligatory, but as it is agreeable to the laws of this supreme Lawgiver, and pursuant to his righteous rules for the government of the world. The power that the potentates of the world have to make laws is but derivative from God. If their dominion be from him, as it is, for “by him kings

reign” (Prov. 8:15), their legislative power, which is a prime flower of their sovereignty, is derived from him also: and the apostle resolves it into this original when he orders us to be “subject to the higher powers, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake” (Rom. 13:5). Conscience, in its operations, solely respects God; and therefore, when it is exercised as the principle of obedience to the laws of men, it is not with respect to them, singly considered, but as the majesty of God appears in their station and in their decrees. This power of giving laws was acknowledged by the heathen to be solely in God by way of original; and therefore the greatest lawgivers among the heathen pretended their laws to be received from some deity or supernatural power, by special revelation: now, whether they did this seriously, acknowledging themselves this part of the dominion of God,—for it is certain that whatsoever just orders were issued out by princes in the world, was by the secret influence of God upon their spirits (Prov. 8:15): “By me princes decree justice;” by the secret conduct of Divine wisdom,—or whether they pretended it only as a public engine, to enforce upon people the observance of their decrees, and gain a greater credit to their edicts, yet this will result from it, that the people in general entertained this common notion, that God was the great Lawgiver of the world. The first founders of their societies could never else have so absolutely gained upon them by such a pretence. There was always a revelation of a law from the mouth of God in every age: the exhortation of Eliphaz to Job (Job 22:22), of receiving a “law from the mouth” of God, at the time before the moral law was published, had been a vain exhortation had there been no revelation of the mind of God in all ages.

(2.) The dominion of God is manifest in the extent of his laws. As he is the Governor and Sovereign of the whole world, so he enacts laws for the whole world. One prince cannot make laws for another, unless he makes him his subject by right of conquest; Spain cannot make laws for England, or England for Spain; but God having the supreme government, as King over all, is a Lawgiver to all, to irrational, as well as rational creatures. The “heavens have their ordinances” (Job 38:33); all creatures have a law imprinted on their beings; rational creatures have Divine statutes copied in their heart: for men, it is clear (Rom. 2:14), every son of Adam, at his coming into the world, brings with him a law in his nature, and

when reason clears itself up from the clouds of sense, he can make some difference between good and evil; discern something of fit and just. Every man finds a law within him that checks him if he offends it: none are without a legal indictment and a legal executioner within them; God or none was the Author of this as a sovereign Lord, in establishing a law in man at the same time, wherein, as an Almighty Creator, he imparted a being. This law proceeds from God's general power of governing, as he is the Author of nature, and binds not barely as it is the reason of man, but by the authority of God, as it is a law engraven on his conscience: and no doubt but a law was given to the angels; God did not govern those intellectual creatures as he doth brutes, and in a way inferior to his rule of man. Some sinned; all might have sinned in regard to the changeableness of their nature. Sin cannot be but against some rule; "where there is no law, there is no transgression;" what that law was is not revealed; but certainly it must be the same in part with the moral law, so far as it agreed with their spiritual natures; a love to God, a worship of him, and a love to one another in their societies and persons.

(3.) The dominion of God is manifest in the reason of some laws, which seem to be nothing else than purely his own will. Some laws there are for which a reason may be rendered from the nature of the thing enjoined, as to love, honor, and worship God: for others, none but this, God will have it so: such was that positive law to Adam of "not eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17), which was merely an asserting his own dominion, and was different from that law of nature God had written in his heart. No other reason of this seems to us, but a resolve to try man's obedience in a way of absolute sovereignty, and to manifest his right over all creatures, to reserve what he pleased to himself, and permit the use of what he pleased to man, and to signify to man that he was to depend on him, who was his Lord, and not on his own will. There was no more hurt in itself, for Adam to have eaten of that, than of any other in the garden; the fruit was pleasant to the eye, and good for food; but God would show the right he had over his own goods, and his authority over man, to reserve what he pleases of his own creation from his touch; and since man could not claim a propriety in anything, he was to meddle with nothing but by the leave of his Sovereign, either discovered by a special or general license. Thus God showed himself the Lord of man, and that man was but his

steward, to act by his orders. If God had forbidden man the use of more trees in the garden, his command had been just; since, as a sovereign Lord, he might dispose of his own goods; and when he had granted him the whole compass of that pleasant garden, and the whole world round about for him and his posterity, it was a more tolerable exercise of his dominion to reserve this “one tree,” as a mark of his sovereignty, when he had left “all others” to the use of Adam. He reserved nothing to himself, as Lord of the manor, but this; and Adam was prohibited nothing else but this one, as a sign of his subjection. Now for this no reason can be rendered by any man but merely the will of God; this was merely a fruit of his dominion. For the moral laws a reason may be rendered; to love God hath reason to enforce it besides God’s will; *viz.*, the excellency of his nature, and the greatness and multitudes of his benefits. To love our neighbor hath enforcing reasons; *viz.*, the conjunction in blood, the preservation of human society, and the need we may stand in of their love ourselves: but no reason can be assigned of this positive command about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but the pleasure of God. It was a branch of his pure dominion to but merely the pleasure of God. It was a branch of his pure dominion to try man’s obedience, and a mark of his goodness to try it by so and light a precept, when he might have extended his authority further. Had not God given this or the like order, his absolute dominion had not been so conspicuous. It is true, Adam had a law of nature in him, whereby he was obliged to perpetual obedience; and though it was a part of God’s dominion to implant it in him, yet his supreme dominion over the creatures had not been so visible to man but by this, or a precept of the same kind. What was commanded or prohibited by the law of nature, did bespeak a comeliness in itself, it appeared good or evil to the reason of man; but this was neither good nor evil in itself, it received its sole authority from the absolute will of God, and nothing could result from the fruit itself, as a reason why man should not taste it, but only the sole will of God. And as God’s dominion was most conspicuous in this precept, so man’s obedience had been most eminent in observing it: for in his obedience to it, nothing but the sole power and authority of God, which is the proper rule of obedience, could have been respected, not any reason from the thing itself. To this we may refer some other commands, as that of appointing the time of solemn and public

worship, the seventh day; though the worship of God be a part of the law of nature, yet the appointing a particular day, wherein he would be more formally and solemnly acknowledged than on other days, was grounded upon his absolute right of legislation: for there was nothing in the time itself that could render that day more holy than another, though God respected his “finishing the work of creation” in his institution of that day (Gen. 2:3). Such were the ceremonial commands of sacrifices and washings under the law, and the commands of sacraments under the gospel: the one to last till the first coming of Christ and his passion; the other to last till the second coming of Christ and his triumph. Thus he made natural and unavoidable uncleannesses to be sins, and the touching a dead body to be pollution, which in their own nature were not so.

(4.) The dominion of God appears in the moral law, and his majesty in publishing it. As the law of nature was writ by his own fingers in the nature of man, so it was engraven by his own finger in the “tables of stone” (Exod. 31:18), which is very emphatically expressed to be a mark of God’s dominion. “And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraven upon the tables” (Exod. 32:16); and when the first tables were broken, though he orders Moses to frame the tables, yet the writing of the law he reserves to himself (Exod. 34:1). It is not said of any part of the Scripture, that it was writ by the finger of God, but only of the Decalogue: herein he would have his sovereignty eminently appear; it was published by God in state, with a numerous attendance of his heavenly militia (Deut. 32:2); and the artillery of heaven was shot off at the solemnity; and therefore it is called a fiery law, coming from his right hand, *i. e.* his sovereign power. It was published with all the marks of supreme majesty.

(5.) The dominion of God appears in the obligation of the law, which reacheth the conscience. The laws of every prince are framed for the outward conditions of men; they do not by their authority bind the conscience; and what obligations do result from them upon the conscience, is either from their being the same immediately with Divine laws, or as they are according to the just power of the magistrate, founded on the law of God. Conscience hath a protection from the King of kings, and cannot be arrested by any human power. God hath given man but an authority over half the man, and the

worst half too, that which is of an earthly original; but reserved the authority over the better and more heavenly half to himself. The dominion of earthly princes extends only to the bodies of men; they have no authority over the soul, their punishment and rewards cannot reach it: and therefore their laws, by their single authority, cannot bind it, but as they are coincident with the law of God, or as the equity of them is subservient to the preservation of human society, a regular and righteous thing, which is the divine end in government; and so they bind, as they have relation to God as the supreme magistrate. The conscience is only intelligible to God in its secret motions, and therefore only guidable by God; God only pierceth into the conscience by his eye, and therefore only can conduct it by his rule. Man cannot tell whether we embrace this law in our heart and consciences, or only in appearance; “He only can judge it” (Luke 12:3, 4), and therefore he only can impose laws upon it; it is out of the reach of human penal authority, if their laws be transgressed inwardly by it. Conscience is a book in some sort as sacred as the Scripture; no addition can be lawfully made to it, no subtraction from it. Men cannot diminish the duty of conscience, or raze out the law God hath stamped upon it. They cannot put a *supersedeas* to the writ of conscience, or stop its mouth with a *noli prosequi*.

They can make no addition by their authority to bind it; it is a flower in the crown of Divine sovereignty only.

2. His sovereignty appears in a power of dispensing with his own laws. It is as much a part of his dominion to dispense with his laws, as to enjoin them; he only hath the power of relaxing his own right, no creature hath power to do it; that would be to usurp a superiority over him, and order above God himself. Repealing or dispensing with the law is a branch of royal authority. It is true, God will never dispense with those moral laws which have an eternal reason in themselves and their own nature; as for a creature to fear, love, and honor God; this would be to dispense with his own holiness, and the righteousness of his nature, to sully the purity of his own dominion; it would write folly upon the first creation of man after the image of God, by writing mutability upon himself, in framing himself after the corrupted image of man; it would null and frustrate the excellency of the creature, wherein the image of God

mostly shines; nay, it would be to dispense with a creature's being a Creator, and make him independent upon the Sovereign of the world in moral obedience. But God hath a right to dispense with the ordinary laws of nature in the inferior creatures; he hath a power to alter their course by an arrest of miracles, and make them come short, or go beyond his ordinances established for them. He hath a right to make the sun stand still, or move backward; to bind up the womb of the earth, and bar the influences of the clouds; bridle in the rage of the fire, and the fury of lions; make the liquid waters stand like a wall, or pull up the dam, which he hath set to the sea, and command it to overflow the neighboring countries: he can dispense with the natural laws of the whole creation, and strain everything beyond its ordinary pitch. Positive laws he hath reversed; as the ceremonial law given to the Jews. The very nature, indeed, of that law required a repeal, and fell of course; when that which was intended by it was come, it was of no longer significancy; as before it was a useful shadow, it would afterwards have been an empty one: had not God took away this, Christianity had not, in all likelihood, been propagated among the Gentiles. This was the "partition wall between Jews and Gentiles" (Eph. 12:14); which made them a distinct family from all the world, and was the occasion of the enmity of the Gentiles against the Jews. When God had, by bringing in what was signified by those rites, declared his decree for the ceasing of them; and when the Jews, fond of those Divine institutions, would not allow him the right of repealing what he had the authority of enacting; he resolved, for the asserting his dominion, to bury them in the ruins of the temple and city, and make them forever incapable of practising the main and essential arts of them; for the temple being the pillar of the legal service, by demolishing that, God hath taken away their rights of sacrificing, it being peculiarly annexed to that place; they have no altar dignified with a fire from heaven to consume their sacrifices, no legal high-priest to offer them. God hath by his providence changed his own law as well as by his receipt; yea, he hath gone higher, by virtue of his sovereignty, and changed the whole scene and methods of his government after the fall, from King Creator to King Redeemer. He hath revoked the law of works as a covenant; released the penalty of it from the believing sinner, by transferring it upon the Surety, who interposed himself by his own will and Divine designation. He hath

established another covenant upon other promises in a higher root, with greater privileges, and easier terms. Had not God had this right of sovereignty, not a man of Adam's posterity could have been blessed; he and they must have lain groaning under the misery of the fall, which had rendered both himself and all in his loins unable to observe the terms of the first covenant. He hath, as some speak, dispensed with his own moral law in some cases; in commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son, his only son, a righteous son, a son whereof he had the promise, that "in Isaac should his seed be called;"ⁱ yet he was commanded to sacrifice him by the right of his absolute sovereignty as the supreme Lord of the lives of his creatures, from the highest angel to the lowest worm, whereby he bound his subjects to this law, not himself. Our lives are due to him when he calls for them, and they are a just forfeit to him, at the very moment we sin, at the very moment we come into the world, by reason of the venom of our nature against him, and the disturbance the first sin of man (whereof we are inheritors) gave to his glory. Had Abraham sacrificed his son of his own head, he had sinned, yea, in attempting it; but being authorized from heaven, his act was obedience to the Sovereign of the world, who had a power to dispense with his own law; and with this law he had before dispense in the case of Cain's murder of Abel, as to the immediate punishment of it with death, which, indeed, was settled afterwards by his authority, but then omitted because of the paucity of men, and for the peopling the world; but settled afterwards, when there was almost, though not altogether, the like occasion of omitting it for a time.

3. His sovereignty appears in punishing the transgression of his law.

(1.) This is a branch of God's dominion as lawgiver. So was the vengeance God would take upon the Amalekites (Exod. 17:16): "The Lord hath sworn, that the Lord will have war;" the Hebrew is, "The hand upon the throne of the Lord," as in the margin: as a "lawgiver" he "saves or destroys" (James 4:12). He acts according to his own law, in a congruity to the sanction of his own precepts; though he be an arbitrary lawgiver, appointing what laws he pleases, yet he is not an arbitrary judge. As he commands nothing but what he hath a right to command, so he punisheth none but whom he hath

a right to punish, and with such punishment as the law hath denounced. All his acts of justice and inflictions of curses are the effects of this sovereign dominion (Psalm 29:10): “He sits King upon the floods;” upon the deluge of waters wherewith he drowned the world, say some. It is a right belonging to the authority of magistrates to pull up the infectious weeds that corrupt a commonwealth; it is no less the right of God, as the lawgiver and judge of all the earth, to subject criminals to his vengeance, after they have rendered themselves abominable in his eyes, and carried themselves unworthy subjects of so great and glorious a King. The first name whereby God is made known in Scripture, is Elohim (Gen. 1:1): “In the beginning God created the heaven and earth;” a name which signifies his power of judging, in the opinion of some critics; from him it is derived to earthly magistrates; their judgment is said, therefore, to be the “judgment of God” (Deut. 1:17). When Christ came, he proposed this great motive of repentance from the “kingdom of heaven being at hand;” the kingdom of his grace, whereby to invite men; the kingdom of his justice in the punishment of the neglecters of it, whereby to terrify men. Punishments as well as rewards belong to royalty; it issued accordingly; those that believed and repented came under his gracious sceptre, those that neglected and rejected it fell under his iron rod; Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple demolished, the inhabitants lost their lives by the edge of the sword, or lingered them out in the chains of a miserable captivity. This term of “judge,” which signifies a sovereign right to govern and punish delinquents, Abraham gives him, when he came to root out the people of Sodom, and make them the examples of his vengeance (Gen. 18:25).

(2.) Punishing the transgressions of his law. This is a necessary branch of dominion. His sovereignty in making laws would be a trifle, if there were not also an authority to vindicate those laws from contempt and injury; he would be a Lord only spurned at by rebels. Sovereignty is not preserved without justice.

When the Psalmist speaks of the majesty of God’s kingdom, he tells us, that “righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne” (Psalm 97:1, 2). These are the engines of Divine dignity which render him glorious and majestic. A legislative power would be trampled on without executive; by this the reverential

apprehensions of God are preserved in the world. He is known to be Lord of the world “by the judgments which he executes” (Psalm 9:16). When he seems to have lost his dominion, or given it up in the world, he recovers it by punishment. When he takes some away “with a whirlwind, and in his wrath,” the natural consequence men make of it, is this: “Surely there is a God that judgeth the earth” (Psalm 58:9, 11). He reduceth the creature, by the lash of his judgments, that would not acknowledge his authority in his precepts. Those sins which disown his government in the heart and conscience, as pride, inward blasphemy, &c., he hath reserved a time hereafter to reckon for. He doth not presently shoot his arrows into the marrow of every delinquent, but those sins which traduce his government of the world, and tear up the foundations of human converse, and a public respect to him, he reckons with particularly here, as well as hereafter, that the life of his sovereignty might not always faint in the world.

(3.) This of punishing was the second discovery of his dominion in the world. His first act of sovereignty was the giving a law; the next, his appearance in the state of a judge. When his orders were violated, he rescues the honor of them by an execution of justice. He first judged the angels, punishing the evil ones for their crime: the first court he kept among them as a governor, was to give them a law; the second court he kept was as a judge trying the delinquents, and adjudging the offenders to be “reserved in chains of darkness” till the final execution (Jude 6); and, at the same time probably, he confirmed the good ones in their obedience by grace. So the first discovery of his dominion to man, was the giving him a precept, the next was the inflicting a punishment for the breach of it. He summons Adam to the bar, indicts him for his crime, finds him guilty by his own confession, and passeth sentence on him, according to the rule he had before acquainted him with.

(4.) The means whereby he punisheth shows his dominion. Sometimes he musters up hail and mildew; sometimes he sends regiments of wild beasts; so he threatens Israel (Lev. 26:22). Sometimes he sends out a party of angels to beat up the quarters of men, and make a carnage among them (2 Kings 19:35).

Sometimes he mounts his thundering battery, and shoots forth his ammunition from the clouds, as against the Philistines (1 Sam.

7:10). Sometimes he sends the slightest creatures to shame the pride and punish the sin of man, as “lice, frogs, locusts,” as upon the Egyptians (Exod. 8–10.).

Secondly. This dominion it manifested by God as a proprietor and Lord of his creatures and his own goods. And this is evident,

1. In the choice of some persons from eternity. He hath set apart some from eternity, wherein he will display the invincible efficacy of his grace, and thereby infallibly bring them to the fruition of glory (Eph. 1:4, 5): “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” Why doth he write some names in the “book of life,” and leave out others? Why doth he enrol some, whom he intends to make denizens of heaven, and refuse to put others in his register? The apostle tells us, it is the pleasure of his will. You may render a reason for many of God’s actions, till you come to this, the top and foundation of all; and under what head of reason can man reduce this act but to that of his royal prerogative? Why doth God save some, and condemn others at last? because of the faith of the one, and unbelief of the other. Why do some men believe? because God hath not only given them the means of grace, but accompanied those means with the efficacy of his Spirit. Why did God accompany those means with the efficacy of his Spirit in some, and not in others? because he had decreed by grace to prepare them for glory. But why did he decree, or choose some, and not others? Into what will you resolve this but into his sovereign pleasure? Salvation and condemnation at the last upshot, are acts of God as the Judge, conformable to his own law of giving life to believers, and inflicting death upon unbelievers; for those a reason may be rendered; but the choice of some, and preterition of others, is an act of God as he is a sovereign monarch, before any law was actually transgressed, because not actually given. When a prince redeems a rebel, he acts as a judge according to law; but when he calls some out to pardon, he acts as a sovereign by a prerogative above law; into this the apostle resolves it (Rom. 9:13, 15). When he speaks of God’s loving Jacob and hating Esau, and that before they had done either good or evil, it is, “because God will have mercy on

whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion.” Though the first scope of the apostle, in the beginning of the chapter, was to declare the reason of God’s rejecting the Jews, and calling in the Gentiles; had he only intended to demolish the pride of the Jews, and flat their opinion of merit, and aimed no higher than that providential act of God; he might, convincingly enough to the reason of men, have argued from the justice of God, provoked by the obstinacy of the Jews, and not have had recourse to his absolute will; but, since he asserts this latter, the strength of his argument seems to be thus: if God by his absolute sovereignty may resolve, and fix his love upon Jacob and estrange it from Esau, or any other of his creatures, before they have done good or evil, and man have no ground to call his infinite majesty to account, may he not deal thus with the Jews, when their demerit would be a bar to any complaints of the creature against him? If God were considered here in the quality of a judge, it had been fit to have considered the matter of fact in the criminal; but he is considered as a sovereign, rendering no other reason of his action but his own will; “whom he will he hardens” (ver. 18). And then the apostle concludes (ver. 20), “Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?” If the reason drawn from God’s sovereignty doth not satisfy in this inquiry, no other reason can be found wherein to acquiesce: for the last condemnation there will be sufficient reason to clear the justice of his proceedings. But, in this case of election, no other reason but what is alleged, *viz.*, the will of God, can be thought of, but what is liable to such knotty exceptions that cannot well be untied.

(1.) It could not be any merit in the creature that might determine God to choose him. If the decree of election falls not under the merit of Christ’s passion, as the procuring cause, it cannot fall under the merit of any part of the corrupted mass. The decree of sending Christ did not precede, but followed, in order of nature, the determination of choosing some. When men were chosen as the subjects for glory, Christ was chosen as the means for the bringing them to glory (Eph. 1:4): “Chosen us in him, and predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.” The choice was not merely in Christ as the moving cause; that the apostle asserts to be “the good pleasure of his will;” but in Christ, as the means of conveying to the chosen ones the fruits of their election. What could there be in any man that could invite God to this act, or be a cause

of distinction of one branch of Adam from another? Were they not all hewed out of the same rock, and tainted with the same corruption in blood? Had it been possible to invest them with a power of merit at the first, had not that venom, contracted in their nature, degraded all of power for the future?

What merit was there in any but of wrathful punishment, since they were all considered as criminals, and the cursed brood of an ungrateful rebel? What dignity can there be in the nature of the purest part of clay, to be made a vessel of honor, more than in another part of clay, as pure as that which was formed into a vessel for mean and sordid use? What had any one to move his mercy more than another, since they were all children of wrath, and equally daubed with original guilt and filth? Had not all an equal proportion of it to provoke his justice? What merit is there in one dry bone more than another, to be inspired with the breath of a spiritual life? Did not all he wallowing in their own filthy blood? and what could the steam and noisomeness of that deserve at the hands of a pure Majesty, but to be cast into a sink furthest from his sight? Were they not all considered in this deplorable posture, with an equal proportion of poison in their nature, when God first took his pen, and singled out some names to write in the book of life? It could not be merit in any one piece of this abominable mass, that should stir up that resolution in God to set apart this person for a vessel of glory, while he permitted another to putrefy in his own gore. He loved Jacob, and hated Esau, though they were both parts of the common mass, the seed of the same loins, and lodged in the same womb.

(2.) Nor could it be any foresight of works to be done in time by them, or of faith, that might determine God to choose them. What good could he foresee resulting from extreme corruption, and a nature alienated from him? What could he foresee of good to be done by them, but what he resolved in his own will, to bestow an ability upon them to bring forth? His choice of them was to holiness, not for a holiness preceding his determination (Eph. 1:4). He hath chosen us, "that we might be holy" before him; he ordained us "to good works," not for them (Eph. 2:10). What is a fruit cannot be a moving cause of that whereof it is a fruit: grace is a stream from the spring of electing love; the branch is not the cause of the root, but

the root of the branch; nor the stream the cause of the spring, but the spring the cause of the stream. Good works suppose grace, and a good and right habit in the person, as rational acts suppose reason. Can any man say that the rational acts man performs after his creation were a cause why God created him? This would make creation, and everything else, not so much an act of his will, as an act of his understanding. God foresaw no rational act in man, before the act of his will to give him reason; nor foresees faith in any, before the act of his will determining to give him faith: "Faith is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). In the salvation which grows up from this first purpose of God, he regards not the works we have done, as a principal motive to settle the top-stone of our happiness, but his own purpose, and the grace given in Christ; "who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ, before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9). The honor of our salvation cannot be challenged by our works, much less the honor of the foundation of it. It was a pure gift of grace, without any respect to any spiritual, much less natural, perfection. Why should the apostle mention that circumstance, when he speaks of God's loving Jacob, and hating Esau, "when neither of them had done good or evil" (Rom. 9:11), if there were any foresight of men's works as the moving cause of his love or hatred? God regarded not the works of either as the first cause of his choice, but acted by his own liberty, without respect to any of their actions which were to be done by them in time. If faith be the fruit of election, the prescience of faith doth not influence the electing act of God. It is called "the faith of God's elect" (Tit. 1:1): "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect;" *i. e.* settled in this office to bring the elect of God to faith. If men be chosen by God upon the foresight of faith, or not chosen till they have faith, they are not so much God's elect, as God their elect; they choose God by faith, before God chooseth them by love: it had not been the faith of God's elect, *i. e.* of those already chosen, but the faith of those that were to be chosen by God afterwards. Election is the cause of faith, and not faith the cause of election; fire is the cause of heat, and not the heat of fire; the sun is the cause of the day, and not the day the cause of the rising of the sun. Men are not chosen because they believe, but they believe because they are chosen: the apostle did ill, else, to

appropriate that to the elect which they had no more interest in, by virtue of their election, than the veriest reprobate in the world. If the foresight of what works might be done by his creatures was the motive of his choosing them, why did he not choose the devils to redemption, who could have done him better service, by the strength of their nature, than the whole mass of Adam's posterity? Well, then, there is no possible way to lay the original foundation of this act of election and preterition in anything but the absolute sovereignty of God. Justice or injustice comes not into consideration in this case. There is no debt which justice or injustice always respects in its acting: if he had pleased, he might have chosen all; if he had pleased, he might have chosen none. It was in his supreme power to have resolved to have left all Adam's posterity under the rack of his justice; if he determined to snatch out any, it was a part of his dominion, but without any injury to the creatures he leaves under their own guilt. Did he not pass by the angels, and take man? and, by the same right of dominion, may he pick out some men from the common mass, and lay aside others to bear the punishment of their crimes. Are they not all his subjects? all are his criminals, and may be dealt with at the pleasure of their undoubted Lord and Sovereign. This is a work of arbitrary power; since he might have chosen none, or chosen all, as he saw good himself. It is at the liberty of the artificer to determine his wood or stone to such a figure, that of a prince, or that of a toad; and his materials have no right to complain of him, since it lies wholly upon his own liberty. They must have little sense of their own vileness, and God's infinite excellency above them by right of creation, that will contend that God hath a lesser right over his creatures than an artificer over his wood or stone. If it were at his liberty whether to redeem man, or send Christ upon such an undertaking, it is as much at his liberty, and the prerogative is to be allowed him, what person he will resolve to make capable of enjoying the fruits of that redemption. One man was as fit a subject for mercy as another, as they all lay in their original guilt: why would not Divine mercy cast its eye upon this man, as well as upon his neighbor?

There was no cause in the creature, but all in God; it must be resolved into his own will: yet not into a will without wisdom. God did not choose hand over head, and act by mere will, without reason and understanding; an Infinite Wisdom is far from such a kind of

procedure; but the reason of God is inscrutable to us, unless we could understand God as well as he understands himself; the whole ground lies in God himself, no part of it in the creature; “not in him that wills, nor in him that runs, but in God that shows mercy” (Rom. 9:15, 16). Since God hath revealed no other cause than his will, we can resolve it into no other than his sovereign empire over all creatures. It is not without a stop to our curiosity, that in the same place where God asserts the absolute sovereignty of his mercy to Moses, he tells him he could not see his face: “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious;” and he said, “Thou canst not see my face” (Exod. 33:19, 20): the rays of his infinite wisdom are too bright and dazzling for our weakness. The apostle acknowledged not only a wisdom in this proceeding, but a riches and treasure of wisdom; not only that, but a depth and vastness of those riches of wisdom; but was unable to give us an inventory and scheme of it (Rom. 11:33). The secrets of his counsels are too deep for us to wade into; in attempting to know the reason of those acts, we should find ourselves swallowed up into a bottomless gulf: though the understanding be above our capacity, yet the admiration of his authority and submission to it are not. “We should cast ourselves down at his feet, with a full resignation of ourselves to his sovereign pleasure.” This is a more comely carriage in a Christian than all the contentious endeavors to measure God by our line.

2. In bestowing grace where he pleases. God in conversion and pardon works not as a natural agent, putting forth strength to the utmost, which God must do, if he did renew man naturally, as the sun shines, and the fire burns, which always act, *ad extremum virium*, unless a cloud interpose to eclipse the one, and water to extinguish the other. But God acts as a voluntary agent, which can freely exert his power when he please, and suspend it when he please. Though God be necessarily good, yet he is not necessitated to manifest all the treasures of his goodness to every subject; he hath power to distil his dews upon one part, and not upon another. If he were necessitated to express his goodness without a liberty, no thanks were due to him. Who thanks the sun for shining on him, or the fire for warming him? None; because they are necessary agents, and can do no other. What is the reason he did not reach out his hand to keep all the angels from sinking, as well as some, or recover them when they were sunk? What is the reason he engrafts one man

into the true Vine, and lets the other remain a wild olive? Why is not the efficacy of the Spirit always linked with the motions of the Spirit? Why does he not mould the heart into a gospel frame when he fills the ear with a gospel sound? Why doth he strike off the chains from some, arid tear the veil from the heart, while he leaves others under their natural slavery and Egyptian darkness? Why do some lie under the bands of death, while another is raised to a spiritual life? What reason is there for all this but his absolute will? The apostle resolves the question, if the question be asked, why he begets one and not another? Not from the will of the creature, but “his own will,” is the determination of one (James 2:18).

Why doth he work in one “to will and to do,” and not in another? Because of “his good pleasure,” is the answer of another (Phil. 2:13). He could as well new create every one, as he at first created them, and make grace as universal as nature and reason, but it is not his pleasure so to do.

(1.) It is not from want of strength in himself. The power of God is unquestionably able to strike off the chains of unbelief from all; he could surmount the obstinacy of every child of wrath, and inspire every son of Adam with faith as well as Adam himself. He wants not a virtue superior to the greatest resistance of his creature; a victorious beam of light might be shot into their understandings, and a flood of grace might overspread their wills with one word of his mouth, without putting forth the utmost of his power.

What hindrance could there be in any created spirit, which cannot be easily pierced into and new moulded by the Father of spirits? Yet he only breathes this efficacious virtue into some, and leaves others under that insensibility and hardness which they love, and suffer them to continue in their benighting ignorance, and consume themselves in the embraces of their dear, though deceitful Delilahs. He could have conquered the resistance of the Jews, as well as chased away the darkness and ignorance of the Gentiles. No doubt but he could overpower the heart of the most malicious devil, as well as that of the simplest and weakest man. But the breath of the Almighty Spirit is in his own power, to breathe “where he lists” (John 3:8). It is at his liberty whether he will give to any the feelings of the invincible efficacy of his grace; he did not want strength to have kept man as firm as a rock against the temptation of Satan, and

poured in such fortifying grace, as to have made him impregnable against the powers of hell, as well as he did secure the standing of the angels against the sedition of their fellows: but it was his will to permit it to be otherwise.

(2.) Nor is it from any prerogative in the creature. He converts not any for their natural perfection, because he seizeth upon the most ignorant; nor for their moral perfection, because he converts the most sinful; nor for their civil perfection, because he turns the most despicable.

[1.] Not for their natural perfection of knowledge. He opened the minds and hearts of the more ignorant. Were the nature of the Gentiles better manured than that of the Jews, or did the tapers of their understandings burn clearer? No; the one were skilled in the prophecies of the Messiah, and might have compared the predictions they owned with the actions and sufferings of Christ, which they were spectators of. He let alone those that had expectations of the Messiah, and expectations about the time of Christ's appearance, both grounded upon the oracles wherewith he had entrusted them. The Gentiles were unacquainted with the prophets, and therefore destitute of the expectations of the Messiah (Eph. 2:12): they were "without Christ," without any revelation of Christ, because "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," without any knowledge of God, or promises of Christ. The Jews might sooner, in a way of reason, have been wrought upon than the Gentiles, who were ignorant of the prophets, by whose writings they might have examined the truth of the apostles' declarations. Thus are they refused that were the kindred of Christ, according to the flesh, and the Gentiles, that were at a greater distance from him, brought in by God; thus he catcheth not at the subtle and mighty devils, who had an original in spiritual nature more like to him, but at weak and simple man.

[2.] Not for any moral perfection, because he converts the most sinful: the Gentiles, steeped in idolatry and superstition. He sowed more faith among the Romans than in Jerusalem; more faith in a city that was the common sewer of all the idolatry of the nations conquered by them, than in that city which had so signally been owned by him, and had not practised any idolatry since the

Babylonish captivity. He planted saintship at Corinth, a place notorious for the infamous worship of Venus, a superstition attended with the grossest uncleanness; at Ephesus, that presented the whole world with a cup of fornication in their temple of Diana; among the Colossians, votaries to Cybele in a manner of worship attended with beastly and lascivious ceremonies. And what character had the Cretians from one of their own poets, mentioned by the apostle to Titus, whom he had placed among them to further the progress of the gospel, but the vilest and most abominable? (Titus 1:12): “liars,” not to be credited; “evil beasts,” not to be associated with; “slow bellies,” fit for no service. What prerogative was there in the nature of such putrefaction? as much as in that of a toad to be elevated to the dignity of an angel. What steam from such dunghills could be welcome to him, and move him to cast his eye on them, and sweeten them from heaven? What treasures of worth were here to open the treasures of his grace! Were such filthy snuffs fit of themselves to be kindled by, and become a lodging for, a gospel beam? What invitements could he have from lying, beastliness, gluttony, but only from his own sovereignty? By this he plucked firebrands out of the fire, while he left straighter and more comely sticks to consume to ashes.

[3.] Not for any civil perfection, because he turns the most despicable. He elevates not nature to grace upon the account of wealth, honor, or any civil station in the world: he dispenseth not ordinarily those treasures to those that the mistaken world foolishly admire and dote upon (1 Cor. 1:26); “Not many mighty, not many noble:” a purple robe is not usually decked with this jewel; he takes more of mouldy clay than refined dust to cast into his image; and lodges his treasures more in the earthly vessels than in the world’s golden ones; he gives out his richest doles to those that are the scorn and reproach of the world. Should he impart his grace most to those that abound in wealth or honor, it had been some foundation for a conception that he had been moved by those vulgarly esteemed excellencies to indulge them more than others. But such a conceit languisheth when we behold the subjects of his grace as void originally of any allurements, as they are full of provocations. Hereby he declares himself free from all created engagements, and that he is not led by any external motives in the object.

[4.] It is not from any obligation which lies upon him. He is indebted to none: disobliged by all. No man deserves from him any act of grace, but every man deserves what the most deplorable are left to suffer. He is obliged by the children of wrath to nothing else but showers of wrath; owes no more a debt to fallen man, than to fallen devils, to restore them to their first station by a superlative grace. How was he more bound to restore them, than he was to preserve them; to catch them after they fell, than to put a bar in the way of their falling? God, as a sovereign, gave laws to men, and a strength sufficient to keep those laws. What obligation is there upon God to repair that strength man wilfully lost, and extract him out of that condition into which he voluntarily plunged himself? What if man sinned by temptation, which is a reason alleged by some, might not many of the devils do so too? Though there was a first of them that sinned without a temptation, yet many of them might be seduced into rebellion by the ringleader. Upon that account he is no more bound to give grace to all men, than to devils. If he promised life upon obedience, he threatened death upon transgression. By man's disobedience God is quit of his promise, and owes nothing but punishment upon the violation of his law. Indeed man may pretend to a claim of sufficient strength from him by creation, as God is the author of nature, and he had it; but since he hath extinguished it by his sin, he cannot in the least pretend any obligation on God for a new strength. If it be a "peradventure" whether he will "give repentance," as it is 2 Tim. 2:25, there is no tie in the case; a tie would put it beyond a peradventure with a God that never forfeited his obligation. No husbandman thinks himself obliged to bestow cost and pains, manure and tillage, upon one field more than another; though the nature of the ground may require more, yet he is at his liberty whether he will expend more upon one than another. He may let it be fallow as long as he please. God is less obliged to till and prune his creatures, than man is obliged to his field or trees. If a king proclaim a pardon to a company of rebels, upon the condition of each of them paying such a sum of money; their estates before were capable of satisfying the condition, but their rebellion hath reduced them to an indigent condition; the proclamation itself is an act of grace, the condition required is not impossible in itself: the prince, out of a tenderness to some, sends them that sum of money, he hath by his proclamation obliged them

to pay, and thereby enabled them to answer the condition he requires; the first be doth by a sovereign authority, the second he doth by a sovereign bounty. He was obliged to neither of them; punishment was a debt due to all of them; if he would remit it upon condition, he did relax his sovereign right; and if he would by his largess make any of them capable to fulfil the condition, by sending them presently a sufficient sum to pay the fine, he acted as proprietor of his own goods, to dispose of them in such a quantity to those to whom he was not obliged to bestow a mite.

[5.] It must therefore be an act of his mere sovereignty. This can only sit arbitrator in every gracious act. Why did he give grace to Abel and not to Cain, since they both lay in the same womb, and equally derived from their parents a taint in their nature; but that he would show a standing example of his sovereignty to the future ages of the world in the first posterity of man? Why did he give grace to Abraham, and separate him from his idolatrous kindred, to dignify him to be the root of the Messiah?

Why did he confine his promise to Isaac, and not extend it to Ishmael, the seed of the same Abraham by Hagar, or to the children he had by Keturah after Sarah's death? What reason can be alleged for this but his sovereign will? Why did he not give the fallen angels a moment of repentance after their sin, but condemned them to irrevocable pains? Is it not as free for him to give grace to whom he please, as create what worlds he please; to form this corrupted clay into his own image, as to take such a parcel of dust from all the rest of the creation whereof to compact Adam's body? Hath he not as much jurisdiction over the sinful mass of his creatures in a new creation, as he had over the chaos in the old? And what reason can be rendered, of his advancing this part of matter to the nobler dignity of a star, and leaving that other part to make up the dark body of the earth; to compact one part into a glorious sun, and another part into a hard rock, but his royal prerogative? What is the reason a prince subjects one malefactor to punishment, and lifts up another to a place of trust and profit? that Pharaoh honored the butler with an attendance on his person, and remitted the baker to the hands of the executioner? It was his pleasure. And is not as great right due to God, as is allowed to the worms of the earth? What is the reason he hardens a Pharaoh, by a denying him that grace which should

mollify him, and allows it to another? It is because he will. "Whom he will he hardens" (Rom. 9:18). Hath not man the liberty to pull up the sluice, and let the water run into what part of the ground he pleases? What is the reason some have not a heart to understand the beauty of his ways? Because the Lord doth not give it them (Deut. 29:4). Why doth he not give all his converts an equal measure of his sanctifying grace? some have mites and some have treasures. Why doth he give his grace to some sooner, to some later? some are inspired in their infancy, others not till a full age, and after; some not till they have fallen into some gross sin, as Paul; some betimes, that they may do him service: others later, as the thief upon the cross, and presently snatcheth them out of the world? Some are weaker, some stronger in nature, some more beautiful and lovely, others more uncomely and sluggish. It is so in supernaturals. What reason is there for this, but his own will? This is instead of all that can be assigned on the part of God. He is the free disposer of his own goods, and as a Father may give a greater portion to one child than to another. And what reason of complaint is there against God? may not a toad complain that God did not make it a man, and give it a portion of reason? or a fly complain that God did not make it an angel, and give it a garment of light; had they but any spark of understanding; as well as man complain that God did not give him grace as well as another? Unless he sincerely desired it, and then was denied it, he might complain of God, though not as a sovereign, yet as a promiser of grace to them that ask it. God doth not render his sovereignty formidable; he shuts not up his throne of grace from any that seek him; he invites man; his arms are open, and the sceptre stretched out; and no man continues under the arrest of his lusts, but he that is unwilling to be otherwise, and such a one hath no reason to complain of God.

3. His sovereignty is manifest in disposing the means of grace to some, not to all. He hath caused the sun to shine bright in one place, while he hath left others benighted and deluded by the devil's oracles. Why do the evangelical dews fall in this or that place, and not in another? Why was the gospel published in Rome so soon, and not in Tartary? Why hath it been extinguished in some places, as soon almost as it had been kindled in them? Why hath one place been honored with the beams of it in one age, and been covered with darkness the next? One country hath been made a sphere for this

star, that directs to Christ, to move in; and afterwards it hath been taken away, and placed in another; sometimes more clearly it hath shone, sometimes more darkly, in the same place; what is the reason of this? It is true something of it may be referred to the justice of God, but much more to the sovereignty of God. That the gospel is published later, and not sooner, the apostle tell us is “according to the commandment of the everlasting God” (Rom. 16:26).

(1.) The means of grace, after the families from Adam became distinct, were never granted to all the world. After that fatal breach in Adam’s family by the death of Abel, and Cain’s separation, we read not of the means of grace continued among Cain’s posterity; it seems to be continued in Adam’s sole family, and not published in societies till the time of Seth. “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord” (Gen. 4:26). It was continued in that family till the deluge, which was 1523 years after the creation, according to some, or 1656 years, according to others. After that, when the world degenerated, it was communicated to Abraham, and settled in the posterity that descended from Jacob; though he left not the world without a witness of himself, and some sprinklings of revelations in other parts, as appears by the Book of Job, and the discourses of his friends.

(2.) The Jews had this privilege granted them above other nations, to have a clearer revelation of God. God separated them from all the world to honor them with the *depositum* of his oracles (Rom. 3:2): “To them were committed the oracles of God.” In which regard all other nations are said to be “without God” (Eph. 2:12), as being destitute of so great a privilege. The Spirit blew in Canaan when the lands about it felt not the saving breath of it. “He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them” (Psalm 147:20). The rest had no warnings from the prophets, no dictates from heaven, but what they had by the light of nature, the view of the works of creation, and the administration of Providence, and what remained among them of some ancient traditions derived from Noah, which, in tract of time, were much defaced. We read but of one Jonah sent to Nineveh, but frequent alarms to the Israelites by a multitude of prophets commissioned by God. It is true, the door of the Jewish church was open to what proselytes would enter themselves, and embrace their religion and

worship; but there was no public proclamation made in the world; only God, by his miracles in their deliverance from Egypt (which could not but be famous among all the neighbor nations), declared them to be a people favored by heaven: but the tradition from Adam and Noah was not publicly revived by God in other parts, and raised from that grave of forgetfulness wherein it had lain so long buried. Was there any reason in them for this indulgence? God might have been as liberal to any other nation, yea, to all the nations in the world, if it had been his sovereign pleasure: any other people were as fit to be entrusted with his oracles, and be subjects for his worship, as that people; yet all other nations, till the rejection of the Jews, because of their rejection of Christ, were strangers from the covenant of promise. These people were part of the common mass of the world: they had no prerogative in nature above Adam's posterity. Were they the extract of an innocent part of his loins, and all the other nations drained out of his putrefaction? Had the blood of Abraham, from whom they were more immediately descended, any more precious tincture than the rest of mankind? They, as well as other nations, were made of "one blood" (Acts 17:26); and that corrupted both in the spring and in the rivulets. Were they better than other nations, when God first drew them out of their slavery? We have Joshua's authority for it, that they had complied with the Egyptian idolatry, "and served other gods," in that place of their servitude (Josh. 24:14). Had they had an abhorrency of the superstition of Egypt, while they remained there, they could not so soon have erected a golden calf for worship in imitation of the Egyptian idols. All the rest of mankind had as inviting reasons to present God with, as those people had. God might have granted the same privilege to all the world, as well as to them, or denied it them, and endowed all the rest of the world with his statutes: but the enriching such a small company of people with his Divine showers, and leaving the rest of the world as a barren wilderness in spirituals, can be placed upon no other account originally than that of his unaccountable sovereignty, of his love to them: there was nothing in them to merit such high titles from God as his first-born, his peculiar treasure, the apple of his eye. He disclaims any righteousness in them, and speaks a word sufficient to damp such thoughts in them, by charging them with their wickedness, while he "loaded them with his benefits" (Deut. 9:4, 6). The Lord "gives thee not" this land

for “thy righteousness;” for thou art a stiff-necked people. It was an act of God’s free pleasure to “choose them to be a people to himself” (Deut. 7:6).

(3.) God afterwards rejected the Jews, gave them up to the hardness of their hearts, and spread the gospel among the Gentiles. He hath cast off the children of the kingdom, those that had been enrolled for his subjects for many ages, who seemed, by their descent from Abraham, to have a right to the privileges of Abraham; and called men from the east and from the west, from the darkest corners in the world, to “sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven,” *i. e.* to partake with them of the promises of the gospel (Matt. 8:11). The people that were accounted accursed by the Jews enjoy the means of grace, which have been hid from those that were once dignified this 1600 years; that they have neither ephod, nor teraphim, nor sacrifice, nor any true worship of God among them (Hos. 3:4). Why he should not give them grace to acknowledge and own the person of the Messiah, to whom he had made the promises of him for so many successive ages, but let their “heart be fat,” and “their ears heavy” (Isa.

6:10)?—why the gospel at length, after the resurrection of Christ, should be presented to the Gentiles, not by chance, but pursuant to the resolution and prediction of God, declared by the prophets that it should be so in time?—why he should let so many hundreds of years pass over, after the world was peopled, and let the nations all that while soak in their idolatrous customs?—why he should not call the Gentiles without rejecting the Jews, and bind them both up together in the bundle of life?—why he should acquaint some people with it a little after the publishing it in Jerusalem, by the descent of the Spirit, and others not a long time after?—some in the first ages of Christianity enjoyed it; others have it not, as those in America, till the last age of the world;—can be referred to nothing but his sovereign pleasure.

What merit can be discovered in the Gentiles? There is something of justice in the case of the Jews’ rejection, nothing but sovereignty in the Gentiles’ reception into the church. If the Jews were bad, the Gentiles were in some sort worse: the Jews owned the one true God, without mixture of idols, though they owned not the Messiah in his appearance, which they did in a promise; but the

Gentiles owned neither the one nor the other. Some tell us, it was for the merit of some of their ancestors. How comes the means of grace, then, to be taken from the Jew, who had (if any people ever had) meritorious ancestors for a plea?

If the merit of some of their former progenitors were the cause, what was the reason the debt due to their merit was not paid to their immediate progeny, or to themselves, but to a posterity so distant from them, and so abominably depraved as the Gentile world was at the day of the gospel-sun striking into their horizon? What merit might be in their ancestors (if any could be supposed in the most refined rubbish), it was so little for themselves, that no oil could be spared out of their lamps for others. What merit their ancestors might have, might be forfeited by the succeeding generations. It is ordinarily seen, that what honor a father deserves in a state for public service, may be lost by the son, forfeited by treason, and himself attainted. Or was it out of a foresight that the Gentiles would embrace it, and the Jews reject it; that the Gentiles would embrace it in one place, and not in another? How did God foresee it, but in his own grace, which he was resolved to display in one, not in another? It must be then still resolved into his sovereign pleasure. Or did he foresee it in their wills and nature? What, were they not all one common dross? Was any part of Adam, by nature, better than another? How did God foresee that which was not, nor could be, without his pleasure to give ability, and grace to receive? Well, then, what reason but the sovereign pleasure of God can be alleged, why Christ forbade the apostles, at their first commission, to preach to the Gentiles (Matt. 10:15), but, at the second and standing commission, orders them to preach to “every creature?” Why did he put a demur to the resolutions of Paul and Timothy, to impart light to Bithynia, or order them to go into Macedonia? Was that country more worthy upon whom lay a great part of the blood of the world shed in Alexander’s time Acts 16:6, 7, 9, 10)? Why should Corazin and Bethsaida enjoy those means that were not granted to the Tyrians and Sidonians, who might probably have sooner reached out their arms to welcome it (Matt.11:21)? Why should God send the gospel into our island, and cause it to flourish so long here, and not send it, or continue it, in the furthest eastern parts of the world? Why should the very profession of Christianity possess so small a compass of ground in the world, but five parts in thirty, the

Mahometans holding six parts, and the other nineteen overgrown with Paganism, where either the gospel was never planted, or else since rooted up? To whom will you refer this, but to the same cause our Saviour doth the revelation of the gospel to babes, and not to the wise— even to his Father? “For so it seemed good in thy sight” (Matt. 11:25, 26); “For so was thy good pleasure before thee” (as in the original); it is at his pleasure whether he will give any a clear revelation of his gospel, or leave them only to the light of nature. He could have kept up the first beam of the gospel in the promise in all nations among the apostasies of Adam’s posterity, or renewed it in all nations when it began to be darkened, as well as he first published it to Adam after his fall; but it was his sovereign pleasure to permit it to be obscured in one place, and to keep it lighted in another.

4. His sovereignty is manifest in the various influences of the means of grace. He saith to these waters of the sanctuary, as to the floods of the sea, “Hitherto you shall go, and no further.” Sometimes they wash away the filth of the flesh and outward man, but not that of the spirit; the gospel spiritualizeth some, and only moralizeth others; some are by the power of it struck down to conviction, but not raised up to conversion; some have only the gleams of it in their consciences, and others more powerful flashes; some remain in their thick darkness under the beaming of the gospel every day in their face, and after a long insensibleness are roused by its light and warmth; sometimes there is such a powerful breath in it, that it levels the haughty imaginations of men, and lays them at its feet that before strutted against it in the pride of their heart. The foundation of this is not in the gospel itself, which is always the same, nor in the ordinances, which are channels as sound at one time as at another, but Divine sovereignty that spirits them as he pleaseth, and “blows when and where it lists.” It has sometimes conquered its thousands (Acts 2:41); at another time scarce its tens; sometimes the harvest hath been great, when the laborers have been but few; at another time it hath been small, when the laborers have been many; sometimes whole sheaves; at another time scarce gleanings. The evangelical net hath been sometimes full at a cast, and at every cast; at another time many have labored all night, and day too, and caught nothing (Acts 2:47): “The Lord added to the church daily.” The gospel chariot doth not always return with captives chained to

the sides of it, but sometimes blurred and reproached, wearing the marks of hell's spite, instead of imprinting the marks of its own beauty. In Corinth it triumphed over many people (Acts 18:10); in Athens it is mocked, and gathers but a few clusters (Acts 17:32, 34). God keeps the key of the heart, as well as of the womb.

The apostles had a power of publishing the gospel, and working miracles, but under the Divine conduct; it was an instrumentality *durante bene placito*, and as God saw it convenient. Miracles were not upon every occasion allowed to them to be wrought, nor success upon every administration granted to them; God sometimes lent them the key, but to take out no more treasure than was allotted to them. There is a variety in the time of gospel operation; some rise out of their graves of sin, and beds of sluggishness, at the first appearance of this sun; others lie snorting longer. Why doth not God spirit it at one season as well as at another, but set his distinct periods of time, but because he will show his absolute freedom? And do we not sometimes experiment that after the most solemn preparations of the heart, we are frustrated of those incomes we expected? Perhaps it was because we thought Divine returns were due to our preparations, and God stops up the channel, and we return drier than we came, that God may confute our false opinion, and preserve the honor of his own sovereignty. Sometimes we leap with John Baptist in the womb at the appearance of Christ; sometimes we lie upon a lazy bed when he knocks from heaven; sometimes the fleece is dry, and sometimes wet, and God withholds to drop down his dew of the morning upon it. The dews of his word, as well as the droppings of the clouds, belong to his royalty; light will not shine into the heart, though it shine round about us, without the sovereign order of that God "who commanded light to shine out of the darkness" of the chaos (2 Cor. 4:6). And is it not seen also in regard of the refreshing influences of the word? sometimes the strongest arguments, and clearest promises, prevail nothing towards the quelling black and despairing imaginations; when, afterwards, we have found them frightened away by an unexpected word, that seemed to have less virtue in it itself than any that passed in vain before it. The reasonings of wisdom have dropped down like arrows against a brazen wall, when the speech of a weaker person hath found an efficacy. It is God by his sovereignty spirits one word and not another; sometimes a secret word comes in, which was not thought

of before, as dropped from heaven, and gives a refreshing, when emptiness was found in all the rest. One word from the lips of a sovereign prince is a greater cordial than all the harangues of subjects without it; what is the reason of this variety, but that God would increase the proofs of his own sovereignty? that as it was a part of his dominion to create the beauty of a world, so it is no less to create the peace as well as the grace of the heart (Isa.

57:19): “I create the fruit of the lips, peace.” Let us learn from hence to have adoring thoughts of, not murmuring fancies against, the sovereignty of God; to acknowledge it with thankfulness in what we have; to implore it with a holy submission in what we want. To own God as a sovereign in a way of dependence, is the way to be owned by him as subjects in a way of favor.

5. His sovereignty is manifested in giving a greater measure of knowledge to some than to others. What parts, gifts, excellency of nature, any have above others, are God’s donative; “He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan. 2:21); wisdom, the habit, and knowledge, the right use of it, in discerning the right nature of objects, and the fitness of means conducing to the end; all is but a beam of Divine light; and the different degrees of knowledge in one man above another, are the effects of his sovereign pleasure. He enlightens not the minds of all men to know every part of his will; one “eats with a doubtful conscience,” another in “faith,” without any staggering (Rom. 14:2). Peter had a desire to keep up circumcision, not fully understanding the mind of God in the abolition of the Jewish ceremonies; while Paul was clear in the truth of that doctrine. A thought comes into our mind that, like a sunbeam, makes a Scripture truth visible in a moment, which before we were poring upon without any success; this is from his pleasure. One in the primitive times had the gift of knowledge, another of wisdom, one the gift of prophecy, another of tongues, one the gift of healing, another that of discerning spirits; why this gift to one man, and not to another? Why such a distribution in several subjects? Because it is his sovereign pleasure. “The Spirit divides to every man severally as he will” (1 Cor. 12:11). Why doth he give Bezaleel and Aholiab the gift of engraving, and making curious works for the tabernacle (Exod. 31:3), and not others? Why doth he bestow the treasures of

evangelical knowledge upon the meanest of earthen vessels, the poor Galileans, and neglect the Pharisees, stored with the knowledge both of naturals and morals? Why did he give to some, and not to others, “to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven?” (Matt. 13:11.) The reason is implied in the words, “Because it was the mystery of his kingdom,” and therefore was the act of his sovereignty. How would it be a kingdom and monarchy if the governor of it were bound to do what he did? It is to be resolved only into the sovereign right of propriety of his own goods, that he furnisheth babes with a stock of knowledge, and leaves the wise and prudent empty of it (Matt. 11:26): “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Why did he not reveal his mind to Eli, a grown man, and in the highest office in the Jewish church, but open it to Samuel, a stripling? why did the Lord go from the one to the other? Because his motion depends upon his own will. Some are of so dull a constitution, that they are incapable of any impression, like rocks too hard for a stamp; others like water; you may stamp what you please, but it vanisheth as soon as the seal is removed. It is God forms men as he pleaseth: some have parts to govern a kingdom, others scarce brains to conduct their own affairs; one is fit to rule men, and another scarce fit to keep swine; some have capacious souls in crazy and deformed bodies, others contracted spirits and heavier minds in a richer and more beautiful case. Why are not all stones alike? some have a more sparkling light, as gems, more orient than pebbles;—some are stars of first, and others of a less magnitude; others as mean as glow-worms, a slimy lustre:—it is because he is the sovereign Disposer of what belongs to him; and gives here, as well as at the resurrection, to one “a glory of the sun;” to another that of the “moon;” and to a third a less, resembling that of a “star” (1 Cor. 15:40). And this God may do by the same right of dominion, as he exercised when he endowed some kinds of creatures with a greater perfection than others in their nature. Why may he not as well garnish one man with a greater proportion of gifts, as make a man differ in excellency from the nature of a beast? or frame angels to a more purely spiritual nature than a man? or make one angel a cherubim or seraphim, with a greater measure of light than another? Though the foundation of this is his dominion, yet his wisdom is not uninterested in his sovereign disposal; he garnisheth those with a greater ability whom he intends for greater service, than those that

he intends for less, or none at all; as an artificer bestows more labor, and carves a more excellent figure upon those stones that he designs for a more honorable place in the building. But though the intending this or that man for service be the motive of laying in a greater provision in him than in others, yet still it is to be referred to his sovereignty, since that first act of culling him out for such an end was the fruit solely of his sovereign pleasure: as when he resolved to make a creature actively to glorify him, in wisdom he must give him reason; yet the making such a creature was an act of his absolute dominion.

6. His sovereignty is manifest in the calling some to a more special service in their generation. God settles some in immediate offices of his service, and perpetuates them in those offices, with a neglect of others, who seem to have a greater pretence to them. Moses was a great sufferer for Israel, the solicitor for them in Egypt, and the conductor of them from Egypt to Canaan; yet he was not chosen to the high priesthood, but that was an office settled upon Aaron, and his posterity after him, in a lineal descent; Moses was only pitched upon for the present rescue of the captived Israelites, and to be the instrument of Divine miracles; but notwithstanding all the success he had in his conduct, his faithfulness in his employment, and the transcendent familiarity he had with the great Ruler of the world, his posterity were left in the common level of the tribe of Levi, without any special mark of dignity upon them above the rest for all the services of that great man. Why Moses for a temporary magistrate, Aaron for a perpetual priesthood, above all the rest of the Israelites? hath little reason but the absolute pleasure of God, who distributes his employments as he pleaseth; and as a master orders his servant to do the noblest work, and another to labor in baser offices, according to his pleasure. Why doth he call out David, a shepherd, to sway the Jewish sceptre, above the rest of the brothers, that had a fairer appearance, and had been bred in arms, and inured to the toils and watchings of a camp? Why should Mary be the mother of Christ, and not some other of the same family of David, of a more splendid birth, and a nobler education? Though some other reasons may be rendered, yet that which affords the greatest acquiescence, is the sovereign will of God. Why did Christ choose out of the meanest of the people the twelve apostles, to be heralds of his grace in Judea, and other parts of the world; and

afterwards select Paul before Gamaliel, his instructor, and others of the Jews, as learned as himself, and advance him to be the most eminent apostle, above the heads of those who had ministered to Christ in the days of his flesh? Why should he preserve eleven of those he first called to propagate and enlarge his kingdom, and leave the other to the employment of shedding his blood? Why, in the times of our reformation, he should choose a Luther out of a monastery, and leave others in their superstitious nastiness, to perish in the traditions of their fathers? Why set up Calvin, as a bulwark of the gospel, and let others as learned as himself wallow in the sink of popery? It is his pleasure to do so. The potter hath power to separate this part of the clay to form a vessel for a more public use, and another part of the clay to form a vessel for a more private one. God takes the meanest clay to form the most excellent and honorable vessels in his house. As he formed man, that was to govern the creatures of the same clay and earth whereof the beasts were formed, and not of that nobler element of water, which gave birth to the fish and birds: so he forms some, that are to do him the greatest service, of the meanest materials, to manifest the absolute right of his dominion.

7. His sovereignty is manifest in the bestowing much wealth and honor upon some, and not vouchsafing it to the more industrious labors and attempts of others. Some are abased, and others are elevated; some are enriched, and others impoverished; some scarce feel any cross, and others scarce feel any comfort in their whole lives; some sweat and toil, and what they labor for runs out of their reach; others sit still, and what they wish for falls into their lap. One of the same clay hath a diadem to beautify his head, and another wants a covering to protect him from the weather. One hath a stately palace to lodge in, and another is scarce master of a cottage where to lay his head. A sceptre is put into one man's hand, and a spade into another's; a rich purple garnisheth one man's body, while another wraps himself in dunghill rags. The poverty of some, and the wealth of others, is an effect of the Divine sovereignty, whence God is said to be the Maker of the "poor as well as the rich" (Prov. 22:2), not only of their persons, but of their conditions. The earth, and the fulness thereof, is his propriety; and he hath as much a right as Joseph had to bestow changes of raiment upon what Benjamins he please. There is an election to a greater degree of worldly felicity, as

there is an election of some to a greater degree of supernatural grace and glory: as he makes it “rain upon one city, and not upon another” (Amos 4:7), so he causeth prosperity to distil upon the head of one and not upon another; crowning some with earthly blessings, while he crosseth others with continual afflictions: for he speaks of himself as a great proprietor of the corn that nourisheth us, and the wine that cheers us, and the wood that warm us (Hos. 2:8, 9): “I will take away,”

not your corn and wine, but “my corn, my wine, my wool.” His right to dispose of the goods of every particular person is unquestionable. He can take away from one, and pass over the propriety to another. Thus he devolved the right of the Egyptian jewels to the Israelites, and bestowed upon the captives what before he had vouchsafed to the oppressors; as every sovereign state demands the goods of their subjects for the public advantage in a case of exigency, though none of that wealth was gained by any public office, but by their private industry, and gained in a country not subject to the dominion of those that require a portion of them. By this right he changes strangely the scene of the world; sometimes those that are high are reduced to a mean and ignominious condition, those that are mean are advanced to a state of plenty and glory. The counter, which in accounting signifies now but a penny, is presently raised up to signify a pound. The proud ladies of Israel, instead of a girdle of curious needlework, are brought to make use of a cord; as the vulgar translates *rent*, a rag, or list of cloth (Isa. 3:24), and sackcloth for a stomacher instead of silk. This is the sovereign act of God, as he is Lord of the world (Psalm 75:6, 7): “Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but God is the Judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” He doth no wrong to any man, if he lets him languish out his days in poverty and disgrace: if he gives or takes away, he meddles with nothing but what is his own more than ours: if he did dispense his benefits equally to all, men would soon think it their due. The inequality and changes preserve the notion of God’s sovereignty, and correct our natural unmindfulness of it. If there were no changes, God would not be feared as the “King of all the earth” (Psalm 55:19): to this might also be referred his investing some countries with greater riches in their bowels, and on the surface; the disposing some of the fruitful and pleasant regions of Canaan or

Italy, while he settles others in the icy and barren parts of the northern climates.

8. His sovereignty is manifest in the times and seasons of dispensing his goods. He is Lord of the times when, as well as of the goods which, he doth dispose of to any person; these “the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:7). As it was his sovereign pleasure to restore the kingdom to Israel, so he would pitch upon the time when to do it, and would not have his right invaded, so much as by a question out of curiosity. This disposing of opportunities, in many things, can be referred to nothing else but his sovereign pleasure. Why should Christ come at the twilight and evening of the world? at the fulness, and not at the beginning, of time? Why should he be from the infancy of the world so long wrapt up in a promise, and not appear in the flesh till the last times and gray hairs of the world, when so many persons, in all nations, had been hurried out of the world without any notice of such a Redeemer? What was this but his sovereign will? Why the Gentiles should be left so long in the devil’s chains, wallowing in the sink of their abominable superstitions, since God had declared his intention by the prophets to call multitudes of them, and reject the Jews;—why he should defer it so long, can be referred to nothing but the same cause. What is the reason the veil continues so long upon the heart of the Jews, that is promised, one time or other, to be taken off? Why doth God delay the accomplishment of those glorious predictions of the happiness and interest of that people? Is it because of the sin of their ancestors, —a reason that cannot bear much weight? If we cast it upon that account, their conversion can never be expected, can never be effected; if for the sins of their ancestors, is it not also for their own sins? Do their sins grow less in number, or less venomous, or provoking in quality, by this delay? Is not their blasphemy of Christ as malicious, their hatred of him as strong and rooted, as ever? Do they not as much approve of the bloody act of their ancestors, since so many ages are past, as their ancestors did applaud it at the time of the execution? are they not the same disposition and will, discovered sufficiently by the scorn of Christ, and of those that profess his name, to act the same thing over again, were Christ now in the same state in the world, and they invested with the same power of government? If their conversion were deferred one age after the death of Christ for the sins of their preceding ancestors, is it to be

expected now; since the present generation of the Jews in all countries have the sins of those remote, the succeeding, and their more immediate ancestors, lying upon them? This, therefore, cannot be the reason; but as it was the sovereign pleasure of God to foretell his intention to overcome the stoutness of their hearts, so it is his sovereign pleasure that it shall not be performed till the “fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom.

11:25). As he is the Lord of his own grace, so he is the Lord of the time when to dispense it. Why did God create the world in six days, which he could have erected and beautified in a moment? Because it was his pleasure so to do. Why did he frame the world when he did, and not many ages before? Because he is Master of his own work. Why did he not resolve to bring Israel to the fruition of Canaan till after four hundred years? Why did he draw out their deliverance to so long time after he began to attempt it? Why such a multitude of plagues upon Pharaoh to work it, when he could have cut short the work by one mortal blow upon the tyrant and his accomplices? It was his sovereign pleasure to act so, though not without other reasons intelligible enough by looking into the story. Why doth he not bring man to a perfection of stature in a moment after his birth, but let him continue in a tedious infancy, in a semblance to beasts, for the want of an exercise of reason? Why doth he not bring this or that man, whom he intends for service, to a fitness in an instant, but by long tracts of study, and through many meanders and labyrinths? Why doth he transplant a hopeful person in his youth to the pleasures of another world, and let another, of an eminent holiness, continue in the misery of this, and wade through many floods of afflictions? What can we chiefly refer all these things to but his sovereign pleasure? The “times are determined by God” (Acts 17:26).

Thirdly. The dominion of God is manifested as a governor, as well as a lawgiver and proprietor.

1. In disposing of states and kingdoms. (Psalm 75:7): “God is Judge; he puts down one, and sets up another.” “Judge” is to be taken not in the same sense that we commonly use the word, for a judicial minister in a way of trial, but for a governor; as you know the extraordinary governors raised up among the Jews were called judges, whence one entire book in the Old Testament is so

denominated, the Book of Judges. God hath a prerogative to “change times and seasons” (Dan. 2:21), *i. e.* the revolutions of government, whereby times are altered. How many empires, that have spread their wings over a great part of the world, have had their carcasses torn in pieces; and unheard-of nations plucked off the wings of the Roman eagle, after it had preyed upon many nations of the world; and the Macedonian empire was as the dew that is dried up a short time after it falls. He erected the Chaldean monarchy, used Nebuchadnezzar to overthrow and punish the ungrateful Jews, and, by a sovereign act, gave a great parcel of land into his hands; and what he thought was his right by conquest, was God’s donative to him. You may read the charter to Nebuchadnezzar, whom he terms his servant (Jer. 27:6): “And now I have given all those lands” (the lands are mentioned ver. 3), “into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant:” which decree he pronounceth after his asserting his right of sovereignty over the whole earth (ver. 5).

After that, he puts a period to the Chaldean empire, and by the same sovereign authority decrees Babylon to be a spoil to the nations of the north country, and delivers her up as a spoil to the Persian (Jer. 1:9, 10): and this for the manifestation of his sovereign dominion, that he was the Lord, that made peace, and created evil (Isa. 45:6, 7). God afterwards overthrows that by the Grecian Alexander, prophesied of under the figure of a goat, with “one horn between his eyes” (Dan. 8.): the swift current of his victories, as swift as his motion, showed it to be from an extraordinary hand of heaven, and not either from the policy or strength of the Macedonian. His strength, in the prophet, is described to be less, being but one horn running against the Persian, described under the figure of a ram with two horns: and himself acknowledged a Divine motion exciting him to that great attempt, when he saw Joddus, the high-priest, coming out in his priestly robes, to meet him at his approach to Jerusalem, whom he was about to worship, acknowledging that the vision which put him upon the Persian war appeared to him in such a garb. What was the reason Israel was rent from Judah, and both split into two distinct kingdoms? Because Rehoboam would not hearken to sober and sound counsels, but follow the advice of upstarts. What was the reason he did not hearken to sound advice, since he had so advantageous an education

under his father Solomon, the wisest prince of the world? “The cause was from the Lord” (1 Kings 12:15), that he might perform what he had before spoke. In this he acted according to his royal word; but, in the first resolve, he acted as a sovereign lord, that had the disposal of all nations in the world. And though Ahab had a numerous posterity, seventy sons to inherit the throne after him, yet God by his sovereign authority gives them up into the hands of Jehu, who strips them of their lives and hopes together: not a man of them succeeded in the throne, but the crown is transferred to Jehu by God’s disposal. In wars, whereby flourishing kingdoms are overthrown, God hath the chief hand; in reference to which it is observed that , in the two prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, God is called “the Lord of Hosts” one hundred and thirty times. It is not the sword of the captain, but the sword of the Lord bears the first rank; “the sword of the Lord and of Gideon” (Judges 7:18). The sword of a conquerer is the sword of the Lord, and receives its charge and commission from the great Sovereign (Jer. 47:6, 7). We are apt to confine our thoughts to second causes, lay the fault upon the miscarriages of persons, the ambition of the one, and the covetousness of another, and regard them not as the effects of God’s sovereign authority, linking second causes together to serve his own purpose. The skill of one man may lay open the folly of a counsellor; an earthly force may break in pieces the power of a mighty prince: but Job, in his consideration of those things, refers the matter higher: “He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle” (Job 12:18). “He looseth the bonds of kings,” *i. e.* takes off the yokes they lay upon their subjects, “and girds their loins with a girdle” (a *cord*, as the vulgar); he lays upon them those fetters they framed for others; such a girdle, or band, as is the mark of captivity, as the words, ver. 19, confirm it: “He leads princes away spoiled, and overthrows the mighty.” God lifts up some to a great height, and casts down others to a disgraceful ruin.

All those changes in the face of the world, the revolutions of empires, the desolating and ravaging wars, which are often immediately the birth of the vice, ambition, and fury of princes, are the royal acts of God as Governor of the world. All government belongs to him; he is the Fountain of all the great and the petty dominions in the world; and, therefore, may place in them what substitutes and vicegerents he pleaseth, as a prince may remove his

officers at pleasure, and take their commissions from them. The highest are settled by God *durante bene placito*, and not *quamdiu bene se gesserint*. Those princes that have been the glory of their country have swayed the sceptre but a short time, when the more wolvisish ones have remained longer in commission, as God hath seen fit for the ends of his own sovereign government. Now, by the revolutions in the world, and changes in governors and government, God keeps up the acknowledgment of his sovereignty, when he doth arrest grand and public offenders that wear a crown by his providence, and employ it, by their pride, against him that placed it there. When he arraigns such by a signal hand from heaven, he makes them the public examples of the rights of his sovereignty, declaring thereby, that the cedars of Lebanon are as much at his foot, as the shrubs of the valley; that he hath as sovereign an authority over the throne in the palace, as over the stool in the cottage.

2. The dominion of God is manifested in raising up and ordering the spirits of men according to his pleasure. He doth, as the Father of spirits, communicate an influence to the spirits of men, as well as an existence; he puts what inclinations he pleaseth into the will, stores it with what habits he please, whether natural or supernatural, whereby it may be rendered more ready to act according to the Divine purpose. The will of man is a finite principle, and therefore subject to Him who hath an infinite sovereignty over all things; and God, having a sovereignty over the will, in the manner of its acting, causeth it to will what he wills, as to the outward act, and the outward manner of performing it. There are many examples of this part of his sovereignty. God, by his sovereign conduct, ordered Moses a protectoress as soon as his parents had formed an “ark of bulrushes,” wherein to set him floating on the river (Exod. 2:3–6): they expose him to the waves, and the waves expose him to the view of Pharoah’s daughter, whom God, by his secret ordering her motion, had posted in that place; and though she was the daughter of a prince that inveterately hated the whole nation, and had, by various arts, endeavored to extirpate them, yet God inspires the royal lady with sentiments of compassion to the forlorn infant, though she knew him to be one of the Hebrews’ children (ver. 6), *i. e.* one of that race whom her father had devoted to the hands of the executioner; yet God, that doth by his

sovereignty rule over the spirits of all men, moves her to take that infant into her protection, and nourish him at her own charge, give him a liberal education, adopt him as her son, who, in time, was to be the ruin of her race, and the saviour of his nation. Thus he appointed Cyrus to be his shepherd, and gave him a pastoral spirit for the restoration of the city and temple of Jerusalem (Isa. 44:28): and Isaiah (chap. 45:5) tells them, in the prophecy, that he had girded him, though Cyrus had not known him, *i. e.* God had given him a military spirit and strength for so great an attempt, though he did not know that he was acted by God for those divine purposes. And when the time came for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt, the spirits of the people were raised up, not by themselves, but by God (Ezra 1:5), “Whose spirit God had raised to go up;” and not only the spirit of Zerubbabel, the magistrate, and of Joshua, the priest, but the spirit of all the people, from the highest to the meanest that attended him, were acted by God to strengthen their hands, and promote the work (Hag. 1:14). The spirits of men, even in those works which are naturally desirable to them, as the restoration of the city and rebuilding of the Temple was to those Jews, are acted by God, as the Sovereign over them, much more when the wheels of men’s spirits are lifted up above their ordinary temper and motion. It was this empire of God good Nehemiah regarded, as that whence he was to hope for success; he did not assure himself so much of, it, from the favor he had with the king, nor the reasonableness of his intended petition, but the absolute power God had over the heart of that great monarch; and, therefore, he supplicates the heavenly, before he petitioned the earthly, throne (Neh. 2:4): “So I prayed to the God of heaven.” The heathens had some glance of this; it is an expression that Cicero hath somewhere, “That the Roman commonwealth was rather governed by the assistance of the Supreme Divinity over the hearts of men, than by their own counsels and management.” How often hath the feeble courage of men been heightened to such a pitch as to stare death in the face, which before were damped with the least thought or glance of it! This is a fruit of God’s sovereign dominion.

3. The dominion of God is manifest in restraining the furious passions of men, and putting a block in their way. Sometimes God doth it by a remarkable hand, as the Babel builders were diverted from their proud design by a sudden confusion of their language,

and rendering it unintelligible to one another; sometimes by ordinary, though unexpected, means; as when Saul, like a hawk, was ready to prey upon David, whom he had hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, he had another object presented for his arms and fury by the Philistines' sudden invasion of a part of his territory (1 Sam. 23:26–28). But it is chiefly seen by an inward curbing mutinous affections, when there is no visible cause. What reason but this can be rendered, why the nations bordering on Canaan, who bore no good will to the Jews, but rather wished the whole race of them rooted out from the face of the earth, should not invade their country, pillage their houses, and plunder their cattle, while they were left naked of any human defence, the males being annually employed at one time at Jerusalem in worship; what reason can be rendered, but an invisible curb God put into their spirits? What was the reason not a man, of all the buyers and sellers in the Temple, should rise against our Saviour, when, with a high hand, he began to whip them out, but a Divine bridle upon them? though it appears, by the questioning his authority, that there were Jews enough to have chased out him and his company (John 2:15, 18). What was the reason that, at the publishing the gospel by the apostles at the first descent of the Spirit, those that had used the Master so barbarously a few days before, were not all in a foam against the servants, that, by preaching that doctrine, upbraided them with the late murder? Had they better sentiments of the Lord, whom they had put to death? Were their natures grown tamer, and their malignity expelled? No; but that Sovereign who had loosed the reins of their malicious corruption, to execute the Master for the purchase of redemption, curbed it from breaking out against the servants, to further the propagation of the doctrine of redemption. He that restrains the roaring lion of hell, restrains also his whelps on earth; he and they must have a commission before they can put forth a finger to hurt, how malicious soever their nature and will be. His empire reaches over the malignity of devils, as well as the nature of beasts. The lions out of the den, as well as those in the den, are bridled by him in favor of his Daniels. His dominion is above that of principalities and powers; their decrees are at his mercy, whether they shall stand or fall; he hath a vote above their stiffest resolves: his single word, *I will*, or, *I forbid*, outweighs the most resolute purposes of all the mighty Nimrods of the earth in their rendezvouses and cabals, in

their associations and counsels (Isa. 8:9, 10): “Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; take counsel together, and it shall come to nought.” “When the enemy shall come in like a flood,” with a violent and irresistible force, intending nothing but ravage and desolation, “the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against them” (Isa.

59:19), shall give a sudden check, and damp their spirits, and put them to a stand. When Laban furiously pursued Jacob, with an intent to do him an ill turn, God gave him a command to do otherwise (Gen.

31:24). Would Laban have respected that command any more than he did the light of nature when he worshipped idols, had not God exercised his authority in inclining his will to observe it, or laying restraints upon his natural inclinations, or denying his concurrence to the acting those ill intentions he had entertained? The stilling the principles of commotion in men, and the noise of the sea, are arguments of the Divine dominion; neither the one nor the other is in the power of the most sovereign prince without Divine assistance: as no prince can command a calm to a raging sea, so no prince can order stillness to a tumultuous people; they are both put together as equally parts of the Divine prerogative (Psalm 65:7), which “still the noise of the sea, and tumult of the people:” and David owns God’s sovereignty more than his own, “in subduing the people under him” (Psalm 18:47). In this his empire is illustrious (Psalm 29:10): “The Lord sitteth upon the floods, yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever;” a King impossible to be deposed, not only on the natural floods of the sea, that would naturally overflow the world, but the metaphorical floods or tumults of the people, the sea in every wicked man’s heart, more apt to rage morally than the sea to foam naturally. If you will take the interpretation of an angel, waters and floods, in the prophetic style, signify the inconstant and mutable people (Rev. 17:1, 5): “The waters where the whore sits are people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues:” so the angel expounds to John the vision which he saw (ver. 1). The heathens acknowledged this part of God’s sovereignty in the inward restraints of men: those apparitions of the gods and goddesses in Homer, to several of the great men when they were in a fury, were nothing else, in the judgment of the wisest philosophers, than an exercise of

God's sovereignty in quelling their passions, checking their uncomely intentions, and controlling them in that which their rage prompted them to. And, indeed, did not God set bounds to the storms in men's hearts, we should soon see the funeral, not only of religion, but civility; the one would be blown out, and the other torn up by the roots.

4. The dominion of God is manifest in defeating the purposes and devices of men. God often makes a mock of human projects, and doth as well accomplish that which they never dreamt of, as disappoint that which they confidently designed. He is present at all cabals, laughs at men's formal and studied counsels, bears a hand over every egg they hatch, thwarts their best compacted designs, supplants their contrivances, breaks the engines they have been many years rearing, diverts the intentions of men, as a mighty wind blows an arrow from the mark which the archer intended. (Job 5:12): "He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise; he taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong." Enemies often draw an exact scheme of their intended proceedings, marshal their companies, appoint their rendezvous, think to make but one morsel of those they hate; God, by his sovereign dominion, turns the scale, changeth the gloominess of the oppressed into a sunshine, and the enemies' sunshine into darkness. When the nations were gathered together against Sion, and said, "Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Sion" (Micah 4:11), what doth God do in this case? (ver. 12), "He shall gather them," *i. e.* those conspiring nations, as "sheaves into the floor." Then he sounds a trumpet to Sion: "Arise, and thresh, O daughter of Sion, for I will make thy horn iron, and thy hoofs brass, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people; and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth." I will make them and their counsels, them and their strength, the monuments and signal marks of my empire over the whole earth. When you see the cunningest designs baffled by some small thing intervening; when you see men of profound wisdom infatuated, mistake their way, and "grope in the noon-day as in the night" (Job 5:14), bewildered in a plain way; when you see the hopes of mighty attempters dashed into despair, their triumphs turned into funerals, and their joyful expectations into sorrowful disappointments; when you see the

weak, devoted to destruction, victorious, and the most presumptuous defeated in their purposes, then read the Divine dominion in the desolation of such devices. How often doth God take away the heart and spirit of grand designs, and burst a mighty wheel, by snatching but one man out of the world! How often doth he “cut off the spirits of princes” (Psalm 76:12), either from the world by death, or from the execution of their projects by some unforeseen interruption, or from favoring those contrivances, which before they cherished by a change of their minds! How often hath confidence in God, and religious prayer, edged the weakest and smallest number of weapons to make a carnage of the carnally confident! How often hath presumption been disappointed, and the contemned enemy rejoice in the spoils of the proud expectant of victory! Phidias made the image of Nemesis, or Revenge, at Marathon, of that marble which the haughty Persians, despising the weakness of the Athenian forces, brought with them, to erect a trophy for an expected, but an unearned, victory. Haman’s neck, by a sudden turn, was in the halter, when the Jews’ necks were designed to the block; Julian designed the overthrow of all the Christians, just before his breast was pierced by an unexpected arrow; the Powder-traitors were all ready to give fire to the mine, when the sovereign hand of Heaven snatched away the match. Thus the great Lord of the world cuts off men on the pinnacle of their designs, when they seem to threaten heaven and earth; puts out the candle of the wicked, which they thought to use to light them to the execution of their purposes; turns their own counsels into a curse to themselves, and a blessing to their adversaries, and makes his greatest enemies contribute to the effecting his purposes. How may we take notice of God’s absolute disposal of things in private affairs, when we see one man, with a small measure of prudence and little industry, have great success, and others, with a greater measure of wisdom, and a greater toil and labor, find their enterprises melt between their fingers! It was Solomon’s observation, “That the race was not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill” (Eccles. 9:11). Many things might interpose to stop the swift in his race, and damp the courage of the most valiant: things do not happen according to men’s abilities, but according to the overruling authority of God: God never yet granted man the dominion of his own way, no more

than to be lord of his own time: “The way of man is not in himself, it is not in him that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). He hath given man a power of acting, but not the sovereignty to command success. He makes even those things which men intended for their security to turn to their ruin; Pilate delivered up Christ to be accounted a friend to Caesar, and Cxsar soon after proves an enemy to him, removes him from his government, and sends him into banishment. The Jews imagined by the crucifying Christ to keep the Roman ensigns at a distance from them, and this hastened their march, by God’s sovereign disposal, which ended in a total desolation. “He makes the judges fools” (Job 22:17), by taking away his light from their understanding, and suffering them to go on in the vanity of their own spirits, that his sovereignty in the management of things may be more apparent; for then he is known to be Lord, when he “snares the wicked in the work of his own hands” (Psalm 9:16). You have seen much of this doctrine in your experience, and, if my judgment fail me not, you will yet see much more.

5. The dominion of God is manifest in sending his judgments upon whom he please. “He kills and makes alive; he wounds and heals” whom he pleaseth: his thunders are his own, and he may cast them upon what subjects he thinks good: he hath a right, in a way of justice, to punish all men; he hath his choice, in a way of sovereignty, to pick out whom he please, to make the examples of it. Might not some nations be as wicked as those of Sodom and Gomorrah, yet have not been scorched with the like dreadful flames? Zoar was untouched, while the other cities, her neighbors, were burnt to ashes. Were there never any places and persons successors in Sodom’s guilt? Yet those only by his sovereign authority are separated by him to be the examples of his “eternal vengeance” (Jude 7). Why are not sinners as Sodom, like as those ancient ones, scalded to death by the like fiery drops? It is because it is his pleasure; and the same reason is to be rendered, why he would in a way of justice cut off the Jews for their sins, and leave the Gentiles untouched in the midst of their idolatries. When the church was consumed because of her iniquities, they acknowledged God’s sovereignty in this. “We are the clay, and thou art our Potter, and we all the work of thy hands” (Isa. 64:7, 8); thou hast a liberty to break or preserve us. Judgments move according to God’s order. When the sword hath a charge against Ashkelon and the sea-shore, thither it

must march, and touch not any other place or person as it goes, though there may be demerit enough for it to punish. When the prophet had spake to the sword, “O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest and be still;” the prophet answers for the sword, “How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon? there hath he appointed it” (Jer. 47:6, 7). If he hath appointed a judgment against London or Westminster, or any other place, there it shall drop, there it shall pierce, and in no other place without a like charge. God, as a sovereign, gives instructions to every judgment, when, and against whom, it shall march, and what cities, what persons, it shall arrest; and he is punctually obeyed by them, as a sovereign Lord. All creatures stand ready for his call, and are prepared to be executioners of his vengeance, when he speaks the word; they are his hosts by creation, and in array for his service at the sound of his trumpet, or beat of his drum, they troop together with arms in their hands, to put his orders exactly in execution.

6. The dominion of God is manifest in appointing to every man his calling and station in the world. If the hairs of every man’s head fall under his sovereign care, the calling of every man, wherein he is to glorify God and serve his generation, which is of a greater concern than the hairs of the head, falls under his dominion. He is the master of the great family, and divides to every one his work as he pleaseth. The whole work of the Messiah, the time of every action, as well as the hour of his passion, was ordered and appointed by God. The separation of Paul to the preaching of the gospel, was by the sovereign disposal of God (Rom. 1:1). By the same exercise of his authority, that he “sets every man the bounds of his habitation” (Acts 17:26), he prescribes also to him the nature of his work. He that ordered Adam, the father of mankind, his work, and the place of it, the “dressing the garden” (Gen. 2:15), doth not let any of his posterity be their own choosers, without an influence of his sovereign direction on them. Though our callings are our work, yet they are by God’s order, wherein we are to be faithful to our great Master and Ruler.

7. The dominion of God is manifest in the means and occasions of men’s conversion. Sometimes one occasion, sometimes another; one word lets a man go, another arrests him, and brings him before

God and his own conscience; it is as God gives out the order. He lets Paul be a prisoner at Jerusalem, that his cause should not be determined there; moves him to appeal to Cwsar, not only to make him a prisoner, but a preacher, in Caesar's court, and render his chains an occasion to bring in a harvest of converts in Nero's palace. His bonds in or for Christ are "manifest in all the palace" (Phil. 1:12, 13); not the bare knowledge of his bonds, but the sovereign design of God in those bonds, and the success of them; the bare knowledge of them would not make others more confident for the gospel, as it follows, ver. 14, without a providential design of them. Onesimus, running from his master, is guided by God's sovereign order into Paul's company, and thereby into Christ's arms; and he who came a fugitive, returns a Christian (Philem. 10, 15). Some, by a strong affliction, have had by the Divine sovereignty their understandings awakened to consider, and their wills spirited to conversion. Monica being called Meribibula, or toss-pot, was brought to consider her way, and reform her life. A word hath done that at one time, which hath often before fallen without any fruit. Many have come to suck in the eloquence of the minister, and have found in the honey for their ears a sting for their consciences. Austin had no other intent in going to hear Ambrose but to have a taste of his famous oratory. But while Ambrose spake a language to his ear, God spake a heavenly dialect to his heart. No reason can be rendered of the order, and timing, and influence of those things, but the sovereign pleasure of God, who will attend one occasion and season with his blessing, and not another.

8. The dominion of God is manifest in disposing of the lives of men. He keeps the key of death, as well as that of the womb, in his own hand; he hath given man a life, but not power to dispose of it, or lay it down at his pleasure; and therefore he hath ordered man not to murder, not another, not himself; man must expect his call and grant, to dispose of the life of his body. Why doth he cut the thread of this man's life, and spin another's out to a longer term? Why doth one die an inglorious death, and another more honorable? One silently drops away in the multitude, while another is made a sacrifice for the honor of God, or the safety of his country. This is a mark of honor he gives to one and not to another. "To you it is given" (Phil. 1:29). The manner of Peter's death was appointed (John 21:19). Why doth a small and slight disease against the rules

of physic, and the judgment of the best practitioners, dislodge one man's soul out of his body, while a greater disease is mastered in another, and discharges the patient, to enjoy himself a longer time in the land of the living? Is it the effect of means so much as of the Sovereign Disposer of all things? If means only did it, the same means would always work the same effect, and sooner master a dwarfish than a giant-like distemper. "Our times are only in God's hands" (Psalm 31:15); either to cut short or continue long. As his sovereignty made the first marriage knot, so he reserves the sole authority to himself to make the divorce.

Fourthly. The dominion of God is manifest in his being a Redeemer, as well as Lawgiver, Proprietor, and Governor. His sovereignty was manifest in the creation, in bestowing upon this or that part of matter a form more excellent than upon another. He was a Lawgiver to men and angels, and prescribed them rules according to the counsel of his own will. These were his creatures, and perfectly at his disposal. But in redemption a sovereignty is exercised over the Son, the Second person in the Trinity, one equal with the Father in essence and works, by whom the worlds were created, and by whom they do consist. The whole gospel is nothing else but a declaration of his sovereign pleasure concerning Christ, and concerning us in him; it is therefore called "the mystery of his will" (Eph. 1:9); the will of God is distinct from the will of Christ, a purpose in himself, not moved thereunto by any; the whole design was framed in the Deity, and as much the purpose of his sovereign will as the contrivance of his immense wisdom. He decreed, in his own leisure, to have the Second Person assume our nature for to deliver mankind from that misery whereinto it was fallen. The whole of the gospel, and the privileges of it, are in that chapter resolved into the will and pleasure of God. God is therefore called "the head of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:3). As Christ is superior to all men, and the man superior to the woman, so is God superior to Christ, and of a more eminent dignity; in regard of the constituting him mediator, Christ is subject to God, as the body to the head. "Head" is a title of government and sovereignty, and magistrates were called the "heads" of the people. As Christ is the head of man, so is God the head of Christ; and as man is subject to Christ, so is Christ subject to God; not in regard of the Divine nature, wherein there is an equality, and consequently no dominion of jurisdiction; nor only in his human

nature, but in the economy of a Redeemer, considered as one designed, and consenting to be incarnate, and take our flesh; so that after this agreement, God had a sovereign right to dispose of him according to the articles consented to. In regard of his undertaking, and the advantage he was to bring to the elect of God upon the earth, he calls God by the solemn title of “his Lord” in that prophetic psalm of him (Psalm 16:2): “O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extends not unto thee, but unto the saints that are in the earth.” It seems to be the speech of Christ in heaven, mentioning the saints on earth as at a distance from him. I can add nothing to the glory of thy majesty, but the whole fruit of my meditation and sufferings will redound to the saints on earth. And it may be observed, that God is called the Lord of Hosts in the evangelical prophets, Isaiah, Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi, more in reference to this affair of redemption, and the deliverance of the church, than for any other works of his providence in the world.

1. This sovereignty of God appears, in requiring satisfaction for the sin of man. Had he indulged man after his fall, and remitted his offence without a just compensation for the injury he had received by his rebellion, his authority had been vilified, man would always have been attempting against his jurisdiction, there would have been a continual succession of rebellions on man’s part; and if a continual succession of indulgences on God’s part, he had quite disowned his authority over man, and stripped himself of the flower of his crown; satisfaction must have been required some time or other from the person thus rebelling, or some other in his stead; and to require it after the first act of sin, was more preservative to the right of the Divine sovereignty, than to do it after a multitude of repeated revolts. God must have laid aside his authority if he had laid aside wholly the exacting punishment for the offence of man.

2. This sovereignty of God appears, in appointing Christ to this work of redemption. His sovereignty was before manifest over angels and men by the right of creation; there was nothing wanting to declare the highest charge of it, but his ordering his own Son to become a mortal creature; the Lord of all things to become lower than those angels that had, as well as all other things, received their being and beauty from him, and to be reckoned in his death among the dust and refuse of the world: he by whom God created all things,

not only became a man, but a crucified man, by the will of his Father (Gal. 1:4), “who gave himself for our sins according to the will of God;” to which may refer that expression (Prov. 8:22), of his being “possessed by God in the beginning of his way.” Possession is the dominion of a thing invested in the possessor; he was possessed, indeed, as a Son by eternal generation; he was possessed also in the beginning of his way or works of creation, as a Mediator by special constitution: to this the expression seems to refer, if you read on to the end of ver. 8:31, wherein Christ speaks of his “rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth,” the earth of the great God, who hath designed him to this special work of redemption. He was a Son by nature, but a Mediator by Divine will; in regard of which Christ is often called God’s servant, which is a relation to God as a Lord. God being the Lord of all things, the dominion of all things inferior to him is inseparable from him; and in this regard, the whole of what Christ was to do, and did actually do, was acted by him as the will of God, and is expressed so by himself in the prophecy (Psalm 40:7), “Lo, I come;” (ver. 8), “I delight to do thy will;” which are put together (Heb.

10:71), “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” The designing Christ to this work was an act of mercy, but founded on his sovereignty. His compassionate bowels might have pitied us without his being sovereign, but without it could not have relieved us. It was the council of his own will, as well as of his bowels: none was his counsellor or persuader to that mercy he showed: (Rom. 11:34), “Who hath been his counsellor?” for it refers to that mercy in “sending the Deliverer out of Sion” (ver. 26), as well as to other things the apostle had been discoursing of. As God was at liberty to create, or not to create, so he was at liberty to redeem or not to redeem, and at his liberty whether to appoint Christ to this work, or not to call him out to it. In giving this order to his Son, his sovereignty was exercised in a higher manner than in all the orders and instructions he hath given out to men or angels, and all the employments he ever sent them upon.

Christ hath names which signify an authority over him: he is called “an Angel,” and a “Messenger” (Mal. 3:1); an “Apostle” (Heb.3:1): declaring thereby, that God hath as much authority over him as over the angels sent upon his messages, or over the apostles

commissioned by his authority, as he was considered in the quality of Mediator.

3. This sovereignty of God appears in transferring our sins upon Christ. The supreme power in a nation can only appoint or allow of a commutation of punishment; it is a part of sovereignty to transfer the penalty due to the crime of one upon another, and substitute a sufferer, with the sufferer's own consent, in the place of a criminal, whom he had a mind to deliver from a deserved punishment. God transferred the sins of men upon Christ, and inflicted on him a punishment for them. He summed up the debts of man, charged them upon the score of Christ, imputing to him the guilt, and inflicting upon him the penalty.

(Isa. 53:6): "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all;" he made them all to meet upon his back: "He hath made him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21); he was made so by the sovereign pleasure of God: a punishment for sin, as most understand it, which could not be righteously inflicted, had not sin been first righteously imputed, by the consent of Christ, and the order of the Judge of the world. This imputation could be the immediate act of none but God, because he was the sole creditor. A creditor is not bound to accept of another's suretyship, but it is at his liberty whether he will or no; and when he doth accept of him, he may challenge the debt of him, as if he were the principal debtor himself. Christ made himself sin for us by a voluntary submission; and God made him sin for us by a full imputation, and treated him penally, as he would have done those sinners in whose stead he suffered. Without this act of sovereignty in God, we had forever perished: for if we could suppose Christ laying down his life for us without the pleasure and order of God, he could not have been said to have borne our punishment. What could he have undergone in his humanity but a temporal death? But more than this was due to us, even the wrath of God, which far exceeds the calamity of a mere bodily death. The soul being principal in the crime, was to be principal in the punishment. The wrath of God could not have dropped upon his soul, and rendered it so full of agonies, without the hand of God: a creature is not capable to reach the soul, neither as to comfort nor terror; and the justice of God could not have made him a sufferer, if it had not first considered him a sinner by imputation, or by

inherency, and actual commission of a crime in his own person. The latter was far from Christ, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled. He must be considered then in the other state of imputation, which could not be without a sovereign appointment, or at least concession of God: for without it, he could have no more authority to lay down his life for us, than Abraham could have had to have sacrificed his son, or any man to expose himself to death without a call; nor could any plea have been entered in the court of heaven, either by Christ for us, or by us for ourselves. And though the death of so great a person had been meritorious in itself, it had not been meritorious for us, or accepted for us; Christ is “delivered up by him” (Rom. 8:32), in every part of that condition wherein he was, and suffered; and to that end, that “we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21): that we might have the righteousness of him that was God imputed to us, or that we might have a righteousness as great and proportioned to the righteousness of God, as God required. It was an act of Divine sovereignty to account him that was righteous a sinner in our stead, and to account us, who were sinners, righteous upon the merit of his death.

4. This was done by the command of God; by God as a Lawgiver, having the supreme legislative and preceptive authority: in which respect, the whole work of Christ is said to be an answer to a law, not one given him, but put into his heart, as the law of nature was in the heart of man at first. (Psalm 40:7, 8): “Thy law is within my heart.” This law was not the law of nature or moral law, though that was also in the heart of Christ, but the command of doing those things which were necessary for our salvation, and not a command so much of doing, as of dying. The moral law in the heart of Christ would have done us no good without the mediatory law; we had been where we were by the sole observance of the precepts of the moral law, without his suffering the penalty of it: the law in the heart of Christ was the law of suffering, or dying, the doing that for us by his death which the blood of sacrifices was unable to effect. Legal “sacrifices thou wouldest not; thy law is within my heart;” *i. e.* thy law ordered me to be a sacrifice; it was that law, his obedience to which was principally accepted and esteemed, and that was principally his passive, his obedience to death (Phil. 2:8); this was the special command received from God, that he should die (John 10:18). It is not so clearly manifested when this command was

given, whether after the incarnation of Christ, or at the point of his constitution as Mediator, upon the transaction between the Father and the Son concerning the affair of redemption: the promise was given “before the world began” (Tit. 1:2). Might not the precept be given, before the world began, to Christ, as considered in the quality of Mediator and Redeemer? Precepts and promises usually attend one another; every covenant is made up of both. Christ, considered here as the Son of God in the Divine nature, was not capable of a command or promise; but considered in the relation of Mediator between God and man, he was capable of both.

Promises of assistance were made before his actual incarnation, of which the Prophets are full: why not precepts for his obedience, since long before his incarnation this was his speech in the Prophet, “Thy law is within my heart!” however, a command, a law it was, which is a fruit of the Divine sovereignty; that as the sovereignty of God was impeached and violated by the disobedience of Adam, it might be owned and vindicated by the obedience of Christ; that as we fell by disloyalty to it, we might rise by the highest submission to it in another head, infinitely superior in his person to Adam, by whom we fell.

5. This sovereignty of God appears in exalting Christ to such a sovereign dignity as our Redeemer. Some, indeed, say, that this sovereignty of Christ’s human nature was natural, and the right of it resulted from its union with the Divine; as a lady of mean condition, when espoused and married to a prince, hath, by virtue of that, a natural right to some kind of jurisdiction over the whole kingdom, because she is one with the king. But to waive this; the Scripture placeth wholly the conferring such an authority upon the pleasure and will of God. As Christ was a gift of God’s sovereign will to us, so this was a gift of God’s sovereign will to Christ (Matt. 28:28): “All power is given me.” And he “gave him to be head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:22); “God gave him a name above every name” (Phil. 2:9); and, therefore, his throne he sits upon is called “The throne of his Father” (Rev. 3:21). And he “committed all judgment to the Son,” *i. e.* all government and dominion; an empire in heaven and earth (John 5:22); and that because he is “the Son of Man” (ver. 27); which may be understood, that the Father hath given him authority to exercise that judgment and government as the

Son of Man, which he originally had as the Son of God; or rather, because he became a servant, and humbled himself to death, he gives him this authority as the reward of his obedience and humility, conformable to Phil. 2:9. This is an act of the high sovereignty of God, to obscure his own authority in a sense, and take into association with him, or vicarious subordination to him, the human nature of Christ as united to the Divine; not only lifting it above the heads of all the angels, but giving that person in our nature an empire over them, whose nature was more excellent than ours: yea, the sovereignty of God appears in the whole management of this kingly office of Christ; for it is managed in every part of it according to God's order (Ezek. 37:24, 25): "David, my servant, shall be king over them," and "my servant David shall be their prince forever:" he shall be a prince over them, but my servant in that principality, in the exercise and duration of it. The sovereignty of God is paramount in all that Christ hath done as a priest, or shall do as a king.

Use 1. For instruction.

1. How great is the contempt of this sovereignty of God! Man naturally would be free from God's empire, to be a slave under the dominion of his own lust; the sovereignty of God, as a Lawgiver, is most abhorred by man (Lev. 26:43). The Israelites, the best people in the world, were apt, by nature, not only to despise, but abhor, his statutes; there is not a law of God but the corrupt heart of man hath an abhorrency of: how often do men wish that God had not enacted this or that law that goes against the grain! and, in wishing so, wish that he were no sovereign, or not such a sovereign as he is in his own nature, but one according to their corrupt model. This is the great quarrel between God and man, whether he or they shall be the Sovereign Ruler. He should not, by the will of man, rule in any one village in the world; God's vote should not be predominant in any one thing. There is not a law of his but is exposed to contempt by the perverseness of man (Prov. 1:21): "Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof:" *Septuag.* "Ye have made all my counsels without authority." The nature of man cannot endure one precept of God, nor one rebuke from him; and for this cause God is at the expense of judgments in the world, to assert his own empire to the teeth and consciences of men (Psalm 59:13): "Lord, consume them in wrath, and let them know that God rules in

Jacob, to the ends of the earth.” The dominion of God is not slighted by any creature of this world but man; all others observe it by observing his order, whether in their natural motions or preternatural irruptions; they punctually act according to their commission. Man only speaks a dialect against the strain of the whole creation, and hath none to imitate him among all the creatures in heaven and earth, but only among those in hell: man is more impatient of the yoke of God than of the yoke of man. There are not so many rebellions committed by inferiors against their superiors and fellow-creatures, as are committed against God. A willing and easy sinning is an equalling the authority of God to that of man (Hos. 6:7): “They, like men, have transgressed my covenant;” they have made no more account of breaking my covenant than if they had broken some league or compact made with a mere man; so slightly do they esteem the authority of God; such a disesteem of the Divine authority is a virtual undeifying of him. To slight his sovereignty is to stab his Deity; since the one cannot be preserved without the support of the other, his life would expire with his authority. How base and brutish is it for vile dust and mouldering clay to lift up itself against the majesty of God, whose throne is in the heavens, who sways his sceptre over all parts of the world—a Majesty before whom the devils shake, and the highest cherubims tremble! It is as if the thistle, that can presently be trod down by the foot of a wild beast, should think itself a match for the cedar of Lebanon, as the phrase is, 2 Kings 14:9.

Let us consider this in general; and, also, in the ordinary practice of men. *First*, In general. (1.) All sin in its nature is a contempt of the Divine dominion. As every act of obedience is a confirmation of the law, and consequently a subscription of the authority of the Lawgiver (Deut. 27:26), so every breach to it is a conspiracy against the sovereignty of the Lawgiver; setting up our will against the will of God is an artiling against his authority, as setting up our reason against the methods of God is an artiling against his wisdom; the intendment of every act of sin is to wrest the sceptre out of God’s hand. The authority of God is the first attribute in the Deity which it directs its edge against; it is called, therefore, a “transgression of his law” (1 John 3:4), and, therefore, a slight, or neglect, of the majesty of God; and the not keeping his commands is called a “forgetting God” (Deut. 8:11), *i. e.* a forgetting him to be

our absolute Lord. As the first notion we have of God as a Creator is that of his sovereignty, so the first perfection that sin struck at, in the violation of the law, was his sovereignty as a Lawgiver. "Breaking the law is a dishonoring God" (Rom. 2:23), a snatching off his crown; to obey our own wills before the will of God, is to prefer ourselves as our own sovereigns before him. Sin is a wrong, and injury to God, not in his essence, that is above the reach of a creature, nor in anything profitable to him, or pertaining to his own intrinsic advantage; not an injury to God in himself, but in his authority, in those things which pertain to his glory; a disowning his due right, and not using his goods according to his will. Thus the whole world may be called, as God calls Chaldea, "a land of rebels" (Jer. 1:21): "Go up against the land of Merathaim," or rebels: rebels, not against the Jews, but against God. The mighty opposition in the heart of man to the supremacy of God is discovered emphatically by the apostle (Rom. 8:7) in that expression, "The carnal mind is enmity against God," *i. e.* against the authority of God, because "it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It refuseth not subjection to this or that part, but to the whole; to every mark of Divine authority in it; it will not lay down its arms against it, nay, it cannot but stand upon its terms against it; the law can no more be fulfilled by a carnal mind, than it can be disowned by a sovereign God. God is so holy, that he cannot alter a righteous law, and man is so averse, that he cares not for, nay, cannot fulfil, one title; so much doth the nature of man swell against the majesty of God. Now an enmity to the law, which is in every sin, implies a perversity against the authority of God that enacted it.

(2.) All sin, in its nature, is the despoiling God of his sole sovereignty, which was probably the first thing the devil aimed at. That pride was the sin of the devil, the Scripture gives us some account of, when the apostle adviseth not a novice, or one that hath but lately embraced the faith, to be chosen a bishop (1 Tim. 3:6), "Lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil;" lest he fall into the same sin for which the devil was condemned. But in what particular thing this pride was manifest, is not so easily discernible; the ancients generally conceived it to be an affecting the throne of God, grounding it on Isa. 14:12: "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning! for thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the

stars of God.” It is certain the prophet speaks there of the king of Babylon, and taxeth him for his pride, and gives to him the title of “Lucifer,” perhaps likening him in his pride to the devil, and then it notes plainly the particular sin of the devil, attempting a share in the sovereignty of God; and some strengthen their conjecture from the name of the archangel who contended against Satan (Jude 9), which is Michael, which signifies, “Who as God?” or, “Who like God?” the name of the angel giving the superiority to God, intimating the contrary disposition in the devil, against whom he contended. It is likely his sin was an affecting equality with God in empire, or a freedom from the sovereign authority of God; because he imprinted such a kind of persuasion on man at his first temptation: “Ye shall be as gods” (Gen. 3:5); and though it be restrained to the matter of knowledge, yet that being a fitness for government, it may be extended to that also. But it is plainly a persuading them, that they might be, in some sort, equal with God, and independent on him as their superior. What he had found so fatal to himself, he imagined would have the same success in the ruin of man. And since the devil hath, in all ages of the world, usurped worship to himself which is only due to God, and would be served by man, as if he were the God of the world; since all his endeavor was to be worshipped as the Supreme God on earth, it is not unreasonable to think, that he invaded the supremacy of God in heaven, and endeavored to be like the Most High before his banishment, as he hath attempted to be like the Most High since. And since the devil and antichrist are reputed by John, in the Revelation, to be so near of kin, and so like in disposition, why might not that, which is the sin of antichrist, the image of him, be also the sin of Satan, “to exalt himself above all that is called God” (2 Thess. 2:4), and “sit as God in his temple,” affecting a partnership in his throne and worship? Whether it was this, or attempting an unaccountable dominion over created things, or because he was the prime angel, and the most illustrious of that magnificent corporation, he might think himself fit to reign with God over all things else? Or if his sin were envy, as some think, at the felicity of man in paradise, it was still a quarrelling with God’s dominion, and right of disposing his own goods and favors; he is, therefore, called “Belial” (2 Cor. 6:14, 15): “What concord hath Christ with Belial?” *i. e.* with the devil, one “without yoke,” as the word “Belial” signifies.

(3.) It is more plain, that this was the sin of Adam. The first act of Adam was to exercise a lordship over the lower creatures, in giving names to them,—a token of dorninion (Gen. 2:19). The next was to affect a lordship over God, in rebelling against him. After he had writ the first mark of his own delegated dominion, in the names he gave the creatures, and owned their dependence on him as their governor, he would not acknowledge his own dependence on God. As soon as the Lord of the world had put him into possession of the power he had allotted him, he attempted to strip his Lord of that which he had reserved to himself; he was not content to lay a yoke upon the other creatures, but desirous to shake off the Divine yoke from himself, and be subject to none but his own will; hence Adam's sin is more particularly called "disobedience" (Rom. 5:19): for, in the eating the apple, there was no moral evil in itself, but a contradiction to the positive command and order of God, whereby he did disown God's right of commanding him, or reserving anything from him to his own use. The language all his posterity speaks, "Let us break his bands, and cast away his cords from us" (Psalm 2:3), was learned from Adam in that act of his. The next act we read of; was that of Cain's murdering Abel, which was an invading God's right, in assuming an authority to dispose of the life of his brother,—a life which God had given him, and reserved the period of it in his own hands. And he persists in the same usurpation when God came to examine him, and ask him where his brother was; how scornful was his answer! (Gen. 4:9): "Am I my brother's keeper?" as much as if he had said, What have you to do to examine me? or, What obligation is there upon me to render an account of him? or, as one saith, it is as much as if he had said, "Go, look for him yourself." The sovereignty of God did not remain undisturbed as soon as ever it appeared in creation; the devils rebelled against it in heaven, and man would have banished it from the earth.

(4.) The sovereignty of God hath not been less invaded by the usurpations of men. One single order of the Roman episcopacy hath endeavored to usurp the prerogatives of God; the Pope will prohibit what God hath allowed; the marriage of priests; the receiving of the cup, as well as of the bread, in the sacrament; the eating of this or that sort of meat at special times, meats which God hath sanctified; and forbid them, too, upon pain of damnation. It is an invasion of God's right to forbid the use of what God hath granted , as though

the earth, and the fulness thereof, were no longer the Lord's, but the Pope's; much more to forbid what God hath commanded, as if Christ overreached his own authority, when he enjoined all to drink of the sacramental wine, as well as eat of the sacramental bread. No lord but will think his right usurped by that steward who shall permit to others what his lord forbids, and forbid that which his master allows, and act the lord instead of the servant. Add to this the pardons of many sins, as if he had the sole key to the treasures of Divine mercy; the disposing of crowns and dominions at his pleasure, as if God had divested himself of the title of King of kings, and transferred it upon the see of Rome. The allowing public stews, dispensing with incestuous marriages, as if God had acted more the part of a tyrant than of a righteous Sovereign in forbidding them, depriving the Jews of the propriety in their estates upon their conversion to Christianity, as if the pilfering men's goods were the way to teach them self-denial, the first doctrine of Christian religion; and God shall have no honor from the Jew without a breach of his law by theft from the Christian. Granting many years' indulgences upon slight performances, the repeating so many *Ave-Marias* and *Pater-Nosters* in a day, canonizing saints, claiming the keys of heaven, and disposing of the honors and glory of it, and proposing creatures as objects of religious worship, wherein he answers the character of the apostle (2 Thess. 2:4), "showing himself that he is God," in challenging that power which is only the right of Divine sovereignty; exalting himself above God, in indulging those things which the law of God never allowed, but hath severely prohibited. This controlling the sovereignty of God, not allowing him the rights of his crown, is the soul and spirit of many errors. Why are the decrees of election and preterition denied? Because men will not acknowledge God the Sovereign Disposer of his creature. Why is effectual calling and efficacious grace denied? Because they will not allow God the proprietor and distributor of his own goods. Why is the satisfaction of Christ denied?

Because they will not allow God a power to vindicate his own law in what way he pleaseth. Most of the errors of men may be resolved into a denial of God's sovereignty; all have a tincture of the first evil sentiment of Adam.

Secondly. The sovereignty of God is contemned in the practices

of men—(1.) As he is a *Lawgiver*. [1.] When laws are made, and urged in any state contrary to the law of God. It is part of God's sovereignty to be a Lawgiver; not to obey his law is a breach made upon his right of government; but it is treason in any against the crown of God, to mint laws with a stamp contrary to that of heaven, whereby they renounce their due subjection, and vie with God for dominion, snatch the supremacy from him, and account themselves more lords than the Sovereign Monarch of the world. When men will not let God be the judge of good and evil, but put in their own vote, controlling his to establish their own; such are not content to be as gods, subordinate to the supreme God, to sit at his feet; nor coordinate with him, to sit equal upon his throne; but paramount to him, to over-top and shadow his crown;—a boldness that leaves the serpent, in the first temptation, under the character of a more commendable modesty; who advised our first parents to attempt to be as gods, but not above him, and would enervate a law of God, but not enact a contrary one to be observed by them. Such was the usurpation of Nebuchadnezzar, to set up a golden image to be adored (Dan. 3.), as if he had power to mint gods, as well as to conquer men; to set the stamp of a Deity upon a piece of gold, as well as his own effigies upon his current coin. Much of the same nature was that of Darius, by the motion of his flatterers, to prohibit any petition to be made to God for the space of thirty days, as though God was not to have a worship without a license from a dotting piece of clay (Dan. 6:7). So Henry the Third of France, by his edict, silenced masters of families from praying with their households. And it is a farther contempt of God's authority, when good men are oppressed by the sole weight of power, for not observing such laws, as if they had a real sovereignty over the consciences of men, more than God himself. When the apostles were commanded by an angel from God, to preach in the Temple the doctrine of Christ (Acts 5:19, 20), they were fetched from thence with a guard before the council (ver. 26). And what is the language of those statesmen to them? as absolute as God himself could speak to any transgressors of his law. [Did not we straitly command you, that you should not teach in this name?] (ver. 28). It is sufficient that we gave you a command to be silent, and publish no more this doctrine of Jesus; it is not for you to examine our decrees, but rest in our order as loyal subjects, and comply with your rulers; they might

have added,—though it be with the damnation of your souls. How would those overrule the apostles by no other reason but their absolute pleasure! And though God had espoused their cause, by delivering them out of the prison, wherein they had locked them the day before, yet not one of all this council had the wit or honesty to entitle it a fighting against God, but Gamaliel (ver. 34). So foolishly fond are men to put themselves in the place of God, and usurp a jurisdiction over men's consciences: and to presume that laws made against the interest and command of God, must be of more force than the laws of God's enacting.

[2.] The sovereignty of God is contemned in making additions to the laws of God. The authority of a sovereign Lawgiver is invaded and vilified when an inferior presumes to make orders equivalent to his edicts. It is a *præmunire* against heaven to setup an authority distinct from that of God, or to enjoin anything as necessary in matter of worship for which a Divine commission cannot be shown. God was always so tender of this part of his prerogative, that he would not have anything wrought in the tabernacle, not a vessel, not an instrument, but what himself had prescribed. "According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Exod. 25:9); which is strictly urged again, ver. 40: "Look that thou make them after their pattern;" look to it, beware of doing anything of thine own head, and justling with my authority. It was so afterwards in the matter of the temple, which succeeded the tabernacle; God gave the model of it to David, and made him "understand in writing by his hand upon him, even all the works of this pattern" (1 Chron. 28:19).

Neither the royal authority in Moses, who was king in Jesurun; nor in David, who was a man after God's own heart, and called to the crown by a special and extraordinary providence; nor Aaron, and the high priests his successors, invested in the sacerdotal office, had any authority from God, to do anything in the framing the tabernacle or temple of their own heads. God barred them from anything of that nature, by giving them an exact pattern, so dear to him was always this, flower of his crown. And afterwards, the power of appointing officers and ordinances in the church was delegated to Christ, and was among the rest of those royalties given to him, which he fully

completed “for the edifying of the body” (Eph. 4:11, 12); and he hath the eulogy by the Spirit of God, to be “faithful as Moses was in all his house, to Him that appointed him” (Heb. 3:2). Faithfulness in a trust implies a punctual observing directions; God was still so tender of this, that even Christ, the Son, should no more do anything in this concern without appointment and pattern, than “Moses, a servant” (ver. 5, 6). It seems to be a vote of nature to refer the original of the modes of all worship to God; and therefore in all those varieties of ceremonies among the heathens, there was scarce any but were imagined by them to be the dictates and orders of some of their pretended deities, and not the resolves of mere human authority. What intrusion upon God’s right hath the papacy made in regard of officers, cardinals, patriarchs, &c., not known in any Divine order? In regard of ceremonies in worship, pressed as necessary to obtain the favor of God, holy water, crucifixes, altars, images, cringings, reviving many of the Jewish and Pagan ceremonies, and adopting them into the family of Christian ordinances; as if God had been too absolute and arbitrary in repealing the one, and dashing in pieces the other. When God had by his sovereign order framed a religion for the heart, men are ready to usurp an authority to frame one for the sense, to dress the ordinances of God in new and gaudy habit, to take the eye by a vain pomp; thus affecting a Divine royalty, and acting a silly childishness; and after this, to impose the observation of those upon the consciences of men, is a bold ascent into the throne of God; to impose laws upon the conscience, which Christ hath not imposed, hath deservedly been thought the very spirit of antichrist; it may be called also the spirit of anti-god. God hath reserved to himself the sole sovereignty over the conscience, and never indulged men any part of it; he hath not given man a power over his own conscience, much less one man a power over another’s conscience. Men have a power over outward things to do this or that, where it is determined by the law of God, but not the least authority to control any dictate or determination of conscience: the sole empire of that is appropriate to God, as one of the great marks of his royalty. What an usurpation is it of God’s right to make conscience a slave to man, which God hath solely, as the Father of spirits, subjected to himself!—an usurpation which, though the apostles, those extraordinary officers, might better have claimed, yet they utterly disowned any imperious dominion over the faith of

others (2 Cor. 1:24). Though in this they do not seem to climb up above God, yet they set themselves in the throne of God, envy him an absolute monarchy, would be sharers with him in his legislative power, and grasp one end of his sceptre in their own hands. They do not pretend to take the crown from God's head, but discover a bold ambition to shuffle their hairy scalps under it, and wear part of it upon their own, that they may rule with him, not under him; and would be joint lords of his manor with him, who hath, by the apostle, forbidden any to be "lords of his heritage" (1 Pet. 5:3.): and therefore they cannot assume such an authority to themselves till they can show where God hath resigned this part of his authority to them. If their exposition of that place (Matt. 16:18), "Upon this rock I will build my church," be granted to be true, and that the person and successors of Peter are meant by that rock, it could be no apology for their usurpations; it is not Peter and his successors shall build, but "I will build;" others are instruments in building, but they are to observe the directions of the grand Architect.

[3.] The sovereignty of God is contemned when men prefer obedience to men's laws before obedience to God. As God hath an undoubted right, as the Lawgiver and Ruler of the world, to enact laws without consulting the pleasure of men, or requiring their consent to the verifying and establishing his edicts, so are men obliged, by their allegiance as subjects, to observe the laws of their Creator, without consulting whether they be agreeable to the laws of his revolted creatures. To consult with flesh and blood whether we should obey, is to authorize flesh and blood above the purest and most sovereign Spirit. When men will obey their superiors, without taking in the condition the apostle prescribes to servants (Col. 3:22), "In singleness of heart fearing God," and postpone the fear of God to the fear of man, it is to render God of less power with them than the drop of a bucket, or dust of the balance. When we, out of fear of punishment, will observe the laws of men against the laws of God, it is like the Egyptians, to worship a ravenous crocodile instead of a Deity; when we submit to human laws, and stagger at Divine, it is to set man upon the throne of God, and God at the footstool of man; to set man above, and God beneath; to make him the tail, and not the head, as God speaks in another case of Israel (Deut. 28:13). When we pay an outward observation to Divine laws, because they are backed by the laws of man, and human authority is the motive of our

observance, we subject God's sovereignty to man's authority; what he hath from us, is more owing to the pleasure of men than any value we have for the empire of God: when men shall commit murders, and imbrue their hands in blood by the order of a grandee; when the worst sins shall be committed by the order of papal dispensations; when the use of his creatures, which God hath granted and sanctified, shall be abstained from for so many days in the week, and so many weeks in the year, because of a Roman edict, the authority of man is acknowledged, not only equal, but superior, to that of God; the dominion of dust and clay is preferred before the undoubted right of the Sovereign of the world; the commands of God are made less than human, and the orders of men more authoritative than Divine, and a grand rebel's usurpation of God's right is countenanced. When men are more devout in observance of uncertain traditions, or mere human inventions, than at the hearing of the unquestionable oracles of God; when men shall squeeze their countenances into a more serious figure, and demean themselves in a more religious posture, at the appearance of some mock ceremony, clothed in a Jewish or Pagan garb, which hath unhappily made a rent in the coat of Christ, and pay a more exact reverence to that which hath no Divine, but only a human stamp upon it, than to the clear and plain word of God, which is perhaps neglected with sleepy nods, or which is worse, entertained with profane scoffs;—this is to prefer the authority of man employed in trifles, before the authority of the wise Lawgiver of the world: besides, the ridiculousness of it is as great as to adore a glow-worm, and laugh at the sun; or for a courtier to be more exact in his cringes and starched postures before a puppet than before his sovereign prince. In all this we make not the will and authority of God our rule, but the will of man; disclaim our dependence on God, to hang upon the uncertain breath of a creature. In all this God is made less than man, and man more than God; God is deposed, and man enthroned; God made a slave, and man a sovereign above him. To this we may refer the solemn addresses of some for the maintenance of the Protestant religion according to law, the law of man; not so much minding the law of God, resolving to make the law, the church, the state, the rule of their religion, and change that if the laws be changed, steering their opinions by the compass of the magistrate's judgment and interest.

(2.) The dominion of God, as a *Proprietor*, is practically

contemned.

[1.] By envy. When we are not flush and gay, as well spread and sparkling as others, this passion gnaws our souls, and we become the executioners to rack ourselves, because God is the executor of his own pleasure, The foundation of this passion is a quarrel with God; to envy others the enjoyment of their propriety is to envy God his right of disposal, and, consequently, the propriety of his own goods; it is a mental theft committed against God; we rob him of his right in our will and wish; it is a robbery to make ourselves equal with God when it is not our due, which is implied (Phil. 2:6), when Christ is said “to think it no robbery to be equal with God.” We would wrest the sceptre out of his hand, wish he were not the conductor of the world, and that he would resign his sovereignty, and the right of the distribution of his own goods, to the *capricios* of our humor, and ask our leave to what subjects he should dispense his favors. All envy is either a tacit accusation of God as an usurper, and assuming a right to dispose of that which doth not belong to him, and so it is a denial of his propriety, or else charges him with a blind or unjust distribution, and so it is a bespattering his wisdom and righteousness. When God doth punish envy, he vindicates his own sovereignty, as though this passion chiefly endeavored to blast this perfection (Ezek. 25:11, 12): “As I live, saith the Lord, I will do according to thy anger, and according to thy envy, and thou shall know that I am the Lord.” The sin of envy in the devils was immediately against the crown of God, and so was the sin of envy in the first man, envying God the sole prerogative in knowledge above himself. This base humor in Cain, at the preference of Abel’s sacrifice before his, was the cause that he deprived him of his life: denying God, first his right of choice and what he should accept, and then invading God’s right of propriety, in usurping a power over the life and being of his brother, which solely belonged to God.

[2.] The dominion of God, as a proprietor, is practically contemned by a violent or surreptitious taking away from any what God hath given him the possession of. Since God is the Lord of all, and may give the possession and dominion of things to whom he pleaseth, all theft and purloining, all cheating and cozening another of his right, is not only a crime against the true possessor, depriving him of what he is entrusted with, but against God, as the absolute

and universal proprietor, having a right thereby to confer his own goods upon whom he pleaseth, as well as against God as a Lawgiver, forbidding such a violence: the snatching away what is another's, denies man the right of possession, and God the right of donation: the Israelites taking the Egyptians' jewels had been theft had it not been by a Divine license and order, but cannot be slandered with such a term, after the Proprietor of the whole world had altered the title, and alienated them by his positive grant from the Egyptians, to confer them upon the Israelites.

[3.] The dominion of God, as a proprietor, is practically contemned by not using what God hath given us for those ends for which he gave them to us. God passeth things over to us with a condition to use that for his glory which he hath bestowed upon us by his bounty: he is Lord of the end for which he gives, as well as Lord of what he gives; the donor's right of propriety is infringed when the lands and legacies he leaves to a particular use are not employed to those ends to which he bequeathed them: the right of the lord of a manor is violated when the copyhold is not used according to the condition of the conveyance.

So it is an invasion of God's sovereignty not to use the creatures for those ends for which we are entrusted with them: when we deny ourselves a due and lawful support from them; hence covetousness is an invasion of his right: or when we unnecessarily waste them; hence prodigality disowns his propriety: or when we bestow not anything upon the relief of others; hence uncharitableness comes under the same title, appropriating that to ourselves, as if we were the lords, when we were but the usufructuaries for ourselves, and stewards for others; this is to be [rich to ourselves, not to God] (Luke 12:21), for so are they who employ not their wealth for the service, and according to the intent, of the donor. Thus the Israelites did not own God the true proprietor of their corn, wine, and oil, which God had given them for his worship, when they prepared offerings for Baal out of his stock: [For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her gold and silver, which they prepared for Baal] (Hos. 2:8); as if they had been sole proprietors, and not factors by commission, to improve the goods for the true owner. It is the same invasion of God's right to use the parts and gifts that God hath given us, either as fuel for our pride, or

advancing self, or a witty scoffing at God and religion; when we use not religion for the honor of our Sovereign, but a stool to rise by, and observe his precepts outwardly, not out of regard to his authority, but as a stale to our interest, and furnishing self with a little concern and trifle; when men will wrest his word for the favor of their lusts, which God intended for the checking of them, and make interpretations of it according to their humors, and not according to his will discovered in the Scripture, this is to pervert the use of the best goods and *depositum* he hath put into our hands, even Divine revelations. Thus hypocrisy makes the sovereignty of God a nullity.

(3.) The dominion of God, as a *Governor*, is practically contemned.

[1.] In idolatry. Since worship is an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, to adore any creature instead of God, or to pay to anything that homage of trust and confidence which is due to God, though it be the highest creature in heaven or earth, is to acknowledge that sovereignty to pertain to a creature, which is challenged by God; as to set up the greatest lord in a kingdom in the government, instead of the lawful prince, is rebellion and usurpation; and that woman incurs the crime of adultery, who commits it with a person of great port and honor, as well as with one of a mean condition. While men create anything a god, they own themselves supreme above the true God, yea, and above that which they account a god; for, by the right of creation, they have a superiority, as it is a deity blown up by the breath of their own imagination.

The authority of God is in this sin acknowledged to belong to an idol; it is called loathing of God as a husband (Ezek. 16:45), all the authority of God as a husband and Lord over them: so when we make anything or any person in the world the chief object and prop of our trust and confidence, we act the same part. Trust in an idol is the formal part of idolatry; "so is every one that trusts in them" (Psalm 115:8), *i. e.* in idols: whatsoever thing we make the object of our trust, we rear as an idol. It is not unlawful to have the image of a creature, but to bestow divine adoration upon it; it was not unlawful for the Egyptians to possess and use oxen, but to dub them gods to be adored, it was: it is not unlawful to have wealth and honor, nor to

have gifts and parts, they are the presents of God; but to love them above God, to fix our reliance upon them more than upon God, is to rob God of his due, who, being our Creator, ought to be our confidence. What we want we are to desire of him, and expect from him. When we confide in anything else we deny God the glory of his creation; we disown him to be Lord of the world; imply that our welfare is in the hands of, and depends upon, that thing wherein we confide; it is not only to “equal it to God” in sovereign power, which is his own phrase (Isa. 40:25), but to prefer it before him in a reproach of him. When the hosts of heaven shall be served instead of the Lord of those hosts; when we shall lackey after the stars, depend barely upon their influences, without looking up to the great Director of the sun, it is to pay an adoration unto a captain in a regiment which is due to the general. When we shall “make gold our hope, and say to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence,” it is to deny the supremacy of that God that is above; as well as if we kiss our hands, in a way of adoration, to the sun in its splendor, or “the moon walking in its brightness,” for Job couples them together (ch. 31:25–28); it is to prefer the authority of earth before that of heaven, and honor clay above the Sovereign of the world: as if a soldier should confide more in the rag of an ensign, or the fragment of a drum, for his safety, than in the orders and conduct of his general; it were as much as is in his power to uncommission him, and snatch from him his commander’s staff. When we advance the creature in our love above God, and the altar of our soul smokes with more thoughts and affections to a petty interest than to God, we lift up that which was given us as a servant in the place of the Sovereign, and bestow that throne upon it which is to be kept undefiled for the rightful Lord, and subject the interest of God to the demands of the creature. So much respect is due to God, that none should be placed in the throne of our affections equal with him, much less anything to perk above him.

[2.] Impatience is a contempt of God as a governor. When we meet with rubs in the way of any design, when our expectations are crossed, we will break through all obstacles to accomplish our projects, whether God will or no. When we are too much dejected at some unexpected providence, and murmur at the instruments of it, as if God divested himself of his prerogative of conducting human affairs; when a little cross blows us into a mutiny, and swells us into

a sauciness to implead God, or make us fret against him (as the expression is, Isa. 8:21), wishing him out of his throne; no sin is so devilish as this; there is not any strikes more at all the attributes of God than this, against his goodness, righteousness, holiness, wisdom, and doth as little spare his sovereignty as any of the rest: what can it be else, but an impious invasion of his dominion, to quarrel with him for what he doth, and to say, What reason hast thou to deal thus with me? This language is in the nature of all impatience, whereby we question his sovereignty, and parallel our dominion with his. When men have not that confluence of wealth or honor they greedily desired, they bark at God, and revile his government: they are angry God doth not more respectfully observe them, as though he had nothing to do in their matters, and were wanting in that becoming reverence which they think him bound to pay to such great ones as they are; they would have God obedient to their minds, and act nothing but what he receives a commission for from their wills. When we murmur, it is as if we would command his will, and wear his crown; a wresting the sceptre out of his hands to sway it ourselves; we deny him the right of government, disown his power over us, and would be our own sovereigns: you may find the character of it in the language of Jehoram (as many understand it), "Behold, this evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" (2 Kings 6:33). This is an evil of such a nature, that it could come from none but the hand of God; why should I attend upon him, as my Sovereign, that delights to do me so much mischief, that throws curses upon me when I expected blessings? I will no more observe his directions, but follow my own sentiments, and regard not his authority in the lips of his dotting prophet. The same you find in the Jews, when they were under Gods lash; "And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart" (Jer. 18:12): we can expect no good from him, and therefore we will be our own sovereigns, and prefer the authority of our own imaginations before that of his precepts. Men would be their own carvers, and not suffer God to use his right; as if a stone should order the mason in what manner to hew it, and in what part of the building to place it. We are not ordinarily concerned so much at the calamities of our neighbors, but swell against heaven at a light drop upon ourselves. We are content God should be the sovereign of

others, so that he will be a servant to us: let him deal as he will himself with others, so he will treat us, and what relates to us, as we will ourselves. We would have God resign his authority to our humors, and our humors should be in the place of a God to him, to direct him what was fit to do in our cause. When things go not according to our vote, our impatience is a wish that God was deposed from his throne, that he would surrender his seat to some that would deal more favorably, and be more punctual observers of our directions. Let us look to ourselves in regard of this sin, which is too common, and the root of much mischief. This seems to be the first bubbling of Adam's will; he was not content with the condition wherein God had placed him, but affected another, which ended in the ruin of himself, and of mankind.

[3.] Limiting God in his way of working to our methods, is another part of the contempt of his dominion. When we will prescribe him methods of acting, that he should deliver us in this or that way, we would not suffer him to be the Lord of his own favors, and have the privilege to be his own director.

When we will limit him to such a time, wherein to work our deliverance, we would rob him of the power of times and seasons, which are solely in his hand. We would regulate his conduct according to our imaginations, and assume a power to give laws to our Sovereign. Thus the Israelites "limited the Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 78:41): they would control his absolute dominion, and, of a sovereign, make him their slave. Man, that is God's vassal, would set bounds to his Lord, and cease to be a servant, and commence master, when he would give, not take, directions from him. When God had given them manna, and their fancies were weary of that delicious food, they would prescribe heaven to rain down some other sort of food for them. When they wanted no sufficient provision in the wilderness, they quarrelled with God for bringing them out of Egypt, and not presently giving them a place of seed, of figs, vines, and pomegranates (Num. 20:5), which is called a "striving with the Lord" (ver. 13), a contending with him for his Lordship. When we tempt God, and require a sign of him as a mark of his favor, we circumscribe his dominion; when we will not use the means he hath appointed, but father our laziness upon a trust in his providence, as if we expected he should work a miracle for our

relief; when we censure him for what he hath done in the course of his providence; when we capitulate with him, and promise such a service, if he will do us such a good turn according to our platform, we would bring down his sovereign pleasure to our will, we invade his throne, and expect a submissive obedience from him. Man that hath not wit enough to govern himself, would be governing God, and those that cannot be their own sovereigns, affect a sovereignty over heaven.

[4.] Pride and presumption is another invasion of his dominion. When men will resolve to go to-morrow to such a city, to such a fair and market, to traffic, and get gain, without thinking of the necessity of a Divine license, as if ourselves were the lords of our time and of our lives, and God were to lackey after us (James 4:13, 15): “Ye that say, To-day we will go into such a city, and buy and sell, whereas ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live;” as if they had a freehold, and were not tenants at will to the Lord of the manor. When we presume upon our own strength or wit to get the better of our adversaries; as the Germans (as Tacitus relates) assured themselves, by the numerousness of their army, of a victory against the Romans, and prepared chains to fetter the captives before the conquest, which were found in their camp after their defeat;—when we are peremptory in expectations of success according to our will; as Pharaoh (Exod. 15:9), “I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them:” he speaks more like a god than a man, as if he were the sovereign power, and God only his vicar and lieutenant; how he struts, without thinking of a superior power to curb him!—when men ascribe to themselves what is the sole fruit of God’s sovereign pleasure; as the king of Assyria speaks a language fit only to be spoken by God (Isa. 10:13, 14, &c.), “I have removed the bounds of the people; my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people; I have gathered all the earth;” which God declares to be a wrong to his sovereignty by the title wherewith he prefaceth his threatening against him (ver. 16): “Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness,” &c. It is indeed a rifling, if not of his crown, yet of the most glittering jewel of it, his glory. “He that mocks the poor reproacheth his Maker” (Prov. 17:5). He never thinks that God made them poor, and himself rich; he owns not his riches to be dropped upon him by the Divine

hand. Self is the great invader of God's sovereignty; doth not only spurn at it, but usurp it, and assume divine honors, payable only to the universal Sovereign. The Assyrian was not so modest as the Chaldean, who would impute his power and victories to his idol (Hab. 1:11), whom he thought to be God, though yet robbing the true God of his authority; and so much was signified by their names, Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach, Belshazzar, Nebo, Merodach, Bel, being the Chaldean idols, and the names signifying, Lord of wealth, Giver of riches, and the like.—When we behave ourselves proudly towards others, and imagine ourselves greater than our Maker ever meant us;—when we would give laws to others, and expect the most submissive observances from them, as if God had resigned his authority to us, and made us, in his stead, the rightful monarchs of the world. To disdain that any creature should be above us, is to disdain God's sovereign disposition of men, and consequently, his own superiority over us. A proud man would govern all, and would not have God his Sovereign, but his subject; to overvalue ourselves, is to undervalue God.

[5.] Slight and careless worship of God is another contempt of his sovereignty. A prince is contemned, not only by a neglect of those reverential postures which are due to him, but in a reproachful and scornful way of paying them. To behave ourselves uncomely or immodestly before a prince, is a disesteem of majesty. Sovereignty requires awe in every address, where this is wanting there is a disrespect of authority. We contemn God's dominion when we give him the service of the lip, the hand, the knee, and deny him that of the heart; as they in Ezekiel 33:31, as though he were the Sovereign only of the body, and not of the soul. To have devout figures of the face, and uncomely postures of the soul, is to exclude his dominion from our spirits, while we own it only over our outward man; we render him an insignificant Lord, not worthy of any higher adorations from us than a senseless statue; we demean not ourselves according to his majestic authority over us, when we present him not with the cream and quintessence of our souls. The greatness of God required a great house, and a costly palace (1 Chron. 29:11, 16); David speaks it in order to the building God a house and a temple; God being a great King expects a male the best of our flock (Mal. 1:14), a masculine and vigorous service. When we present him with a sleepy, sickly rheumatic service, we betray our conceptions

of him to be as mean as if he were some petty lord, whose dominion were of no larger extent than a mole-hill, or some inconsiderable village.

[6.] Omission of the service he hath appointed is another contempt of his sovereignty. This is a contempt of his dominion, whereby he hath a right to appoint what means and conditions he pleaseth, for the enjoyment of his proffered and promised benefits. It is an enmity to his sceptre not to accept of his terms after a long series of precepts and invitations made for the restoring us to that happiness we had lost, and providing all means necessary thereunto, nothing being wanting but our own concurrence with it, and acceptance of it, by rendering that easy homage he requires. By withholding from him the service he enjoins, we deny, that we hold anything of him; as he that pays not the quit rent, though it be never so small, disowns the sovereignty of the lord of the manor; it implies, that he is a miserable poor lord, having no right, or destitute of any power, to dispose of anything in the world to our advantage (Job 22:17): “They say unto God, Depart from us, what can the Almighty do for them?” They will have no commerce with him in a way of duty, because they imagine him to have no sovereign power to do anything for them in way of benefit, as if his dominion were an empty title, and as much destitute of any authority to command a favor for them as any idol. They think themselves to have as absolute a disposal of things, as God himself. What can he do for us? what can he confer upon us, that we cannot invest ourselves in? as though they were sovereigns in an equality with God. Thus men live “without God in the world” (Eph.

2:12), as if there were no Supreme Being to pay a respect to, or none fit to receive any homage at their hands; withholding from God the right of his time and the right of his service, which is the just claim of his sovereignty.

[7.] Censuring others is a contempt of his sovereignty. When we censure men’s persons or actions by a rash judgment; when we will be judges of the good and evil of men’s actions, where the law of God is utterly silent, we usurp God’s place, and invade his right; we claim a superiority over the law, and judge God defective, as the Rector of the world, in his prescriptions of good and evil. (James 4:11, 12), “He that speaks evil of his brother, and judgeth his

brother, speaks evil of the law, and judgeth the law; there is one Lawgiver who is able to save, and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" Do you know what you do in judging another? You take upon you the garb of a sovereign, as if he were more your servant than God's, and more under your authority than the authority of God; it is a setting thyself in God's tribunal, and assuming his rightful power of judging; thy brother is not to be governed by thy fancy, but by God's law, and his own conscience.

2. *Information.* Hence it follows, that God doth actually govern the world. He hath not only a right to rule, but "he rules over all," so saith the text. He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords,"—what, to let them do what they please, and all that their lusts prompt them to? hath God an absolute dominion? Is it good, and is it wise? Is it then a useless prerogative of the Divine nature? Shall so excellent a power lie idle, as if God were a lifeless image? Shall we fancy God like some lazy monarch, that solaceth himself in the gardens of his palace, or steeps himself in some charming pleasures, and leaves his lieutenants to govern the several provinces, which are all members of his empire, according to their own humor? Not to exercise this dominion is all one as not to have it; to what purpose is he invested with this sovereignty, if he were careless of what were done in the world, and regarded not the oppressions of men? God keeps no useless excellency by him; he actually reigns over the heathen (Psalm 47:8), and those as bad, or worse than heathens. It had been a vanity in David to call upon the heavens to be glad, and the earth to rejoice, under the rule of a "sleepy Deity" (1 Chron. 16:31). No; his sceptre is full of eyes, as it was painted by the Egyptians; he is always waking, and always more than Ahasuerus, reading over the records of human actions. Not to exercise his authority, is all one as not to regard whether he keep the crown upon his head, or continue the sceptre in his hand. If his sovereignty were exempt from care, it would be destitute of justice; God is more righteous than to resign the ensigns of his authority to blind and oppressive man; to think that God hath a power, and doth not use it for just and righteous ends, is to imagine him an unrighteous as well as a careless Sovereign; such a thing in a man renders him a base man, and a worse governor; it is a vice that disturbs the world, and overthrows the ends of authority, as to have a power, and use it well, is the greatest virtue of an earthly sovereign. What an unworthy

conception is it of God, to acknowledge him to be possessed of a greater authority than the greatest monarch, and yet to think that he useth it less than a petty lord; that his crown is of no more value with him than a feather? This represents God impotent, that he cannot, or unrighteous and base, that he will not administer the authority he hath for the noblest and justest end. But can we say, that he neglects the government of the world? How come things then to remain in their due order? How comes the law of nature yet to be preserved in every man's soul? How comes conscience to check, and cite, and judge if God did not exercise his authority, what authority could conscience have to disturb man in unlawful practices, and to make his sports and sweetness so unpleasant and sour to him? Hath he not given frequent notices and memorials, that he holds a curb over corrupt inclinations, puts rubs in the way of malicious attempters, and often oversets the disturbers of the peace of the world?

3. *Information.* God can do no wrong, since he is absolute Sovereign. Man may do wrong, princes may oppress and rifle, but it is a crime in them so to do: because their power is a power of government, and not of propriety, in the goods or lives of their subjects; but God cannot do any wrong, whatsoever the clamors of creatures are, because he can do nothing but what he hath a sovereign right to do. If he takes away your goods, he takes not away anything that is yours more than his own, since though he entrusted you with them, he divested not himself of the propriety. When he takes away our lives, he takes what he gave us by a temporary donation, to be surrendered at his call: we can claim no right in anything but by his will. He is no debtor to us: and since he owes us nothing, he can wrong us in nothing that he takes away. His own sovereignty excuseth him in all those acts which are most distasteful to the creature. If we crop a medicinal plant for our use, or a flower for our pleasure, or kill a lamb for our food, we do neither of them any wrong: because the original of them was for our use, and they had their life, and nourishment, and pleasing qualities for our delight and support. And are not we much more made for the pleasure and use of God, than any of those can be for us? "Of him and to him are all things" (Rom. 11:36): hath not God as much right over any one of us, as over the meanest worm? Though there be a vast difference in nature between the angels in heaven and the

worms on earth, yet they are all one in regard of subjection to God; he is as much the Lord of the one as the other; as much the Proprietor of the one as the other; as much the Governor of one as the other;—not a cranny in the world is exempt from his jurisdiction;—not a mite or grain of a creature exempt from his propriety. He is not our Lord by election; he was a Lord before we were in being; he had no terms put upon him who capitulated with him, and set him in his throne by covenant. What oath did he take to any subject at his first investiture in his authority? His right is as natural, as eternal as himself: as natural as his existence, and as necessary as his Deity. Hath he any law but his own will? What wrong can he do that breaks no law, that fulfils his law in everything he doth, by fulfilling his own will, which as it is absolutely sovereign, so it is infinitely righteous? In whatsoever he takes from us, then, he cannot injure us; it is no crime in any man to seize upon his own goods to vindicate his own honor;—and shall it be thought a wrong in God to do such things, besides the occasion he hath from every man, and that every day provoking him to do it? He seems rather to wrong himself by forbearing such a seizure, than wrong us by executing it.

4. *Information.* If God have a sovereignty over the whole world., then merit is totally excluded. His right is so absolute over all creatures, that he neither is, nor can be, a debtor to any; not to the undefiled holiness of the blessed angels, much less to poor earthly worms; those blessed spirits enjoy their glory by the title of his sovereign pleasure, not by virtue of any obligation devolving from them upon God. Are not the faculties, whereby they and we perform any act of obedience, his grant to us? Is not the strength, whereby they and we are enabled to do anything pleasing to him, a gift from him? Can a vassal merit of his lord, or a slave of his master, by using his tools, and employing his strength in his service, though it was a strength he had naturally, not by donation from the man in whose service it is employed? God is Lord of all—all is due to him; how can we oblige him by giving him what is his own, more his to whom it is presented, than ours by whom it is offered? He becomes not a debtor by receiving anything from us, but by promising something to us.

5. *Information.* If God hath a sovereign dominion over the

whole world, then hence it follows, that all magistrates are but sovereigns under God. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords; all the potentates of the world are no other than his lieutenants, movable at his pleasure, and more at his disposal than their subjects are at theirs. Though they are dignified with the title of “gods,” yet still they are at an infinite distance from the supreme Lord; gods under God, not to be above him, not to be against him. The want of the due sense of their subordination to God hath made many in the world act as sovereigns above him more than sovereigns under him. Had they all bore a deep conviction of this upon their spirits, such audacious language had never dropped from the mouth of Pharaoh: “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go?” (Exod. 5:2), presuming that there was no superior to control him, nor any in heaven able to be a match for him; Darius had never published such a dotting edict, as to prohibit any petition to God; Nero had never fired Rome, and sung at the sight of the devouring flames; nor ever had he ripped up his mother’s belly, to see the womb where he first lodge and received a life so hateful to his country. Nor would Abner and Joab, the two generals, have accounted the death of men but a sport and interlude. “Let the young men arise and play before us” (2 Sam. 2:14); what play it was, the next verse acquaints you with; thrusting their swords into one another’s sides. They were no more troubled at the death of thousands, than a man is to kill a fly, or a flea. Had a sense of this but hovered over their souls, people in many countries had not been made their foot-balls, and used worse than their dogs! Nor had the lives of millions, worth more than a world, been exposed to fire and sword, to support some sordid lust, or breach of faith upon an idle quarrel, and for the depredation of their neighbors’ estates; the flames of cities had not been so bright, nor the streams of blood so deep, nor the cries of innocents so loud. In particular,

(1). If God be Sovereign, all under-sovereigns are not to rule against him, but to be obedient to his orders. If they “rule by his authority” (Prov. 8:15), they are not to rule against his interest; they are not to imagine themselves as absolute as God, and that their laws must be of as sovereign authority against his honor, as the Divine are for it. If they are his lieutenants on earth, they ought to act according to his orders. No man but will account a governor of a province a rebel, if he disobeys the orders sent to him by the

sovereign prince that commissioned him. Rebellion against God is a crime of princes, as well as rebellion against princes a crime of subjects. Saul is charged with it by Samuel in a high manner for an act of simple disobedience, though intended for the service of God, and the enriching his country with the spoils of the Amalekites. "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (1 Sam. 15:23); like witchcraft or covenanting with the devil, acting as if he had received his commission not from God, but from Satan.

Magistrates, as commissioned by God, ought to act for him. Doth human authority ever give a commission to any to rebel against itself? did God ever depute any earthly sovereignty against his glory, and give them leave to outlaw his laws, to introduce their own? No; when he gave the vicarious dominion to Christ, he calls upon the kings of the earth to be instructed, and be wise, and "kiss the Son" (Psalm 2:10, 12), *i. e.* to observe his orders, and pay him homage as their Governor. What a silly doltish thing is it to resist that Supreme Authority, to which the archangels submit themselves, and regulate their employments punctually by their instructions! Those excellent creatures exactly obey him in all the acts of their subordinate government in the world; those in whose hand the greatest monarch is no more than a silly fly between the fingers of a giant. A contradiction to the interest of God hath been fatal to kings. The four monarchies have had their wings clipped, and most of them have been buried in their own ashes; they have all, like the imitators of Lucifer's pride, fallen from the heaven of their glory to the depth of their shame and misery. All governors are bound to be as much obedient to God, as their subjects are bound to be submissive to them. Their authority over men is limited; God's authority over them is absolute and unbounded. Though every soul ought to be subject to the higher powers, yet there is a higher Power of all, to which those higher powers are to subject themselves; they are to be keepers of both the tables of the law of God, and are then most sovereigns when they set in their own practice an example of obedience to God, for their subjects to write after.

(2.) They ought to imitate God in the exercise of their sovereignty in ways of justice and righteousness. Though God be an absolute sovereign, yet his government is not tyrannical, but managed according to the rules of righteousness, wisdom, and

goodness. If God, that created them as well as their subjects, doth so exercise his government, it is a duty incumbent upon them to do the same; since they are not the creators of their people, but the conductors. As God's government tends to the good of the world, so ought theirs to the good of their countries. God committed not the government of the world to the Mediator in an unlimited way, but for the good of the church, in order to the eternal salvation of his people. "He gave him to be head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22). He had power over the devils to restrain them in their temptation and malice; power over the angels to order their ministry for the heirs of salvation. So power is given to magistrates for the civil preservation of the world and of human society; they ought therefore to consider for what ends they were placed over the rest of mankind, and not exercise their authority in a licentious way, but conformable to that justice and righteousness wherein God doth administer his government, and for the preservation of those who are committed to them.

(3.) Magistrates must then be obeyed when they act according to God's order, and within the bounds of the Divine commission. They are no friends to the sovereignty of God, that are enemies to magis tracy, his ordinance. Saul was a good governor, though none of the best men, and the despisers of his government after God's choice, were the sons of Belial (1 Sam. 10:27). Christ was no enemy to Caesar. To pull down a faithful magistrate, such an one as Zerubbabel, is to pluck a signet from the hand of God; for in that capacity he accounts him (Hag. 2:23). God's servants stand or fall to their own Master; how doth he check Aaron and Miriam for speaking against Moses, his servant? "Were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Num. 12:8); against Moses as related to you in the capacity of a governor; against Moses as related to you in the capacity of my servant? To speak anything against them, as they act by God's order, is an invasion of God's sovereign right, who gave them their commission. To act against just power, or the justice of an earthly power, is to act against God's ordinance, who ordained them in the world, but not any abuse, or ill use of their power.

Use II. How dreadful is the consideration of this doctrine to all rebels against God! Can any man that hath brains in his head,

imagine it an inconsiderable thing to despise the Sovereign of the world? It was the sole crime of disobedience to that positive law, whereby God would have a visible memorial of his sovereignty preserved in the eye of man, that showered down that deluge of misery, under which the world groans to this day. God had given Adam a soul, whereby he might live as a rational creature; and then gives him a law, whereby he might live as a dutiful subject: for God forbidding him to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, declared his own supremacy over Adam, and his propriety in the pleasant world he had given him by his bounty; he let him know hereby, that man was not his own lord, nor was to live after his own sentiments, but the directions of a superior. As when a great lord builds a magnificent palace, and brings in another to inhabit it, he reserves a small duty to himself, not of an equal value with the house, but for an acknowledgment of his own right, that the tenant may know he is not the lord of it, but hath this grant by the liberality of another. God hereby gave Adam matter for a pure obedience, that had no foundation in his own nature by any implanted law; he was only in it to respect the will of his Sovereign, and to understand that he was to live under the power of a higher than himself. There was no more moral evil in the eating of this fruit, as considered distinct from the command, than in eating of any other fruit in the garden: had there been no prohibition, he might with as much safety have fed upon it as upon any other. No law of nature was transgressed in the act of eating of it, but the sovereignty of God over him was denied by him; and for this the death threatened was inflicted on his posterity: for though divines take notice of other sins in the fall of Adam, yet God, in his trial, chargeth him with none but this, and doth put upon his question an emphasis of his own authority: "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded ye that thou shouldst not eat?" (Gen. 3:11). This I am pleased with, that thou shouldst disown my dominion over thyself, and this garden. This was the inlet to all the other sins: as the acknowledgment of God's sovereignty is the first step to the practice of all the duties of a creature, so the disowning his. sovereignty is the first spring of all the extravagances of a creature. Every sin against the sovereign Lawgiver is worthy of death: the transgression of this command deserved death, and procured it to spread itself over the face of the world. God's dominion cannot be despised without meriting the

greatest punishment.

1. Punishment necessarily follows upon the doctrine of sovereignty. It is a faint and a feeble sovereignty that cannot preserve itself, and vindicate its own wrongs against rebellious subjects; the height of God's dominion infers a vengeance on the contemners of it: if God be an eternal King, he is an eternal Judge. Since sin unlinks the dependence between God the Sovereign, and man the subject, if God did not vindicate the rights of his sovereignty, and the authority of his law, he would seem to despise his own dominion, be weary of it, and not act the part of a good governor. But God is tender of his prerogative, and doth most bestir himself when men exalt themselves proudly against him: "In the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he will be above them" (Exod. 18:11). When haraoh thought himself a mate for God, and proudly rejected his commands, as if they had been the messages of some petty Arabian lord, God rights his own authority upon the life of his enemy by the ministry of the Red Sea. He turned a great king into a beast, to make him know that the Most High ruled in the kingdoms of men: "The demand is by the word of the holy ones, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men" (Dan. 4:16, 17); and that by the petitions of the angels, who cannot endure that the empire of God should be obscured and diminished by the pride of man. Besides the tender respect he hath to his own glory, he is constantly presented with the solicitations of the angels to punish the proud ones of the earth, that darken the glory of his majesty: it is necessary for the rescue of his honor, and necessary for the satisfaction of his illustrious attendants, who would think it a shame to them to serve a Lord that were always unconcerned in the rebellions of his creatures, and tamely, suffer their spurns at his throne; and therefore there is a day wherein the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, the cedars of Lebanon overthrown, and high mountains levelled, that "God may be exalted in that day" (Isa. 2:11, 12), &c. Pride is a sin that immediately swells against God's authority; this shall be brought down that God may be exalted; not that he should have a real exaltation, as if he were actually deposed from his government, but that he shall be manifested to be the Sovereign of the whole world. It is necessary there should be a day to chase away those clouds that are upon his throne, that the lustre of his majesty may break forth to the

confusion of all the children of pride that vaunt against him. God hath a dominion over us as a Lawgiver, as we are his creatures; and a dominion over us in a way of justice, as we are his criminals.

2. This punishment is unavoidable.

(L) None can escape him. He hath the sole authority over hell and eath, the keys of both are in his hand: the greatest Caesar can no more escape him than the meanest peasant: “Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel?” (Zech. 4:7). The height of angels is no match for him, much less that of the mortal grandees of the world; they can no more resist him than the meanest person; but are rather, as the highest steeples, the fittest marks for his crushing thunder. If he speaks the word, the principalities of men come down, and “the crown of their glory” (Jer. 13:18). He can “take the mighty away in a moment,” and that “without hands,” *i. e.* without instruments (Job 34:20). The strongest are like the feet of Nebuchadnezzar’s image, iron and clay; iron to man, but clay to God, to be crumbled to nothing.

(2.) What comfort can be reaped from a creature, when the Sovereign of the world arms himself with terrors, and begins his visitation? “What will you do in the day of visitation, to whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your glory?” (Isa. 10:3). The torments from a subject may be relieved by the prince, but where can there be an appeal from the Sovereign of the world? Where is there any above him to control him, if he will overthrow us? Who is there to call him to account, and say to him, What dost thou? He works by an uncontrollable authority; he needs not ask leave of any; “he works, and none can let it” (Isa. 43:13): as when he will relieve, none can afflict; so when he will wound, none can relieve. If a king appoint the punishment of a rebel, the greatest favorite in the court cannot speak a comfortable word to him: the most beloved angel in heaven cannot sweeten and ease the spirit of a man that the Sovereign Power is set against to make the butt of his wrath. The devils he under his sentence, and wear their chains as marks of their condemnation, without hope of ever having them filed off, since they are laid upon them by the authority of an unaccountable Sovereign.

(3.) By his sovereign authority God can make any creature the

instrument of his vengeance. He hath all the creatures at his beck, and can commission any of them to be a dreadful scourge. Strong winds and tempests fulfil his word (Psalm 148:8); the lightnings answer him at his call, and cry aloud, "Here are we" (Job 38:35). By his sovereign authority he can render locusts as mischievous as lions, forge the meanest creatures into swords and arrows, and commission the most despicable to be his executioners. He can cut off joy from our spirits, and make our own hearts be our tormentors, our most confident friends our persecutors, our nearest relations to be his avengers; they are more his, who is their Sovereign, than ours, who place a vain confidence in them. Rather than Abraham shall want children, he can raise up stones, and adopt them into his family; and rather than not execute his vengeance, he can array the stones in the streets, and make them his armed subjects against us. If he speak the word, a hair shall drop from our heads to choke us, or a vapor, congealed into rheum in our heads, shall drop down and putrefy our vitals. He can never want weapons, who is Sovereign over the thunders of heaven and stones of the earth, over every creature; and can, by a sovereign word, turn our greatest comforts into curses.

3. This punishment must be terrible. How loth David, a great king, sound in his body, prosperous in his crown, and successful in his conquests, settled in all his royal conveniences, groan under the wrathful touch of a greater King than himself (Psalm 6, 38, and his other penitential Psalms), not being able to give himself a writ of ease by all the delights of his palace and kingdom "If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion" (Prov. 19:10) to a poor subject, how great is the wrath of the King of kings, that cannot be set forth by the terror of all the amazing volleys of thunder that have been since the creation, if the noise of all were gathered into one single crack! As there is an inconceivable ground of joy in the special favor of so mighty a King, so is there of terror in his severe displeasure: he is "terrible to the kings of the earth; with God is terrible majesty" (Psalm 86:12). What a folly is it, then, to rebel against so mighty a Sovereign!

Use III. Of comfort. The throne of God drops honey and sweetness, as well as dread and terror; all his other attributes afford little relief without this of his dominion and universal command.

When, therefore, he speaks of his being the God of his people, he doth often preface it with “the Lord thy God;” his sovereignty, as a Lord, being the ground of all the comfort we can take in his federal relation as our God; thy God, but superior to thee; thy God, not as thy cattle and goods are thine, in a way of sole propriety, but a Lord too, in a way of sovereignty, not only over thee, but over all things else for thee. As the end of God’s settling earthly governments was for the good of the communities over which the governors preside, so God exerciseth his government for the good of the world, and more particularly for the good of the church, over which he is a peculiar Governor.

1. His love to his people is as great as his sovereignty over them. He stands not upon his dominion with his people so much as upon his affection to them; he would not be called “Baali, my Lord,” *i. e.* he would not be known only by the name of sovereignty, but “Ishi, my husband,” a name of authority and sweetness together (Hos. 2:16, 19, &c.): he signifies that he is not only the Lord of our spirits and bodies, but a husband by a marriage knot, admitting us to a nearness to him, and communion of goods with him. Though he majestically sits upon a high throne, yet it is a throne “encircled with a rainbow” (Ezek. 1:28), to show that his government of his people is not only in a way of absolute dominion, but also in a way of federal relation; he seems to own himself their subject rather than their Sovereign, when he gives them a charter to command him in the affairs of his church (Isa. 45:11); “Ask of me things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command you me.” Some read it by way of question, as a corrective of a sauciness: Do you ask me of things to come, and seem to command me concerning the works of my hands, as if you were more careful of my interest among my people than I am, who have formed them? But if this were the sense, it would seem to discourage an importunity of prayer for public deliverance; and therefore, to take it according to our translation, it is an exhortation to prayer, and a mighty encouragement in the management and exercise of it. Urge me with my promise, in a way of humble importunity, and you shall find me as willing to perform my word, and gratify your desires, as if I were rather under your authority, than you under mine: as much as to say, If I be not as good as my word, to satisfy those desires that are according to my promise,

implead me at my own throne, and, if I be failing in it, will give judgment against myself: almost like princes' charters, and gracious grants, "We grant such a thing against us and our heirs," giving the subject power to implead them if they be not punctually observed by them. How is the love of God seen in his condescension below the majesty of earthy governors! He that might command, by the absoluteness of his authority, doth not only do that, but entreats, in the quality of a subject, as if he had not a fulness to supply us, but needed something from us for a supply of himself (2 Cor. 5:20): "As though God did beseech you by us." And when he may challenge, as a due by the right of his propriety, what we bestow upon his poor, which are his subjects as well as ours, he reckons it as a loan to him, as if what we had were more our own than his (Prov. 19:17). He stands not upon his dominion so much with us, when he finds us conscientious in paying the duty we owe to him; he rules as a Father, by love as well as by authority; he enters into a peculiar communion with poor earthy worms, plants his gracious tabernacle among the troops of sinners, instructs us by his word, invites us by his benefits, admits us into his presence, is more desirous to bestow his smiles than we to receive them, and acts in such a manner as if he were willing to resign his sceptre into the hands of any that were possessed with more love and kindness to us than himself: this is the comfort of believers.

2. In his being Sovereign, his pardons carry in them a full security. He that hath the keys of hell and death, pardons the crime, and wipes off the guilt. Who can repeal the act of the chief Governor? what tribunal can null the decrees of an absolute throne? (Isa. 43:25), "I, even I, am he that blots out thy transgressions, for my name's sake." His sovereign dominion renders his mercy comfortable. The clemency of a subject, though never so great, cannot pardon; people may pity a criminal, while the executioner tortures him, and strips him of his life; but the clemency of the Supreme Prince establisheth a pardon. Since we are under the dominion of God, if he pardons, who can reverse it? if he doth not, what will the pardons of men profit us in regard of an eternal state? If God be a King forever, then he whom God forgives, he in whom God reigns, shall live forever; else he would want subjects on earth, and have none of his lower creatures, which he formed upon the earth, to reign over after the dissolution of the world; if his pardons

did not stand secure, he would, after this life, have no voluntary subjects that had formerly a being upon the earth; he would be a King only over the damned creatures.

3. Corruptions will certainly be subdued in his voluntary subjects. The covenant, "I will be your God," implies protection, government, and relief, which are all grounded upon sovereignty; that, therefore, which is our greatest burden, will be removed by his sovereign power (Mic. 7:19): "He will subdue our iniquities." If the outward enemies of the church shall not bear up against his dominion, and perpetuate their rebellions unpunished, those within, his people, shall as little bear up against his throne, without being destroyed by him; the billows of our own hearts, and the raging waves within us, are as much at his beck as those without us; and his sovereignty is more eminent in quelling the corruptions of the heart, than the commotions of the world in reigning over men's spirit, by changing them, or curbing them, more than over men's bodies, by pinching and punishing them. The remainders of Satan's empire will moulder away before him, since He that is in us is a greater Sovereign "than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). His enemies will be laid at his feet, and so never shall prevail against him, when his kingdom shall come. He could not be Lord of any man, as a happy creature, if he did not, by his power, make them happy; and he could not make them happy, unless, by his grace, he made them holy: he could not be praised, as a Lord of glory, if he did not make some creatures glorious to praise him; and an earthly creature could not praise him perfectly, unless he had every grain of enmity to his glory taken out of his heart. Since God is the only Sovereign, he only can still the commotions in our spirits, and pull down all the ensigns of the devil's royalty; he can waste him by the powerful word of his lips.

4. Hence is a strong encouragement for prayer. "My King," was the strong compellation David used in prayer, as an argument of comfort and confidence, as well as that of "my God" (Psalm 5:2): "Hearken to the voice of my cry, my King and my God." To be a king is to have an office of government and protection: he gives us liberty to approach to him as the "Judge of all" (Heb. 12:23), *i. e.* as the Governor of the world; we pray to one that hath the whole globe of heaven and earth in his hand, and can do whatsoever he will:

though he be higher than the cherubims, and transcendently above all in majesty, yet we may soar up to him with the wings of our soul, faith and love, and lay open our cause, and find him as gracious as if he were the meanest subject on earth, rather than the most sovereign God in heaven. He hath as much of tenderness as he hath of authority, and is pleased with prayer, which is an acknowledgment of his dominion, an honoring of that which he delights to honor; for prayer, in the notion of it, imports thus much—that God is the Rector of the world, that he takes notice of human affairs, that he is a careful, just, wise Governor, a storehouse of blessing, a fountain of goodness to the indigent, and a relief to the oppressed. What have we reason to fear when the Sovereign of the world gives us liberty to approach to him and lay open our case? that God, who is King of the whole earth, not only of a few villages or cities in the earth, but the whole earth; and not only King of this dreddy place of our dross, but of heaven, having prepared, or established, his throne in the most glorious place of the creation.

5. Here is comfort in affliction. As a sovereign, he is the author of afflictions; as a sovereign, he can be the remover of them; he can command the waters of affliction to go so far and no farther. If he speaks the word, a disease shall depart as soon as a servant shall from your presence with a nod; if we are banished from one place, he can command a shelter for us in another; if he orders Moab, a nation that had no great kindness for his people, to let “his outcasts dwell with them,” they shall entertain them, and afford them sanctuary (Isa. 16:4). Again, God chasteneth as a “Sovereign,” but teacheth as a “Father” (Psalm 99:12); the exercise of his authority is not without an exercise of his goodness; he doth not correct for his own pleasure, or the creature’s torment, but for the creature’s instruction; though the rod be in the hand of a sovereign, yet it is tintured with the kindness of Divine bowels: he can order them as a sovereign to mortify our flesh, and try our faith. In the severest tempest, the Lord that raised the wind against us, which shattered the ship, and tore its rigging, can change that contrary wind for a more happy one, to drive us into the port.

6. It is a comfort against the projects of the church’s adversaries in times of public commotions. The consideration of the Divine sovereignty may arm us against the threatenings of mighty

ones, and the menaces of persecutors. God hath authority above the crowns of men, and a wisdom superior to the cabals of men; none can have a step without him; he hath a negative voice upon their counsels, a negative hand upon their motions; their politic resolves must stop at the point he hath prescribed them; their formidable strength cannot exceed the limits he hath set them; their overreaching wisdom expires at the breath of God: "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord" (Prov. 21:30); not a bullet can be discharged, nor a sword drawn, a wall battered, nor a person despatched out of the world, without the leave of God, by the mightiest in the world. The instruments of Satan are no more free from his sovereign restraint than their inspirer; they cannot pull the hook out of their nostrils, nor cast the bridle out of their mouths; this Sovereign can shake the earth, rend the heavens, overthrow mountains, the most mountainous opposers of his interest. Though the nations rush in against his people like the rushing of many waters, "God shall rebuke them, they shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind" (Isa. 17:13); so doth he often burst in pieces the most mischievous designs, and conducts the oppressed to a happy port: he often turns the severest tempests into a calm, as well as the most peaceful calm into a horrible storm. How often hath a well-rigged ship, that seemed to spurn the sea under her feet, and beat the waves before her to a foam, been swallowed up into the bowels of that element, over whose back she rode a little before! God never comes to deliver his church as a governor, but in a wrathful posture (Ezek. 20:33): "Surely, saith the Lord, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you;" not with fury poured out upon the church, but fury poured out upon her enemies, as the words following evidence: the church he would bring out from the countries where she was scattered, and bring the people into the bond of the covenant. He sometimes "cuts off the spirits of princes" (Psalm 76:12), *i. e.* cuts off their designs as men do in the pipes of a water-course. The hearts of all are as open to him as the riches of heaven, where he resides; he can slip an inclination into the heart of the mighty, which they dreamed not of before; and if he doth not change their projects, he can make them abortive, and waylay them in their attempts. Laban marched with fury, but God put a padlock on his passion against

Jacob (Gen. 31:24, 29); the devils, which ravage men's minds, must be still when he gives out his sovereign orders. This Sovereign can make his people find favor in the eyes of the cruel Egyptians, which had so long oppressed them (Exod. 11:3); and speak a good word in the heart of Nebuchadnezzar for the prophet Jeremiah, that he should order his captain to take him into his special protection, when he took Zedekiah away prisoner in chains, and "put out his eyes" (Jer. 39:11). His people cannot want deliverance from Him who hath all the world at his command, when he is pleased to bestow it; he hath as many instruments of deliverance as he hath creatures at his beck in heaven or earth, from the meanest to the highest. As he is the Lord of hosts, the church hath not only an interest in the strength he himself is possessed with, but in the strength of all the creatures that are under his command, in the elements below, and angels above. In those armies of heaven, and in the inhabitants of the earth, he doth "what he will" (Dan. 4:35); they are all in order and array at his command. There are angels to employ in a fatal stroke, lice and frogs to quell the stubborn hearts of his enemies; he can range his thunders and lightnings, the cannon and granadoes of heaven, and the worms of the earth in his service; he can muzzle lions, calm the fury of the fire, turn his enemies' swords into their own bowels, and their artillery on their own breasts; set the wind in their teeth, and make their chariot-wheels languish; make the sea enter a quarrel with them, and wrap them in its waves till it hath stifled them in its lap. The angels have storms, and tempests, and wars in their hands, but at the disposal of God; when they shall cast them out against the empire of antichrist (Rev. 7:1, 2), then shall Satan be discharged from his throne, and no more seduce the nations; the everlasting gospel shall be preached, and God shall reign gloriously in Sion. Let us, therefore, shelter ourselves in the Divine sovereignty, regard God as the most high in our dangers and in our petitions. This was David's resolution (Psalm 57:1, 2): "I will cry unto God most high;" this dominion of God is the true "tower of David, wherein there are a thousand shields" for defence and encouragement (Cant. 4:4).

Use IV. If God hath an extensive dominion over the whole world, this ought to be often meditated on, and acknowledged by us. This is the universal duty of mankind. If he be the Sovereign of all, we should frequently think of our great Prince, and acknowledge ourselves his subjects, and him our Lord. God will be acknowledged

the Lord of the whole earth; the neglect of this is the cause of the judgments which are sent upon the world. All the prodigies were to this end, that they might know, or acknowledge, that “God was the Lord” (Exod. 10:2); as God was proprietor, he demanded the first-born of every Jew, and the first-born of every beast; the one was to be redeemed, and the other sacrificed; this was the quit rent they were to pay to him for their fruitful land. The first-fruits of the earth were ordered to be paid to him, as a homage due to the landlord, and an acknowledgment they held all in chief of him. The practice of offering first-fruits for an acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty, was among many of the heathens, and very ancient; hence they dedicated some of the chief of their spoils, owning thereby the dominion and goodness of God, whereby they had gained the victory; Cain owned this in offering the fruits of the earth, and it was his sin he owned no more, *viz.*, his being a sinner, and meriting the justice of God, as his brother Abel did in his bloody sacrifice. God was a sovereign Proprietor and Governor while man was in a state of innocence; but when man proved a rebel, the sovereignty of God bore another relation towards him, that of a Judge, added to the other. The first-fruits might have been offered to God in a state of innocence, as a homage to him as Lord of the manor of the world; the design of them was to own God’s propriety in all things, and men’s dependence on him for the influences of heaven in producing the fruits of the earth, which he had ordered for their use. The design of sacrifices, and placing beasts instead of the criminal, was to acknowledge their own guilt, and God as a sovereign Judge; Cain owned the first, but not the second; he acknowledged his dependence on God as a Proprietor, but not his obnoxiousness to God as a Judge; which may be probably gathered from his own speech, when God came to examine him, and ask him for his brother (Gen. 4:9): “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Why do you ask me? though I own thee as the Lord of my land and goods, yet I do not think myself accountable to thee for all my actions. This sovereignty of God ought to be acknowledged in all the parts of it, in all the manifestattons of it to the creature; we should bear a sense of this always upon our spirits, and be often in the thoughts of it in our retirements; we should fancy that we saw God upon his throne in his royal garb, and great attendants about him, and take a view of it, to imprint an awe upon our spirits. The meditation of this would,

1. Fix us on him as an object of trust. It is upon his sovereign dominion as much as upon anything, that safe and secure confidence is built; for if he had any superior above him to control him in his designs and promises, his veracity and power would be of little efficacy to form our souls to a close adherency to him. It were not fit to make him the object of our trust that can be gainsayed by a higher than himself, and had not a full authority to answer our expectations; if we were possessed with this notion fully and believingly, that God were high above all, that "his kingdom rules over all," we should not catch at every broken reed, and stand gaping for comforts from a pebble stone. He that understands the authority of a king, would not waive a reliance on his promise to depend upon the breath of a changeling favorite. None but an ignorant man would change the security he may have upon the height of a rock, to expect it from the dwarfishness of a molehill. To put confidence in any inferior lord more than in the prince, is a folly in civil converse, but a rebellion in divine; God only being above all, can only rule all; can command things to help us, and check other things which we depend on, and make them fall short of our expectations. The due consideration of this doctrine would make us pierce through second causes to the first, and look further than to the smaller sort of sailors, that climb the ropes, and dress the sails, to the pilot that sits at the helm, the master, that, by an indisputable authority, orders all their notions. We should not depend upon second causes for our support, but look beyond them to the authority of the Deity, and the dominion he hath over all the works of his hands (Zech. 10:1): "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain;" when the seasons of the year conspire for the producing such an effect, when the usual time of rain is wheeled about in the year, stop not your thoughts at the point of the heavens whence you expect it, but pierce the heavens, and solicit God, who must give order for it before it comes. The due meditation of all things depending on the Divine dominion would strike off our hands from all other holds, so that no creature would engross the dependence and trust which is due to the First Cause; as we do not thank the heavens when they pour out rain, so we are not to depend upon them when we want it; God is to be sought to when the womb of second causes is opened to relieve us, as well as when the womb of second causes is barren, and brings not forth its wonted progeny.

2. It would make us diligent in worship. The consideration of God, as the Supreme Lord, is the foundation of all religion: "Our Father, which art in heaven," prefaceth the Lord's prayer; "Father" is a name of authority; "in heaven," the place where he hath fixed his throne, notes his government; not "my Father," but "our Father," notes the extent of this authority. In all worship we acknowledge the object of our worship our Lord, and ourselves his vassals; if we bear a sense that he is our Sovereign King, it would draw us to him in every exigence, and keep us with him in a reverential posture, in every address; when we come, we should be careful not to violate his right, but render him the homage due to his royalty. We should not appear before him with empty souls, but filled with holy thoughts: we should bring him the best of our flock, and present him with the prime of our strength; were we sensible we hold all of him, we should not withhold anything from him which is more worthy than another. Our hearts would be framed into an awful regard of him, when we consider that glorious and "fearful name, the Lord our God" (Deut. 28:58). We should look to our feet when we enter into his house; if we considered him in heaven upon his throne, and ourselves on earth at his footstool (Eccles. 5:2), lower before him than a worm before an angel, it would hinder garnishness and lightness. The Jews, saith Capel, on 1 Tim. 1:17, repeat this expression, *העולם מלך*, King of worlds, or Eternal King; probably the first original of it might be to stake them down from wandering. When we consider the majesty of God, clothed with a robe of light, sitting upon his high throne, adorned with his royal ensigns, we should not enter into the presence of so great a Majesty with the sacrifice of fools, with light motions and foolish thoughts, as if he were one of our companions to be drolled with. We should not hear his word as if it were the voice of some ordinary peasant. The consideration of majesty would engender reverence in our service; it would also make us speak of God with honor and respect, as of a great and glorious king, and not use defaming expressions of him, as if he were an infamous being. And were he considered as a terrible majesty, he would not be frequently solicited by some to pronounce a damnation upon them upon every occasion.

3. It would make us charitable to others. Since he is our Lord, the great Proprietor of the world, it is fit he should have a part of our goods, as well as our time: he being the Lord both of our goods and

time. The Lord is to be honored with our substance (Prov. 3:9); kings were not to be approached to without a present; tribute is due to kings: but because he hath no need of any from us to bear up his state, maintain the charge of his wars, or pay his military officers and hosts, it is a debt due to him to acknowledge him in his poor, to sustain those that are a part of his substance; though he stands in no need of it himself, yet the poor, that we have always with us, do; as a seventh part of our weekly time, so some part of our weekly gains, are due to him. There was to be a weekly laying by in store somewhat of what God had prospered them, for the relief of others (1 Cor. 16:1, 2); the quantity is not determined, that is left to every man's conscience, "according as God hath prospered him" that week. If we did consider God as the Donor and Proprietor, we should dispose of his gifts according to the design of the true owner, and act in our places as stewards entrusted by him, and not purse up his part, as well as our own, in our coffers. We should not deny him a small quit rent, as an acknowledgement that we have a greater income from him; we should be ready to give the inconsiderable pittance he doth require of us, as an acknowledgment of his propriety, as well as liberality.

4. It would make us watchful, and arm us against all temptations. Had Eve stuck to her first argument against the serpent, she had not been instrumental to that destruction which mankind yet feel the smart of (Gen. 3:3): "God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it;" the great Governor of the world hath laid his sovereign command upon us in this point. The temptation gained no ground till her heart let go the sense of this for the pleasure of her eye and palate. The repetition of this, the great Lord of the world hath said or ordered, had both unargued and disarmed the tempter. A sense of God's dominion over us would discourage a temptation, and put it out of countenance; it would bring us with a vigorous strength to beat it back to a retreat. If this were as strongly urged as the temptation, it would make the heart of the tempted strong, and the motion of the tempter feeble.

5. It would make us entertain afflictions as they ought to be entertained, *viz.*, with a respect to God. When men make light of any affliction from God, it is a contempt of his sovereignty, as to contemn the frown, displeasure, and check of a prince, is an affront

to majesty: it is as if they did not care a straw what God did with them, but dare him to do his worst. There is a “despising the chastening of the Almighty” (Job 5:17). To be unhumiliated under his hand, is as much, or more, affront to him, than to be impatient under it. Afflictions must be entertained as a check from heaven, as a frown from the great Monarch of the world; under the feeling of every stroke, we are to acknowledge his sovereignty and bounty; to despise it, is to make light of his authority over us; as to despise his favors is to make light of his kindness to us.

A sense of God’s dominion would make us observe every check from him, and not diminish his authority by casting off a due sense of his correction.

6. This dominion of God would make us resign up ourselves to God in everything. He that considers himself a thing made by God, a vassal under his authority, would not expostulate with him, and call him to an account why he hath dealt so or so with him. It would stab the vitals of all pleas against him. We should not then contest with him, but humbly lay our cause at his feet, and say with Eli, (1 Sam. 3:18), “It is the Lord, let him do what seems good.” We should not commence a suit against God, when he doth not answer our prayers presently, and send the mercy we want upon the wings of the wind; he is the Lord, the Sovereign. The consideration of this would put an end to our quarrels with God; should I expect that the Monarch of the world should wait upon me; or I, a poor worm, wait upon him? Must I take state upon me before the throne of heaven, and expect the King of kings should lay by his sceptre, to gratify my humor? Surely Jonah thought God no more than his fellow, or his vassal, at that time when he told him to his face he did well to be angry, as though God might not do what he pleased with so small a thing as a gourd; he speaks as if he would have sealed a lease of ejectionment, to exclude him from any propriety in anything in the world.

7. This dominion of God would stop our vain curiosity. When Peter was desirous to know the fate of John, the beloved disciple, Christ answereth no more than this: (John 21:22), “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.” Consider your duty, and lay aside your curiosity, since it is my pleasure not to reveal it. The sense of God’s absolute dominion would silence many vain disputes in the world. What if God will not reveal this or that?

the manner and method of his resolves should humble the creature under intruding inquiries.

Use V. Of exhortation.

1. The doctrine of the dominion of God may teach us humility. We are never truly abased, but by the consideration of the eminence and excellency of the Deity. Job never thought himself so pitiful a thing, so despicable a creature, as after God's magnificent declamation upon the theme of his own sovereignty (Job 42:5, 6). When God's name is regarded as the most excellent and sovereign name in all the earth, then is the soul in the fittest temper to lie low; and cry out, What is man, that so great a Majesty should be mindful of him? When Abraham considers God as the supreme Judge of all the earth, he then owns "himself but dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:25, 27). Indeed, how can vile and dusty man vaunt before God, when angels, far more excellent creatures, cannot stand before him, but with a veil on their faces? How little a thing is man in regard of all the earth! How mean a thing is the earth in regard of the vaster heavens!

How poor a thing is the whole world in comparison of God! How pitiful a thing is man, if compared with so excellent a Majesty! There is as great a distance between God and man, as between being and not being; and the more man considers the Divine royalty, the more disesteem he will have of himself; it would make him stoop and disrobe himself, and fall low before the throne of the King of kings, throwing down before his throne any crown he gloried in (Rev. 4:10).

(1). In regard of authority. How unreasonable is pride in the presence of majesty! How foolish is it for a country justice of peace to think himself as great as his prince that commissioned him! How unreasonable is pride in the presence of the greatest sovereignty! What, is human greatness before Divine? The stars discover no light when the sun appears, but in a humble posture withdraw in their lesser beams, to give the sole glory of enlightening the world to the sun, who is, as it were, the sovereign of those stars, and imparts a light unto them. The greatest prince is infinitely less, if compared with God, than the meanest scullion in his kitchen can be before him. As the wisdom, goodness, and holiness of a man is a mere

mote compared to the goodness and holiness of God, so is the authority of a man a mere trifle in regard of the sovereignty of God: and who but a simple child would be proud of a mote or trifle? Let man be as great as he can, and command others, he is still a subject to One greater than himself. Pride would then vanish like smoke at the serious consideration of this sovereignty. One of the kings of this country did very handsomely shame the flattery of his courtiers, that cried him up as lord of sea and land, by ordering his chair to be set on the sand of the sea shore, when the tide was coming in, and commanding the waters not to touch his feet, which when they did without any regard to his authority, he took occasion thereby to put his flatterers out of countenance, and instruct himself in a lesson of humility. [See,] saith he, [how I rule all things, when so mean a thing as the water will not obey me!] It is a ridiculous pride that the Turk and Persian discover in their swelling titles. What poor sovereigns are they, that cannot command a cloud, give out an effectual order for a drop of rain, in a time of drought, or cause the bottles of heaven to turn their mouth another way in a time of too much moisture! Yet their own prerogatives are so much in their minds, that they jostle out all thoughts of the supreme prerogative of God, and give thereby occasion to frequent rebellions against him.

(2). In regard of propriety. And this doctrine is no less an abatement of pride in the highest, as well as in the meanest; it lowers pride in point of propriety, as well as in point of authority. Is any proud of his possessions? how many lords of those possessions have gone before you! how many are to follow you! Your dominion lasts but a short time, too short to be a cause of any pride and glory in it. God by a sovereign power can take you from them, or them from you, when he pleaseth. The traveller refresheth himself in the heat of summer under a shady tree; how many have done so before him the same day he knows not, and how many will have the benefit after before night comes, he is as much ignorant of; he, and the others that went before him and follow after him, use it for their refreshment, but none of them can say, that they are the lords of it; the property is invested in some other person, whom perhaps they know not. The propriety of all you have is in God, not truly in yourselves. Doth not that man deserve scorn from you, who will play the proud fool in gay clothes and attire, which are known to be none of his own, but borrowed? Is it not the same case with every proud man, though he

hath a property in his goods by the law of the land? Is anything you have your own truly? Is it not lent you by the great Lord? Is it not the same vanity in any of you, to be proud of what you have as God's loan to you, as for such a one to be proud of what he hath borrowed of man? And do you not make yourselves as ridiculous to angels and good men, who know that though it is yours in opposition to man, yet it is not yours in opposition to God? they are granted you only for your use, as the collar of eses and sword, and other ensigns of the chief magistrate in the city, pass through many hands in regard of the use of them, but the propriety remains in the community and body of the city: or as the silver plate of a person that invites you to a feast is for your use during the time of the invitation. What ground is there to be proud of those things you are not the absolute lords and proprietors of, but only have the use of them granted to you during the pleasure of the Sovereign of the world!

2. Praise and thankfulness result from this doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

(1). He is to be praised for his royalty. (Psalm 145:1), "I will extoll thee, my God, O King." The Psalmist calls upon men five times to sing praise to him as King of all the earth. (Psalm 47:6, 7), "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises to our king, sing praises: for God is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding." All creatures, even the inanimate ones, are called upon to praise him because of the excellency of his name and the supremacy of his glory, in the 148th Psalm throughout, and ver. 13. That Sovereign Power that gave us hearts and tongues, deserves to have them employed in his praises, especially since he hath by the same hand given us so great matter for it. As he is a Sovereign we owe him thankfulness; he doth not deal with us in a way of absolute dominion; he might then have annihilated us, since he hath as full a dominion to reduce us to nothing. Consider the absoluteness of his sovereignty in itself, and you must needs acknowledge that he might have multiplied precepts, enjoined us the observance of more than he hath done; he might have made our tether much shorter; he might exact obedience, and promise no reward for it; he might dash us against the walls, as a potter doth his vessel, and no man have any just reason to say, What dost thou? or, Why dost thou use me so? A

greater right is in him to use us in such a manner as we do sensible as well as insensible things. And if you consider his dominion as it is capable to be exercised in a way of unquestionable justice, and submitted to the reason and judgments of creatures, he might have dealt with us in a smarter way than he hath hitherto done; instead of one affliction, we might have had a thousand: he might have shut his own hands from pouring out any good upon us, and ordered innumerable scourges to be prepared for us; but he deals not with us according to the rights of his dominion. He doth not oppress us by the greatness of his majesty; he enters into covenant with us, and allures us by the chords of a man, and shows himself as much a merciful as an absolute Sovereign.

(2.) As he is a Proprietor, we owe him thankfulness. He is at his own choice whether he will bestow upon us any blessings or no; the more value, therefore, his benefits deserve from us, and the Donor the more sincere returns. If we have anything from the creature to serve our turn, it is by the order of the chief Proprietor. He is the spring of honor, and the fountain of supplies: all creatures are but as the conduit pipes in a great city, which serve several houses with water, but from the great spring. All things are conveyed originally from his own hand, and are dispensed from his exchequer. If this great Sovereign did not order them, you would have no more supplies from a creature than you could have nourishment from a chip: it is the Divine will in everything that doth us good; every favor from creatures is but a smile from God, an evidence of his royalty to move us to pay a respect to him as the great Lord. Some heathens had so much respect for God, as to conclude that his will, and not their prudence, was the chief conductor of their affairs. His goodness to us calls for our thankfulness, but his sovereignty calls for a higher elevation of it: a smile from a prince is more valued, and thought worthy of more gratitude, than a present from a peasant; a small gift from a great person is more gratefully to be received than a larger from an inferior person: the condescension of royalty magnifies the gift. What is man, that thou, so great a Majesty, art mindful of him, to bestow this or that favor upon him?—is but a due reflection upon every blessing we receive. Upon every fresh blessing we should acknowledge the Donor and true Proprietor, and give him the honor of his dominion: his property ought to be thankfully owned in everything we are capable of consecrating to

him; as David, after the liberal collection he had made for the building of the temple, owns in his dedication of it to that use the propriety of God: "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chron. 29:14): it was but a return of God's own to him, as the waters of the river are no other than the return to the sea of what was taken from it. Praise and thankfulness is a rent due from all mankind, and from every creature, to the great Landlord, since all are tenants, and hold by him at his will. "Every creature in heaven and earth, and under the earth, and in the sea," were heard, by John, to ascribe "blessing, honor, glory, and power, to Him that sits on the throne" (Rev. 5:13). We are as much bound to the sovereignty of God for his preservation of us, as for his creation of us; we are no less obliged to him that preserves our beings when exposed to dangers, than we are for bestowing a being upon us when we were not capable of danger. Thankfulness is due to this Sovereign for public concerns. Rath he not preserved the ship of his church in the midst of whistling winds and roaring waves; in the midst of the combats of men and devils; and rescued it often when it hath been near shipwrecked?

3. How should we be induced from hence to promote the honor of this Sovereign! We should advance him as supreme, and all our actions should concur in his honor: we should return to his glory what we have received from his sovereignty, and enjoy by his merey he that is the superior of all, ought to be the end of all. This is the harmony of the creation; that which is of an inferior nature is ordered to the service of that which is of a more excellent nature; thus water and earth, that have a lower being, are employed for the honor and beauty of the plants of the earth, who are more excellent in having a principle of a growing life: these plants are again subservient to the beasts and birds, which exceed them in a principle of sense, which the others want: those beasts and birds are ordered for the good of man, who is superior to them in a principle of reason, and is invested with a dominion over them. Man having God for his superior, ought as much to serve the glory of God, as other things are designed to be useful to man. Other governments are intended for the good of the community, the chief end is not the good of the governors themselves: but God being every way sovereign, the sovereign Being, giving being to all things, the

sovereign Ruler, giving order and preservation to all things, is also the end of all things, to whose glory and honor all things, all creatures, are to be subservient; “for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever” (Rom. 11:36): *of* him, as the efficient cause; *through* him, as the preserving cause; *to* him, as the final cause. All our actions and thoughts ought to be addressed to his glory; our whole beings ought to be consecrated to his honor, though we should have no reward but the honor of having been subservient to the end of our creation: so much doth the excellency and majesty of God, infinitely elevated above us, challenge of us. Subjects use to value the safety, honor, and satisfaction of a good prince above their own: David is accounted worth ten thousand of the people; and some of his courtiers thought themselves obliged to venture their lives for his satisfaction in so mean a thing as a little water from the well of Bethlehem. Doth not so great, so good a Sovereign as God, deserve the same affection from us? “Do we swear,” saith a heathen, “to prefer none before Caesar, and have we not greater reason to prefer none before God?” It is a justice due from us to God to maintain his glory, as it is a justice to preserve the right and property of another. As God would lay aside his Deity if he did deny himself, so a creature acts irregularly, and out of the rank of a creature, if it doth not deny itself for God.

He that makes himself his own end, makes himself his own sovereign.

To napkin up a gift he hath bestowed upon us, or to employ what we possess solely to our own glory, to use anything barely for ourselves, without respect to God, is to apply it to a wrong use, and to injure God in his propriety, and the end of his donation. What we have ought to be used for the honor of God: he retains the dominion and lordship, though he grants us the use: we are but stewards, not proprietors, in regard to God, who expects an account from us, how we have employed his goods to his honor. The kingdom of God is to be advanced by us: we are to pray that his kingdom may come: we are to endeavor that his kingdom may come, that is, that God may be known to be the chief Sovereign; that his dominion, which was obscured by Adam’s fall, may be more manifested; that his subjects, which are suppressed in the world, may be supported; his laws,

which are violated by the rebellions of men, may be more obeyed; and his enemies be fully subdued by his final judgment, the last evidence of his dominion in this state of the world; that the empire of sin and the devil may be abolished, and the kingdom of God perfected, that none may rule but the great and rightful Sovereign. Thus while we endeavor to advance the honor of his throne, we shall not want an honor to ourselves. He is too gracious a Sovereign to neglect them that are mindful of his glory; “those that honor him, he will honor” (1 Sam. 2:30).

4. Fear and reverence of God in himself, and in his actions, is a duty incumbent on us from this doctrine (Jer. 10:7): “Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?” The ingratitude of the world is taxed in not reverencing God as a great king, who had given so many marks of his royal government among them. The prophet wonders there was no fear of so great a King in the world, since, “among all the wise men of the nations, and among all their kings, there is none like unto this;” no more reverence of him, since none ruled so wisely, nor any ruled so graciously. The dominion of God is one of the first sparks that gives fire to religion and worship, considered with the goodness of this Sovereign (Psalm 12:27, 28): “All the nations shall worship before thee, for the kingdom is the Lord’s, and he is Governor among the nations.” Epicurus, who thought God careless of human affairs, leaving them at hap-hazard, to the conduct of men’s wisdom and mutability of fortune, yet acknowledged that God ought to be worshipped by man for the excellency of his nature, and the greatness of his majesty. How should we reverence that God, that hath a throne encompassed with such glorious creatures as angels, whose faces we are not able to behold, though shadowed in assumed bodies! how should we fear the Lord of Hosts, that hath so many armies at his command in the heavens above, and in the earth below, whom he can dispose to the exact obedience of his will! how should men be afraid to censure any of his actions, to sit judge of their Judge, and call him to an account at their bar! how should such an earth-worm, a mean animal as man, be afraid to speak irreverently of so great a King among his pots and strumpets! Not to fear him, not to reverence him, is to pull his throne from under him, and make him of a lower authority than ourselves, or any creature that we reverence more.

5. Prayer to God, and trust in him, is inferred from his sovereignty. If he be the supreme Sovereign, holding heaven and earth in his hand, disposing all things here below, not committing everything to the influence of the stars or the humors of men, we ought, then, to apply ourselves to him in every case, implore the exercise of his authority; we hereby own his peculiar right over all things and persons. He only is the supreme Head in all causes, and over all-persons: "Thine is the kingdom" (Matt. 6:13), concludes the Lord's prayer, both as a motive to pray, and a ground to expect what we want. He that believes not God's government will think it needless to call upon him, will expect no refuge under him in a strait, but make some creature need his support. If we do not seek to him, but rely upon the dominion we have over our own possessions, or upon the authority of anything else, we disown his supremacy and dominion over all things; we have as good an opinion of ourselves, or of some creatures, as we ought to have of God; we think ourselves, or some natural cause we seek to or depend upon, as much sovereigns as he, and that all things which concern us are as much at the dispose of an inferior, as of the great Lord. It is, indeed, to make a god of ourselves, or of the creature; when we seek to him, upon all occasions, we own this Divine eminency, we acknowledge that it is by him men's hearts are ordered, the world governed, all things disposed; and God, that is jealous of his glory, is best pleased with any duty in the creature that doth acknowledge and desire the glorification of it, which prayer and dependence on him doth in a special manner, desiring the exercise of his authority, and the preservation of it in ordering the affairs of the world.

6. Obedience naturally results from this doctrine. As his justice requires fear, his goodness thankfulness, his faithfulness trust, his truth belief, so his sovereignty, in the nature of it, demands obedience: as it is most fit he should rule, in regard of his excellency, so it is most fit we should obey him in regard of his authority: he is our Lord, and we his subjects; he is our Master, and we his servants; it is righteous we should observe him, and conform to his will: he is everything that speaks an authority to command us, and that can challenge an humility in us to obey. As that is the truest doctrine that subjects us most to God, so he is the truest Christian that doth, in his practice, most acknowledge this subjection; and as sovereignty is the first notion a creature can have of God, so

obedience is the first and chief thing conscience reflects upon the creature. Man holds all of God; and therefore owes all the operations capable to be produced by those faculties to that Sovereign Power that endowed him with them. Man had no being but from him; he hath no motion without him; he should, therefore, have no being but for him; and no motion but according to him: to call him Lord, and not to act in subjection to him, is to mock and put a scorn upon him (Luke 6:46): “Why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?” It is like the crucifying Christ under the title of a King. It is not by professions, but by observance of the laws of a prince, that we manifest a due respect to him: by that we reverence that authority that enacted them, and the prudence that framed them.

This doctrine affords us motives to obey, and directs us to the manner of obedience. 1st. Motives to obey,

(1.) It is comely and orderly. Is it not a more becoming thing to be ruled by the will of our Sovereign than by that of our lusts?—to observe a wise and gracious Authority, than to set up inordinate appetites in the room of his law? Would not all men account it a disorder to be abominated, to see a slave or vassal control the just orders of his lord, and endeavor to subject his master’s will to his own? much more to expect God should serve our humor rather than we be regulated by his will. It is more orderly that subjects should obey their governors, than governors their subjects; that passion should obey reason, than reason obey passion. When good governors are to conform to subjects, and reason veil to passion, it is monstrous! the one disturbs the order of a community, and the other defaceth the beauty of the soul. Is it a comely thing for God to stoop to our meanness, or for us to stoop to his greatness?

(2.) In regard of the Divine sovereignty, it is both honorable and advantageous to obey God. It is, indeed, the glory of a superior to be obeyed by his inferior; but where the sovereign is of transcendent excellency and dignity, it is an honor to a mean person to be under his immediate commands, and enrolled in his service. It is more honor to be God’s subject than to be the greatest worldly monarch; his very service is an empire, and disobedience to him is a slavery. It is a part of his sovereignty to reward any service done him. Other lords may be willing to recompense the service of their subjects, but are often rendered unable; but nothing can stand in the way of God

to hinder your reward, if nothing stand in your way to hinder your obedience (Lev. 18:5): “If you keep my statutes, you shall live in them; I am the Lord.” Is there anything in the world can recompense you for rebellion against God, and obedience to a lust? Saul cools the hearts of his servants from running after David, by David’s inability to give them fields and vineyards (1 Sam. 22:7): “Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, that you have conspired against me?” But God hath a dominion to requite, as well as an authority to command your obedience; he is a great Sovereign, to bear you out in your observance of his precepts against all reproaches and violence of men, and at last to crown you with eternal honor. If he should neglect vindicating, one time or other, your loyalty to him, he will neglect the maintaining and vindicating his own sovereignty and greatness.

(3.) God, in all his dispensations to man, was careful to preserve the rights of his sovereignty in exacting obedience of his creature. The second thing he manifested his sovereignty in was that of a Lawgiver to Adam, after that of a Proprietor in giving him the possession of the garden; one followed immediately the other (Gen. 2:15, 16): “The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it; and the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it,” &c. Nothing was to be enjoyed by man but upon the condition of obedience to his Lord; and it is observed that in the description of the creation, God is not called “Lord” till the finishing of the creation, and particularly in the forming of man. “And the Lord God formed man” (Gen. 2:7). Though he was Lord of all creatures, yet it was in man he would have his sovereignty particularly manifested, and by man have his authority specially acknowledged. The law is prefaced with this title: “I am the Lord thy God” (Exod. 20:2): authority in Lord, sweetness in God, the one to enjoin, the other to allure obedience; and God enforceth several of the commands with the same title. And as he begins many precepts with it, so he concludes them with the same title, “I am the Lord,” Lev. 19:37, and in other places. In all his communications of his goodness to man in ways of blessing them, he stands upon the preservation of the rights of his sovereignty, and manifests his graciousness in favor of his authority. “I am the Lord

your God,” your God in all my perfections for your advantage, but yet your Sovereign for your obedience. In all his condescension he will have the rights of this untouched and unviolated by us. When Christ would give the most pregnant instance of his condescending and humble kindness, he useth his authority to ballast their spirits from any presumptuous eruptions because of his humility. “You call me Master, and Lord; and you say well: for so I am” (John 13:13). He asserts his authority, and presseth them to their duty, when he had seemed to lay it by for the demeanor of a servant, and had, below the dignity of a master, put on the humility of a mean underling, to wash the disciples feet; all which was to oblige them to perform the command he then gave them (ver. 14), and in obedience to his authority, and imitation of his example.

(4.) All creatures obey him. All creatures punctually observe the law he hath imprinted on their nature, and in their several capacities acknowledge him their Sovereign; they move according to the inclinations he imprinted on them. The sea contains itself in its bounds, and the sun steps out of its sphere; the stars march in their order, “they continue this day according to thy ordinance, for all are thy servants” (Psalm 119:91). If he orders things contrary to their primitive nature, they obey him. When he speaks the word, the devouring fire becomes gentle, and toucheth not a hair of the children he will preserve; the hunger- starved lions suspend their ravenous nature, when so good a morsel as Daniel is set before them; and the sun, which had been in perpetual motion since its creation, obeys the writ of ease God sent it in Joshua’s time, and stands still. Shall insensible and sensible creatures be punctual to his orders, passively acknowledge his authority? shall lions and serpents obey God in their places?—and shall not man, who can, by reason, argue out the sovereignty of God, and understand the sense and goodness of his laws, and actively obey God with that will he hath enriched him with above other creatures? Yet the truth is, every sensitive, yea, every senseless creature, obeys God more than his rational, more than his gracious creatures in this world. The rational creatures since the fall have a prevailing principle of corruption. Let the obedience of other creatures incite us more to imitate them, and shame our remissness in not acknowledging the dominion of God, in the just way he prescribes us to walk in. Well then, let us not pretend to own God as our Lord, and yet act the part of rebels; let us give

him the reverence, and pay him that obedience, which of right belongs to so great a King. Whatsoever he speaks as a true God, ought to be believed; whatsoever he orders as a sovereign God, ought to be obeyed; let not God have less than man, nor man have more than God. It is a common principle writ upon the reason of all men, that respect and observance is due to the majesty of a man, much more to the Majesty of God as a Lawgiver.

2d. As this doctrine presents us motives, so it directs us to the manner and kind of our obedience to God.

(1.) It must be with a respect to his authority. As the veracity of God is the formal object of faith, and the reason why we believe the things he hath revealed; so the authority of God is the formal object of our obedience, or the reason why we observe the things he hath commanded. There must be a respect to his will as the rule, as well as to his glory as the end. It is not formally obedience that is not done with regard to the order of God, though it may be materially obedience, as it answers the matter of the precept. As when men will abstain from excess and rioting, because it is ruinous to their health, not because it is forbidden by the great Lawgiver; this is to pay a respect to our own conveniency and interest, not a conscientious observance to God; a regard to our health, not to our Sovereign; a kindness to ourselves, not a justice due to the rights of God. There must not only be a consideration of the matter of the precept as convenient, but a consideration of the authority of the Lawgiver as obligatory. "Thus saith the Lord," ushers in every order of his, directing our eye to the authority enacting it; Jeroboam did God's will of prophecy in taking the kingdom of Israel; and the devils may be subservient in God's will or providence; but neither of them are put upon the account of obedience, because not done intentionally with any conscience of the sovereignty of God. God will have this owned by a regular respect to it; so much he insists upon the honor of it, that the sacrifice of Christ, God-man, was most agreeable to him, not only as it was great and admirable in itself, but also for that ravishing obedience to his will, which was the life and glory of his sacrifice, whereby the justice of God was not only owned in the offering, but the sovereignty of God owned in the obedience. "He became obedient unto death; wherefore God highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:8).

(2.) It must be the best and most exact obedience. The most sovereign authority calls for the exactest and lowest observance; the highest Lord for the deepest homage; being, he is, a “great King; he must have the best in our flock” (Mal. 1:14). Obedience is due to God, as King, and the choicest obedience is due to him, as he is the most excellent King. The more majestic and noble any man is, the more careful we are in our manner of service to him. We are bound to obey God, not only under the title of a “Lord” in regard of jurisdiction and political subjection, but under the title of a true “Lord and Master,” in regard of propriety; since we are not only his subjects but his servants, the exactest obedience is due to God, *jure servitutis*; “When you have done all, say you are unprofitable servants” (Luke 17:10), because we can do nothing which we owe not to God.

(3.) Sincere and inward obedience. As it is a part of his sovereignty to prescribe laws not only to man in his outward state, but to his conscience, so it is a part of our subjection to receive his laws into our will and heart. The authority of his laws exceeds human laws in the extent and riches of them, and our acknowledgment of his sovereignty cannot be right, but by subjecting the faculties of our soul to the Lawgiver of our souls; we else acknowledge his authority to be as limited as the empire of man; when his will not only sways the outward action, but the inward motion, it is a giving him the honor of his high throne above the throne of mortals. The right of God ought to be preserved undamaged in affection, as well as action.

(4.) It must be sole obedience. We are ordered to serve him only; “Him only shalt thou serve” (Matt.

4:10): as the only Supreme Lord, as being the highest Sovereign, it is fit he should have the highest obedience before all earthly sovereigns, and as being unparalleled by any among all the nations, so none must have an obedience equal to him. When God commands, if the highest power on earth countermands it, the precept of God must be preferred before the countermand of the creature. “Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye” (Act 4:18, 19). We must never give place to the authority of all the monarchs in the world, to the prejudice of that obedience we owe to the Supreme Monarch of

heaven and earth; this would be to place the throne of God at the footstool of man, and debase him below the rank of a creature. Loyalty to man can never recompense for the mischief accruing from disloyalty to God. All the obedience we are to give to man, is to be paid in obedience to God, and with an eye to his precept: therefore, what servants do for their masters, they must do “as to the Lord” (Col. 3:23); and children are to obey their parents “in the Lord” (Eph. 6:1). The authority of God is to be eyed in all the services payable to man; proper and true obedience hath God solely for its principal and primary object; all obedience to man that interferes with that, and would jostle out obedience to God, is to be refused. What obedience is due to man, is but rendered as a part of obedience to God, and a stooping of his authority.

(5.) It must be universal obedience. The laws of man are not to be universally obeyed; some may be oppressing and unjust: no man hath authority to make an unjust law, and no subject is bound to obey an unrighteous law; but God being a righteous Sovereign, there is not one of his laws but doth necessarily oblige us to obedience. Whatsoever this Supreme Power declares to be his will, it must be our care to observe; man, being his creature, is bound to be subject to whatsoever laws he doth impose to the meanest as well as to the greatest: they having equally a stamp of Divine authority upon them. We are not to pick and choose among his precepts this is to pare away part of his authority, and render him a half sovereign. It must be universal in all places. An Englishman in Spain is bound to obey the laws of that country wherein he resides and so not responsible there for the breach of the laws of his native country. In the same condition is a Spaniard in England. But the laws of God are to be obeyed in every part of the world; wheresoever Divine Providence doth cast us, it casts us not out of the places where he commands, nor out of the compass of his own empire. He is Lord of the world, and his laws oblige in every part of the world; they were ordered for a world, and not for a particular climate and territory.

(6.) must be indisputable obedience. All authority requires readiness in the subject; the centurion had it from his soldiers; they went when he ordered them, and came when he beckoned to them (Matt. 8:9). It is more fit God should have the same promptness from his subjects. We are to obey his orders, though our purblind

understanding may not apprehend the reason of every one of them. It is without dispute that he is sovereign, and therefore it is without dispute that we are bound to obey him, without controlling his conduct. A master will not bear it from his slave, why should God from his creature? Though God admits his creatures sometimes to treat with him about the equality of his justice, and also about the reason of some commands, yet sometimes he gives no other reason but his own sovereignty, "Thus saith the Lord;" to correct the malapertness of men, and exact from them an entire obedience to his unlimited and absolute authority. When Abraham was commanded to offer Isaac, God acquaints him not with the reason of his demand till after (Gen. 22:2, 12), nor did Abraham enter any demur to the order, or expostulate with God, either from his own natural affection to Isaac, the hardness of the command, it being, as it were, a ripping up of his own bowels, nor the quickness of it after he had been a child of the promise, and a Divine donation above the course of nature. Nor did Paul confer with flesh and blood, and study arguments from nature and interest to oppose the Divine command, when he was sent upon his apostolical employment (Gal. 1:16). The more indisputable his right is to command, the stronger is our obligation to obey, without questioning the reason of his orders.

(7.) It must be joyful obedience. Men are commonly more cheerful if their obedience to a great prince than to a mean peasant; because the quality of the master renders the service more honorable. It is a discredit to a prince's government, when his subjects obey him with discontent and dejectedness, as though he were a hard master, and his laws tyrannical and unrighteous. When we pay obedience but with a dull and feeble pace, and a sour and sad temper, we blemish our great Sovereign, imply his commands to be grievous, void of that peace and pleasure he proclaims to be in them; that he deserves no respect from us, if we obey him because we must, and not because we will. Involuntary obedience deserves not the title: it is rather submission than obedience, an act of the body, not of the mind: a mite of obedience with cheerfulness, is better than a talent without it. In the little Paul did, he comforts himself in this, that with the "mind he served the law of God" (Rom. 7:25); the testimonies of God were David's delight (Psalm 119:24). Our understandings must take pleasure in knowing him, our wills delightfully embrace him, and our actions be cheerfully squared to

him. This credits the sovereignty of God in the world, makes others believe him to be a gracious Lord, and move them to have some veneration for his authority.

(8.) It must be a perpetual obedience. As man is a subject as soon as he is a creature, so he is a subject as long as he is a creature. God's sovereignty is of perpetual duration, as long as he is God; man's obedience must be perpetual, while he is a man. God cannot part with his sovereignty, and a creature cannot be exempted from subjection; we must not only serve him, but cleave to him (Deut. 13:4).

Obedience is continued in heaven, his throne is established in heaven, it must be bowed to in heaven, as well as in earth. The angels continually fulfil his pleasure.

7. *Exhortation.* Patience is a duty flowing from this doctrine. In all strokes upon ourselves, or thick showers upon the church, "the Lord reigns," is a consideration to prevent muttering against him, and make us quietly wait to see what the issue of his Divine pleasure will be. It is too great an insolence against the Divine Majesty to censure what he acts, or quarrel with him for what he inflicts. Proud clay doth very unbecomingly swell against an infinite superior. If God be our Sovereign, we ought to subscribe to his afflicting will without debates, as well as to his liberal will with affectionate applauses. We should be as full of patience under his sharper, as of praise under his more grateful, dispensations, and be without reluctancy against his penal, as well as his preceptive, pleasure. It is God's part to inflict, and the creature's part to submit.

This doctrine affords us motives, and shows us the nature of patience. 1. Motives to it.

(1.) God, being Sovereign, hath an absolute right to dispose of all things. His title to our persons and possessions is, upon this account, stronger than our own can be; we have as much reason to be angry with ourselves, when we assert our worldly right against others, as to be angry with God for asserting the right of his dominion over us. Why should we enter a charge against him, because he hath not tempered us so strong in our bodies, drawn us with as fair colors, embellished our spirits with as rich gifts as others? Is he not the Sovereign of his own goods, to impart what,

and in what measure, he pleaseth? Would you be content your servants should cheek your pleasure in dispensing your own favors? It is an unreasonable thing not to leave God to the exercise of his own dominion. Though Job were a pattern of patience, yet he had deep tinctures of impatience; he often complains of God's usage of him as too hard, and stands much upon his own integrity; but when God comes, in the latter chapters of that book, to justify his carriage towards him, he chargeth him not as a criminal, but considers him only as his vassal. He might have found flaws enough in Job's carriage, and corruption enough in Job's nature, to clear the equity of his proceeding as a judge; but he useth no other medium to convince him, but the greatness of his Majesty, the unlimitedness of his sovereignty, which so appals the good man, that he puts his finger on his mouth and stands mute with a self-abhorrency before him, as a Sovereign, rather than as a Judge. When he doth pinch us, and deprive us of what we most affect, his right to do it should silence our lips and calm our hearts from any boisterous uproars against him.

(2.) The property of all still remains in God, since he is sovereign. He did not divest himself of the property when he granted us the use; the earth is his, not ours; the fulness any of us have, as well as the fulness others have. After he had given the Israelites corn, wine, and oil, he calls them all *his*, and emphatically adds *my*, to every one of them (Hos. 2:9). His right is universal over every mite we have, and perpetual too; he may, therefore, take from us what he please. He did but deposit in our hands for awhile the benefits we enjoy, either children, friends, estate, or lives; he did not make a total conveyance of them, and alienate his own property, when he put them into our hands; we can show no patent for them, wherein the full right is passed over to us, to hold them against his will and pleasure, and implead him if he offer to re-assume them: he reserved a power to dispossess us upon a forfeiture, as he is the Lord and Governor. Did any of us yet answer the condition of his grant? it was his indulgence to allow them so long; there is reason to submit to him, when he re-assumes what he lent us, and rather to thank him that he lent it so long, and did not seize upon it sooner.

(3.) Other things have more reason to complain of our sovereignty over them, than we of God's exercise of his sovereignty

over us. Do we not exercise an authority over our beasts, as to strike them when we please, and merely for our pleasure; and think we merit no reproof for it, because they are our own, and of a nature inferior to ours? And shall not God, who is absolute, do as much with us, who are more below him than the meanest creatures are below us? They are creatures as well as we, and we no more creatures than they; they were framed by Omnipotence as well as we; there is no more difference between them and us in the notion of creatures. As there is no difference between the greatest monarch on earth, and the meanest beggar on the dunghill, in the notion of a man; the beggar is a man, as well as the monarch, and as much a man; the difference consists in the special endowments we have above them by the bounty of their and our common Creator. We are less, if compared with God, than the worst, meanest, and most sordid creature can be, if compared with us. Hath not a bird or a hare (if they had a capacity) more reason to complain of men's persecuting them by their hawks and their dogs? but would their complaints appear reasonable, since both were made for the use of man, and man doth but use the nature of the one to attain a benefit by the other? Have we any reason to complain of God if he lets loose other creatures, the devouring hounds of the world, to bite and afflict us? We must not open our lips against him, nor let our heart swell against his scourge, since both they and we were made for his use, as well as other creatures for our; this is a reason to stifle all complaints against God, but not to make us careless of preventing afflictions, or emerging out of them by all just ways. The hare hath a nature to shift for itself by its winding and turning, and the bird by its flight; and neither of them could be blamed, if they were able, should the one scratch out the eyes of the hounds, and the other sacrifice the hawk to its own fury.

(4.) It is a folly not to submit to him. Why should we strive against him, since he is an unaccountable Sovereign, and "gives no account of any of his matters?" (Job 33:13.) Who can disannul the judgment God gives? There is no appeal from the supreme court; a higher court can repeal or null the sentence of an inferior court, but the sentence of the highest stands irreversible, but by itself and its own authority. It is better to lower our sails, than to grapple with one that can shoot us under water; to submit to that Sovereign whom we cannot subdue.

2. It shows us the true nature of patience in regard of God: it is a submission to God's sovereignty. As the formal object of obedience is the authority of God enacting the law, so the formal object of patience is the authority of God inflicting the punishment: as his right of commanding is to be eyed in the one, so his right of punishing is to be considered in the other. This was Eli's condition, when he had received a message that might put flesh and blood into a mutiny, the rending the priesthood from his family, and the ruin of his house: yet this consideration, "It is the Lord," calms him into submission, and a willing compliance with the Divine pleasure (1 Sam. 3:18): "It is the Lord, let him do what seems good in his sight." Job was of the same strain (Job 1:21): "The Lord gives, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord;" he considers God as a sovereign, who was not to be reproached, or have anything uncomely uttered of him, for what he had done. To be patient because we cannot avoid it, or resist it, is a violent, not a loyal patience; but to submit because it is the will of God to inflict; to be silent, because the sovereignty of God doth order it, is a patience of a true complexion. The other kind of patience is no other than that of an enemy that will free himself as soon as he can, and by any way, though never so violent, that offers itself. This sort of patience is that of a subject acknowledging the supreme authority over him, and that he ought to be ordered by the will, and to the glory of God, more than by his own will, and for his own ease; "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth" (Psalm 39:10); not because I could not help it, but "because thou didst it," thou who art my sovereign Lord. The greatness of God claims an awful and inviolable respect from his creatures in what way soever he doth dispose of them; this is due to him; since his kingdom ruleth over all, his kingdom should be acknowledged by all, and his royal authority submitted to in all that he doth.

DISCOURSE XIV - ON GOD'S PATIENCE

NAHUM 1:3.—*The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.*

THE subject of this prophecy is God's sentence against Nineveh, the head and metropolis of the Assyrian empire: a city famous for its strength, and thickness of its walls, and the multitude of its towers for defence against an enemy. The forces of this empire did God use as a scourge against the Israelites, and by their hands ruined Samaria, the chief city of the ten tribes, and transplanted them as captives into another country (2 Kings 17:5, 6), about six years after Hezekiah came to the crown of Judah (2 Kings 18 compared with chap. 17:6), in whose time, or, as some think, later, Nahum uttered this prophecy. The name, Nahum, signifies Comforter; though the matter of his prophecy be dreadful to Nineveh, it was comfortable to the people of God: for a promise is made, (ver. 7), "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him." And an encouragement to Judah, to keep their solemn feasts, (ver. 15: and also in chap. 2:3), with a declaration of the misery of Nineveh, and the destruction of it. Observe,

1. In all the fears of God's people, God will have a Comforter for them. Judah might well be dejected with the calamity of their brethren, not knowing but it might be their own turn shortly after. They knew not where the ambition of the Assyrian would stop; but God by his prophets calms their fears of their furious neighbor, by predicting to them the ruin of their feared adversary.

2. The destruction of the church's enemies is the comfort of the church. By that God is glorified in his justice, and the church secured in its worship.

3. The victories of persecutors secure them not from being the triumphs of others. The Assyrians that conquered and captived Israel, were themselves to be conquered and captived by the Medes. The whole oppressing empire is threatened with destruction in the ruin of their chief city; accordingly it was accomplished, and the empire extinguished by a greater power. God burns the rod when it hath done the work he appointed it for; and the wisp of straw wherewith the vessels are scoured, is flung into the fire, or upon the

dunghill.

Nahum begins his prophecy majestically, with a description of the wrath and fury of God. (ver. 2), “God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious: the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and reserveth wrath for his enemies.” And therefore the whole of it is called (ver. 1), “The burden of Nineveh,” as those prophecies are, which are composed of threatenings of judgments, which he as a mighty weight upon the heads and backs of sinners.

God is jealous—jealous of his glory and worship, and jealous for his people, and their security. He cannot long bear the oppressions of his people, and the boasts of his enemies. He is jealous for himself, and is jealous for you of Judah, who retain his worship. He is not forgetful of those that remember him, nor of the danger of those that are desirous to maintain his honor in the world. In this first expression, the prophet uses the covenant name, God; the covenant runs, “I am your God,” or “the Lord your God;” mostly God without Lord, never Lord without God: and, therefore, his jealousy here is meant of the care of his people, and the relation that his actions against his enemies have to his servants. He is a lover of his own, and a revenger on his enemies.

The Lord revengeth, and is furious.—He now describes God by a name of sovereignty and power, when he describes him in his wrath and fury, and is furious. *Heb.* חמה בעל, *Lord of hot anger.* God will vindicate his own glory, and have his right on his enemies in a way of punishment, if they will not give it him in a way of obedience. It is three times repeated, to show the certainty of the judgment; and the name of “Lord” added to every one, to intimate the power wherewith the judgment should be executed. It is not a fatherly correction of children in a way of mercy, but an offended Sovereign a destruction of his enemies in a way of vengeance. There is an anger of God with his own people, which hath more of mercy than wrath; in this his rod is guided by his bowels. There is a fury of God against his enemies, where there is sole wrath without any tincture of mercy; when his sword is all edge, without any balsam drops upon it. Such a fury as David deprecates (Psalm 6:1): “O Lord, rebuke me not in thy anger, nor chasten me in thy sore displeasure,” with a fury untempered with grace, and insupportable

wrath.

He reserves wrath for his enemies.—He lays it up in his treasury, to be brought out and expended in a due season. “Wrath” is supplied by our translators, and is not in the Hebrew. He reserves, what?—that which is too sharp to be expressed, too great to be conceived: a vengeance it is. And הוֹאֵר וְגוֹטֵר, *He reserves it*. He that hath an infinite wrath, he reserves it; that hath a strength and power to execute it.

(ver. 3.) *The Lord is slow to anger*, Heb. אַפִּים אַרְךָ, *of broad nostrils*. The anger of God is expressed by this word, which signifies “nostrils:” as, Job 9:13, “If God will not withdraw his anger,” Heb. “his nostrils.” And the anger whereby the wicked are consumed, is called the “breath of nostrils” (Job 4:9); and when he is angry, smoke and fire are said to go out of his nostrils (2 Sam. 2:9); and in Psalm 74:1, “Why doth thy anger smoke?” Heb. “Wby do thy nostrils smoke?” So the rage of a horse, when he is provoked in battle, is called the glory of his nostrils (Job 39:20). He breathes quick fumes, and neighs with fury. And slowness to anger is here expressed by the phrase of “long or wide nostrils:” because in a vehement anger, the blood boiling about the heart, exhales men’s spirit, which fume up, and break out in dilated nostrils. But where the passages are straighter the spirits have not so quick a vent, and therefore raise more motions within; or, because the wider the nostrils are, the more cool air is drawn in to temper the heat of the heart, where the angry spirits are gathered; and so the passion is allayed, and sooner calmed. God speaks of himself in Scripture often after the rate of men; Jeremiah prays (ch. 15:15) that God would not take him away in his long-suffering, Heb. “in the length of his nostrils,” *i. e.* Be not slow and backward in thy anger against my persecutors, as to give them time and opportunity to destroy me. The nostrils, as well as other members of a human body, are ascribed to God. He is slow to anger; he hath anger in his nature, but is not always in the execution of it.

And great in power.—This may refer to his patience as the cause of it, or as a bar to the abuse of it.

1. “He is slow to anger, and great in power,” *i. e.* his power moderates his anger; he is not so impotent as to be at the command

of his passions, as men are; he can restrain his anger under just provocations to exercise it. His power over himself is the cause of his slowness to wrath, as Num. 14:17: "Let the power of my Lord be great," saith Moses, when he pleads for the Israelites' pardon. Men that are great in the world are quick in passions, and are not so ready to forgive an injury, or bear with an offender, as one of a meaner rank. It is a want of a power over a man's self that makes him do unbecoming things upon a provocation. A prince that can bridle his passion, is a king over himself, as well as over his subjects. God is slow to anger, because great in power: he hath no less power over himself than over his creatures: he can sustain great injuries without an immediate and quick revenge: he hath a power of patience, as well as a power of justice.

2. Or thus: "He is slow to anger and great in power." He is slow to anger, but not for want of power to revenge himself; his power is as great to punish, as his patience to spare. It seems thus, that slowness to anger is brought in as an objection against the revenge proclaimed. What do you tell us of vengeance, vengeance, nothing but such repetitions of vengeance?—as though we were ignorant that God is slow to anger. It is true, saith the prophet, I acknowledge it as much as you, that God is slow to anger; but withal, great in power. His anger certainly succeeds his abused patience; he will not always bridle in his wrath, but one time or other let it march out in fury against his adversaries. The Assyrians, who had captived the ten tribes, and been victorious a little against the Jews, might think that the God of Israel had been conquered by their gods, as well as the people professing him had been subdued by their arms; that God had lost all his power; and the Jews might argue, from God's patience to his enemies, against the credit of the prophet's denouncing revenge. The prophet answers, to the terror of the one, and the comfort of the other, that this indulgence to his enemies, and not accounting with them for their crimes, proceeded from the greatness of his patience, and not from any debility in his power. As it refers to the Assyrian, it may be rendered thus: You Ninevites, upon your repentance after Jonah's thundering of judgments, are witnesses of the slowness of God to anger, and had your punishments deferred; but, falling to your old sins, you shall find a real punishment, and that he hath as much power to execute his ancient threatenings, as he had then compassion to recall them; his

patience to you then was not for want of power to ruin you, but was the effect of his goodness towards you. As it refers to the Jews, it may be thus paraphrased: Do not despise this threatening against your enemies because of the greatness of their might, the seeming stability of their empire, and the terror they possess all the nations with round about them: it may be long before it comes, but assure yourselves the threatening I denounce shall certainly be executed; though he hath patience to endure them a hundred and thirty-five years (for so long as it was before Nineveh was destroyed after this threatening, as Ribera, *in loc.* computes from the years of the reign of the kings of Judah), yet he hath also power to verify his word, and accomplish his will: assure yourselves, he will not at all acquit the wicked.

He will not acquit the wicked.—He will not always account the criminal an innocent, as he seems to do by a present sparing of them, and dealing with them as if they were destitute of any provoking carriage towards him, and he void of any resentment of it. He will “not acquit the wicked;” how is this? Who then can be saved? Is there no place for remission? He will “not acquit the wicked.” *i. e.* he will not acquit obstinate sinners. As he hath patience for the wicked, so he hath mercy for the penitent. The wicked are the subjects of his long-suffering, but not of his acquitting grace; he doth not presently punish their sins, because he is slow to anger; but without their repentance he will not blot out their sins, because he is righteous in judgment: if God should acquit them without repentance for their crimes, he must himself repent of his own law and righteous sanction of it. “He will not acquit,” *i. e.* he will not go back from the thing he hath spoken, and forbear, at long run, the punishment he hath threatened.

The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind.—The way of God signifies sometimes the law of God, sometimes the providential operations of God: “Is not my way equal?” (Ezek. 18:25). It seems there to take in both.

And in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.—The prophet describes here the fight of God with the Assyrians, as if he rushed upon them with a mighty noise of an army, raising the dust with the feet of their horses, and motion of their chariots. Symbolically, it signifies the multitude of the Chaldean and Median

forces, invading, besieging, and storming the city. It signifies,

1. The rule of providence. The way of God is in every motion of the creature; he rules all things, whirlwinds, storms, and clouds; his way is in all their walks, in the whirlings and blusterings of the one, in the raising and dissolving the other. He blows up the winds, and compacts the clouds, to make them serviceable to his designs.

2. The management of wars by god. His way is in the storm as he was the Captain of the Assyrians against Samaria, so he will be the Captain of the Medes against Nineveh: as Israel was not so much wasted by the Assyrians as by the Lord, who levied and armed their forces; so Nineveh shall be subverted, rather by God, than by the arms of the Medes. Their force is described not to be so much from human power as Divine. God is President in all the commotions of the world, his way is in every whirlwind.

3. The easiness of executing the judgment. He is of so great power that he can excite tempests in the air, and overthrow them with the clouds, which are the dust of his feet: he can blind his enemies, and avenge himself on them: he is Lord of clouds, and can fill their womb with hail, lightnings, and thunders, to burst out upon those he kindles his anger against: he is of so great force, that he needs not use the strength of his arm, but the dust of his feet, to effect his destroying purpose.

4. The suddenness of the judgment. Whirlwinds come suddenly, without any harbingers to give notice of their approach: clouds are swift in their motion; "Who are those that fly as a cloud?" (Isa. 60:8), *i. e.* with a mighty nimbleness. What God doth, he shall do on the sudden, come upon them before they are aware, be too quick for them in his motion to overrun and overreach them. The winds are described with wings, in regard of the quickness of their motion.

5. The terror of judgments. "The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind," *i. e.* in great displeasure. The anger of the Lord is often compared to a storm; he shall bring clouds of judgments upon them, many and thick, as terrible as when a day is turned into night, by the mustering of the darkest clouds that interpose between the sun and the earth. "Clouds and darkness are round about him, and a fire goes before him," when he "burns up his enemies" (Psalm 97:2, 3). The

judgments shall have terror without mercy, as clouds obscure the light, and are dark masks before the face and glory of the sun, and cut off its refreshing beams from the earth. Clouds note multitude and obscurity; God could crush them without a whirlwind, beat them to powder with one touch, but he will bring his judgments in the most surprising and amazing manner to flesh and blood, so that all their glory shall be changed into nothing but terror, by the noise of the bellowing winds, and the clouds, like ink, blacking the heavens.

6. The confusion of the offenders upon God's proceeding. A whirlwind is not only a boisterous wind, that hurls and rolls everything out of its place, but, by its circular motion, by its winding to all points of the compass, it confounds things, and jumbles them together. It keeps not one point, but, by a circumgyration, toucheth upon all. Clouds, like dust, shall be blown in their face, and gum up their eyes: they shall be in a posture of confusion, not know what counsels to take, what motions to resolve upon. Let them look to every point of heaven and earth, they shall meet with a whirlwind to confound them, and cloudy dust to blind them.

7. The irresistibleness of the judgment. Winds have more than a giant-like force, a torrent of compacted air, that, with an invincible wiffulness, bears all before it, displaceth the firmest trees, and levels the tallest towers, and pulls up bodies from their natural place. Clouds also are over our heads, and above our reach; when God places them upon his people for defence they are an invincible security (Isa. 4:5); and when he moves them, as his chariot, against a people, they end in an irresistible destruction. Thus the ruin of the wicked is described (Prov. 10:25): "As the whirlwind passes, so is the wicked no more:" it blows them down, sweeps them away, they irrecoverably fall before the force of it. What heart can endure, and what hands can be strong, in the days wherein God doth deal with them! (Ezek. 22:14). Thus is the judgment against Nineveh described: God hath his way in the whirlwind, to thunder down their strongest walls, which were so thick that chariots could march abreast upon them; and batter down their mighty towers, which that city had in multitudes upon their walls.

They are the first words I intend to insist upon, to treat of the Patience of God described in those words, "The Lord is slow to anger."

Doctrine. Slowness to anger, or admirable patience, is the property of the Divine nature. As patience signifies suffering, so it is not in God. The Divine nature is impassible, incapable of any impair, it cannot be touched by the violences of men, nor the essential glory of it be diminished by the injuries of men; but as it signifies a willingness to defer, and an unwillingness to pour forth his wrath upon sinful creatures, he moderates his provoked justice, and forbears to revenge the injuries he daily meets with in the world. He suffers no grief by men's wronging him, but he restrains his arm from punishing them according to their merits; and thus there is patience in every cross a man meets with in the world, because, though it be a punishment, it is less than is merited by the unrighteous rebel, and less than may be inflicted by a righteous and powerful God. This patience is seen in his providential works in the world: "He suffered the nations to walk in their own way," and the witness of his providence to them was his "giving them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their heart with food and gladness" (Acts 16:17). The heathens took notice of it, and signified it by feigning their god Saturn, to be bound a whole year in a soft cord, a cord of wool, and expressed it by this proverb: "The mills of the gods grind slowly;" *i. e.* God doth not use men with that severity that they deserve; the mills being usually turned by criminals condemned to that work. This, in Scripture, is frequently expressed by a slowness to anger (Psalm 103:8), sometimes by long-suffering, which is a patience with duration (Psalm 145:8; 8; Joel 2:13). He is slow to anger, he takes not the first occasions of a provocation; he is long-suffering (Rom. 9:22), and (Psalm 86:15) he forbears punishment upon many occasions offered him. It is long before he consents to give fire to his wrath, and shoot out his thunderbolts. Sin hath a loud cry, but God seems to stop his ears, not to hear the clamor it raises and the charge it presents. He keeps his sword a long time in the sheath; one calls the patience of God the sheath of his sword, upon those words (Ezek.21:3), "I will draw forth my sword out of his sheath." This is one remarkable letter in the name of God; he himself proclaims it (Exod. 34:6): "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful, gracious, and long-suffering." And Moses pleads it in the behalf of the people (Num. 14:18), where he placeth it in the first rank; the Lord is "long-suffering and of great mercy:"

it is the first spark of mercy, and ushers it to its exercises in the

world. In the Lord's proclamation, it is put in the middle link, mercy and truth together; mercy could have no room to act if patience did not prepare the way; and his truth and goodness, in his promise of the Redeemer, would not have been manifest to the world if he had shot his arrows as soon as men committed their sins, and deserved his punishment. This perfection is expressed by other phrases, as "keeping silence" (Psalm 50:21): "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence," תי שוהחר יתשע אל ת; it signifies to behave one's self as a deaf or dumb man. I did not fly in thy face, as some do, with a great noise upon a light provocation, as if their life, honor, estates, were at the stake; I did not presently call thee to the bar, and pronounce judicial sentence upon thee according to the law, but demeaned myself as if I had been ignorant of thy crimes, and had not been invested with the power of judging thee for them. *Chald.* "I waited for thy conversion." God's patience is the silence of his justice, and the first whisper of his mercy. It is also expressed by not laying folly to men (Job 24:12); men groan under the oppressions of others, yet God lays not folly to them, *i. e.* to the oppressors; God suffers them to go on with impunity. He doth not deliver his people because he would try them, and takes not revenge upon the unrighteous, because in patience he doth bear with them: patience is the life of his providence in this world. He chargeth not men with their crimes here, but reserves them, upon impenitency, for another trial. This attribute is so great a one, that it is signally called by the name of "Perfection" (Matt. 5:45, 48). He had been speaking of Divine goodness, and patience to evil men, and he concludes, "Be you perfect," &c., implying it to be an amazing perfection of the Divine nature, and worthy of imitation.

In the prosecution of this, I. Let us consider the nature of this patience. II. Wherein it is manifested.

III. Why God doth exercise so much patience. IV. The Use.

I. The nature of this patience.

1. It is part of the Divine goodness and mercy, yet differs from both. God being the greatest goodness, hath the greatest mildness. Mildness is always the companion of true goodness, and the greater the goodness the greater the mildness. Who so holy as Christ, and who so meek? God's slowness to anger is a branch or slip from his

mercy (Psalm 145:8): “The Lord is full of compassion, slow to anger.” It differs from mercy in the formal consideration of the object; mercy respects the creature as miserable, patience respects the creature as criminal; mercy pities him in his misery, and patience bears with the sin which engendered that misery, and is giving birth to more. Again, mercy is one end of patience; his long-suffering is partly to glorify his grace: so it was in Paul (1 Tim. 1:16). As slowness to anger springs from goodness, so it makes merely the butt and mark of its operations (Isa. 30:18): “He waits that he may be gracious.” Goodness sets God upon the exercise of patience, and patience sets many a sinner on running into the arms of mercy. That mercy which makes God ready to embrace returning sinners, makes him willing to bear with them in their sins, and wait their return. It differs also from goodness, in regard of the object. The object of goodness is every creature, angels, men, all inferior creatures, to the lowest worm that crawls upon the ground. The object of patience is, primarily, man, and secondarily; those creatures that respect men’s support, conveniency, and delight; but they are not the objects of patience, as considered in themselves, but in relation to man, for whose use they were created; and therefore God’s patience to them is properly his patience with man. The lower creatures do not injure God, and therefore are not the objects of his patience, but as they are forfeited by man, and man deserves to be deprived of them; as man in this regard falls under the patience of God, so do those creatures which are designed for man’s good. That patience which spares man, spares other creatures for him, which were all forfeited by man’s sin, as well as his own life, and are rather the testimonies of God’s patience, than the proper objects of it. The object of God’s goodness, then, is the whole creation; not a devil in hell, but as a creature, is a mark of his goodness, but not of his patience. There is a kind of sparing exercised to the devils, in deferring their complete punishment, and hitherto keeping off the day wherein their final sentence is to be pronounced; yet the Scripture never mentions this by the name of slowness to anger, or long-suffering. It can no more be called patience, than a prince’s keeping a malefactor in chains, and not pronouncing a condemning sentence, or not executing a sentence already pronounced, can be called a patience with him, when it is not out of kindness to the offender, but for some reasons of state. God’s sparing the devils from their total punishment—

which they have not yet, but are “reserved in chains, under darkness for it” (Jude 6)—is not in order to repentance, or attended with any invitations from God, or hopes in them; and, therefore, cannot come under the same title as God’s sparing man: where there is no proposal of mercy, there is no exercise of patience. The fallen angels had no mercy reserved for them, nor any sacrifices prepared for them; God “spared not the angels” (2 Pet. 2:4), “but delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment,” *i. e.* he had no patience for them; for patience is properly a temporary sparing a person, with a waiting of his relenting, and a change of his injurious demeanor. The object of goodness is more extensive than that of patience: nor do they both consider the object under the same relation. Goodness respects things in a capacity, or in a state of creation, and brings them forth into creation, and nurseth and supports them as creatures. Patience considers them already created, and fallen short of the duty of creatures; it considers them as sinners, or in relation to sinners. Had not sin entered, patience had never been exercised; but goodness had been exercised, had the creature stood firm in its created state without any transgression; nay, creation could not have been without goodness, because it was goodness to create; but patience had never been known without an object, which could not have been without an injury. Where there is no wrong, no suffering, nor like to be any, patience hath no prospect of any operation. So, then, goodness respects persons as creatures, patience as transgressors; mercy eyes men as miserable and obnoxious to punishment; patience considers men as sinful, and provoking to punishment.

2. Since it is a part of goodness and mercy, it is not an insensible patience. What is the fruit of pure goodness cannot be from a weakness of resentment; he is “slow to anger;” the prophet doth not say, he is incapable of anger, or cannot discern what is a real object of anger; it implies, that he doth consider every provocation, but he is not hasty to discharge his arrows upon the offenders; he sees all, while he bears with them; his omniscience excludes any ignorance; he cannot but see every wrong; every aggravation in that wrong, every step and motion from the beginning to the completing it; for he knows all our thoughts; he sees the sin and the sinner at the same time; the sin with an eye of abhorrency, and the sinner with an eye of pity. His eye is upon their iniquities,

and his hatred edged against them; while he stands with arms open, waiting a penitent return. When he publisheth his patience in his keeping silence, he publisheth also his resolution, to set sin in order before their eyes (Psalm 50:21): "I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thy eyes." Think me not such a piece of phlegm, and so dull as not to resent your insolences; you shall see, in my final charge, when I come to judge, that not a wry look escaped my knowledge, that I had an eye to behold, and a heart to loathe every one of your transgressions. The church was ready to think that God's slowness to deliver her, and his bearing with her oppressors, was not from any patience in his nature, but a drowsy carelessness, a senseless lethargy (Psalm 44:23): "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?" We must conclude him an inapprehensive God, before we can conclude him an insensible God. As his delaying his promise is not slackness to his people (2 Pet. 3:9), so his deferring of punishment is not from a stupidity under the affronts offered him.

3. Since it is a part of his mercy and goodness, it is not a constrained or faint-hearted patience. It is not a slowness to anger, arising from a despondency of his own power to revenge. He hath as much power to punish as he hath to forbear punishment. He that created a world in six days, and that by a word, wants not a strength to crush all mankind in one minute; and with as much ease as a word imports, can give satisfaction to his justice in the blood of the offender. Patience in man is many times interpreted, and truly too, a cowardice, a feebleness of spirit, and a want of strength. But it is not from the shortness of the Divine arm, that he cannot reach us, nor from the feebleness of his hand, that he cannot strike us. It is not because he cannot level us with the dust, dash us in pieces like a potter's vessel, or consume us as a moth. He can make the mightiest to fall before him, and lay the strongest at his feet the first moment of their crime. He that did not want a powerful word to create a world, cannot want a powerful word to dissolve the whole frame of it, and raze it out of being. It is not, therefore, out of a distrust of his own power, that he hath supported a sinful world for so many ages, and patiently borne the blasphemies of some, the neglects of others, and the ingratitude of all, without inflicting that severe justice which righteously he might have done; he wants no thunder to crush the whole generation of men, nor waters to drown them, nor earth to swallow them up. How easy is it for him to single out this or that

particular person to be the object of his wrath, and not of his patience! What he hath done to one, he may to another; any signal judgment he hath sent upon one, is an evidence that he wants not power to inflict it upon all. Could he not make the motes in the air to choke us at every breath, rain thunderbolts instead of drops of water, fill the clouds with a consuming lightning, take off the reverence and fear of man, which he hath imprinted upon the creature, spirit our domestic beasts to be our executioners, unloose the tiles from the house-top to brain us, or make the fall of a house to crush us? It is but taking out the pins, and giving a blast, and the work is done. And doth he want a power to do any of those things? It is not then a faint-hearted, or feeble patience, that he exerciseth towards man.

4. Since it is not for want of power over the creature, it is from a fulness of power over himself. This is in the text, “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power;” it is a part of his dominion over himself, whereby he can moderate, and rule his own affections according to the holiness of his own will. As it is the effect of his power, so it is an argument of his power; the greatness of the effect demonstrates the fulness and sufficiency of the cause. The more feeble any man is in reason the less command he hath over his passions, and he is the more heady to revenge. Revenge is a sign of a childish mind; the stronger any man is in reason, the more command he hath over himself. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his own spirit, than he that takes a city” (Prov. 16:32); he that can restrain his anger, is stronger than the Caesars and Alexanders of the world, that have filled the earth with slain carcasses and ruined cities. By the same reason, God’s slowness to anger is a greater argument of his power than the creating a world, or the power of dissolving it by a word; in this he hath a dominion over creatures, in the other over himself; this is the reason he will not return to destroy; because “I am God, and not man” (Hos. 11:9); I am not so weak and impotent as man, that cannot restrain his anger. This is a strength possessed only by a God, wherein a creature is no more able to parallel him, than in any other; so that he may be said to be the Lord of himself; as it is in the verse before the text, that he is the Lord of anger, in the Hebrew, instead of “furious,” as we translate it; so he is the Lord of patience. The end why God is patient, is to show his power. “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with

much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" (Rom. 11:22). To show his wrath upon sinners, and his power over himself in bearing such indignities, and forbearing punishment so long, when men were vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, of whom there was no hopes of amendment. Had he immediately broken in pieces those vessels, his power had not so eminently appeared as it hath done, in tolerating them so long, that had provoked him to take them off so often; there is indeed the power of his anger, and there is the power of his patience; and his power is more seen in his patience than in his wrath: it is no wonder that He that is above all, is able to crush all; but it is a wonder, that he that is provoked by all, doth not, upon the first provocation, rid his hands of all. This is the reason why he did bear such a weight of provocations from vessels of wrath, prepared for ruin, that he might *γνωρίσαι τὸ δυνάτον αὐτοῦ*, show what he was able to do, the lordship and royalty he had over himself.

The power of God is more manifest in his patience to a multitude of sinners, than it would be in creating millions of worlds out of nothing; this was the *δυνατὸν αὐτοῦ*, a power over himself.

5. This patience being a branch of mercy, the exercise of it is founded in the death of Christ. Without the consideration of this, we can give no account why Divine patience should extend itself to us, and not to the fallen angels. The threatening extends itself to us as well as to the fallen angels; the threatening must necessarily have sunk man, as well as those glorious creatures, had not Christ stepped in to our relief. Had not Christ interposed to satisfy the justice of God, man upon his sin had been actually bound over to punishment, as well as the fallen angels were upon theirs, and been fettered in chains as strong as those spirits feel. The reason why man was not hurled into the same deplorable condition upon his sin, as they were, is Christ's promise of taking our nature, and not theirs. Had God designed Christ's taking their nature, the same patience had been exercised towards them, and the same offers would have been made to them, as are made to us. In regard to these fruits of this patience, Christ is said to buy the wickedest apostates from him: "Denying the Lord that bought them" (1 Pet. 2:1). Such were bought by him, as "bring upon themselves just destruction, and whose damnation slumbers not" (ver. 3); he purchased the continuance of their lives,

and the stay of their execution, that offers of grace might be made to them. This patience must be either upon the account of the law, or the gospel; for there are no other rules, whereby God governs the world. A fruit of the law it was not; that spake nothing but curses after disobedience; not a letter of mercy was writ upon that, and therefore nothing of patience; death and wrath were denounced; no slowness to anger intimated. It must be therefore upon account of the gospel, and a fruit of the covenant of grace, whereof Christ was Mediator. Besides this perfection being God's "waiting that he might be gracious" (Isa. 30:18), that which made way for God's grace made way for his waiting to manifest it. God discovered not his grace, but in Christ; and therefore discovered not his patience but in Christ; it is in him he met with the satisfaction of his justice, that he might have a ground for the manifestation of his patience. And the sacrifices of the law, wherein the life of a beast was accepted for the sin of man, discovered the ground of his forbearance of them to be the expectation of the great Sacrifice, whereby sin was to be completely expiated (Gen. 8:21). The publication of his patience to the end of the world is presently after the sweet savor he found in Noah's sacrifice. The promised and designed coming of Christ, was the cause of that patience God exercised before in the world; and his gathering the elect together, is the reason of his patience since his death.

6. The naturalness of his veracity and holiness, and the strictness of his justice, are no bars to the exercise of his patience.

(1.) His veracity. In those threatenings where the punishment is expressed, but not the time of inflicting it prefixed and determined in the threatening, his veracity suffers no damage by the delaying execution; so it be once done, though a long time after, the credit of his truth stands unshaken: as when God promises a thing without fixing the time, he is at liberty to pitch upon what time he pleases for the performance of it, without staining his faithfulness to his word, by not giving the thing promised presently. Why should the deferring of justice upon an offender be any more against his veracity than his delaying an answer to the petitions of a suppliant? But the difference will lie in the threatening. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death" (Gen. 2:17). The time was there settled; "in that day thou shalt die;" some refer "day" to eating, not

to dying; and render the sentence thus: I do not prohibit thee the eating this fruit for a day or two, but continually. In whatsoever day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die; but not understanding his dying that very day he should eat of it; referring "day" to the extensiveness of the prohibition, as to time. But to leave this as uncertain, it may be answered, that as in some threatenings a condition is implied, though not expressed, as in that positive denouncing of the destruction of Ninevah: "Yet forty days, and Ninevah shall be destroyed" (Jonah 3:4), the condition is implied; unless they humble themselves, and repent; for upon their repentance, the sentence was deferred. So here, "in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death," or certainly die, unless there be a way found for the expiation of thy crime, and the righting my honor. This condition, in regard of the event, may as well be asserted to be implied in this threatening, as that of repentance was in the other; or rather, "thou shalt die," thou shalt die spiritually, thou shalt lose that image of mine in thy nature, that righteousness which is as much the life of thy soul as thy soul is the life of thy body; that righteousness whereby thou art enabled to live to me and thy own happiness. What the soul is to the body, a quickening soul, that the image of God is to the soul, a quickening image. Or "thou shalt die the death," or certainly die; thou shalt be liable to death. And so it is to be understood, not of an actual death of the body, but the merit of death, and the necessity of death; thou wilt be noxious to death, which will be avoided, if thou dost forbear to eat of the forbidden fruit; thou shalt be a guilty person, and so under a sentence of death, that I may, when I please, inflict it on thee. Death did come upon Adam that day, because his nature was vitiated; he was then also under an expectation of death, he was obnoxious to it, though that day it was not poured out upon him in the full bitterness and gall of it: as when the apostle with, "The body is dead because of sin" (Rom. 8:10), he speaks to the living, and yet tells them the body was dead because of sin; he means no more than that it was under a sentence, and so a necessity of dying, though not actually dead; so thou shalt be under the sentence of death that day, as certainly as if that day thou shouldst sink into the dust: and as by his patience towards man, not sending forth death upon him in all the bitter ingredients of it, his justice afterwards was more eminent upon man's surety, than it would have been if it had been then employed

in all its severe operations upon man. So was his veracity eminent also in making good this threatening, in inflicting the punishment included in it upon our nature assumed by a mighty Person, and upon that Person in our nature, who was infinitely higher than our nature.

(2.) His justice and righteousness are not prejudiced by his patience. There is a hatred of the sin in his holiness, and a sentence past against the sin in his justice, though the execution of that sentence be suspended, and the person reprieved by patience, which is implied (Eccles. 8:11): “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil;” sentence is past, but a speedy execution is stopped. Some of the heathens, who would not imagine God unjust, and yet, seeing the villainies and oppressions of men in the world remain unpunished, and frequently beholding prosperous wickedness, to free him from the charge of injustice, denied his providence and actual government of the world; for if he did take notice of human affairs, and concern himself in what was done upon the earth, they could not think an Infinite Goodness and Justice could be so slow to punish oppressors, and relieve the miserable, and leave the world in that disorder under the injustice of men: they judged such a patience as was exercised by him, if he did govern the world, was drawn out beyond the line of fit and just. Is it not a presumption in men to prescribe a rule of righteousness and conveniency to their Creator? It might be demanded of such, whether they never injured any in their lives; and when certainly they have one way or another, would they not think it a very unworthy, if not unjust, thing, that a person so injured by them should take a speedy and severe revenge on them?—and if every man should do the like, would there not be a speedy despatch made of mankind? Would not the world be a shambles, and men rush forwards to one another’s destructions, for the wrongs they have mutually received? If it be accounted a virtue in man, and no unrighteousness, not presently to be all on fire against an offence; by what right should any question the inconsistency of God’s patience with his justice? Do we praise the lenity of parents to children, and shall we disparage the long-suffering of God to men? We do not censure the righteousness of physicians and chirurgeons, because they cut not off a corrupt member this day as well as to-morrow?

And is it just to asperse God, because he doth defer his vengeance which man assumes to himself a right to do? We never account him a bad governor that defers the trial, and consequently the condemnation and execution of a notorious offender for important reasons, and beneficial to the public, either to make the nature of his crime more evident, or to find out the rest of his complices by his discovery. A governor, indeed, were unjust, if he commanded that which were unrighteous, and forbade that which were worthy and commendable; but if he delays the execution of a convict offender for weighty reasons, either for the benefit of the state whereof he is the ruler, or for some advantage to the offender himself, to make him have a sense of, and a regret for his offence, we account him not unjust for this. God doth not by his patience dispense with the holiness of his law, nor cut off anything from its due authority. If men do strengthen themselves by his long-suffering against his law, it is their fault, not any unrighteousness in him; he will take a time to vindicate the righteousness of his own commands, if men will wholly neglect the time of his patience, in forbearing to pay a dutiful observance to his precept. If justice be natural to him, and he cannot but punish sin, yet he is not necessitated to consume sinners, as the fire doth stubble put into it, which hath no command over its own qualities to restrain them from acting; but God is a free agent, and may choose his own time for the distribution of that punishment his nature leads him to. Though he be naturally just, yet it is not so natural to him, as to deprive him of a dominion over his own acts, and a freedom in the exerting them what time he judgeth most convenient in his wisdom. God is necessarily holy, and is necessarily angry with sin; his nature can never like it, and cannot but be displeased with it; yet he hath a liberty to restrain the effects of this anger for a time, without disgracing his holiness, or being interpreted to act unrighteously; as well as a prince or state may suspend the execution of a law, which they will never break, only for a time and for a public benefit. If God should presently execute his justice, this perfection of patience, which is a part of his goodness, would never have an opportunity of discovery; part of his glory, for which he created the world, would lie in obscurity from the knowledge of his creature; his justice would be signal in the destruction of sinners, but this stream of his goodness would be stopped up from any motion. One perfection must not cloud another;

God hath his seasons to discover all, one after another: “The times and seasons are in his own power” (Acts 1:7): the seasons of manifesting his own perfections as well as other things; succession of them, in their distinct appearance, makes no invasion upon the rights of any. If justice should complain of an injury from patience, because it is delayed, patience hath more reason to complain of an injury from justice, that by such a plea it would be wholly obscured and inactive: for this perfection hath the shortest time to act its part of any, it hath no stage but this world to move in; mercy hath a heaven, and justice, a hell, to display itself to eternity, but long-suffering hath only a short-lived earth for the compass of its operation. Again, justice is so far from being wronged by patience, that it rather is made more illustrious, and hath the fuller scope to exercise itself; it is the more righted for being deferred, and will have stronger grounds than before for its activity; the equity of it will be more apparent to every reason, the objections more fully answered against it, when the way of dealing with sinners by patience hath been slighted.

When this dam of long-suffering is removed, the floods of fiery justice will rush down with more force and violence; justice will be fully recompensed for the delay, when, after patience is abused, it can spread itself over the offender with a more unquestionable authority; it will have more arguments to hit the sinner in the teeth with, and silence him; there will be a sharper edge for every stroke; the sinner must not only pay for the score of his former sins, but the score of abused patience, so that justice hath no reason to commence a suit against God’s slowness to anger: what it shall want by the fulness of mercy upon the truly penitent, it will gain by the contempt of patience on the impenitent abusers. When men, by such a carriage, are ripened for the stroke of justice, justice may strike without any regret in itself, or pull-back from mercy; the contempt of long-suffering will silence the pleas of the one, and spirit the severity of the other. To conclude: since God hath glorified his justice on Christ, as a surety for sinners, his patience is so far from interfering with the rights of his justice, that it promotes it; it is dispensed to this end, that God might pardon with honor, both upon the score of purchased mercy and contented justice; that by a penitent sinner’s return his mercy might be acknowledged free, and the satisfaction of his justice by Christ be glorified in believing: for

he is long-suffering from an unwillingness “that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9); *i. e.* all to whom the promise is made, for to such the apostle speaks, and calls it “long-suffering to us-ward;” and repentance being an acknowledgment of the demerit of sin, and a breaking off unrighteousness, gives a particular glory to the freeness of mercy, and the equity of justice.

II. . The second thing, How this patience or slowness to anger is manifested.

1. To our first parents. His slowness to anger was evidenced in not directing his artillery against them, when they first attempted to rebel. He might have struck them dead when they began to bite at the temptation, and were inclinable to a surrender; for it was a degree of sinning, and a breach of loyalty as well, though not so much as the consummating act. God might have given way to the floods of his wrath at the first spring of man’s aspiring thoughts, when the monstrous motion of being as God began to be curdled in his heart; but he took no notice of any of their embryo sins till they came to a ripeness, and started out of the womb of their minds into the open air: and after he had brought his sin to perfection, God did not presently send that death upon him, which he had merited, but continued his life to the space of 930 years (Gen. 5:5). The sun and stars were not arrested from doing their office for him. Creatures were continued for his use, the earth did not swallow him up, nor a thunderbolt from heaven raze out the memory of him. Though he had deserved to be treated with such a severity for his ungrateful demeanor to his Creator and Benefactor, and affecting an equality with him, yet God continued him with a sufficiency for his content, after he turned rebel, though not with such a liberality as when he remained a loyal subject; and though he foresaw that he would not make an end of sinning, but with an end of living, he used him not in the same manner as he had used the devils. He added days and years to him, after he had deserved death, and hath for this 5,000 years continued the propagation of mankind, and derived from his loins an innumerable posterity, and hath crowned multitudes of them with hoary heads. He might have extinguished human race at the first; but since he hath preserved it till this day, it must be interpreted nothing else but the effect of an admirable patience.

2. His slowness to anger is manifest to the Gentiles. What they were, we need no other witness than the apostle Paul, who sums up many of their crimes (Rom. 1:29–32). He doth preface the catalogue with a comprehensive expression, “Being filled with all unrighteousness;” and concludes it with a dreadful aggravation, “They not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” They were so soaked and naturalized in wickedness, that they had no delight, and found no sweetness in anything else but what was in itself abominable; all of them were plunged in idolatry and superstition; none of them but either set up their great men, or creatures, beneficial to the world, and some the damned spirits in his stead, and paid an adoration to insensible creatures or devils, which was due to God. Some were so depraved in their lives and actions, that it seemed to be the interest of the rest of the world, that they should have been extinguished for the instruction of their contemporaries and posterity. The best of them had turned all religion into a fable, coined a world of rites, some unnatural in themselves, and most of them unbecoming a rational creature to offer, and a Deity to accept: yet he did not presently arm himself against them with fire and sword, nor stopped the course of their generations, nor tear out all those relics of natural light which were left in their minds. He did not do what he might have done, but he winked at the “times of that ignorance” (Acts 17:30), their ignorant idolatry; for that it refers to (ver. 29): “They thought the Godhead was like to gold or silver, or stone graven heart, and men’s device;” ὑπεριδῶν, overlooking them. He demeaned himself so, as if he did not take notice of them. He winked as if he did not see them, and would not deal so severely with them: the eye of his justice seemed to wink, in not calling them to an account for their sin.

3. His slowness to anger is manifest to the Israelites. You know how often they are called a “stiff-necked people;” they are said to do evil “from their youth;” *i. e.* from the time wherein they were erected a nation and commonwealth; and that “the city had been a provocation of his anger, and of his fury, from the day that they built it, even to this day;” *i. e.* the day of Jeremiah’s prophecy, “that he should remove it from before his face” (Jer. 32:31): from the days of Solomon, say some, which is too much a curtailing of the text, as though their provocations had taken date no higher than from the time of Solomon’s rearing the temple, and beautifying the city,

whereby it seemed to be a new building. They began more early; they scarce discontinued their revolting from God; they were a “grief to him forty years together in the wilderness” (Psalm 95:10), “yet he suffered their manners” (Acts 13:18). He bore with their ill-behaviour and sauciness towards him; and no sooner was Joshua’s head laid, and the elders, that were their conductors, gathered to their fathers, but the next generation forsook God, and smutted themselves with the idolatry of the nations (Judges 2:7, 10, 11): and when he punished them by prospering the arms of their enemies against them, they were no sooner delivered upon their cry and humiliation, but they began a new scene of idolatry; and though he brought upon them the power of the Babylonian empire, and laid chains upon them to bring them to their right mind. And at seventy years’ end he struck off their chains, by altering the whole posture of affairs in that part of the world for their sakes: overturning one empire, and settling another for their restoration to their ancient city. And though they did not after disown him for their God, and set up “Baal in his throne,” yet they multiplied foolish traditions, whereby they impaired the authority of the law; yet he sustained them with a wonderful patience, and preferred them before all other people in the first offers of the gospel; and after they had outraged not only his servants, the prophets, but his Son, the Redeemer, yet he did not forsake them, but employed his apostles to solicit them, and publish among them the doctrine of salvation: so that his treating this people might well be called “much long-suffering,” it being above 1500 years, wherein he bore with them, or mildly punished them, far less than their deserts; their coming out of Egypt being about the year of the world 2450, and their final destruction as a commonwealth, not till about forty years after the death of Christ; and all this while his patience did sometimes wholly restrain his justice, and sometimes let it fall upon them in some few drops, but made no total devastation of their country, nor wrote his revenge in extraordinary bloody characters, till the Roman conquest, wherein he put a period to them both as a church and state. In particular this patience is manifest,

1st. In his giving warnings of judgments, before he orders them to go forth. He doth not punish in a passion, and hastily; he speaks before he strikes, and speaks that he may not strike. Wrath is published before it is executed, and that a long time; an hundred and

twenty years' advertisement was given to a debauched world before the heavens were opened, to spout down a deluge upon them. He will not be accused of coming unawares upon a people; he inflicts nothing but what he foretold either immediately to the people that provoke him, or anciently to them that have been their forerunners in the same provocation (Hos. 7:12), "I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard." Many of the leaves of the Old Testament are full of those presages and warnings of approaching judgment. These make up a great part of the volume of it in various editions, according to the state of the several provoking times. Warnings are given to those people that are most abominable in his sight (Zeph. 2:1, 2); "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired,"—it is a *Meiosis*, O nation abhorred,—"before the decree bring forth." He sends his heralds before he sends his armies; he summons them by the voice of his prophets, before he confounds them by the voice of his thunders. When a parley is beaten, a white flag of peace is hung out, before a black flag of fury is set up. He seldom cuts down men by his judgments, before he hath "hewed them by his prophets" (Hos. 6:5). Not a remarkable judgment but was foretold: the flood to the old world by Noah; the famine to Egypt by Joseph; the earthquake by Amos (eh. 1:1); the storm from Chaldea by Jeremiah; the captivity of the ten tribes by Hosea; the total destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Christ himself. He hath chosen the best persons in the world to give those intimations; Noah, the most righteous person on the earth, for the old world; and his Son, the most beloved person in heaven, for the Jews in the later time: and in other parts of the world, and in the later times, where he hath not warned by prophets, he hath supplied it by prodigies in the air and earth; histories are full of such items from heaven. Lesser judgments are forewarners of greater, as lightnings before thunder are messengers to tell us of a succeeding clap.

(1). He doth often give warning of judgments. He comes not to extremity, till he hath often shaken the rod over men; he thunders often, before he crusheth them with his thunderbolt; he doth not till after the first and second admonition punish a rebel, as he would have us reject a heretic. "He speaks once, yea, twice" (Job 33:14), "and man perceives it not;" he sends one message after another, and waits the success of many messages before he strikes. Eight prophets were ordered to acquaint the whole world with approaching

judgment (2 Pet. 2:5): he saved “Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly,” called “the eighth” in respect of his preaching, not in regard of his preservation; he was the eighth preacher in order, from the beginning of the world, that endeavored to restore the world to the way of righteousness. Most, indeed, consider him here as the eighth person saved, so do our translators; and, therefore, add *person*, which is not in the Greek. Some others consider him here as the eighth preacher of righteousness, reckoning Enoch, the son of Seth, the first, grounding it upon Gen. 4:26: “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord,” *heb.* “Then it was began to call in the name of the Lord,” τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ. *Sept.* “He began to call in the name of the Lord,” which others render, “He began to preach, or call upon men in the name of the Lord.” The word κληρο signifies to preach, or to call upon men by preaching (Prov. 1:21): “Wisdom crieth,” or “preaches;”

and if this be so, as it is very probable, it is easy to reckon him the eighth preacher, by numbering the successive heads of the generations (Gen. 5.), beginning at Enoch, the first preacher of righteousness. So many there were before God choked the old world with water, and swept them away. It is clear he often did admonish, by his prophets, the Jews of their sin, and the wrath which should come upon them. One prophet, Hosea, prophesied seventy years; for he prophesied in the days of four kings of Judah, and one of Israel, Jeroboam, the son of Joash (Hos. 1:1), or Jeroboam, the second of that name. Uzziah, king of Judah, in whose reign Hosea prophesied, lived thirty-eight years after the death of Jeroboam. The second Jotham, Uzziah’s successor, reigned sixteen ears; Ahaz sixteen; Hezekiah twenty-nine years. Now, take noting of Hezekiah’s time, and date the beginning of his prophecy from the last year of Jeroboam’s reign, and the time of Hosea’s prophecy will be seventy years complete; wherein God warned those people, and waited the return particularly of Israel; and not less than five of those we call the Lesser Prophets, were sent to foretell the destruction of the ten tribes, and to call them to repentance,—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Jonah; and though we have nothing of Jonah’s prophecy in this concern of Israel, yet that he lived in the time of the same Jeroboam, and prophesied things which are not upon record in the book of Jonah, is clear (2 Kings 14:25). And besides those, Isaiah prophesied

also in the reign of the same kings as Hosea did (Isa. 1:1); and it is God's usual method to send forth his servants, and when their admonitions are slighted he commissions others, before he sends out his destroying armies (Matt. 22:3, 4, 7).

(2). He doth often give warning of judgments, that he might not pour out his wrath. He summons them to a surrender of themselves, and a return from their rebellion, that they might not feel the force of his arms. He offers peace before he shakes off the dust of his feet, that his despised peace might not return in vain to him to solicit a revenge from his anger. He hath a right to punish upon the first commission of a crime, but he warns men of what they have deserved, of what his justice moves him to inflict, that by having recourse to his mercy he might not exercise the rights of his justice. God sought to kill Moses for not circumcising his son (Exod. 4:24). Could God, that sought it, miss a way to do it? Could a creature lurch, or fly from him? God put on the garb of an enemy, that Moses might be discouraged from being an instrument of his own ruin: God manifested an anger against Moses for his neglect, as if he would then have destroyed him, that Moses might prevent it by casting off his carelessness, and doing his duty. He sought to kill him by some evident sign, that Moses might escape the judgment by his obedience. He threatens Nineveh, by the prophet, with destruction, that Nineveh's repentance might make void the prophecy. He fights with men by the sword of his mouth, that he might not pierce them by the sword of his wrath. He threatens, that men might prevent the execution of his threatening; he terrifies, that he might not destroy, but that men by humiliation may lie prostrate before him, and move the bowels of his mercy to a louder sound than the voice of his anger. He takes time to whet his sword, that men may turn themselves from the edge of it. He roars like a lion, that men, by hearing his voice, may shelter themselves from being torn by his wrath. There is patience in the sharpest threatening, that we may avoid the scourge. Who can charge God with an eagerness to revenge, that sends so many heralds, and so often before he strikes, that he might be prevented from striking? His threatenings have not so much of a black flag as of an olive branch. He lifts up his hand before he strikes, that men might see and avert the stroke (Isa. 26:11).

2d. His patience is manifest in long delaying his threatened judgments, though he finds no repentance in the rebels. He doth sometimes delay his lighter punishments, because he doth not delight in torturing his creatures; but he doth longer delay his destroying punishments, such as put an end to men's happiness, and remit them to their final and unchangeable state; because he "doth not delight in the death of a sinner." While he is preparing his arrows, he is waiting for an occasion to lay them aside, and dull their points, that he may with honor march back again, and disband his armies. He brings lighter smarts sooner, that men might not think him asleep, but he suspends the more terrible judgments that men might be led to repentance. He scatters not his consuming fires at the first, but brings on ruining vengeance with a "slow pace; sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed" (Eccles. 8:11). The Jews therefore say, that Michael, the minister of justice, flies with one wing, but Gabriel, the minister of mercy, with two. An hundred and twenty years did God wait upon the old world, and delay their punishment all the time the "ark was preparing" (1 Pet. 3:20); wherein that wicked generation did not enjoy only a bare patience, but a striving patience (Gen. 6:3): "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years," the days wherein I will strive with him; that his long-suffering might not lose all its fruit, and remit the objects of it into the hands of consuming justice. It was the tenth generation of the world from Adam, when the deluge overflowed it, so long did God bear with them: and the tenth generation from Noah wherein Sodom was consumed. God did not come to keep his assizes in Sodom, till "the cry of their sins was very strong," that it had been a wrong to his justice to have restrained it any longer. The cry was so loud that he could not be at quiet, as it were, on his throne of glory for the disturbing noise (Gen. 17:20, 21). Sin transgresseth the law; the law being violated, solicits justice; justice, being urged, pleads for punishment; the cry of their sins did, as it were, force him from heaven to come down, and examine what cause there was for that clamor. Sin cries loud and long before he takes his sword in hand. Four hundred years he kept off deserved destruction from the Amorites, and deferred making good his promise to Abraham, of giving Canaan to his posterity, out of his long-suffering to the Amorites (Gen. 15:16). In the fourth generation they shall come

hither again, “for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.”

Their measure was filling then, but not so full as to put a stop to any further patience till four hundred years after. The usual time in succeeding generations, from the denouncing of judgments to the execution, is forty years; this some ground upon Ezek. 4:6, “Thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days,” taking each day for a year. Though Hosea lived seventy years, yet from the beginning of his prophesying judgments against Israel to the pouring them out upon that idolatrous people, it was forty years. Hosea, as was mentioned before, prophesied against them in the days of Jeroboam the Second, in whose time God did wonderfully deliver Israel (2 Kings 14:26, 27). From that time, till the total destruction of the ten tribes, it was forty years, as may easily be computed from the story (2 Kings 1–16), by the reign of the succeeding kings. So forty years after the most horrid villany that ever was committed in the face of the sun, *viz.*, the crucifying the Son of God, was Jerusalem destroyed, and the inhabitants captived; so long did God delay a visible punishment for such an outrage. Sometimes he prolongs sending a threatened judgment upon a mere shadow of humiliation; so he did that denounced against Ahab. He turned it over to his posterity, and adjourned it to another season (1 Kings 21:29). He doth not issue out an arrest upon one transgression; you often find him not commencing a suit against men till “three and four transgressions.” The first of Amos, all along that chapter and the second chapter, for “three and four,” *i. e.* “seven;” a certain number for an uncertain. He gives not orders to his judgments to march till men be obstinate, and refuse any commerce with him; he stops them till “there be no remedy” (2 Chron. 36:16). It must be a great wickedness that gives vent to them (Hos. 10:15); *Heb.* “Your wickedness of wickedness.” He is so “slow to anger,” and stays the punishment his enemies deserve, that he may seem to have forgot his “kindness to his friends” (Psalm 44:24): “Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and oppression?” He lets his people groan under the yoke of their enemies, as if he were made up of kindness to his enemies, and anger against his friends. This delaying of punishment to evil men is visible in his suspending the terrifying acts of conscience, and supporting it only in its checking, admonishing, and controlling acts. The patience of a governor is seen in the patient mildness of his deputy: David’s conscience did

not terrify him till nine months after his sin of murder. Should God set open the mouth of this power within us, not only the earth, but our own bodies and spirits, would be a burden to us: it is long before God puts scorpions into the hands of men's consciences to scourge them: he holds back the rod, waiting for the hour of our return, as if that would be a recompense for our offences and his forbearance.

3d. His patience is manifest in his unwillingness to execute his judgments when he can delay no longer. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men" (Lam. 3:33); *Heb.* "He doth not afflict from his heart:" he takes no pleasure in it, as he is Creator. The height of men's provocations, and the necessity of the preserving his rights, and vindicating his laws, obligeth him to it, as he is the Governor of the world; as a judge may willingly condemn a malefactor to death out of affection to the laws, and desire to preserve the order of government, but unwillingly, out of compassion to the offender himself. When he resolved upon the destruction of the old world, he spake it as a God grieved with an occasion of punishment (Gen. 6:6, 7, compared together). When he came to reckon with Adam, "he walked," he did not run with his sword in his hand upon him, as a mighty man with an eagerness to destroy him (Gen. 3:8), and that "in the cool of the day," a time when men, tired in the day, are unwilling to engage in a hard employment. His exercising judgment is a "coming out of his place" (Isa. 26:21; Mic. 1:3): he comes out of his station to exercise judgment; a throne is more his place than a tribunal. Every prophecy, loaded with threatenings, is called the "burden of the Lord;" a burden to him to execute it, as well as to men to suffer it. Though three angels came to Abraham about the punishment of Sodom, whereof one Abraham speaks to as to God, yet but two appeared at the destruction of Sodom, as if the Governor of the world were unwilling to be present at such dreadful work (Gen. 19:1): and when the man, that had the ink-horn by his side, that was appointed to mark those that were to be preserved in the common destruction, returned to give an account of the performing his commission (Ezek. 9:10), we read not of the return of those that were to kill, as if God delighted only to hear again of his works of mercy, and had no mind to hear again of his severe proceedings. The Jews, to show God's unwillingness to punish, imagine that hell was created the second day, because that day's work is not pronounced

good by God as all the other days' works are (Gen. 1:8).

(1.) When God doth punish he doth it with some regret. When he hurls down his thunders, he seems to do it with a backward hand, because with an unwilling heart. He created, saith Chrysostom, the world in six days, but was seven days in destroying one city, Jericho, which he had before devoted to be razed to the ground. What is the reason, saith he, that God is so quick to build up, but slow to pull down? His goodness excites his power to the one, but is not earnest to persuade him to the other: when he comes to strike, he doth it with a sigh or groan (Isa. 1:24): "Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me on my enemies," אהי, Ah! a note of grief. So Hos. 6:4, "O Ephraim! what shall I do unto thee? O Judah I what shall I do unto thee?" It is an *addubitatio*, a figure in rhetoric, as if God were troubled that he must deal so sharply with them, and give them up to their enemies:—I have tried all means to reclaim you; I have used all ways of kindness, and nothing prevails; what shall I do? my mercy invites me to spare them, and their ingratitude provokes me to ruin them. God had borne with that people of Israel almost three hundred years, from the setting up of the calves at Dan and Bethel; sent many a prophet to warn them, and spent many a rod to reform them: and when he comes to execute his threatenings, he doth with a conflict in himself (Hos. 11:8): "How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?" as if there were a pull-back in his own bowels. He solemnizeth their approaching funeral with a hearty groan, and takes his farewell of the dying malefactor with a pang in himself. How often, in former times, when he had signed a warrant for their execution, did he call it back? (Psalm 78:38): "Many a time turned he his anger away." Many a time he recalled or ordered his anger to return again, as the word signifies, as if he were irresolute what to do: he recalled it, as a man doth his servant, several times, when he is sending him upon an unwelcome message; or as a tender-hearted prince wavers and trembles when he is to sign a writ for the death of a rebel that hath been before his favorite, as if, when he had signed the writ, he blotted out his name again, and flung away the pen. And his method is remarkable when he came to punish Sodom; though the cry of their sin had been fierce in his ears, yet when he comes to make inquisition, he declares his intention to Abraham, as if he were desirous that Abraham should have helped him to some arguments

to stop the outgoings of his judgment. He gave liberty to the best person in the world to stand in the gap, and enter into a treaty with him, to show, saith one, how willingly his mercy would have compounded with his justice for their redemption; and Abraham interceded so long, till he was ashamed for pleading the cause of patience and mercy to the wrong of the rights of Divine justice. Perhaps, had Abraham had the courage to ask, God would have had the compassion to grant a reprieve just at the time of execution.

(2.) His patience is manifest in that when he begins to send out his judgments, he doth it by degrees. His judgments are “as the morning light,” which goes forth by degrees in the hemisphere (Hos. 6:5). He doth not shoot all his thunders at once, and bring his sharpest judgments in array at one time, but gradually, that a people may have time to turn to him (Joel 1:4). First the palmer-worm, then the locust, then the canker-worm, then the caterpillar; what one left, the other was to eat, if there were not a timely return. A Jewish writer saith, these judgments came not all in one year, but one year after another. The palmer-worm and locust might have eaten all, but Divine patience set bounds to the devouring creatures. God had been first as a moth to Israel (Hos. 5:12): “Therefore will I be to the house of Ephraim as a moth;” Rivet translates it, “I have been;” in the Hebrew it is “I,” without adding “I have been,” or “I will be,” and more probably “I have been;” I was as a moth, which makes little holes in a garment, and consumes it not all at once; and as “rottenness to the house of Judah,” or a worm that eats into wood by degrees. Indeed, this people had consumed insensibly, partly by civil combustions, change of governors, foreign invasions, yet they were as obstinate in their idolatry as ever; at last God would be no longer to them as a moth, but as a lion, tear and go away (ver. 14): so Hos. 2, God had disowned Israel for his spouse (ver. 2), “She is not my wife, neither am I her husband;” yet he had not taken away her ornaments, which by the right of divorce he might have done, but still expected her reformation, for that the threatening intimates (ver. 3); let her put away her whoredom, “lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day when she was born.” If she returned, she might recover what she had lost; if not, she might be stripped of what remained: thus God dealt with Judah (Ezek. 9:3. The glory of God goes first from the cherub to the threshold of the house, and stays there, as if he had a mind to be invited back again; then it goes from

the threshold of the house, and stands over the cherubims, as if upon a penitent call it would drop down again to its ancient station and seat, over which it hovered (Ezek. 10:18); and when he was not solicited to return, he departs out of the city, and stood upon the mountain, which is on the east part of the city (Ezek. 11:23), looking still towards, and hovering about the temple, which was on the east of Jerusalem, as if loth to depart, and abandon the place and people. He walks so leisurely, with his rod in his hand, as if he had a mind rather to fling it away than use it; his patience in not pouring out all his vials, is more remarkable than his wrath in pouring out one or two. Thus hath God made his slowness to anger visible to us in the gradual punishment of us; first, the pestilence on this city, then firing our houses, consumption of trade; these have not been answered with such a carriage as God expects, therefore a greater is reserved. I dare prognosticate, upon reasons you may gather from what hath been spoke before, if I be not much mistaken, the forty years of his usual patience are very near expired; he hath inflicted some, that he might be met with in a way of repentance, and omit with honor the inflicting the remainder.

4th. His patience is manifest, in moderating his judgments, when he sends them. Doth he empty his quiver of his arrows, or exhaust his magazines of thunder? No; he could roll one thunderbolt successively upon all mankind; it is as easy with him to create a perpetual motion of lightning and thunder, as of the sun and stars, and make the world as terrible by the one, as it is delightful by the other. He opens not all his store, he sends out a light party to skirmish with men, and puts not in array his whole army; "He stirs not up all his wrath" (Psalm 78:38); he doth but pinch, where he might have torn asunder; when he takes away much, he leaves enough to support us; if he had stirred up all his anger, he had taken away all, and our lives to boot. He rakes up but a few sparks, takes but one firebrand to fling upon men, when he might discharge the whole furnace upon them; he sends but a few drops out of the cloud, which he might make to break in the gross, and fall down upon our heads to overwhelm us; he abates much of what he might do. When he might sweep away a whole nation by deluges of water, corruption of the air, or convulsions of the earth, or by other ways that are not wanting at his order; he picks out only some persons, some families, some cities; sends a plague into one house, and not into another;

here is patience to the stock of a nation, while he inflicts punishment upon some of the most notorious sinners in it. Herod is suddenly snatched away, being willingly flattered into the thoughts of his being a god; God singled out the chief in the herd for whose sake he had been affronted by the rabble (Acts 12:22, 23). Some find him sparing them, while others feel him destroying them; he arrests some, when he might seize all, all being his debtors; and often in great desolations brought upon a people for their sin, he hath left a stump in the earth, as Daniel speaks (Dan. 4:15), for a nation to grow upon it again, and arise to a stronger constitution. He doth punish "less than our iniquities deserve" (Ezra 9:13), and rewards us "not according to our iniquities" (Psalm 103:10). The greatness of any punishment in this life, answers not the greatness of the crime. Though there be an equity in whatsoever he doth, yet there is not an equality to what we deserve; our iniquities would justify a severer treating of us; his justice goes not here to the end of its line, it is stopped in its progress, and the blows of it weakened by his patience; he did not curse the earth after Adam's fall, that it should bring forth no fruit, but that it should not bring forth fruit without the wearisome toil of man, and subjected him to distempers presently, but inflicted not death immediately; while he punished him, he supported him; and while he expelled him from paradise, he did not order him not to cast his eye towards it, and conceive some hopes of regaining that happy place.

5th. His patience is seen in giving great mercies after provocations. He is so slow to anger, that he heaps many kindnesses upon a rebel, instead of punishment. There is a prosperous wickedness, wherein the provoker's strength continues firm; the troubles, which like clouds drop upon others, are blown away from them, and they are "not plagued like other men," that have a more worthy demeanor towards God (Psalm 73:3–5). He doth not only continue their lives, but sends out fresh beams of his goodness upon them, and calls them by his blessings, that they may acknowledge their own fault and his bounty, which he is not obliged to by any gratitude he meets with from them, but by the richness of his own patient nature: for he finds the unthankfulness of men as great as his benefits to them. He doth not only continue his outward mercies, while we continue our sins, but sometimes gives fresh benefits after new provocations, that if possible he might excite an ingenuity in

men. When Israel at the Red Sea flung dirt in the face of God, by quarrelling with his servant Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, and misjudging God in his design of deliverance, and were ready to submit themselves to their former oppressors (Exod. 14:11, 12), which might justly have urged God to say to them, Take your own course; yet he is not only patient under their unjust charge, but “makes bare his arm in a deliverance at the Red Sea,” that was to be an amazing monument to the world in all ages; and afterwards, when they repiningly quarrelled with him in their wants in the wilderness, he did not only not revenge himself upon them, or cast off the conduct of them, but bore with them by a miraculous long-suffering, and supplied them with miraculous provision,— manna from heaven, and water from a rock. Food is given to support us, and clothes to cover us, and Divine patience makes the creature which we turn to another use than what they were at first intended for, serve us contrary to their own genius: for had they reason, no question but they would complain to be subjected to the service of man, who hath been so ungrateful to their Creator, and groan at the abuse of God’s patience, in the abuse they themselves suffer from the hands of man.

6th. All this is more manifest, if we consider the provocations he hath. Wherein his slowness to anger infinitely transcends the patience of any creature; nay, the spirits of all the angels and glorified saints in heaven, would be too narrow to bear the sins of the world for one day, nay, not so much as the sins of churches, which is a little spot in the whole world; it is because he is the Lord, one of an infinite power over himself, that not only the whole mass of the rebellious world, but of the sons of Jacob (either considered as a church and nation springing from the loins of Jacob, or considered as the regenerate part of the world, sometimes called the seed of Jacob), “are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6). A Jonah was angry with God, for recalling his anger from a sinful people; had God committed the government of the world to the glorified saints, who are perfect in love and holiness, the world would have had an end long ago; they would have acted that which they sue for at the hands of God, and is not granted them. “How long, Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev. 6:10). God hath designs of patience above the world, above the unsinning angels, and perfectly renewed spirits in glory.

The greatest created long-suffering is infinitely disproportioned to the Divine: fire from heaven would have been showered down before the greatest part of a day were spent, if a created patience had the conduct of the world, though that creature were possessed with the spirit of patience, extracted from all the creatures which are in heaven, or are, or ever were upon the earth. Methinks Moses intimates this; for as soon as God had passed by, proclaiming his name gracious and long suffering, as soon as ever Moses had paid his adoration, he falls to praying that God would go with the Israelites; "For it is a stiff-necked people" (Exod. 34:8, 9). What an argument is here for God to go along with them! he might rather, since he had heard him but just before say "he would by no means clear the guilty," desire God to stand further off from them, for fear the fire of his wrath should burst out from him, to burn them as he did the Sodomites. But he considers, that as none but God had such anger to destroy them, so none but God had such a patience to bear with them; it is as much as if he should have said, Lord! if thou shouldest send the most tender-hearted angel in heaven to have the guidance of this people, they would be a lost people; a period will quickly be set to their lives, no created strength can restrain its power from crushing such a stiff-necked people; flesh and blood cannot bear them, nor any created spirit of a greater might.

(1.) Consider the greatness of the provocations. No light matter, but actions of a great defiance: what is the practical language of most in the world, but that of Pharoah? "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" How many questions his being, and more his authority? What blasphemies of him, what reproaches of his Majesty! Men "drinking up iniquity like water," and with a haste and ardency "rushing into sin, as the horse into the battle." What is there in the reasonable creature, that hath the quickest capacity, and the deepest obligation to serve him, but opposition and enmity, a slight of him in everything, yea, the services most seriously performed, unsuited to the royalty and purity of so great a Being? such provocations as dare him to his face, that are a burden to so righteous a Judge, and so great a lover of the authority and majesty of his laws; that were there but a spark of anger in him, it is a wonder it doth not show itself.

When he is invaded in all his attributes, it is astonishing that this

single one of patience and meekness should withstand the assault of all the rest of his perfections; his being, which is attacked by sin, speaks for vengeance; his justice cannot be imagined to stand silent without charging the sinner. His holiness cannot but encourage his justice to urge its pleas, and be an advocate for it. His omniscience proves the truth of all the charge, and his abused mercy hath little encouragement to make opposition to the indictment; nothing but patience stands in the gap to keep off the arrest of judgment from the sinner.

(2.) His patience is manifest, if you consider the multitudes of these provocations. Every man hath sin enough in a day to make him stand amazed at Divine patience, and to call it, as well as the apostle did, “all long-suffering” (1 Tim. 1:16). How few duties of a perfectly right stamp are performed! What unworthy considerations mix themselves, like dross, with our purest and sincerest gold! How more numerous are the respects of the worshippers of him to themselves, than unto him! How many services are paid him, not out of love to him, but because he should do us no hurt, and some service; when we do not so much design to please him, as to please ourselves by expectations of a reward from him! What master would endure a servant that endeavored to please him, only because he should not kill him! Is that former charge of God upon the old world yet out of date, “That the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man was only evil, and that continually?” (Gen. 6:5.) Was not the new world as chargeable with it as the old? Certainly it was (Gen. 8:21); and is of as much force this very minute as it was then. How many are the sins against knowledge, as well as those of ignorance; presumptuous sins, as well as those of infirmity! How numerous those of omission and commission! It is above the reach of any man’s understanding to conceive all the blasphemies, oaths, thefts, adulteries, murders, oppressions, contempt of religion, the open idolatries of Turks and heathens, the more spiritual and refined idolatries of others.

Add to those, the ingratitude of those that profess his name, their pride, earthliness, carelessness, sluggishness to Divine duties, and in every one of those a multitude of provocations; the whole man being engaged in every sin, the understanding contriving it, the will embracing it, the affections complying with it, and all the members

of the body instruments in the acting the unrighteousness of it; every one of these faculties bestowed upon men by him, are armed against him in every act: and in every employment of them there is a distinct provocation, though centred in one sinful end and object. What are the offences all the men of the world receive from their fellow-creatures, to the injuries God receives from men, but as a small dust of earth to the whole mass of earth and heaven too? What multitudes of sins is one profane wretch guilty of in the space of twenty, forty, fifty years? Who can compute the vast number of his transgressions, from the first use of reason to the time of the separation of his soul from his body, from his entrance into the world to his exit? What are those, to those of a whole village of the like inhabitants?

What are those, to those of a great city? Who can number up all the foul-mouthed oaths, the beastly excess, the goatish uncleanness, committed in the space of a day, year, twenty years in this city, much less in the whole nation, least of all, in the whole world? Were it no more than the common idolatry of former ages, when the whole world turned their backs upon their Creator, and passed him by to sue to a creature, a stock or stone, or a degraded spirit? How provoking would it be to a prince to see a whole city under his dominion deny him a respect, and pay it to his scullion, or the common executioner he employs! Add to this the unjust invasion of kings, the oppressions exercised upon men, all the private and public sins that have been in the world ever since it began. The Gentiles were described by the apostle (Rom. 1:29–31), in a black character, “They were haters of God;” yet how did the “riches of his patience” preserve multitudes of such disingenuous persons, and how “many millions of such haters of him” breathe every day in his air, and are maintained by his bounty, have their tables spread, and their cups filled to the brim, and that, too, in the midst of reiterated belchings of their enmity against him? All are under sufficient provocations of him to the highest indignation. The presiding angels over nations could not forbear, in love and honor to their governor, to arm themselves to the destruction of their several charges, if Divine patience did not set them a pattern, and their obedience incline them to expect his orders, before they act what their zeal would prompt them to. The devils would be glad of a commission to destroy the world, but that his patience puts a stop to their fury, as well as his own justice.

(3.) Consider the longtime of this patience. He spread out his hands “all the day” to a rebellious world (Isa. 65:2). All men’s day, all God’s day, which is a “thousand years,” he hath borne with the gross of mankind, with all the nations of the world in a long succession of ages, for five thousand years and upwards already, and will bear with them till the time comes for the world’s dissolution. He hath suffered the monstrous acts of men, and endured the contradictions of a sinful world against himself, from the first sin of Adam, to the last committed this minute. The line of his patience hath run along with the duration of the world to this day; and there is not any one of Adam’s posterity but hath been expensive to him, and partaken of the riches of it.

(4.) All these he bears when he hath a sense of them. He sees every day the roll and catalogue of sin increasing; he hath a distinct view of every one, from the sin of Adam to the last filled up in his omniscience; and yet gives no order for the arrest of the world. He knows men fitted for destruction; all the instants he exerciseth long-suffering towards them, which makes the apostle call it not simply long-suffering, without the addition of *πολλῆ*, “much long-suffering” (Rom. 9:23). There is not a grain in the whole mass of sin, that he hath not a distinct knowledge of, and of the quality of it. He perfectly understands the greatness of his own majesty that is vilified, and the nature of the offence that doth disparage him. He is solicited by his justice, directed by his omniscience, and armed with judgments to vindicate himself, but his arm is restrained by patience. To conclude: no indignity is hid from him, no iniquity is beloved by him; the hatred of their sinfulness is infinite, and the knowledge of the malice is exact. The subsisting of the world under such weighty provocations, so numerous, so long time, and with his full sense of every one of them, is an evidence of such a “forbearance and long-suffering,” that the addition of riches which the apostle puts to it (Rom. 2:4), labors with an insufficiency clearly to display it.

III. Why God doth exercise so much patience.

1. To show himself appeasable. God did not declare by his patience to former ages, or any age, that he was appeased with them, or that they were in his favor; but that he was appeasable, that he was not an implacable enemy, but that they might find him favorable to them, if they did seek after him. The continuance of the

world by patience, and the bestowing many mercies by goodness, were not a natural revelation of the manner how he would be appeased: that was made known only by the prophets, and after the coming of Christ by the apostles; and had indeed been intelligible in some sort to the whole world, had there been a faithfulness in Adam's posterity, to transmit the tradition of the first promise to succeeding generations. Had not the knowledge of that died by their carelessness and neglect, it had been easy to tell the reason of God's patience to be in order to the exhibition of the "Seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head." They could not but naturally know themselves sinners, and worthy of death; they might, by easy reflections upon themselves, collect that they were not in that comely and harmonious posture now, as they were when God first wrought them with his own finger, and placed them as his lieutenants in the world; they knew they did grievously offend him; this they were taught by the sprinklings of his judgments among them sometimes. And since he did not utterly root up mankind, his sparing patience was a prologue of some further favors, or pardoning grace to be displayed to the world by some methods of God yet unknown to them. Though the earth was something impaired by the curse after the fall, yet the main pillars of it stood; the state of the natural motions of the creature was not changed; the heavens remained in the same posture wherein they were created; the sun, and moon, and other heavenly bodies, continued their usefulness and refreshing influences to man.

The heavens did still "declare the glory of God, day unto day" did "utter speech; their line is gone throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Psalm 19:1-4): which declared God to be willing to do good to his creatures, and were as so many legible letters or rudiments, whereby they might read his patience, and that a further design of favor to the world lay hid in that patience. Paul applies this to the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 10:18): "Have they not heard the word of God? yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world." Redeeming grace could not be spelled out by them in a clear notion, but yet they did declare that which is the foundation of gospel mercy. Were not God patient, there were no room for a gospel mercy, so that the heavens declare the gospel, not formally, but fundamentally, in declaring the long-suffering of God, without

which no gospel had been framed, or could have been expected. They could not but read in those things favorable inclinations towards them: and though they could not be ignorant that they deserved a mark of justice, yet seeing themselves supported by God, and beholding the regular motions of the heavens from day to day, and the revolutions of the seasons of the year, the natural conclusions they might draw from thence was, that God was placable; since he behaved himself more as a tender friend, that had no mind to be at war with them, than an enraged enemy. The good things which he gave them, and the patience whereby he spared them, were no arguments of an implacable disposition; and, therefore, of a disposition willing to be appeased. This is clearly the design of the apostle's arguing with the Lystrians, when they would have offered sacrifices to Paul (Acts 14:17). When God "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, he did not leave himself without witness, giving rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons." What were those witnesses of? not only of the being of a God, by their readiness to sacrifice to those that were not gods, only supposed to be so in their false imaginations; but witnesses to the tenderness of God, that he had no mind to be severe with his creatures, but would allure them by ways of goodness. Had not God's patience tended to this end, to bring the world under another dispensation, the apostle's arguing from it had not been suitable to his design, which seems to be a hindering the sacrifices they intended for them, and a drawing them to embrace the gospel, and therefore preparing the way to it, by speaking of the patience and goodness of God to them, as an unquestionable testimony of the reconcilableness of good to them, by some sacrifice which was represented under the common notion of sacrifices. These things were not witnesses of Christ, or syllables whereby they could spell out the redeeming person; but witnesses that God was placable in his own nature. When man abused those noble faculties God had given him, and diverted them from the use and service God intended them for, God might have stripped man of them the first time that he misemployed them; and it would have seemed most agreeable to his wisdom and justice, not to suffer himself to be abused, and the world to go contrary to its natural end. But since he did not level the world with its first nothing, but healed the world so favorably, it was evident that his patience pointed the world to a further design of mercy and goodness in him. To imagine

that God had no other design in his long-suffering but that of vengeance, had been a notion unsuitable to the goodness and wisdom of God. He would never have pretended himself to be a friend, if he had harbored nothing but enmity in his heart against them. It had been far from his goodness to give them a cause to suspect such a design in him, as his patience certainly did, had he not intended it. Had he preserved men only for punishment, it is more like he would have treated men as princes do those they reserve for the axe or halter, give them only things necessary to uphold their lives till the day of execution, and not have bestowed upon them so many good things to make their lives delightful to them, nor have furnished them with so many excellent means to please their senses, and recreate their minds; it had been a mocking of them to treat them at that rate, if nothing but punishment had been intended towards them. If the end of it, to lead men to repentance, were easily intelligible by them, as the apostle intimates (Rom. 2:4)—which is to be linked with the former chapter, a discourse of the Gentiles: “Not knowing,” saith he, “that the riches of his forbearance and goodness leads thee to repentance”—it also gives them some ground to hope for pardon. For what other argument can more induce to repentance than an expectation of mercy upon a relenting, and acknowledging the crime? Without a design of pardoning grace, his patience would have been in a great measure exercised in vain: for by mere patience God is not reconciled to a sinner, no more than a prince to a rebel, by bearing with him. Nor can a sinner conclude himself in the favor of God, no more than a rebel can conclude himself in the favor of his prince; only, this he may conclude, that there is some hopes he may have the grant of a pardon, since he hath time to sue it out. And so much did the patience of God naturally signify that he was of a reconcilable temper, and was willing men should sue out their pardon upon repentance; otherwise, he might have magnified his justice, and condemned men by the law of works.

(2.) He therefore exercised so much patience to wait for men’s repentance. All the notices and warnings that God gives men, of either public or personal calamities, is a continual invitation to repentance. This was the common interpretation the heathens made of extraordinary presages and prodigies, which showed as well the delays as the approaches of judgments. What other notion but this,

that those warnings of judgments witness a slowness to anger, and a willingness to turn his arrows another way, should move them to multiply sacrifices, go weeping to their temples, sound out prayers to their gods, and show all those other testimonies of a repentance which their blind understandings hit upon? If a prince should sometimes in a light and gentle manner punish a criminal, and then relax it, and show him much kindness, and afterwards inflict upon him another kind of punishment as light as the former, and less than was due to his crime, what could the malefactor suspect by such a way of proceeding, but that the prince, by those gently-repeated chastisements, had a mind to move him to a regret for his crime? And what other thoughts could men naturally have of God's conduct, that he should warn them of great judgments, send light afflictions, which are testimonies rather of a patience than of a severe wrath, but that it was intended to move them to a relenting, and a breaking off their sins by working righteousness? Though Divine patience does not, in the event, induce men to repentance, yet the natural tendency of such a treatment is to mollify men's hearts, to overcome their obstinacy; and no man hath any reason to judge otherwise of such a proceeding. The "long-suffering of God is salvation," saith Peter (2 Pet. 3:16), *i. e.* hath a tendency to salvation, in its being a solicitation of men to the means of it; for the apostle cites Paul for the confirmation of it,—“Even as our beloved brother, Paul, hath written unto you,” which must refer to Rom. 2:4: “it leads to repentance,” it conducts, which is more than barely to invite; it doth, as it were, take us by the hand, and point us to the way wherein we should go; and for this end it was exercised, not only towards the Jews, but towards the Gentiles, not only towards those that are within the pale of the church, and under the dews of the gospel, but to those that are in darkness, and in the shadow of death; for this discourse of the apostle was but an inference from what he had treated of in the first chapter concerning the idolatry and ingratitude of the Gentiles; since the Gentiles were to be punished for the abuse of it as well as the Jews, as he intimates, ver. 9. It is plain that his patience, which is exercised towards the idolatrous Gentiles, was to allure them to repentance as well as others; and it was a sufficient motive in itself to persuade them to a change of their vile and gross acts, to such as were morally good: and there was enough in God's dealing with them, and in that light

they had to engage them to a better course than what they usually walked in; and though men do abuse God's long-suffering, to encourage their impenitence, and persisting in their crimes, yet that they cannot reasonably imagine that to be the end of God is evident; their own gripes of conscience would acquaint them that it is otherwise. They know that conscience is a principle that God hath given them, as well as understanding, and will, and other faculties; that God doth not approve of that which the voice of their own consciences, and of the consciences of all men under natural light, are utterly against: and if there were really, in this forbearance of God, an approbation of men's crimes, conscience could not, frequently and universally in all men, check them for them. What authority could conscience have to do it? But this it doth in all men: as the apostle (Rom. 1:22), "They know the judgment of God, that those that do such things," which he had mentioned before, "are worthy of death." In this thing the consciences of all men cannot err: they could not, therefore, conclude from hence God's approbation of their iniquities, but his desire that their hearts should be touched with a repentance for them. The "sin of Ephraim is hid" (Hos. 13:12, 13); *i. e.* God doth not presently take notice of it, to order punishment; he lays it in a secret place from the eye of his justice, that Ephraim might not be his unwise son, and "stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children;" *i. e.* that he should speedily reclaim himself, and not continue in the way of destruction. God hath no need to abuse any; he doth not lie to the sons of men; if he would have men perish, he could easily destroy them, and have done it long ago: he did not leave the woman Jezebel in being, nor lengthened out her time, but as a space to repent (Rev. 2:21), that she might reflect upon her ways, and devote herself seriously to his service, and her own happiness. His patience stands between the offending creature and eternal misery a long time, that men might not foolishly throw away their souls, and be damned for their impenitency; by this he shows himself ready to receive men to mercy upon their return. To what purpose doth he invite men to repentance, if he intended to deceive them, and damn them after they repent?

3. He doth exercise patience for the propagation of mankind. If God punished every sin presently, there would not only be a period put to churches, but to the world; without patience, Adam had sunk

into eternal anguish the first moment of his provocation, and the whole world of mankind, in his loins, had perished with him, and never seen the light. If this perfection had not interposed after the first sin, God had lost his end in the creation of the world, which he “created not in vain, but formed it to be inhabited” (Isa. 45:18). It had been inconsistent with the wisdom of God to make a world to be inhabited, and destroy it upon sin, when it had but two principal inhabitants in it; the reason of his making this earth had been insignificant; he had not had any upon earth to glorify him, without erecting another world, which might have proved as sinful and as quickly wicked as this; God should have always been pulling down down and rearing up, creating and annihilating; one world would have come after another, as wave after wave in the sea. His patience stepped in to support the honor of God, and the continuance of men, without which one had been in part impaired, and the other totally lost.

4. He doth exercise patience for the continuance of the church. If he be not patient toward sinners, what stock would there be for believers to spring up from? He bears with the provoking carriage of men, evil men, because out of their loins he intends to extract others, which he will form for the glory of his grace. He hath some unborn that belong to the election of grace, which are to be the seed of the worst of men; Jeroboam, the chief incendiary of the Israelites to idolatry, had an Abijah, in whom was found “some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel” (1 Kings 14:13). Had Ahaz been snapped in the first act of his wickedness, the Israelites had wanted so good a prince and so good a man as Hezekiah, a branch of that wicked predecessor. What gardener cuts off the thorns from the rose-brush till he hath gathered the roses? and men do not use to burn all the crab-tree, but preserve a stock to engraft some sweet fruit upon. There could not have been a saint in the earth, nor, consequently, in heaven, had it not been for this perfection: he did not destroy the Israelites in the wilderness, that he might keep up a church among them, and not extinguish the whole seed that were heirs of the promises and covenant made with Abraham. Had God punished men for their sins as soon as they had been committed, none would have lived to have been better, none could have continued in the world to honor him by their virtues. Manasseh had never been a convert, and many brutish men had never been changed

from beasts to angels, to praise and acknowledge their Creator. Had Peter received his due recompense upon the denial of his Master, he had never been a martyr for him; nor had Paul been a preacher of the gospel; nor any else: and so the gospel had not shined in any part of the world. No seed would have been brought into Christ; Christ is beholding immediately to this attribute for all the seed he hath in the world: it is for his name's sake that he doth defer his anger; and for his praise that he doth refrain from "cutting us off" (Isa. 48:9): and in the next chapter follows a prophecy of Christ. To overthrow mankind for sin, were to prevent the spreading a church in the world: a woman that is guilty of a capital crime, and lies under a condemning sentence, is reprieved from execution for her being with child; it is for the child's sake the woman is respited, not for her own: it is for the elect's sake, in the loins of transgressors, that they are a long time spared, and not for their own (Isa.

55:8): "As the new wine is found in a cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all;" as a husbandman spares a vine for some good clusters in it. He had spoke of vengeance before, yet he would reserve some from whom he would bring forth those that should be "inheritors of his mountains," that he might make up his church of Judea; Jerusalem being a mountainous place, and the type of the church in all ages. What is the reason he doth not level his thunder at the heads of those for whose destruction he receives so many petitions from the "souls under the altar?" (Rev. 6:9, 10). Because God had others to write a testimony for him in their own blood, and perhaps out of the loins of those for whom vengeance was so earnestly supplicated; and God, as the master of a vessel, lies patiently at anchor, till the last passenger he expects be taken in.232

5. For the sake of his church he is patient to wicked men. The tares are patiently endured till the harvest, for fear in the plucking up the one, there might be some prejudice done to the other. Upon this account he spares some, who are worse than others whom he crusheth by signal judgments: the Jews had committed sins worse than Sodom, for the confirmation of which we have God's oath (Ezek. 16:48); and more by half than Samaria, or the ten tribes had done (ver. 51): yet God spared the Jews, though he destroyed the

Sodomites. What was the reason, but a larger remnant of righteous persons, more clusters of good grapes, were found among them than grew in Sodom? (Isa. 1:9). A few more righteous in Sodom had damped the fire and brimstone designed for that place, and a "remnant of such in Judea" was a bar to that fierceness of anger, which otherwise would have quickly consumed them. Had there been but "ten righteous in Sodom," Divine patience had still bound the arms of Justice, that it should not have prepared its brimstone, notwithstanding the clamor of the sins of the multitude. Judea was ripe for the sickle, but God would put a lock upon the torrent of his judgments, that they should not flow down upon that wicked place, to make them a desolation and a curse, as long as tender-hearted Josiah lived, "who had humbled himself" at the threatening, and wept before the Lord (1 Kings 22:19, 20). Sometimes he bears with wicked men, that they might exercise the patience of the saints (Rev. 14:12): the whole time of the "forbearance of antichrist" in all his intrusions into the temple of God, invasions of the rights of God, usurpations of the office of Christ, and besmearing himself with the blood of the saints, was to give them an opportunity of patience. God is patient towards the wicked, that by their means he might try the righteous. He burns not the wisp till he hath scoured his vessels; nor lays by the hammer, till he hath formed some of his matter into an excellent fashion. He useth the worst men as rods to correct his people, before he sweeps the twigs out of his house. God sometimes uses the thorns of the world, as a hedge to secure his church, sometimes as instruments to try and exercise it. Howsoever he useth them, whether for security or trial, he is patient to them for his church's advantage.

6. When men are not brought to repentance by his patience, he doth longer exercise it, to manifest the equity of his future justice upon them. As wisdom is justified by her obedient children, so is justice justified by the rebels against patience; the contempt of the latter is the justification of the former. The "apostles were unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that perish," as well as in them that were saved by the acceptance of their message (2 Cor. 2:15). Both are fragrant to God; his mercy is glorified by the one's acceptance of it, and his justice freed from any charge against it by the other's refusal. The cause of men's ruin cannot be laid upon God, who provided means for their salvation, and solicited her compliance

with him. What reason can they have to charge the Judge with any wrong to them, who reject the tenders he makes, and who hath forborne them with so much patience, when he might have censured them by his righteous justice, upon the first crime they committed, or the first refusal of his gracious offers? “*Quanto Dei magis judicium tardum est tanto magis justum.*”²³³ After the despising of patience, there can be no suspicion of an irregularity in the acts of justice. Man hath no reason to fall foul in his charge upon God, if he were punished for his own sin, considering the dignity of the injured person, and the meanness of himself, the offender; but his wrath is more justified when it is poured out upon those whom he hath endured with much long-suffering. There is no plea against the shooting of his arrows into those, for whom this voice hath been loud, and his arms open for their return. As patience, while it is exercised, is the silence of his justice, so when it is abused, it silenceth men’s complaints against his justice. The “riches of his forbearance” made way for the manifesting the “treasures of his wrath.” If God did but a little bear with the insolencies of men, and cut them off after two or three sins, he would not have opportunity to show either the power of his patience, or that of his wrath; but when he hath a right to punish for one sin, and yet bears with them for many, and they will not be reclaimed, the sinner is more inexcusable, Divine justice less chargeable, and his wrath more powerful. (Rom. 9:22), “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?” The proper and immediate end of his long-suffering is to lead men to repentance; but after they have by their obstinacy fitted themselves for destruction, he bears longer with them, to “magnify his wrath” more upon them; and if it is not the *finis operantis*, it is at least the *finis operis*, where patience is abused. Men are apt to complain of God, that he deals hardly with them; the Israelites seem to charge God with too much severity, to cast them off, when so many promises were made to the fathers for their perpetuity and preservation, which is intimated, Hos. 2:2. “Plead with your mother, plead:” by the double repetition of the word “plead;” do not accuse me of being false or too rigorous, but accuse your mother, your church, your magistracy, your ministry, for their spiritual fornications which have provoked me; for their נאפופיה, intimating the greatness of their sins by the reduplication

of the word, “lest I strip her naked.” I have borne with her under many provocations, and I have not yet taken away all her ornaments, or said to her, according to the rule of divorce, *Res tuas tibi habeto*. God answers their impudent charge: “She is not my wife, nor am I her husband;” he doth not say first, I am not her husband, but she is not my wife; she first withdrew from her duty by breaking the marriage covenant, and then I ceased to be her husband. No man shall be condemned, but he shall be convinced of the due desert of his sin, and the justice of God’s proceeding. God will lay open men’s guilt, and repeat the measures of his patience to justify the severity of his wrath (Hos. 7:10), “Sins will testify to their face.” What is in its own nature a preparation for glory, men by their obstinacy make a preparation for a more indisputable punishment. We see many evidences of God’s forbearance here, in sparing men under those blasphemies which are audible, and those profane carriages which are visible, which would sufficiently justify an act of severity; yet when men’s secret sins, both in heart and action, and the vast multitude of them, far surmounting what can arrive to our knowledge here, shall be discovered, how great a lustre will it add to God’s bearing with them, and make his justice triumph without any reasonable demur from the sinner himself! He is long-suffering here, that his justice may be more public hereafter.

Use IV. For instruction. How is this patience of God abused! The Gentiles abused those testimonies of it, which were written in showers and fruitful seasons. No nation was ever stripped of it, under the most provoking idolatries, till after multiplied spurns at it not a person among us but hath been guilty of the abuse of it. How have we contemned that which demands a reverence from us! How have we requited God’s waitings with rebellions, while he hath continued urging and expecting our return! Saul relented at David’s forbearing to revenge himself, when he had his prosecuting and industrious enemy in his power. (1 Sam. 24:17), “Thou art more righteous than I; thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil:” and shall we not relent at God’s wonderful long-suffering, and silencing his anger so much? He could puff away, our lives, but he will not, and yet we endeavor to strip him of his being, though we cannot.

1. Let us consider the ways, how slowness to anger is abused.

(1.) It is abused by misinterpretations of it, when men slander his patience to be only a carelessness and neglect of his providence; as Averroes argued from his slowness to anger, a total neglect of the government of the lower world: or when men from his long-suffering charge him with impurity, as if his patience were a consent to their crimes; and because he suffered them, without calling them to account, he were one of their partisans, and as wicked as themselves (Psalm 50:21): “Because I kept silence, thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself.” His silence makes them conclude him to be an abettor of, and a consort in their sins; and think him more pleased with their iniquity than their obedience. Or when they will infer from his forbearance a want of his omniscience; because he suffers their sins, they imagine he forgets them (Psalm 10:11): “He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten:” thinking his patience proceeds not from the sweetness of his nature, but a weakness of his mind. How base is it, instead of admitting him, to disparage him for it; and because he stands in so advantageous a posture towards us, not to own the choicest prerogatives of his Deity! This is to make a perfection, so useful to us, to shadow and extinguish those others, which are the prime flowers of his crown.

(2.) His patience is abused by continuing in a course of sin under the influences of it. How much is it the practical language of men, Come, let us commit this or that iniquity; since Divine patience hath suffered worse than this at our hands! Nothing is remitted to their sensual pleasures, and eagerness in them. How often did the Israelites repeat their murmurings against him, as if they would put his patience to the utmost proof, and see how far the line of it could extend! They were no sooner satisfied in one thing, but they quarrelled with him about another, as if he had no other attribute to put in motion against them. They tempted him as often as he relieved them, as though the declaration of his name to Moses (Exod. 34.), “to be a God gracious, and long-suffering,” had been intended for no other purpose but a protection of them in their rebellions. Such a sort of men the prophet speaks of, that were “settled in their lees,” or dregs (Zeph. 1:12): they were congealed, and frozen in their successful wickedness. Such an abuse of Divine patience is the very dregs of sin; God chargeth it highly upon the Jews (Isa. 57:11): “I have held my peace, even of old, and thou fearest me not;” my silence made thee confident, yea, impudent in

thy sin.

(3.) His patience is abused by repeating sin, after God hath, by an act of his patience, taken off some affliction from men. As metals melted in the fire remain fluid under the operations of the flames, yet when removed from the fire, they quickly return to their former hardness, and sometimes grow harder than they were before; so men who, in their afflictions, seem to be melted, like Ahab confess their sins, he prostrate before God, and seek him early; yet, if they be brought from under the power of their afflictions, they return to their old nature, and are as stiff against God, and resist the blows of the Spirit as much as they did before. They think they have a new stock of patience to sin upon. Pharaoh was somewhat thawed under judgments, and frozen again under forbearance (Exod. 9:27, 34). Many will howl when God strikes them, and laugh at him when he forbears them. Thus that patience which should melt us, doth often harden us, which is not an effect natural to his patience, but natural to our abusing corruption.

(4.) His patience is abused, by taking encouragement from it to mount to greater degrees of sin.

Because God is slow to anger, men are more fierce in sin, and not only continue in their old rebellions, but heap new upon them. If he spare them for three transgressions, they will commit four, as is intimated in the first and second of Amos; "Men's hearts are fully set in them to do evil, because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed" (Eccles. 8:11). Their hearts are more desperately bent; before they had some waverings, and pull-backs, but after a fair sunshine of Divine patience, they entertain more unbridled resolutions, and pass forward with more liberty and licentiousness. They make his long-suffering subservient to turn out all those little relentings and regrets they had before, and banish all thoughts of barring out a temptation. No encouragement is given to men by God's patience, but they force it by their presumption. They invert God's order, and bind themselves stronger to iniquity by that which should bind them faster to their duty. A happy escape at sea makes men go more confidently into the deeps afterward. Thus we deal with God as debtors do with good-natured creditors: because they do not dun them for what they owe, they take encouragement to run more upon the score, till the sum amounts above their ability of

payment.

But let it be considered, 1st. That this abuse of patience is a high sin. As every act of forbearance obligeth us to duty, so every act of it abused, increaseth our guilt. The more frequent its solicitations of us have been, the deeper aggravations our sin receives by it. Every sin, after an act of Divine patience, contracts a blacker guilt. The sparing us after the last sin we committed, was a superadded act of long-suffering, and a laying out more of his riches upon us: and, therefore, every new act committed is a despite against greater riches expended, and greater cost upon us, and against his preserving us from the hand of justice for the last transgression. It is disingenuous not to have a due resentment of so much goodness, and base to injure him the more, because he doth not right himself. Shall he receive the more wrongs from us, by how much the sweeter he is to us? No man's conscience but will tell him it is vile to prefer the satisfaction of a sordid lust, before the counsel of a God of so gracious a disposition. The sweeter the nature, the fouler is the injury that is done unto it. 2d. It is dangerous to abuse his patience.

Contempt of kindness is most irksome to an ingenuous spirit; and he is worthy to have the arrows of God's indignation lodged in his heart, who despiseth the riches of his long-suffering. For,

[1.] The time of patience will have an end. Though his Spirit strives with man, yet it shall "not always strive" (Gen. 6:3). Though there be a time wherein Jerusalem might "know the things that concerned her peace," yet there is another period wherein they should be "hid from her eyes" (Luke 19:43): "O that thou hadst known in this thy day!" Nations have their day, and persons have their day; and the day of most persons is shorter than the day of nations. Jerusalem had her day of forty years; but how many particular persons were taken off before the last or middle hours of that day were arrived! "Forty years was God grieved" with the generation of the Israelites (Heb. 3:11). One carcass dropped after another in that limited time, and at the end not a man but fell under the judicial stroke, except Caleb and Joshua. One hundred and twenty years was the term set to the mass of the old world, but not to every man in the old world; some fell while the ark was preparing, as well as the whole stock when the ark was completed.

Though he be patient with most, yet he is not in the same degree with all; every sinner hath his time of sinning, beyond which he shall proceed no further, be his lusts never so impetuous, and his affections never so imperious. The time of his patience is, in Scripture, set forth sometimes by years; three years he came to find fruit on the fig-tree: sometimes by days; some men's sins are sooner ripe, and fall. There is a measure of sin (Jer. 2:13), which is set forth by the ephah (Zech. 5:8), which, when it is filled, is sealed up, and a weight of lead cast upon the mouth of it. When judgments are preparing, once and twice the Lord is prevailed with by the intercession of the prophet: the prepared grass-hoppers are not sent to devour, and the kindled fire is not blown up to consume (Amos 7:1-8). But at last God takes the plumb-line, to suit and measure punishment to their sin, and would not pass by them any more; and when their sin was ripe, represented by a "basket of summer-fruit," God would withhold his hand no longer, but brought such a day upon them, wherein "the songs of the Temple should be howlings, and dead bodies be in every place" (Amos 8:2, 3). He lays by any further thoughts of patience to speed their ruin. God had borne long with the Israelites, and long it was before he gave them up. He would first brake the "bow in Jezreel" (Hos. 1:5); take away the strength of the nation by the death of Zechariah, the last of Jehu's race, which introduced civil dissensions and ambitious murders, for the throne, whereby in weakening one part they weakened the whole; or, as some think, alluding to Tiglah Pilezar, who carried captive two tribes and a half. If this would not reclaim them, then follows "Lo-ruhamah, I will not have mercy," I will sweep them out of the land (ver. 6). If they did not repent, they should be "Lo-ammi" (ver. 9), "You are not my people," and "I will not be your God." They should be discovenanted, and stripped of all federal relation. Here patience forever withdrew from them, and wrathful anger took its place. And, for particular persons, the time of life, whether shorter or longer, is the only time of long-suffering. It hath no other stage than the present state of things to act upon; there is none else to be expected after but giving account of what hath been done in the body, not of anything done after the soul is fled from the body: the time of patience ends with the first moment of the soul's departure from the body. This time only is the "day of salvation;"

i. e. the day wherein God offers it, and the day wherein God

waits for our acceptance of it: it is at his pleasure to shorten or lengthen our day, not at ours; it is not our long-suffering, but his; he hath the command of it.

[2.] God hath wrath to punish, as well as patience to bear. He hath a fury to revenge the outrages done to his meekness: when his messages of peace, sent to reclaim men, are slighted, his sword shall be whetted, and his instruments of war prepared (Hos. 5:3): “Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah.” As he deals gently, like a father, so he can punish capitally as a judge: though he holds his peace for a long time, yet at last he will go forth like a mighty man, and stir up jealousy, as a man of war, to cut in pieces his enemies. It is not said he hath no anger, but that he is “slow to anger,” but sharp in it: he hath a sword to cut, and a bow to shoot, and arrows to pierce (Psalm 12:13): though he be long drawing the one out of its scabbard, and long fitting the other to his bow, yet, when they are ready, he strikes home, and hits the mark: though he hath a time of patience, yet he hath also a “day of rebuke”

(Hos. 5:9); though patience overrules justice, by suspending it, yet justice will at last overrule patience, by an utter silencing it. God is Judge of the whole earth to right men, yet he is no less Judge of the injuries he receives to right himself. Though God awhile was pressed with the murmurings of the Israelites, after their coming out of Egypt, and seemed desirous to give them all satisfaction upon their unworthy complaints, yet, when they came to open hostility, in setting a golden calf in his throne, he commissions the “Levites to kill every man his brother and companion in the camp” (Exod. 32:27): and how desirous soever he was to content them before, they never murmured afterwards but they severely smarted for it. When once he hath begun to use his sword, he sticks it up naked, that it might be ready for use upon every occasion. Though he hath feet of lead, yet he hath hands of iron. It was long that he supported the peevishness of the Jews, but at last he captived them by the arms of the Babylonians, and laid them waste by the power of the Romans. He planted, by the apostles, churches in the east; and when his goodness and long-suffering prevailed not with them, he tore them up by the roots. What Christians are to be found in those once famous parts of Asia but what are overgrown with much error and ignorance?

[3.] The more his patience is abused, the sharper will be the wrath he inflicts. As his wrath restrained makes his patience long, so his compassions restrained will make his wrath severe; as he doth transcend all creatures in the measures of the one, so he doth transcend all creatures in the sharpness of the other. Christ is described with “feet of brass,” as if they burned in a furnace (Rev. 1:15), slow to move, but heavy to crush, and hot to burn. His wrath loseth nothing by delay; it grows the fresher by sleeping, and strikes with greater strength when it awakes: all the time men are abusing his patience, God is whetting his sword, and the longer it is whetting the sharper will be the edge; the longer he is fetching his blow, the smarter it will be. The heavier the cannons are, the more difficultly are they drawn to the besieged town; but, when arrived, they recompense the slowness of their march by the fierceness of their battery. “Because I have purged thee,” *i. e.* used means for thy reformation, and waited for it, “and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee: I will not go back, neither will I spare; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee” (Ezek. 24:13, 14). God will spare as little then as he spared much before; his wrath shall be as raging upon them as the sea of their wickedness was within them. When there is a bank to forbid the irruption of the streams, the waters swell; but when the bank is broke, or the lock taken away, they rush with the greater violence, and ravage more than they would have done had they not met with a stop: the longer a stone is in falling, the more it bruises and grinds to powder. There is a greater treasure of wrath laid up by the abuses of patience: every sin must have a just recompense of reward; and therefore every sin, in regard of its aggravations, must be more punished than a sin in the singleness and simplicity of its own nature. As treasures of mercy are kept by God for us, “he keeps mercy for thousands;” so are treasures of wrath kept by him to be expended, and a time of expense there must be: patience will account to justice all the good offices it hath done the sinner, and demand to be righted by justice; justice will take the account from the hands of patience, and exact a recompense for every disingenuous injury offered to it. When justice comes to arrest men for their debts, patience, mercy, and goodness, will step in as creditors, and clap their actions upon them, which will make the

condition so much more deplorable.

[4.] When he puts an end to his abused patience, his wrath will make quick and sure work. He that is “slow to anger” will be swift in the execution of it. The departure of God from Jerusalem is described with “wings and wheels” (Ezek. 11:23). One stroke of his hand is irresistible; he that hath spent so much time in waiting needs but one minute to ruin; though it be long ere he draws his sword out of his scabbard, yet, when once he doth it, he despatcheth men at a blow. Ephraim, or the ten tribes, had a long time of patience and prosperity, but now shall a “month devour him with his portion” (Hos. 5:7). One fatal month puts a period to the many years’ peace and security of a sinful nation; his arrows wound suddenly (Psalm 64:7); and while men are about to fill their bellies, he casts the fruits of his wrath upon them (Job 20:23), like thunder out of a cloud, or a bullet out of a cannon, that strikes dead before it is heard. God deals with sinners as enemies do with a town, batter it not by planted guns, but secretly undermines and blows up the walls, whereby they involve the garrison in a sudden ruin, and carry the town. God spared the Amalekites a long time after the injury committed against the Israelites, in their passage out of Egypt to Canaan; but when he came to reckon with them, he would waste them in a trice, and make an utter consumption of them (1 Sam. 15:2, 3). He describes himself by a “travailing woman” (Isa. 24:14), that hath borne long in her womb, and at last sends forth her birth with strong cries. Though he hath held his peace, been still, and refrained himself, yet, at last, he will destroy and devour at once: the Ninevites, spared in the time of Jonah for their repentance, are, in nature, threatened with a certain and total ruin, when God should come to bring them to an account for his length and patience, so much abused by them. Though God endured the murmuring Israelites so long in the wilderness, yet he paid them off at last, and took away the rebels in his wrath: he uttered their sentence with an irreversible oath, that “none of them should enter into his rest;” and he did as surely execute it as he had solemnly sworn it.

[5.] Though he doth defer his visible wrath, yet that very delay may be more dreadful than a quick punishment. He may forbear striking, and give the reins to the hardness and corruption of men’s hearts; he may suffer them to walk in their own counsels, without

any more striving with them, whereby they make themselves fitter fuel for his vengeance. This was the fate of Israel when they would not hearken to his voice; he “gave them up to their own hearts’ lusts, and they walked in their own counsels” (Psalm 81:12). Though his sparing them had the outward aspect of patience, it was a wrathful one, and attended with spiritual judgments; thus many abusers of patience may still have their line lengthened, and the candle of prosperity to shine upon their beads, that they may increase their sins, and be the fitter mark at last for his arrows; they swim down the stream of their own sensuality with a deplorable security, till they fall into an unavoidable gulf, where, at last, it will be a great part of their hell to reflect on the length of Divine patience on earth, and their inexcusable abuse of it.

2. It informs us of the reason why he lets the enemies of his church oppress it, and defers his promise of the deliverance of it. If he did punish them presently, his holiness and justice would be glorified, but his power over himself in his patience would be obscured. Well may the church be content to have a perfection of God glorified, that is not like to receive any honor in another world by any exercise of itself. If it were not for this patience, he were incapable to be the Governor of a sinful world; he might, without it, be the Governor of an innocent world, but not of a criminal one; he would be the destroyer of the world, but not the orderer and disposer of the extravagancies and sinfulness of the world. The interest of his wisdom, in drawing good out of evil, would not be served, if he were not clothed with this perfection as well as with others. If he did presently destroy the enemies of his church upon the first oppression, his wisdom in contriving, and his power in accomplishing deliverance against the united powers of hell and earth, would not be visible, no, nor that power in preserving his people unconsumed in the furnace of affliction. He had not got so great a name in the rescue of his Israel from Pharaoh, had he thundered the tyrant into destruction upon his first edicts against the innocent. If he were not patient to the most violent of men, he might seem to be cruel. But when he offers peace to them under their rebellions, waits that they may be members of his church, rather than enemies to it, he frees himself from any such imputation, even in the judgment of those that shall feel most of his wrath; it is this renders the equity of his justice unquestionable, and the deliverance

of his people righteous in the judgment of those from whose fetters they are delivered. Christ reigns in the midst of his enemies, to show his power over himself, as well as over the heads of his enemies, to show his power over his rebels. And though he retards his promise, and suffers a great interval of time between the publication and performance, sometimes years, sometimes ages to pass away, and little appearance of any preparation, to show himself a God of truth; it is not that he hath forgotten his word, or repents that ever he passed it, or sleeps in a supine neglect of it: but that men might not perish, but bethink themselves, and come as friends into his bosom, rather than be crushed as enemies under his feet (2 Pet. 3:9): "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Hereby he shows, that he would be rather pleased with the conversion, than the destruction, of men.

3. We see the reason why sin is suffered to remain in the regenerate; to show his patience towards his own; for since this attribute hath no other place of appearance but in this world, God takes opportunity to manifest it; because, at the close of the world, it will remain closed up in the Deity, without any further operation. As God suffers a multitude of sins in the world, to evidence his patience to the wicked, so he suffers great remainders of sin in his people, to show his patience to the godly. His sparing mercy is admirable, before their conversion, but more admirable in bearing with them after so high an obligation as the conferring upon them special converting grace.

Use 2. Of comfort. It is a vast comfort to any when God is pacified towards them; but it is some comfort to all, that God is yet patient towards them, though but very little to a refractory sinner. His continued patience to all, speaks a possibility of the care of all, would they not stand against the way of their recovery. It is a terror that God hath anger, but it is a mitigation of that terror that God is slow to it; while his sword is in his sheath there is some hopes to prevent the drawing of it: alas! if he were all fire and sword upon sin, what would become of us? We should find nothing else but overflowing deluges, or sweeping pestilences, or perpetual flashes of Sodom's fire and brimstone from heaven. He dooms us not presently to execution, but gives us a long breathing time after the

crime, that by retiring from our iniquities, and having recourse to his mercy, he may be withheld forever from signing a warrant against us, and change his legal sentence into an evangelical pardon. It is a special comfort to his people, that he is a “sanctuary to them” (Ezek. 22:16); a place of refuge, a place of spiritual communications; but it is some refreshment to all in this life, that he is a defence to them: for so is his patience called (Num. 14:9): “Their defence is departed from them;” speaking to the Israelites, that they should not be afraid of the Canaanites, for their defence is departed from them. God is no longer patient to them, since their sins be full and ripe. Patience, as long as it lasts, is a temporary defence to those that are under the wing of it; but to the believer it is a singular comfort; and God is called the “God of patience and consolation” in one breath (Rom.15:5): “The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded;” all interpreters understand it effectively. The God that inspires you with patience, and cheers you with comfort, grant this to you. Why may it not be understood formally, of the patience belonging to the nature of God? and though it be expressed in the way of petition, yet it might also be proposed as a pattern for imitation, and so suits very well to the exhortation laid down (ver. 1), which was to “bear with the infirmities of the weak,” which he presseth them to (ver. 3) by the example of Christ; and (ver. 5) by the patience of God to them, and so they are very well linked together. “God of patience and consolation” may well be joined, since patience is the first step of comfort to the poor creature. If it did not administer some comfortable hopes to Adam, in the interval between his fall and God’s coming to examine him, I am sure it was the first discovery of any comfort to the creature, after the sweeping the destroying deluge out of the world (Gen. 9:21); after the “savor of Noah’s sacrifice,” representing the great Sacrifice which was to be in the world, had ascended up to God, the return from him is a publication of his forbearing to punish any more in such a manner: and though he found man no better than he was before, and the imaginations of men’s hearts as evil as before the deluge, that he would not again smite every living thing, as he had done. This was the first expression of comfort to Noah, after his exit from the ark; and declares nothing else but the continuance of patience to the new world above what he had shown to the old.

1. It is a comfort, in that it is an argument of his grace to his

people. If he hath so rich a patience to exercise towards his enemies, he hath a greater treasure to bestow upon his friends. Patience is the first attribute which steps in for our salvation, and therefore called "salvation" (2 Pet. 3:15). Something else is therefore built upon it, and intended by it, to those that believe. Those two letters of his name, "a God keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgressions and sin," follow the other letter of his long-suffering in the proclamation (Exod. 34:6, 7). He is "slow to anger," that he may be merciful, that men may seek, and receive their pardon. If he be long-suffering, in order to be a pardoning God, he will not be wanting in pardoning those who answer the design of his forbearance of them. You would not have had sparing mercy to improve, if God would have denied you saving mercy upon the improvement of his sparing goodness. If he hath so much respect to his enemies that provoke him, as to endure them with much long-suffering, he will surely be very kind to those that obey him, and conform to his will. If he hath much long-suffering to those that are "fitted for destruction" (Rom. 9:22), he will have a muchness of mercy for those that are prepared for glory by faith and repentance. It is but a natural conclusion a gracious soul may make,—If God had not a mind to be appeased towards me, he would not have had a mind to forbear me; but since he hath forborne me, and given me a heart to see, and answer the true end of that forbearance, I need not question, but that sparing mercy will end in saving, since it finds that repentance springing up in me, which that patience conducted me to.

2. His patience is a ground to trust in his promise. If his slowness to anger be so great when his precept is slighted, his readiness to give what he hath promised will be as great when his promise is believed. If the provocations of them meet with such an unwillingness to punish them, faith in him will meet with the choicest embraces from him. He was more ready to make the promise of redemption after man's apostasy, than to execute the threatening of the law. He doth still witness a greater willingness to give forth the fruits of the promise, than to pour out the vials of his curses. His slowness to anger is an evidence still, that he hath the same disposition, which is no slight cordial to faith in his word.

3. It is a comfort in infirmities. If he were not patient, he could

not bear with so many peevishnesses and weaknesses in the hearts of his own. If he be patient to the grosser sins of his enemies, he will be no less to the lighter infirmities of his people. When the soul is a bruised reed, that can emit no sound at all, or one very harsh and ungrateful, he doth not break it in pieces, and fling it away in disdain, but waits to see whether it will fully answer his pains, and be brought to a better frame and sweeter note. He brings them not to account for every slip, but, “as a father, spares his son that serves him” (Mal. 3:17). It is a comfort to us in our distracted services; for were it not for this slowness to anger, he would stifle us in the midst of our prayers, wherein there are as many foolish thoughts to disgust him, as there are petitions to implore him. The patientest angels would hardly be able to bear with the follies of good men in acts of worship.

Use 3. For exhortation.

1. Meditate often on the patience of God. The devil labors for nothing more than to deface in us the consideration and memory of this perfection. He is an envious creature; and since it hath reached out itself to us and not to him, he envies God the glory of it, and man the advantage of it: but God loves to have the volumes of it studied, and daily turned over by us. We cannot without an inexcusable wilfulness miss the thoughts of it, since it is visible in every bit of bread, and breath of air in ourselves, and all about us.

(1.) The frequent consideration of his patience would render God highly amiable to us. It is a more endearing argument than his mere goodness; his goodness to us as creatures, endowing us with such excellent faculties, furnishing us with such a commodious world, and bestowing upon us so many attendants for our pleasure and service, and giving us a lordship over his other works, deserves our affection but his patience to us as sinners, after we have merited the greatest wrath, shows him to be of a sweeter disposition than creating goodness to unoffending creatures; and, consequently, speaks a greater love in him, and bespeaks a greater affection from us. His creating goodness discovered the majesty of his Being, and the greatness of his mind, but this the sweetness and tenderness of his nature. In this patience he exceeds the mildness of all creatures to us; and therefore should be enthroned in our affections above all other creatures. The consideration of this would make us affect him

for his nature as well as for his benefits.

(2.) The consideration of his patience would make us frequent and serious in the exercise of repentance. In its nature it leads to it, and the consideration of it would engage us to it, and melt us in the exercise of it. Could we deeply think of it without being touched with a sense of the kindness of our forbearing Creditor and Governor? Could we gaze upon it, nay, could we glance upon it, without relenting at our offending one of so mild a nature, without being sensibly affected, that he hath preserved us so long from being loaded with those chains of darkness, under which the devils groan? This forbearance hath good reason to make sin and sinners ashamed. That you are in being, is not for want of advantages enough in his hand against you; many a forfeiture you have made, and many an engagement you have broke; he hath scarce met with any other dealing from us, than what had treachery in it. Whatsoever our sincerity is, we have no reason to boast of it, when we consider what mixtures there are in it, and what swarms of base motions taint it. Hath he not lain pressed and groaning under our sins, as a “cart is pressed with sheaves” (Amos 2:13), when one shake of himself, as Sampson, might have rid him of the burden, and dismissed us in his fury into hell? If we should often ask our consciences why have we done thus and thus against so mild a God, would not the reflection on it put us to the blush? If men would consider, that such a time they provoked God to his face, and yet not have felt his sword; such a time they blasphemed him, and made a reproach of his name, and his thunder did not stop their motion; such a time they fell into an abominable brutishness, yet he kept the punishment of devils, the unclean spirits, from reaching them; such a time he bore an open affront from them, when they scoffed at his word, and he did not send a destruction, and laugh at it: would not such a meditation work some strange kind of relents in men? What if we should consider, that we cannot do a sinful act without the support of his concurring Providence? We cannot see, hear, move, without his concurrence. All creatures we use for our necessity or pleasure, are supported by him in the very act of assisting to pleasure us; and when we abuse those creatures against him, which he supports for our use, how great is his patience to bear with us, that he doth not annihilate those creatures, or at least embitter their use! What issue could reasonably be expected from this consideration, but, “O wretched man that I

am, to serve myself of God's power to affront him, and of his long-suffering to abuse him?" O infinite patience to employ that power to preserve me, that might have been used to punish me! He is my Creator, I could not have a being without him, and yet I offend him! He is my Preserver, I cannot maintain my being without him, and yet I affront him! Is this a worthy requital of God (Deut. 32:6), "Do you thus requite the Lord?" would be the heart-breaking reflection. How would it give men a fuller prospect of the depravation of their nature than anything else; that their corruption should be so deep and strong, that so much patience could not overcome it! It would certainly make a man ashamed of his nature as well as his actions.

(3.) The consideration of his patience would make us resent more the injuries done by others to God. A patient sufferer, though a deserving sufferer, attracts the pity of men, that have a value for any virtue, though clouded with a heap of vice. How much more should we have a concern of God, who suffers so many abuses from others! and be grieved, that so admirable a patience should be slighted by men, who solely live by and under the daily influence of it! The impression of this would make us take God's part, as it is usual with men to take the part of good dispositions that lie under oppression.

(4.) It would make us patient under God's hand. His slowness to anger and his forbearance is visible, in the very strokes we feel in this life. We have no reason to murmur against him, who gives us so little cause, and in the greatest afflictions gives us more occasion of thankfulness than of repining. Did not slowness to the extremest anger moderate every affliction, it had been a scorpion instead of a rod. We have reason to bless Him, who, from his long-suffering, sends temporal sufferings, where eternal are justly due. (Ezra 9:13), "Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities do deserve." His indulgences towards us have been more than our corrections, and the length of his patience hath exceeded the sharpness of his rod. Upon the account of his long-suffering, our mutinies against God have as little to excuse them, as our sins against him have to deserve his forbearance. The consideration of this would show us more reason to repine at our own repinings, than at any of his smarter dealings; and the consideration of this would make us submissive under the judgments we expect. His undeserved patience hath been more than our merited judgments can possibly be thought to be. If we fear the

removal of the gospel for a season, as we have reason to do, we should rather bless him, that by his waiting patience, he hath continued it so long, than murmur, that he threatens to take it away so late. He hath borne with us many a year, since the light of it was rekindled, when our ancestors had but six years' of patience between the rise of Edward the Sixth, and the ascent of Queen Mary, to the crown.

2. Exhortation is to admire and stand astonished at his patience, "and bless him for it." If you should have defiled your neighbor's bed, or sullied his reputation, or rifled his goods, would he have withheld his vengeance, unless he had been too weak to execute it? We have done worse to God than we can do to man, and yet he draws not that sword of wrath out of the scabbard of his patience, to sheath it in our hearts. It is not so much a wonder that any judgments are sent, as that there are no more, and sharper. That the world shall be fired at last, is not a thing so strange, as that fire doth not come down every day upon some part of it. Had the disciples, that saw such excellent patterns of mildness from their Master, and were so often urged to learn of him that was lowly and meek, the government of the world, it had been long since turned into ashes, since they were too forward to desire him to open his magazine of judgments, and kindle a fire to consume a Samaritan village, for a slight affront in comparison of what he received from others, and afterwards from themselves in their forsaking of him (Luke 9:52–54). We should admire and praise that here which shall be praised in heaven; though patience shall cease as to its exercise after the consummation of the world, it shall not cease from receiving the acknowledgments of what it did, when it traversed the stage of this earth. If the name of God be glorified, and acknowledged in heaven, no question but this will also; since long-suffering is one of his Divine titles, a letter in his name, as well as "merciful, and gracious, abundant in goodness and truth." And there is good reason to think that the patience exercised towards some, before converting grace was ordered to seize upon them, will bear a great part in the anthems of heaven. The greater his long-suffering hath been to men, that lay covered with their own dung, a long time before they were freed by grace from their filth; the more admiringly and loudly they will cry up his mercy to them, after they have passed the gulf, and see a deserved hell at a distance from them, and many in that place of

torment who never had the tastes of so much forbearance.

If mercy will be praised there, that which began the alphabet of it, cannot be forgot. If Paul speak so highly of it in a damping world, and under the pull-backs of a "body of death," as he doth (1 Tim. 1:16, 17: "For this cause I obtained mercy; that Christ might show forth all long-suffering. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen." No doubt, but he will have a higher note for it, when he is surrounded with a heavenly flame, and freed from all remains of dulness. Shall it be praised above, and have we no notes for it here below? Admire Christ, too, who sued out your reprieve upon the account of his merit. As mercy acts not upon any but in Christ, so neither had patience borne with any but in Christ. The pronouncing the arrest of judgment (Gen. 8:21) was when "God smelled a sweet savor from Noah's sacrifice," not from the beasts offered, but the antitypical sacrifice represented. That we may be raised to bless God for it, let us consider,

(1.) The multitude of our provocations. Though some have blacker guilt than others, and deeper stains, yet let none wipe his mouth, but rather imagine himself to have but little reason to bless it. Are not all our offences as many as there have been minutes in our lives? All the moments of our continuance in the world have been moments of his patience and our ingratitude. Adam was punished for one sin, Moses excluded Canaan for a passionate unbelieving word. Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives for one sin against the Holy Ghost. One sin sullied the beauty of the world, defaced the works of God, and cracked heaven and earth in pieces, had not infinite satisfaction been proposed to the provoked Justice by the Redeemer; and not one sin committed, but is of the same venomous nature. How many of those contradictions against himself hath he borne with! Had we been only unprofitable to him, his forbearance of us had been miraculous; but how much doth it exceed a miracle, and lift itself above the meanness of a conjunction with such an apithet, since we have been provoking! Had there been no more than our impudent or careless rushings into his presence in worship; had they been only sins of omission, and sins of ignorance, it had been enough to have put a stand to any further operations of this perfection towards us. But add to those, sins of commission,

sins against knowledge, sins against spiritual motions, sins against repeated resolutions, and pressing admonitions, the neglects of all the opportunities of repentance; put them all together, and we can as little recount them, as the sands on the sea-shore. But what, do I only speak of particular men? View the whole world, and if our own iniquities render it an amazing patience, what a mighty supply will be made to it in all the numerous and weighty provocations, under which he hath continued the world for so many revolutions of years and ages! Have not all those pressed into his presence with a loud cry, and demanded a sentence from justice? yet hath not the Judge been overcome by the importunity of our sins? Were the devils punished for one sin, a proud thought, and that not committed against the blood of Christ, as we have done numberless times; yet hath not God made us partakers in their punishment, though we have exceeded them in the quality of their sin. O admirable patience! that would bear with me under so many, while he would not bear with the sinning angels for one.²³⁴

(2.) Consider how mean things we are, who have provoked him. What is man but a vile thing, that a God, abounding with all riches, should take care of so abject a thing, much more to bear so many affronts from such a drop of matter, such a nothing creature! That he that hath anger at his command, as well as pity should endure such a detestable, deformed creature by sin, to fly in his face! “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” (Psalm 8.) אָנוּ, miserable, incurable man, derived from a word, that signifies to be incurably sick. Man is “Adam,” earth from his earthly original, and “Enoch,” incurable from his corruption. Is it not worthy to be admired, that a God of infinite glory should wait on such Adams, worms of earth, and be, as it were, a servant, and attendant to such Enochs, sickly and peevish creatures?

(3.) Consider who it is that is thus patient. He it is that, with one breath, could turn heaven and earth, and all the inhabitants of both, into nothing; that could, by one thunderbolt, have razed up the foundations of a cursed world. He that wants not instruments without to ruin us, that can arm our own consciences against us, and can drown us in our own phlegm; and, by taking out one pin from our bodies, cause the whole frame to fall asunder. Besides, it is a God that, while he suffers the sinner, hates the sin more than all the

holy men upon earth, or angels in heaven, can do; so that his patience for a minute transcends the patience of all creatures, from the creation to the dissolution of the world: because it is the patience of a God, infinitely more sensible to the cursed quality of sin, and infinitely more detesting it.

(4.) Consider how long he hath forborne his anger. A reprieve for a week or a month is accounted a great favor in civil states; the civil law enacts, “That if the emperor commanded a man to be condemned, the execution was to be deferred thirty days: because in that time the prince’s anger might be appeased.”²³⁵ But how great a favor is it to be reprieved thirty years for many offences, every one of which deserves death more at the hands of God than any offence can at the hands of man! Paul was, according to the common account, but about thirty years old at his conversion; and how much doth he elevate Divine long-suffering! Certainly there are many who have more reason, as having larger quantities of patience cut out to them, who have lived to see their own gray hairs in a rebellious posture against God, before grace brought them to a surrender. We were all condemned in the womb; our lives were forfeited the first moment of our breath, but patience hath stopped the arrest; the merciful Creditor deserves to have acknowledgment from us, who hath laid by his bond so many years without putting it in suit against us.

Many of your companions in sin have perhaps been surprised long ago, and haled to an eternal prison; nothing is remaining of them but their dust, and the time is not yet come for your funeral. Let it be considered, that that God that would not wait upon the fallen angels one instant after their sin, nor give them a moments space of repentance, hath prolonged the life of many a sinner in the world to innumerable moments, to 420,000 minutes in the space of a year, to 8,400,000 minutes in the space of twenty years. The damned in hell would think it a great kindness to have but a year’s, month’s, nay, day’s respite, as a space to repent in.

(5.) Consider also, how many have been taken away under shorter measures of patience: some have been struck into a hell of misery, while thou remainest upon an earth of forbearance. In a plague, the destroying angel hath hewed down others, and passed by us; the arrows have flew about our heads, passed over us, and stuck

in the heart of a neighbor. How many rich men, how many of our friends and familiars, have been seized by death since the beginning of the year, when they least thought of it, and imagined it far from them! Have you not known some of your acquaintance snatched away in the height of a crime?

Was not the same wrath due to you as well as to them! And had it not been as dreadful for you to be so surprised by Him as it was for them? Why should he take a less sturdy sinner out of thy company, and let thee remain still upon the earth? If God had dealt so with you, how had you been cut off, not only from the enjoyment of this life, but the hopes of a better! And if God had made such a providence beneficial for reclaiming you, how much reason have you to acknowledge him! He that hath had least patience, hath cause to admire; but those that have more, ought to exceed others in blessing him for it. If God had put an end to your natural life before you had made provision for eternal, how deplorable would your condition have been! Consider also, whoever have been sinners formerly of a deeper note; might not God have struck a man in the embraces of his harlots, and choked him in the moment of his excessive and intemperate healths, or on the sudden have spured fire and brimstone into a blasphemer's mouth? What if God had snatched you away, when you had been sleeping in some great iniquity, or sent you while burning in lust to the fire it merited? Might he not have cracked the string that linked your souls to your bodies, in the last sickness you had? And what then had become of you? What could have been expected to succeed your impenitent state in this world, but howlings in another? but he reprieved you upon your petitions, or the solicitations of your friends; and have you not broke your word with him? Have your hearts been steadfast; hath he not yet waited, expecting when you would put your vows and resolutions into execution? What need had he to cry out to any so loud and so long, O you fools, "how long will you love foolishness?" (Prov. 1:22), when he might have ceased his crying to you, and have by your death prevented your many neglects of him? Did he do all this that any of us might add new sins to our old; or rather, that we should bless him for his forbearance, comply with the end of it in reforming our lives, and having recourse to his mercy?

3. Exhortion; therefore presume not upon his patience. The

exercise of it is not eternal; you are at present under his patience; yet, while you are unconverted, you are also under his anger (Psalm 7:11), "God is angry with the wicked every day." You know not how soon his anger may turn his patience aside, and step before it. It may be his sword is drawn out of his scabbard, his arrows may be settled in his bow; and perhaps there is but a little time before you may feel the edge of the one or the point of the other: and then there will be no more time for patience in God to us, or petition from us to him. If we repent here he will pardon us. If we defer repentance, and die without it, he will have no longer mercy to pardon, nor patience to bear. What is there in our power but the present? the future time we cannot command, the past time we cannot recall; squander not then the present away. The time will come when "time shall be no more," and then long-suffering shall be no more. Will you neglect the time, wherein patience acts, and vainly hope for a time beyond the resolves of patience? Will you spend that in vain, which goodness hath allotted you for other purposes? What an estimate will you make of a little forbearance to respite death, when you are gasping under the stroke of its arrows? How much would you value some few days of those many years you now trifle away? Can any think God will be always at an expense with them in vain, that he will have such riches trampled under their feet, and so many editions of his patience be made waste paper? Do you know how few sands are yet to run in your glass? Are you sure that He that waits to-day, will wait as well to-morrow? How can you tell, but that God that is slow to anger to-day, may be swift to it the next? Jerusalem had but a day of peace, and the most careless sinner hath no more. When their day was done, they were destroyed by famine, pestilence, or sword, or led into a doleful captivity. Did God make our lives so uncertain, and the duration of his forbearance unknown to us, that we should live in a lazy neglect of his glory, and our own happiness? If you should have more patience in regard of your lives, do you know whether you shall have the effectual offers of grace? As your lives depend upon his will, so your conversion depends solely upon his grace. There have been many examples of those miserable wretches, that have been left to a reprobate sense, after they have a long time abused Divine forbearance. Though he waits, yet he "binds up sin." (Hos. 13:12), "The sin of Ephraim is bound up," as bonds are bound up by a creditor till a fit opportunity: when

God comes to put the bond in suit, it will be too late to wish for that patience we have so scornfully despised. Consider therefore the end of patience.

The patience of God considered in itself, without that which it tends to, affords very little comfort; it is but a step to pardoning mercy, and it may be without it, and often is. Many have been reprieved that were never forgiven; hell is full of those that had patience as well as we, but not one that accepted pardoning grace went within the gates of it. Patience leaves men, when their sins have ripened them for hell; but pardoning grace never leaves men till it hath conducted them to heaven. His patience speaks him placable, but doth not assure us that he is actually appeased. Men may hope that a long-suffering tends to a pardon, but cannot be assured of a pardon, but by something else above mere long-suffering. Rest not then upon bare patience, but consider the end of it; it is not that any should sin more freely, but repent more meltingly; it is not to spirit rebellion, but give a merciful stop to it. Why should any be so ambitious of their ruin, as to constrain God to ruin them against the inclinations of his sweet disposition?

4. The fourth exhortation is, Let us imitate God's patience in our own to others. He is unlike God that is hurried, with an unruly impetus, to punish others for wronging him. The consideration of Divine patience should make us square ourselves according to that pattern. God hath exercised a long-suffering from the fall of Adam to this minute on innumerable subjects, and shall we be transported with desire of revenge upon a single injury? If God were not "slow to wrath," a sinful world had been long ago torn up from the foundation. And if revenge should be exercised by all men against their enemies, what man should have been alive, since there is not a man without an enemy? If every man were like Saul, breathing out threatenings, the world would not only be an aceldema, but a desert. How distant are they from the nature of God, who are in a flame upon every slight provocation from a sense of some feeble and imaginary honor, that must bloody their sword for a trifle, and write their revenge in wounds and death! When God hath his glory every day bespattered, yet he keeps his sword in his sheath; what a woe would it be to the world, if he drew it upon every affront! This is to be like brutes, dogs, or tigers, that snarl, bite, and devour, upon

every slight occasion: but to be patient is to be divine, and to show ourselves acquainted with the disposition of God. “Be you therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48): *i.*

e. Be you perfect and good; for he had been exhorting them to bless them that cursed them, and to do good to them that hated them, and that from the example God had set them, in causing his sun to rise upon the evil as well as the good. “Be you therefore perfect.” To conclude: as patience is God’s perfection, so it is the accomplishment of the soul: and as his “slowness to anger” argues the greatness of his power over himself, so an unwillingness to revenge is a sign of a power over ourselves which is more noble than to be a monarch over others.