



**Library of The Theological Seminary**

PRINCETON · NEW JERSEY



PRESENTED BY

John M. Krebs

BX 9315 .C427 1815 v.3  
Charnock, Stephen, 1628-1680  
The works of the late Rev.  
Stephen Charnock







THE  
WORKS

OF THE LATE

REV. STEPHEN CHARNOCK, B.D.

IN

*NINE VOLUMES.*

---

WITH A

PREFATORY DEDICATION AND MEMOIR,

BY

EDWARD PARSONS.

---

VOL. III,

---

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR BAYNES, PATERNOSTER ROW; CONDER, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH  
YARD; WILLIAMS, STATIONERS' COURT; AND ROBINSON, SON,  
AND HOLDSWORTH, LEEDS.

—  
1815.

Inchbold and Gawtress, Printers, Leeds.

## CONTENTS.

---

---

	<b>Page</b>
I. The Goodness of God - - - - -	1
II. The Dominion of God - - - - -	231
III. The Patience of God - - - - -	414
IV. The Providence of God - - - - -	497



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.

---

---

PART I.

CONNEXION AND SENSE OF THE TEXT.

---

*God is good in a more excellent way than any creature.—Remarks upon the young man's question.—Perfect goodness the exclusive prerogative of God.—What this goodness is.—His bounty.—Includes all his attributes. The chief goodness.—His goodness communicative.—Necessary.—Free.—His goodness the motive and end of all his work.*

---

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, *There came one*, ver. 17, a certain man; but Luke describes him by his dignity, *a certain ruler*, chap. 18. 18. 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? *Mat.* 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 hope of the happiness of another world by the works of the law; unless they were perfect and answerable to every divine precept. He does 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*, *γούυτεήσαε*, prostrated himself upon the ground; besides Christ is said, *to love him*, ver. 21, which had been inconsistent with the knowledge Christ had of the hearts and thoughts of men, and his abhorrence 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.

1. 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? Light-foot *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 does 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 simple, mere man. He disowns not his deity, but allures the young man to a confession of it. "Why

\* Erasm. *in loc.*

† Augustin.

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 sharp reproof for giving him a title due to God alone, than have received him with such courtesy and complaisance.\* 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.

2. 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 think me an impostor, an enemy of God, and a friend of 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 Satan 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*, *Mat. 16. 16*. But I think Paræus's 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 fix so great a title upon one you have no higher thoughts of than as a

\* Hensius in Matth. † Calvin in loc.

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 honour 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 prophane 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 he 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 goodness upon his creatures, but to partake of 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. 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 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, drops of goodness to this fountain. No-

\* Trismegist. Pæmand, cap. 2. † Eugubin de Peren Philos. lib. 5. cap. 9.



thing 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 vast numbers 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. As in him is the whole nature of entity, so in him is the whole nature of excellency. As nothing has an absolute perfect being but God, so nothing has an absolutely perfect goodness but God. As the sun has perfection of heat, 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 every thing 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 for ever, Psal. 52. 1.* God always shines in goodness, as the sun, which the heathens called the visible image of the divinity, does 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 light, James 1. 17.*

\* Eugubin, de Peren, Philos. lib. 5. cap. 9. p. 97. col. 1.

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?* And, 1. The opinion of gaining *eternal life by the outward observation of the law*, will appear very unsatisfactory to an inquisitive conscience. This ruler affirmed, and certainly did confidently believe, that he had fulfilled the law: *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 for the end proposed. And to that purpose he comes to Christ, to receive instructions as to 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 recompence 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 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; *Who hath first given to him; and it shall be recompenced to him again?* Rom. 11. 35. The duty of the creature, and God's gift of eternal life, is not a bargain and sale.

God gives to the creature, he does not properly repay. For he that repays has received something of 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 any thing 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 indulges the imagination of obtaining it by doing ; *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 their debtor, and be purchasers of felicity ; they would not have it conveyed 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 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 frequent *fasting*, and his exactness in paying *tithes* ; as if God had been beholden to him, and could not without manifest wrong deny his demand. And Paul confesses it to be his own sentiment before conversion, he accounted this *righteous-*

ness of the law gain to him, *Phil.* 3. 7; he thought by this to make his terms with God. The whole nation of the Jews affected it, *compassing sea and land* to make out a righteousness of their own, as the pharisees did to make proselytes; *going about to establish their own righteousness, Rom.* 10. 3.

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 what the scripture informs us of: it is from hence also, that men are so ready to make faith as a work, the cause of justification. Man foolishly thinks he has enough to set up himself after he has 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 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.

3. Observe 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 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 their rabbins. All this some think is included in the word *γονιπετησας*, ver. 17. 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 grief. What was the cause of his refusing the instructions, he pretended such desire 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?

4. Observe, we should never admit any thing 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, as Mighty and Invincible to princes, and Holiness to the pope. We call one another good, without considering how foolish; mighty, without considering how weak; and knowing, without considering how ignorant. There is 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 honour, 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 invincible vindicators of their Creator's honour, when summoned to arms by the Creator's word. *Acts 12. 22, 27.*

The observation which I intend to prosecute is this:—That 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 the 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 over-flowing goodness of his nature ; he refers all things to himself as the end, for the representation of his own goodness ; *truly God is good, Psa. 73. 1.* Certainly it is an undoubted truth, it is written in his works of nature ; and his acts of grace, *he is abundant in goodness, Exod. 34. 6.* And every thing is a memorial, not of some few sparks, but of his greater goodness, *Psa. 145. 7.* This is often celebrated in the Psalms, and men are invited more than once to sing forth the praises of it, *Psa. 137. 8, 15, 21, 31.* It may easier 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 Ἀγαθὸν* 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 Ἔρωτα, love, as being the band which unites 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 does not shine as gloriously. 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.

\* Ficin. in Dionys. de divin. nom. cap. 511.

† Empedocles.

‡ Hesiod.

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 has 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, and as legible to the understanding, 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 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, Rom. 20. 21.* 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 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 impressions 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 unthankfulness was a slight of the latter. God is the object of honour, as he is powerful; and the object of thankfulness properly, as he is bountiful.

All the idolatry 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 invention for the benefit of mankind, they thought he merited a rank in the number of their deities. The Italians esteem-

ed Pythagoras a God because he was *Φιλανθρωπίτατος*.\* 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 but the visible character of their goodness and usefulness, to capacitate them for the honour of a sacrifice, *Acts* 14. 8, 9, 10, 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 pre-existent notion, not only of the being, but of the goodness of God, which was naturally implanted in them, and legible in all his works. And the more beneficial any thing 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. But what an absurd mistake to think every thing that was sensibly good to them to be God, cloathing 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 for plowing 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, the greatest, was the name whereby the Romans entitled him. His nature is as good as it is majestic: so the Psalmist joins them; *I will declare thy greatness, they shall abundantly*

\* Jamblych vit. Pythag. lib. 1. col. 6. p. 43.



*utter the memory of thy great goodness, Psal. 145. 6, 7.* They considered his goodness before his greatness, in putting *optimus* before *maximus*; greatness without goodness is an unruly and affrighting monster; like a vast turbulent sea, *casting out mire and dirt.* Goodness is the brightness and loveliness of our majestical 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 God that is not good, he is not 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 any thing better than God, fancies 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 evil if the bad one were superior.

In the prosecution of this let us see,

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, 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 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 Satan is good, as he is a creature of God's making; he has 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 apostacy; 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 any thing hath, the more of this sort of natural goodness it hath; and so Satan 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, 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 of himself, he could not be infinitely good 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. His holiness is manifested in his rational creatures; but his goodness extends to all the works of his hands. His holiness beams most in his law, his goodness reaches to every thing that had a being from him, *The Lord is good to all, Psal. 145. 9*. 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; 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 stretches 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 any thing 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

\* Lombard lib. 4. distinct. 46. p. 286.

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 where he lived, or had done another as great a benefit, 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 in 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 does not act for his own profit, but for his creature's welfare, and the manifestation of his own goodness. He sends out his beams, without receiving any addition to himself, or advantage from his creatures.

It is from this perfection that he loves whatsoever is

\* Coccei. sum. p. 50.

good, and that is, whatsoever he hath made, *For every creature of God is good*; 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 simply and absolutely wishes evil to another; but God does not absolutely wish evil to the damned; that justice that inflicts upon them the deserved punishment of their sin, is part of his goodness. 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 conveniencies, 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 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 washes, as the British and German ocean. When Moses longed to see his glory, God tells him, he would give him a prospect of his goodness; *I will make all my goodness to pass before thee, Exod. 33. 19.* His goodness is his glory and Godhead, as much as is delightfully visible to his

† Cajetan in secund secundæ, Qu. 34. Ar. 3.

creatures, and whereby he benefits 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. 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, 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 succours an innocent person, it is righteousness; and when it pardons a penitent, it is mercy; all summed up in this one name of goodness; and the psalmist expresseth the same sentiment in the same words; *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 all his works, Psal. 145. 7, 8.*

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 defies all the rest, and verifies 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

\* Herle upon wisdom. cap. 5. p. 41, 42.

† Ingelo Bentivolio, & Uran, Book 4. p. 260, 261.

to his goodness. This puts all the rest upon a delightful exercise, this makes his wisdom design for us, and his power to act for us; this veils his holiness from affrighting us, and 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 endeavoured to raze out the first marks of his favour; 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 commanding attribute that leads, attends, and spirits the rest in all his ways of acting. This is the perfection of all his works; had it not been for this, nothing of his wonders had been seen in creation, nothing of his compassions had been seen in redemption.

The second thing is some propositions to *explain the nature* of this goodness. And, 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 thing is good, as God pronounced every thing 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 and from himself, not by participation from another; he made every thing 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

\* Daillé Mélang. part 2. p. 704, 705.

good by him. Creatures are good 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 habit 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. *Αὐτὰγαθός*, *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 any thing without him, or any thing he acts. 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; as no star, no splendid body that derives light from the sun, equals that sun by which it is enlightened.

Hence his goodness must be *infinite*. 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 any thing 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 any thing 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 endeavour the destruction of its opposite. He is essentially good by his own essence, therefore good of himself, eternally good, and abundantly good.

† Ficini epist. lib. 11. epist. 30.



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 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; wickedness may hurt a man, 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?* *Psal.* 16. 2. *Job* 35. 7, 8. As he has no superior in place above him, so being the chief of all, he cannot be made better by any inferior to him. How can he be made better by any, that has 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 comparisson of God. If any thing had been *ex deo*, God being the matter of it, it had been as good as God; 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. *Whom have I in heaven but thee, &c.* God is all good, every creature has 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 in their odours to our smell, every creature in its natural comeliness to our sight; plants in their healing qualities for our cure. And all derive from themselves a goodness of knowledge objectively to our understandings. The sun 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, nourishes us by bread. *It is not by bread alone, that we live, but by the word of God.* It is all by his own supreme goodness, conveyed through those various mediums. *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 has 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 does 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 any thing, which can be called not good in him; every thing 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.

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 its object. Thus God is good by nature, and his nature is not without activity, he acts conveniently to his own nature. *Thou art good, and doest 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: *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 idle, as a spring shut up, or a fountain sealed, bubbling up within itself, but *out* of itself. A fountain of gardens to water every part of his creation; he is an *ointment poured forth*: 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, *He fills all in all, Eph. 1. 23.* He fills rational creatures with understanding, sensitive nature with vigour and motion, the whole world with beauty. Every taste, every touch of a creature is a taste and touch of divine goodness. Divine goodness offers itself in one spark to this creature, in another spark to the other creature, and altogether makes 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 any thing is, the more nobly it acts. How remotely does light, that excellent brightness of the creation, disperse itself? How does that glorious creature, which God hath set in the heavens, spread its wings over heaven and earth, 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, reach out its communications to influence every thing 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*; not from its power, nor from its sweetness. How communicative also is water? How active is it in a river, to nourish the living creatures it engenders? 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 vapours mounted up, and concocted by the sun, and gently distilled upon the earth, for the production of 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 its 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

\* Tom. 2. p. 926.

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 undeify 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 any thing without goodness in the very act ; the very act of creation or communicating being to any thing 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 any thing 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 any thing, 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 do it, as well as to create him; but in regard of his goodness, he could not morally do it: for had he annihilated man as soon as 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,

\* Coccei. sum. Theolog. p. 91.

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 every thing as it resembles himself, because it is an efflux of his own goodness: and as he necessarily loves himself, and his own excellency, so he necessarily loves any thing 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

\* Gilbert. de Dei Domino, p. 6.

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 goodness of God, making the world flow from God as *natural* as light from the sun.

God indeed is necessarily good *affective*, in regard of his nature ; but freely good *effective*, in regard of the effluxes of it to this or that particular subject upon which he fixes. He is not 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 has 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 pleases, according to the free determinations of his own will, guided 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 acts, 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 colour, 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 understand-



ing 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 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 favour 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, that he should *see his goodness*, intimating that his goodness is his glory, and his glory his delight also. He sends not forth his blessings with an ill will; he does not stay till they are squeezed from him; he prevents men with his *blessings of goodness*; he is most delighted, when he is most diffusive, and his pleasure in bestowing is larger than his creatures 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*. 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 any thing, and more communicative than any thing ; 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 misery of any of his creatures, he certainly delights in what may conduce unto their felicity. He doth with the same de-

light 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 the 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, could not act without the highest reason, and for the highest end; the reason that induced him to create, must be of as great an emiency as himself; the motive could not be taken from 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 honour 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, 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 will chiefly, is his end; but God cannot will any other thing but himself as his end, because there is nothing superior to him-

\* Amyral Moral. Tom. I. p. 260.

self in goodness. He cannot will any thing, 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 them in goodness, and then he would not be righteous, in willing that which is a lower good before a higher. God cannot will any thing as his end of acting but himself, without undeifying himself. God's will being infinitely good, cannot move for any thing but what is infinitely good ; and therefore whatsoever God made, he made for himself, 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 any thing to increase his excellency (for that is capable of no addition) but to manifest his excellency. God possessing every thing, 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 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 ; 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 we 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.

---

## PART II.

### THE GOODNESS OF GOD DEFENDED.

---

*Permission of sin.—Goodness not equal in all.—Distinct usefulness of creatures.—His goodness could not be equally communicated.—Sovereignty of it.—Punishing and afflicting.—Justice a part of his goodness.—His laws and threatenings no impeachment of his goodness.—Good in punishing.—The judgments of God do not impeach his goodness.*

**T**HE THIRD thing to be considered is, *That God is good.*

1. The more excellent any thing 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, cherishes 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 any thing is, the more it does communicate itself. The sun is more excellent than the stars, and therefore does 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*, he must needs be better than all, because they have nothing but what is derived 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, *Psal.* 4. 6. As the certainty of a first principle of all things, is necessarily concluded from the being of creatures; and the upholding and sus-

taining 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 every thing, 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, and motion of him whose image it is, but not in the fullness 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 infinitude 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 super-eminent above them. If any thing be good by itself, it must be infinitely good, it would set itself no bound; 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 pierces all things; he decks spirits with reason, endues matter with form, furnisheth every thing 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. And, 1. '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

\* Ficinus in Com. Amor. Orat. 2. cap. p. 1326.

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 enquired, 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 with which he was endowed, 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 restraint 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 did 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, 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. *God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon them all, Rom. 11. 32.* But if nothing could be alledged 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 as the *apostle* does, *Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out?* ver. 33.

2. *His goodness is not prejudiced by his not making all things the equal subjects of it.* Remark,

1. That 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 vigour 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 gives 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 raises others; he afflicts some with a continual pain, while he blesses 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 every thing good distinctly in its production, and the whole good in its universal perfection. 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 has 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, Psal. 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*; so there are *various distributions*, but from *one goodness*; the drops as well as the fuller streams, are of the same fountain, and partake of the nature of it; and though he does not make all men partake of the riches of his grace after the corruption of their nature, is his goodness disgraced thereby? Or does 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.* bet-

ter for the creature itself, if 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 every thing 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 shewed 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 has been wrapped 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 has 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 honour, a comeliness from the goodness of God, but not so great a good-

ness as the nobler part ; yet if you consider them in their several 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 lie 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 most delightful duties to be exercised here ; it would cool prayer, which is excited by wants, and is a necessary demonstration of the creature's dependance 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 it 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 does disperse light

to the stars above, and the places below, to some more, to some less, according to the measures of their reception. God does 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 shewn him all his glory, *Exod.* 33. 18, 20. He doth manifest more goodness 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 humours? 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 his 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

\* *Camero.* p. 30.

disperse? Though God cannot but love his own image where he finds it, yet when this image is lost, and the devil's image voluntarily received, he may choose whether he will manifest his goodness to such a one or not. 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 dispenses his bounties 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 clashed with 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 any thing 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; 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 uncontrouled 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 blessings, than of dreadful thunderbolts? Does he not oftener seem forgetful of his justice, when he pours 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? Observe here,

1. *That 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. 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 recompence. 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 order of the obedience, must be in the order of suffering for God's honour.

The goodness of all things which God pronounced so, consisted in their order and beneficial subserviency to one another. When this order is inverted, the goodness of the creature ceases; 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 punishes that which makes a disorder in his government? And is it a dimunition 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. 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 penal inflictions 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 guilty 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 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 he behave himself in the same manner of carriage to the innocent and culpable? Could you account him good, if he always with pleasure beheld evil, and perpetually suffered 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 vapours 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. It is the part of the goodness of God to make laws, and annex threatenings; and it is no *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 honour 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 vigour 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 uncontrouled, 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; *The law is holy, just, and good, Rom. 7. 12*, and so is every precept of it; the law was for no other end, but to keep the creature in subjection to, and dependance on God; this dependance 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 loses the nature of a law, without a penalty ; and the penalty loseth its vigour, 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 men's hearts be encouraged by such a kind of uncomely goodness ? and all the threatnings 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 himself 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 honour of them ? It is every whit as rational, and as good to vindicate the honour 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 his law ; and would not his own 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 of a vindication? How can there be any support to the honour 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? 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 honour of his goodness. The rewards of obedience, and the punishment of disobedience refer to the same end, 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. 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 should God silently behold 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 sentences, and judgment, whereby he executes his sentence, were not the supports of it. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, Psal. 89. 14; the stability or foundation of thy throne.* 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. *The Lord is known by his judgments which he executes; Psal. 9. 16.* 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 honour, 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 honour? Or be a good 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 honour? 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 honour 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 has so often abused it; and has refused to have any pity exercised towards it in a righteous and regular way? Is sovereignty destitute of goodness, because it preserves its honour against one that would not have it reign over him? Would he not seem by such a carelessness 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

\* Zarnovecius, de Satisfact. part 1. c. 1. p. 3, 4.

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 honour of the laws ; yet consequently to punish bad men, without which, the protection of the good would not be secured, nor the honour of the law be supported : and a good judge in the exercise of his office, principally intends the encouragement of the good, and wishes there were no wickedness that might occasion punishment ; and when he sentences a malefactor in order to his execution, he does not act against the goodness of his nature, but pursuant to the duty of his place ; but wishes he had no occasion for such severity.

Thus God seems to speak of himself ; he calls the act of his wrath, his *strange work*, his *strange act*, *Isa. 28. 2* : 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. 3* ; 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 reduces the suffering creature to the order of his precept, or reduces 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 does not place 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. Who-

\* Suarez. vol. 1. de Deo, lib. 3. cap. 7. p. 146.

ever regards a good judge as an enemy to the malefactor, but as an enemy to his crime, when he sentences and executes him ?

5. *Judgments in the world being the acts of goodness*, are no impeachments of the goodness of God. They have,

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 favour, and often experienced 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. When he brandishes his sword, he wishes for some to stand in that gap to mollify his anger, that he might not strike the fatal blow ; *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, Ezek. 22. 30.* 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*, *Exod. 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

\* Cressel Antholog. Decad. 2. p. 162.

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 not averted by their own merit or intercession, but by *Moses*' 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 shew God disaffected to evil, conduce to the glory of his holiness, and deter others from presumptuous sins: *I will be glorified in all that draw near unto me, Deut. 10. 3*; in his judgment upon *Nadab* and *Abihu*, the sons of *Aaron*, for offering strange fire.

By them God preserves the manifestations 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, Psa. 119*, and *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 those crimes which they see attended with such judgments. The censers of *Korah*, *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; 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 apostacy; that use Christ himself makes of it, in the exhortation against *turning back*, *Luke* 17. 32, 33. And *the righteous shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked*, *Psa.* 58. 10. 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 a dreadful noise, and lightning a scaring flash, yet they have a liberal goodness in them, in shattering and consuming those contagious vapours 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 persecuted christians. The gracious deliverance of good men is often occasioned by some severe stroke upon some emi-

nent 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 own 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 man ? Is it a want of goodness that keeps an incorrigible offender in chains ? While sin remains, it is fit it should be punished : would not God else be an enemy to his own goodness ; and shew favour 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 has manifested his goodness ; and can it be bad in him to defend what his goodness has

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.

2. 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's* 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 those 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 honour 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*. 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 honour? 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 straggling. 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. 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 recompenced by the accession of clearer graces.

It is rather a high mark of his 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: That is the third thing, God is good.

## PART III.

MANIFESTATIONS OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS IN  
CREATION.

---

*The goodness of God in creation—In the creation of man  
—The body—The soul—The life of man—Conveniences  
provided for man—The world made for him—Fur-  
nished for him—Laws given to him---Suited to his  
nature---Fitting him for happiness---Promised rewards.*

---

*Fourthly.* **WE** are to consider the manifestation of this goodness in creation, redemption, and providence.

1. *In creation.* This is apparent from what hath been said before, that no other attribute could be the motive of his creating, but 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*, 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

\* Cusan, p. 228.

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 multitude 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 have 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 every thing 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 any thing 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 every thing 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, that is, because they had a being, but because they had a good being;

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 unsustained 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; 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 has 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 of our bodies. *He is good to all, Psal.* 145. 9. He is therefore good in all; not a drop of the creation, but is a drop of his goodness.

These are the colours 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, *in the*

\* Petav. Theolog. Dogmat. Tom. 1. p. 402.

† Lessius de Perfect. div. p: 100.

‡ Pherecydes.

*volume of thy book it is written of me, Psal. 40. 7*; 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, Psal. 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.

1. 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 honour than other creatures, *Psal. 8. 5.* Had it not been for divine goodness, this excellent creature had lain wrapped 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 the *body* of man? 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 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? A curious wrought piece of needle-work, a comely artifice; 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 has eyes to conduct its motion, to serve in matter for the food and delight of the understanding; ears to let in the pleasure of sounds, to convey intelligence of the affairs of the world, and the counsels of heaven to a more noble mind; it has 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?

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 operations 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. 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 has 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 benefits, which he hath not expended upon the other creatures on earth.

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; 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.

Wherein 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 un-

spotted 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 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.

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 chrystal 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 has 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 gift than any of those creatures have received in a rational intellectual life, whereby he approaches to the nature of angels. This some of the *Jews* understood.

*God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul, Gen. 2. 7, 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.

All this was *free* goodness. God eternally possessed his own felicity in himself, and had no need of the existence of any thing 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 creation. Well may we cry out with the psalmist, *O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name, Psal. 8. 1, 4, 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 clod of earth and dust, that thou shouldst ennoble him with so rich a nature, and engrave upon him such characters of thy immense Being?

\* *Eugubin, lib. cap. 9.*

The goodness of God appears in *the conveniences* he provided for, and gave to man. As God gave him a being morally perfect with respect to righteousness, so he gave him a being naturally perfect with respect to delightful conveniencies, 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 any thing 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 honour 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 hands, 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; *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 through the paths of the sea, Psal. 8. 6, 7, 8.*

What less is witnessed to by the calamity all creatures were subject to by the corruption of man's nature? Then was the earth cursed, and a black cloud cast upon the beauty of the creation, and the strength and vigour of it languishes to this day under the curse of God, 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 forfeited, 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 right to serve himself of the delightful creatures he had provided ; 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 hands of man, binding all creatures to pay a respect to him, and recognize him as their lord, either spontaneously or by force ; and commissions them all to fill the heart of man with "*food and gladness.*" 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 : 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, 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 has 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 labour, *Psal.* 104. 22, 23; both sun and moon, though set in the heaven, were formed to *give light* on the earth.

The air is his aviary, the sea and rivers his fish-ponds, the valleys his granary, the mountains his magazine; the first affords 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 to 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. *The whole earth is full of his riches, Psal.* 104. 24. 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 him. And therefore all the living creatures were brought by God to attend upon him 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 colours for our eye, the harmony of sounds for our ear, the fragrancy of odours for our nostrils, and a delicious sweetness for our palates: some have qualities to pleasure all; every thing 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 has 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 pleasure 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 detraction was it from 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 inexpressibly 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, *and* the covenant he made with him. It had not been agreeable to the goodness of God to let a creature, governable by 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 two 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 laws 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 suitability in the *law* to kindle a *delight*, *Psal. 1. 2*. It could not then have any wise shaken 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, Psal. 119. 164*. The law was so righteous that *Adam* had 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 law-giver, as well as a gracious benefactor in the imparting to us of 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, great peace in the loving it, *Psa. 119. 165*; for the preservation of human society, wherein consists the external felicity of man. It had been inconsistent with divine goodness, to enjoin man any thing that should be oppressive and uncomfortable. Bitterness cannot come from that which is altogether sweet; goodness would not have obliged the creature to any thing, 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 any thing, 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 honour. 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.

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: *Oh 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 evidences, 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 any thing 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 for ever*, *Psa.* 81. 13, 15, 16. And by the same reason, this was his design 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 design of the precept was the eternal life of the subject, ordered to obey it.

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 tract of sweetness as well as sovereignty ; he would preserve the rights of his dominion in the authority of his commands, and honour 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 engages 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 rigour, which might have been expected from an enraged sovereign, but in a gentle examination, *Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldest not eat?* *Gen.* 3. 11, 13. 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*, *Ezek.* 18. 25.

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?

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, besides 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

\* Amyral. Dissertat. p. 637, 638.

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 him, 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* very emphatically expresses the felicity of man to be the design of God in the first forming him and moulding 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 eter-

nal 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.

4. 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, 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 necessary 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 recompence; 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.

\* Suarez. de Gratia, Vol. 1. p. 126, 127.

## PART IV.

DIVINE GOODNESS MANIFESTED IN REDEMPTION.

---

*The nature of the goodness manifested in redemption—  
Wherein this goodness appears—The gift of Christ—  
Value of this gift—Enhanced by considering the state  
of man—Depravity—Demerit—His low condition—  
Multiplied provocations—Impotence—High advance-  
ment of his fallen nature.*

---

THE second thing is 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, *good will towards man*, *Luke 2. 14*. 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. Compare *Job 38. 7*, with chap. 9. ver. 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.

1. 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 relievér 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 the 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, *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, 1 John 4. 8, 9.* 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 there-

fore he would be known by the name of love now in the days of the gospel.

2. 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 tenderness of a father, and erect a mercy-seat 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 recompence 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 any thing 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 gives it the title of the *gospel of the blessed God*, 2 *Tim.* 1. 11. It was the

\* Rada Controvers. part. 3. p. 363.

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 any thing from us; but it was a pure goodness, streaming out of itself, without bringing any thing 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.

3. It was a *distinct* goodness of the whole Trinity. In the creation of man we find a general consultation, without those distinct labours 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 gospel of redemption.

4. 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 does not only relieve our wants, but restores us to our dignity. It is a greater testimony of goodness to establish a person in the highest honour, than barely to supply his present necessity ; it is an admirable pity, whereby he was inclined 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.

5. 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 does 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*, *God so 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 analyze, 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.

1. In regard of the *difficulty* of 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 seem 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.

2. 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, Psal. 49. 8*, much more costly than the whole fabric of the world, or as many worlds as the understanding 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 expence 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 clotted 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 mercy sent a Son to die for us.

3. This goodness of God in redemption is greater than<sup>e</sup>

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 favour 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 honour of it above the title of mere goodness, to that of *grace*, *Rom. 5. 2. Tit. 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.

4. 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 sinful 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 expiated and 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 *Colos. 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 the sovereign head of the whole creation, appointed by God to gather all things into one, which some think to be the intendment of *Ephes.* 1. 10, where all things, as well those in heaven as those on 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 preservation of a man standing upon the top of a steep hill is more easy, than to bring a crippled man from the bottom to the top. The continuance God gave to the angels, is not so signal a mark of 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 day-spring from on high, and never turn the *Egyptian* darkness of devils into a 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 for ever, while Christ

is made partaker of our blood, and wallows in his blood, that we might not for ever corrupt in ours ; they fell down from heaven, and divine goodness would not vouchsafe to save them : man falls, 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 man, when he offended, when he might as well for ever have let man lie 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 comparisson 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 ; *What is man that thou*

*takest knowledge of him, and the son of man that thou makest account of him? Psal. 144. 3.* 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 angelic; 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 angelic nature might excite the divine mercy: and since all the things of the lower world were created for man, God would not lose the honour 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 natures 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 for ever be wet with ours; but that his goodness might for ever 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 shew 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;

1. 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

\* *Lingend de Eucharist.* p. 84, 85.

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, begat 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*. 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 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 any thing 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; 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

\* Lessius.

of divine bounty. 'T was by the will of God that he came, and by his will he drank the 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,*" 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,*" 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.

2. 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 gift 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 can-

not 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 signalised, 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 ensure our comfort, he swears *by himself*, because he cannot swear *by a greater*, *Heb. 6. 15.* So when he would ensure our happiness, he gives up 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, that 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, be-

cause 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 angelic 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 loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son*. 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 ; that *Son* that is to be *honoured* by us, as we *honour the Father*, *John 5. 23* ; that *Son* which was his delight, 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*, *John 3. 16*. He had but one *Son* in heaven or earth, one *Son* from eternity, and that one *Son* he gave for a regenerate world ; this *Son* he consecrated for *ever-*



more 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 dishonourable death, for the security of those that had violated the laws of righteousness, and endeavoured to pull the sovereign crown from his head. Besides, being an only Son, all those affections centred 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 was 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 diseases. 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 restore 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*," 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 a Redeemer, but for us as redeemed. Divine goodness centred 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 "*honour, glory, and power*," for advancing the "*Lamb slain*," Rev. 5. 11, 12, 13. Divine goodness did not only give him to us, but gave him power, riches, strength, and honour, 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 *himself* 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?

3. 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 acknowledgement 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; endeavoured 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 any thing 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 allurements? 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*, 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 opposed as a superior his liberal sovereign, and by every sin rendered himself more a child of Satan, and an 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 ; ἡ περὶ περισσεύσεν.* 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, *Matth.* 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 created according to men's humours ; 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 *enhances* 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, *serviſing 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 any thing 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 not only indebted, but a 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 feebleſneſs ; he was as much without love to obſerve the one, as *without ſtrength* to bear the other, *Rom. 8. 7* ; he could not, becauſe of his *enmity*, *be ſubject to the law*, 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, *Psa. 19. 14*; when he found out a Redeemer for our misery, he found out strength for our impotency.

To conclude this; behold the *goodness of God*, when man had thus unhandsomely dealt with him; had nothing to allure his goodness, multitudes of provocations to incense him, was reduced to a condition as low as could be, fit to be 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 resentment 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 experienced 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.

4. 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, 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, honour 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 has 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 nature ; 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, Psa. 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*, 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. 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 honoured to sit for ever upon a throne above all the tribes of seraphim and cherubim ; 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 cherubim.

## PART V.

MANIFESTATION OF GOODNESS IN THE COVENANT  
OF GRACE.

---

*The nature of the covenant of grace—God gives himself in this covenant—Confirmation of it—Its conditions—Conditions of it easy—Reasonable—Necessary—Its invitations—Obstinacy of man bewailed—Sacraments of the covenant—Sealing the covenant—Union and communion with Christ—The excellent condition to which redemption exalts us.*

---

**T**HE goodness of God is manifested in the *covenant of grace* made with us, whereby we are freed from the rigour 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 rigour 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 debasement of his sovereignty: though he gave the precepts as a sovereign Lord, yet in his covenanting, he seems to descend to some kind of equality with that dust and ashes with whom he 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 breast, 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 favour 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, *Psal.* 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, 19, 20 ; in the first he is a *Lord* ; in the second a *husband*, and binds himself upon gracious condition 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 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*, *Rom.* 8. 1: we are by it snatched from the jaws of the law, to be wrapt up in the bosom of *grace*: 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 sacrificing, the type of the great *sacrifice*: that covenant brought in *death upon one offence*, *Heb.* 12. 18, 22, this covenant offers life after many *offences*, *Rom.* 5. 16, 17; that involved us in a curse, and this enriches 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 exercises 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

\* Turretii, ser. p. 33.

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 con-vened 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*, i. e. sincere, Gen. 17. 1. What is hearty in our actions is accepted, and what is defective is over-looked, 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 supposes 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*, of justifica-

tion 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 sin, 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 *Thes.* 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; *That the world may know, that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me*, *John* 17. 23.

3. This goodness appears in the choice gift of *himself* which he hath made over in this covenant. You know how it runs in scripture, *I will be their God, and they shall be my people*, *Gen.* 17. 7. 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*, *Jer.* 32. 38. 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 in making himself over in a deed of gift to a mean worm, and a 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, *I ascend to my God, and your God, John 20. 17.* This of God's being our God, is the quintessence of the covenant, the soul of all the promises: in this he has 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 vigour 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 disposal; 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 has 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 has done; and his wisdom, whereby he can contrive more than he has 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 most solemn manner for our assurance, to over-rule all the despondencies unbelief could raise up in our souls. The reason why he confirmed it by an oath, was to shew *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 him-

self, that he will be true to it, not so much out of an election of himself, as the object of the oath. *Because he could not swear by a greater, he swears by himself, Heb. 6. 13*; whereby the apostle clearly intimates, that divine goodness was raised to such a height for us, that if there had been any thing 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 distrusts of that creature, that deserved for ever to lie in his own ruins, for not believing his 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 honour; he had cast that off, had he not insisted on this condition of faith; it being the lowest he could conde-

scend 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,

*First*, 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. But the condition of the evangelical covenant, is a sincere, though weak faith; he has 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 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, transgressing the covenant, Hos. 6. 7*, 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 abstinencies, 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 non-age under the elements of the world, nor requires those innumerable bodily exercises that he exacted of them; he demands not thousands 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 has 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 endeavoured to introduce a multitude of legal burthens, 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 favourably.

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 has 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 has lost its wings to attain a knowledge of such sublime things as that of the Trinity, and other

mysteries of the christian religion ; God has 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 has 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 by 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 which 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.

*Secondly*, 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 every thing. 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 souls, and wraps us up in the fruition of all the privileges purchased by it. So much he has 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 on such a person.

5. It is a *necessary* condition.

1. Necessary for the *honour* 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 which he has 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 has no value for it, nor any abhorrence 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 honour 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 receive men into 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 has 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 honour 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 honour 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 honour 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 glorifying in himself; the evangelical covenant directs its whole battery against it, that men may *glory in nothing* but divine goodness, 1 *Cor.* 1. 29, 30, 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 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 does 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 effect 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 has 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.

6. 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 carries not on the gospel by force of arms ; he does 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 uses rational expostulations to move men voluntarily to comply with his proposals ; *Come now, saith the Lord, let us reason together, Isa. 1. 18.* 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 ; *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, I have nourished and brought up children, Isa. 1. 2.* What various encouragements doth he use agreeable to the nature of men, endeavouring 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 *Zion*, 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. 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 does he *invite* men? What multitudes of alluring promises, and pressing exhortations are there every where 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? What affection is displayed in his speech in the prophet, *Hearken to me, O my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation, my people, my nation?* *Isa.* 51. 4. 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 besecching God.

The apostle fears not to use the expression for the glory of divine goodness, *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us,* *2 Cor.* 5. 20. The besecching 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 wringed hands, intreating 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 to his own life and happiness; this he doth not only in his general proclamations, but in his particular wooings, those inward courtings of his Spirit, 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 world 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 intreaties 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? They are like the noise a favourable 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; *I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the*

*iniquity of my sin, Selah, Psal. 32. 1.* 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 *Selah* 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 hearts, 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, 21, 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 rebel to throw down his arms and lie at his feet ; and this because *he delights in mercy ? Mic. 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, Psal. 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 good-nate goodness bewailing with tears and sighs the ruin of *Jerusalem, Luke 19. 41.* By the same reason that when a sinner returns, there is joy in heaven, upon his obstinacy, there is sorrow on 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 should

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 encouragement, 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 willingness to express it to his creature. Hath he any mind to deceive us, that thus entreats 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 humour?

7. Divine goodness is eminent in the *sacraments* he hath affixed to this covenant, especially in 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 eats the flesh, and drinks 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, *Matth.* 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 does not cease to be bread, nor the wine cease to be wine ; neither of them lose their substance, but both require 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 for ever ; 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 has more strength than our guilt, 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 experienced 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 ; where-



by 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 *shew 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 Judaical 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 does 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 obliges 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, engages 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

\* Amyral. Irenicum, p. 16. 17.

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 acknowledged 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 infeoffment in a parcel of land; but as the power of the 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 anointed did not of itself confer upon them the 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 the 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 divine goodness evidences itself, not only in making a gracious covenant with us, but fixing seals to

\* Daille, *Melang.* part 1. p. 153.

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 shews 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 his goodness, that he hath appointed us so often to celebrate it, whereby he shews 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; *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?* 1 Cor. 10. 16. 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 his 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, Colos. 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 eat of the sacrifices, did *partake of the*

*altar*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 18, that is, they had a communion with the God of *Israel*, to whom they had been sacrificed; and those that *eat 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, having 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, 1 *Cor.* 11. 27, 29, guilty of treating him in as base a manner as the Jews did when they crowned him with thorns; 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, straightly 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 honour 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 has 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 coloured 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 so gloriously in the open air, though the one be masked and the other revealed.

To conclude this, we may notice 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 loses not the authority of a sovereign; and the humble familiarity he invites us to, does not diminish the condition and duty of a subject. A sovereign prince would not take it well, if a favourite should refuse the offered honour 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 conveyance 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.

6. 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. *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly, John 10. 10.* 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 has *died to expiate our sins*, and so crowned with life to save, and for ever preserve our persons: *Because I live, ye shall live also, Rom. 5. 10;* 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, 48, 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 honourable. 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 make 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.

7. 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. *By him all things consist, Colos. 1. 17.* 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 honour 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 honour of answering so excellent an end. But when man lost his integrity, the creatures lost their perfection; the honour 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 dishonouring 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, *The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, Rom. 8. 22.* 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 to 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 passionately groans under its vanity, so it does *earnestly*

*expect and wait for its deliverance at the time of the manifestation of the sons of God.* 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 a little 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 has not yet enjoyed the creatures 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 *Isaiah* 11. 6, 7, 8, 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 honour 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* of universal nature, the main part of the creation at least, *Acts* 3. 21. 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 vapours, 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 redemption 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 favour; 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, *Psal.* 96. 11, 12. & 98. 7, 8. If they were to be destroyed, there would be no ground to invite them to triumph. Thus doth divine goodness spread its kind arms over the whole creation.

## PART VI.

## THE GOODNESS OF GOD DISPLAYED IN HIS GOVERNMENT.

---

*The care of God over all creatures—Over all things animate and inanimate—His care of the meanest rational creatures—Of the most wicked men—Preservation of human society—Encouragement of moral goodness—Giving the scriptures—The goodness of God in the conversion of men—In answering prayer—Forbearing with his people's infirmities—In their afflictions.*

---

**WE** now proceed to the third thing in order, which is, the goodness of God in his *government*. That goodness that despised not their creation, does 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 does 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 every thing which he has made, which love could not be without a continued diffusive-

ness 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 every thing in the world would be involved in confusion. 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 as nothing, it would much more respect it when it was something by the sole virtue of his power and good will to it, without any motive from any thing 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 does 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 his creatures if he did not provide for them, while he intends to use them. But infinite goodness cannot be affected 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, *Psal.* 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, labours day and night in a perpetual care of them. The whole life of the world is linked together by *divine goodness*. Every thing 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.

First, 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 has 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 has 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*, not a creek or cranny but partakes of it, *Psal. 104. 24*. 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 every thing 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 God spreads his wings over the whole creation, and neglects nothing, wherein he sees a mark of his first creating goodness.

His goodness is seen, 1. In *preserving* all things. *O Lord, thou preservest man and beast, Psal. 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 w.t.e ses of his liberality and kindness to man. *The earth is visited and watered by the river of God. He set-*

\* Gulielmus Parasien. p. 184.

*cles 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 vallies are covered over with corn,* as the Psalmist elegantly, *Psal.* 65, 9, 10, and 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*, *Psal.* 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*, *Psal.* 27. 1, continuing the vigour of our limbs, and the health of our bodies ; secures us from *terrors by night, and the arrows of diseases that fly by day*, *Psal.* 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. He watcheth over us *in our goings out, and our comings in*, *Psal.* 121. 7, 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*, *Psal.* 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 dan-

gers, does 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 a time of confusion, doth he preserve an indefensible place from the attacks of enemies, like a spark 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 has peculiar preservations for his *Israel in Egypt*, and his *Lots in Sodom*, his *Daniels in the lion's den*, and his *children in a fiery furnace*. He has 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 inanimatethings*. Divine goodness embraces in its arms the lowest worm as well as the loftiest *cherubim*: he provides food for the *crying ravens*, *Psal.* 147. 19, and a prey for the appetite of the *hungry lion*; 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*, *Psal.* 104. 25, 26, 27, 28. They are better provided for by the hand of heaven, than the best favourite is by an earthly prince; for *they are filled with good*. He has made channels in the wildest deserts for the watering of beasts, and trees for the nests and *habitation of birds*, *Psal.* 104. 10, 12, 17. As a law-giver 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 labouring beast in that command of the sabbath, 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, (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 officious by his labour 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 enforces this precept with a threatening of a shortness of life, if they transgressed it; *Thou shalt let the dam go, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days, Deut.* 22. 7. 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, Levit.* 22. 28. All which precepts, say the *Jews*, are to teach mercy to their beasts; so much doth divine goodness bow down itself to take notice of these 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 favour of a distressed beast; the *helping of a sheep, or an ox, or an ass out of a pit*, was indulged them even *on the sabbath-day*, a day God had peculiarly sanctified and ordered for his service, *Matth.* 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, *Matth.* 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 degradation of their dig-

nity to regard little things ; but God, who is infinitely greater in majesty than 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 lodge in the tabernacles 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 servants*, *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*. 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 surrender 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, 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 most wicked persons. *The earth is full of his goodness, Psa.* 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 any thing 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 has 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 most wicked 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 mem-

bers of their bodies. God distributes his blessings where he might shoot his thunders, and darts his light to 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*, *Psal.* 24. 1; every thing 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 multitude of them in the world; for he is *the Saviour of all men*, that is, he 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 man 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 enjoyment 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*?

2. 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 *honour* of himself; *four* for the rights of *God*, and *six* for the rights of *man*, *Exod.* 20. 1, 2, and his security in his authority, relations, life, goods, and reputation; superiors not to be dishonoured, life not to be invaded, chastity not to be stained, goods not to be stolen, good name not to be destroyed by false witnesses, nor any thing belonging to our neighbour 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 paradisaical state, if men had a goodness to observe, what God has 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 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 sheddeth 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*, *Psa. 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 dissentions will break out into public disorders.

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 the rollings of the sea, *He stilleth the noise of the waves, and the tumults of the people*, *Psal. 65. 7.* Though God has 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 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* murmured 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 has 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 has established for the good of the earth. He does not so often in this world punish those faults committed immediately against his own honour, 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 *Korah, Adonijah, Zimri: Ahitophel* draws *Absalom's* sword against *David* and *Israel*, and the next is, he makes a halter for himself. *Absalom* heads a party against his father, and God by a goodness to *Israel* hangs him, 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 enterprizes, and bringing the contrivers out of their caverns and lurking holes. In such cases, God so acts, and uses such methods, that he silences any creature from challenging any partnership with him in the discovery. He does 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* in this world, are of this sort, *Col. 3. 5, 6*: and when princes will be oppressing the people, God will be *pouring contempt on the princes, and set the poor on high from affliction, Psal. 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 restore 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 preservation of a due dependance 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 honour and worship, it was void without the approbation of that person under whose charge they were, *Numb. 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 party's 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 madmen. Order renders every city, every nation, yea, the whole earth beautiful: this is an effect of divine goodness.

3. His goodness is evident in *encouraging* any thing of moral goodness in the world. Though *moral goodness* cannot claim an eternal reward, yet it has been many times rewarded with a temporal happiness; he has 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 delayed 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 *Jeremiah*, to write his prophecy, and very despondent to 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 the 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 favour, 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 heart, as 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. 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 of her neighbours, 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.

4. 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 man in the world with the means of that return? Would he exact an obedience of men, as their consciences witness, and furnish them with no rules to guide them in the darkness, they cannot but acknowledge, that they have contracted? No, divine goodness has 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 among the *Jews*, and afterwards to open it to the whole world, to abuse men in religion and worship, which so nearly concerned himself and his own honour, that the world should not be deceived by the *devil*, without a remedy in the morning of its appearance? It has been honoured and admired by some *heathens*, when they have cast their eyes upon it, and their natural light made them behold some foot-steps 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 of 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 has 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. *They are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the*

*world are come*, 1 Cor. 10. 11. 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 has 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 guilt, 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 any thing 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 of it; he hath triumphed over the powers that opposed it, and shewed himself good in 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 enforce 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*.

5. His goodness in his government is evident. In *conversions* of men. Though his 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 impostors 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 shewed 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.

It is his goodness to pitch upon *mean and despicable men* in the eye of the world. To call this poor *publican*, and over-look that proud *pharisee*; this man that sits upon a dung-hill, and neglect him that glitters 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*, 1 *Cor.* 26, 27, 28; 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*. *The poor receive the gospel*, *Mat.* 11. 5, when those that are more acute, and furnished with a more apprehensive reason, are not touched by it.

God displays his goodness to the *worst* men. He seizes 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 thunder-bolt of wrath. It is his goodness to visit any, when they lie putrifying 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*, persecuting *Sauls*, Christ-crucifying *Jews*, persons in whom lusts had had a peaceable possession and empire for many years.

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 *gain-saying 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 which 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 has 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 any thing may be said to have a difficulty to omnipotence) 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.

His goodness appears in turning men, when they were *pleased with their own misery*, and *unable to deliver them-*

*selves.* 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 endeavoured to blow it out, and the corrosive near to our hearts, when we endeavoured to tear it off, being more fond of our disease, than the remedy? We should have been destroyed with the *Sodomites*, had not God laid his good hand upon us, and drawn us from the approaching ruin we effected, 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 bestowed his grace, 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 rigours of his justice, we had merited. Now this goodness in conversion is greater than that in creation; as in creation there was 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 my 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.

6. The divine goodness appears in *answering prayer*.

He delights to be familiarly acquainted with his people, and to hear them call upon him. He indulges 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 cherubim, 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 has in its treasury, he delights to give the best upon asking, because God acts 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 does 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 expect-



ing 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 chooses the time, wherein his gifts may be most acceptable to his suppliants: *In an acceptable time I have heard thee. Isa. 49. 8.* He oftens 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 into practice; he is more liberal than his creatures are craving. *Abraham* petitioned for the *life of Ishmael*, and God promises 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 repossess it with *two bands*, *Gen. 28. 20.* *David* asked life of God, and he gave him *life* and a *crown* besides, *Psal.'21. 2, 3, 4, 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 poverty of our distractions and diffidence. *David* vents his astonishment at it; *Blessed be God, for he hath shewed me marvellous kindness.*

*I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thy eyes, nevertheless, thou heardest the voice of my supplication, Psal. 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?

6. 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 scutcheon, 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, Numb. 23. 21.* 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 does 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; *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, *Psal. 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.

8. 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, *Psal. 119. 71,* then goodness in God is the principal cause and ordainer 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 mad-man's hand, wherewith he was about to stab himself, though it were beset with the 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 into 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; *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? Job 7. 17.* He strokes are often the means of exaltation. He sets his heart upon man, while he inflicts the smart of his rod; he shews 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 ruin: his goodness would not suffer him to do it, if our badness did not force him to it. *I will melt them, and try them, for how shall I do for the daughter of my people, Jerem. 9. 7.* What other course can I take but this, according to the nature of man? The goldsmith has 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, Mal.*

3. 3 ; he watches for the purifying of 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, *I have refined thee, but not with silver, Isa. 48. 10* ; 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 the 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 yearned after them in their affliction ; the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. Isa. 52. 4, 5, that is, 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 ? For I will redeem again those jewels the enemy hath carried away. That chapter is a prophecy of redemption ; God shews 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, Wherefore glorify the Lord in the fires, Isa. 24. 15.*

\* Harwood's Sermon at Oxford, p. 5.

9. The goodness of God is seen in *temptations*. In those he takes occasion to shew 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 exposes them not to temptation beyond the ability he hath already granted them, or will at the time, or afterwards multiply in them. He hath promised his people, that *the gates 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 temptation.

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 the deep. The more violent temptations are, the shorter time God allots 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, *this is your hour and the power of darkness*, Luke 22. 53. 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 does 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 armour to render us victorious. If we fall, it is not for want of provision from him, but for want of our *putting on the armour 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's* time were under great temptation to apostacy, by reason of the violence of their persecutions, were *out of weakness made strong* for the combat, *Ileb.* 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; *then was Jesus led up of the Spirit*. *Then*, *Matt.* 4. 2: 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 furnishes our recruits from his own omnipotence; *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, *Eph.* 6. 10. 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 favour, 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; *Go your ways, tell his disciples and Peter, Mark 16. 7*. 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 vigour 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 pre-

sently 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 teaches us to manage our weapons ; the spiritual armour 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 sins* which we were likely to fall into. *Paul's thorn* in the flesh was to prevent the pride of his spirit, and to humble the presumption 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 own hearts : humility is a greater benefit than pride ; if God brings us into a wilderness to be tempted of the devil, 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 ; as it is a sin to overlook the one as well as the other, since divine goodness shines in both.

6. 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.

---

## PART VII.

THE SIN OF TREATING DIVINE GOODNESS WITH  
CONTEMPT.

---

*The frequency of this sin—The baseness of it—Divine goodness abused by forgetfulness of it—Impatience—Unbelief—Mistrust of his providence—Omissions of duty—Proud confidence in our services—Inordinate attachment to created comforts—Taking encouragement from the abounding of divine goodness—Ascribing our benefits to other causes.*

---

**I** SHALL now come to the use of the subject:

FIRST, Of instruction.

I. If God be so good, how *unworthy is the contempt and 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 has 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;

*God doth know that you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil, Gen. 3. 5.* 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 colours, 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 conduces 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, *What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and walked after vanity? Jer. 2. 5.* 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 chief 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 broken and *empty cistern*, as the chief happiness before him, *Jer. 2. 3.* 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 endeavoured to frustrate all the communications of divine goodness in crea-

tion, 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 any thing 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 honourable 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 our earth for 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 every thing 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 any thing in scripture, but with the abuse of the good things he has 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*, when they abused those honours 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 *aceldama*, 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; *If you forsake the Lord, he will do you hurt, after he hath done you good, Josh.* 24. 20. 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 impending 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.

Let us here enquire, *how* God's goodness is contemned or abused.

1. 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, Psa.* 100. 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 defaces; 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 favours 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 premeditated bounty of God. It is in God's judgment a folly 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 remained longer in our memories, but the sense of daily favours 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.

2. 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. *In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly, Job 1. 22*, as if it were a character peculiar to him, whereby he verified the eulogy God had given of him before, verse 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 and 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, 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. 45. 3, 4. and 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 honour 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 is 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 blessings ; 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 free men, 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*, *Numb. 11. 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 has established him, *Numb.* 10. 3, 9, 10, 11 : they would *stone* those that reminded them of the goodness of God to them, and thereupon of their crime and their duty ; 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, *Psal.* 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.

3. 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 mercies, 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 disgraces 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 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 sottish 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, delighting only to mark our faults, and overlook our services.

4. The goodness of God is contemned by a *distrust* of his providence. As all trust in him supposes him good, so all distrust of him supposes him evil, either without goodness to exert his power, or without power to display his goodness. *Job* seems to have had some measure of this in his complaint; *I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me, I stand up, and thou regardest me not, Job. 30. 20.* 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 mis-interpret 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*, *Numb. 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*, *Psal.* 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, *casting your care upon him, for he cares for you*, 1 *Pet.* 5. 7; 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.

5. We condemn 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, *this evil is of the Lord, why should I wait on the Lord any longer?* 2 *Kings* 6. 33. 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 any thing 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 a due esteem and valuation of him, a surrender of all the powers of our souls 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 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.

6. 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

\* Amyral. Moral. Tom. 1. p. 291.

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 an 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 extorted 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 nature of this perfection of the generosity and royalty of divine goodness; as if God were of a mean and mechanic temper, not to part with any thing, 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 has 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, *Sire, 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.

7. 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 fasten 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 pleasures 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 inconveniencies, 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 any thing above us to out-strip 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 has 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

\* *Cressol. Antholog. part. 2. p.29.*

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 has 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 nourishes 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.

8. 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 oppose him; this is the fruit which corrupt nature produces. Thus the *Egyptians* who had so fertile a country, proved unthankful to the Creator, by adoring the meanest creatures, and putting the sceptre of the Monarch of the world, into the hands of the most sottish and most cruel beasts. And the *Romans* multiplied 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 neighbours; 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 high-minded, 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 blessings 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, mis-employing 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 prodigious debauchery; *as we do, saith one\*, with the Thames, which brings us in provision, and we soil it with our rubbish.* The more God sows his gifts, the more we increase our abuse of them. Thus we make our outward happiness the most unhappy part of

\* Young, of Affliction. p. 34.



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 honour by those instruments he puts into our hands to glorify him; as if a favourite should turn that sword against 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 its heel against the dam, as soon as ever it has 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 favours, 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 surgeon on the head, as soon as he hath set and bound up his dislocated members. So God compares the ungrateful behaviour 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 surgeon that applies corroborating plaisters to a broken limb.

9. 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 honoured in the same rank with the most sordid 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 over-weening conceit of our own sagacity, applaud and admire ourselves, and over-look the hand that conducted us, and brought our endeavours 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, 13, 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 honour of any work ; as ridiculous as if a soldier after a victory should erect an altar to the honour 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 any thing 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 any thing 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 furnishes 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, *Ezra* 8. 18. And *Nehemiah* the *success he had with the king* in the behalf of his nation, and not solely to his favour with the prince, or the arts used to please him, *Neh.* 2. 8.

## PART VIII.

FURTHER INSTRUCTION DEDUCED FROM THE DIVINE  
GOODNESS.

---

*That man is a fallen creature.—Justice of God in punishing the abuse of his goodness.—His fitness to govern the world.—Perfection of goodness the ground of all religion.—The goodness of God renders him infinitely amiable.—A fit object of trust and confidence.—His goodness claims our obedience.*

---

**T**HE 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 free from cares and trouble, and are not racked with that solicitude 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 like that goodness which is as infinite as his power, and knows no more limits than his almightiness 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 dependance upon one another; nothing could be ungrateful and unuseful to man by the original law of the 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 detains his spirit from more generous employments, shews, 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 any thing, 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 justifies his severest proceedings against men, and very seldom charges them with any else as the matter of their provocations; *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, Hos. 2. 3.* 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 rigour 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.

This renders him *fit* for the government of the world, and gives him a full title to it. This perfection the psalmist celebrates throughout the 107th *Psalms*, 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 rigour without kindness; but God, because of his infinite and immutable goodness, cannot do any thing unworthy of himself, and uncomely in itself, or

\* Petav. Theolog. Dogmat. vol. 1. p. 407.

destructive to any moral goodness in the creature. It is impossible he should do any thing that is base, or act any thing 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; *Oh Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, Hos. 13. 9.* And though God sends judgments upon the world, we have shewn these to be intended for the support and vindication of his goodness; and *H Ezekiah* 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 any thing 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.

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 honour 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, in a short progress increases its streams, and widens the passages through which it runs. It would be a blemish to divine goodness if it deserted what it made, and left 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, *That the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men, Dan. 4. 17.* If he does 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 has he committed the disposal of things to angels, either good or bad; though he uses 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 their instruments in the world, nor fill their spirits with disquiet and restlessness when they are engaged in some ruinous design, as often as is experienced; nor has he committed it to the *good* angels, who, for ought 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, villainies, 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 honour 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 the 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 incoffing them in a land flowing with milk and honey. Every act of bounty and success the *heathens* received, moved them to appoint new feasts, 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 alledged to God, that *Job did not fear him for nought*, or 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 ingenious religion could never have been born into the world, without a notion of *goodness*; and would have gasped 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. *He that comes unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. 11. 6 ;* 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 bountiful hand, will 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 ingeniously adored and acknowledged, if he were not liberal as well as powerful ; the goodness of God is the foundation of all sincere 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 ; *how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty ? Zech. 9. 17.* 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 any thing. 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 vigour to allure our will. This perfection of God is the loadstone to draw us, and the centre for our spirits to rest in.

This attribute of goodness 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 any thing 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, has 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 any thing 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 seraph, 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 crea-

ture 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.

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.

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 any thing 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, which has not a triumphant excellency above all other things : where there is an equality of goodness, neither can justly challenge a supremacy, but only an equality of affection.

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*? *Psal.* 130. 4. It is for his

goodness' sake, that he is sued to by his people in distress, *For thy goodness' sake, O Lord, Psal. 25. 7.* 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, or because they expect to be the better for them. Severity can never conquer enmity, and kindle love: were there nothing but wrath in the Deity, it would make him be feared, and render him odious, and that to an innocent nature.

As the *spouse* speaks of Christ, so we may of God, *Cant. 5. 10, 11*; 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, verse 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.

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.

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 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 favour? That man is accounted odious, and justly despicable, by man, that reproaches and disesteems, nay, that does 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.

We are obliged to love God, 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 this 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 ravishes, and the second allures and melts: He has 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 elevate 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 has before received many good turns from him : the virtue, valour, 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 a 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*, that is 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 kindly employed his power for him, in the eruption of his love ; *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength, Psal. 18. 1 ; and I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications, Psal. 116. 1.*

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 any thing 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, that is 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 amiable to us, by the light we see, and the warmth we feel.

1. 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 expence he was at for our regaining our defaced beauty; the gift he made of his Son; the affectionate calls we have heard to 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 favours 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.*

2. 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 we not set our love upon so excellent an object, as himself? How base are we, if his goodness doth not constrain us to love him, who hath been so free in his favour to us, who have merited quite the contrary at his hands? *If his tender mercies are over all his works, Psal. 145. 9,* he ought for it to be esteemed by all his works, that are capable of a rational estimation.

3. 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, Psal. 86.*

1. 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 a 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 honour of loving, and embracing him, who hath stored every creature with that which may pleasure us ? But instead of endeavouring to parallel our affection with his kindness, we endeavour to make our disingenuity as extensive and lofty as his divine goodness.

4. 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 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, Psal. 34. 8.* What is the consequence ? *Blessed is the man, that trusts in thee.* The voice of divine goodness sounds in 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 any thing weakly, so his goodness cannot act any thing 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 is 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 any thing 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 *Psal. 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 contemplation 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 whereby 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, *Hosea 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*; and *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 honour that was due to God, to implore his goodness, and cast their cares upon it. To do good is the most honourable thing in the world, and to acknowledge a goodness in a way of confidence, is as high an honour 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; *Psa. 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 honours 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, Psa. 147. 11.* He takes it for an honour, 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 splendour 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 sends 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, Psa. 119. 49.* If his promise did not please him, why did he make it? If reliance on the promise doth 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 suppliant, 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 honoured.* 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 expresses an ardent desire to be acquainted with the divine statutes, that he might make adequate returns in a dutiful observance; *Thou art good, and thou doest good, teach me thy statutes, Psa. 119. 68.* As his goodness is the ori-



ginal, so the acknowledgment of it is the end of 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 number of the benefits received. The more excellent the favours are which are conferred upon any person, the more right hath the Benefactor to claim an observance from the person benefited 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 honouring 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 claims 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 our 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*

\* Amyrald, Dissert. p. 65.

*deliverance from Egypt*, 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 of the transcendent goodness and righteousness of his nature, he will not, he cannot command any thing that is evil in itself, or repugnant to the true interest of his creature ; and God never obliged the creature to any thing, 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, *Psal.* 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 controul 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

\* As a Heathen Maximus Tyrius, Dissert. 22. p. 220. εὐαὐδοξίμῳ Διὶ βέλτερον ἄλλο τι ἢ τὸ εὐάλλεστον.

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 every thing were good because God loves it, or because God wills it, that is, 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 loved himself, and his being good, was the ground of his loving himself, because, as was said before, if there were any thing 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, and tyranny? 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 any thing 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.

---

## PART IX.

THE INFLUENCE OF DIVINE GOODNESS UPON OUR  
SPIRIT AND DEPARTMENT.

---

*The goodness of God a source of comfort—We should seek the enjoyment of God as good—Frequent meditation on his goodness—A sense of his goodness will make us devout in his worship—Will keep us humble—Faithful—Patient—Elevate us above the world—Suppress envy—Make us thankful—We should imitate the goodness of God—In assisting the distressed—In kindness to enemies.*

---

*Secondly.* **T**HE attribute of goodness is an unexhaustible source 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, Psal. 25. 8.* His goodness makes him stoop to be the tutor to those worms that lie 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, Psal. 86. 5.* He acts not according to the rigour 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 makes 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 shewing 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 honour his goodness, and gladly meet with a fit object 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 pleaded 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? *His eyes are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to*

*their cry, Psal. 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 any thing else. He loves to be sought to, to give 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; his goodness is as flexible to our importunities, as his power is invincible by the arm of a silly worm: he thinks his liberality honoured, by being applied to, and your address to be a recompence for his expence.

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 he were not so good, he would not be so great in the apprehensions of any creature. How ought his goodness in the great gift of his Son to encourage us to apply to him; since he hath set him as a Mediator 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; *Grace and glory will he give, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly, Psal. 84. 11.* This David comforted himself with, in that which his devout soul accounted the greatest calamity, his *absence from the courts and house of God.* 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 every thing thing 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, 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 has 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 ends, 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, 3, 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 renewed 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 burthen, 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 the 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 dishonourable 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 title 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 can say it merits; *A cup of cold water shall not lose its reward, Matt. 10. 42.* 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 instru-

mental in those good works, both commanded and approved by God; he that had the goodness to pity our original dust, will not want goodness to advance it; and if we put off our bodies, it is but afterwards to put them on repaired and fresh. 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 has more sweetness in it to support us, than the malice of enemies hath to deject us; because he is *good*, he is a *strong hold in the day of trouble*, *Nah. 1. 7.* If his goodness extends to all his creatures, it will much more extend to those that honour 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 has 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 cast 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?

3. The third use is of exhortation.

1. How should we endeavour 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.

Consider, nothing but good can be the object of a rational appetite. The will cannot direct its motion to any thing 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 shew me any good, Psal. 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 benefit to him in point of honour, 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 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.

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 blows 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 deject us with their absence ; like fading flowers blooming 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 for ever, 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 darkness, he is a light to scatter it ; when we are in want, he hath riches to relieve us ; when we are in a 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 any where but on him, in the desire of whom there is a delight, and in the enjoyment of whom there is an inconceivable pleasure.

He is to be most sought after, since all things else that are desirable, had their goodness from him. If any thing 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 given to them by God; so what goodness they are possessed with, they were furnished with 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 pleasure, 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 desire beside thee?* *Psa. 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*, was an uncomely speech, *Gen. 30. 1*; 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, endeavour 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 any thing 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 any thing 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 every thing in it, and yet overlook that which is most *full* of divine goodness, *Psa.* 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 seriousest thoughts? Is there any thing 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 reasonable 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 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 mastered 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 greatly to impress the spirit of *Paul*, since he so often sprinkles 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, that a dull dispenser of his alms; he loves a *cheerful giver*, *2 Cor. 9. 7*; he doth himself what he loves in others; 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*? *Psa. 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*, *Psa. 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 any thing 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 feel for an oppressor, 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* ; *Do I thus requite the Lord ? Deut. 32. 6.* 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 particulars, 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 honour 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

for ever, 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, Psal. 16. 2.* The service of the benefactor is but a rational return for benefits, whence *Nehemiah* aggravates the sins of the *Jews*; *They have not served thee in thy great goodness, that thou gavest them, Neh. 9. 35,* that is, 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 visor 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 honour 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 any thing upon his people, he sees it best they should have it; and when he removes any thing 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 humours, 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 mercy, *How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim, I will not execute the fierceness of my anger, Hos. 11. 8, 9*; 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 reveals himself as our portion for ever.

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 should teach us to draw a calm, even from storms, and distil balsam from rods. If the reproofs of the righteous be an excellent oil, *Psal. 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 *elevate* 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 lie soaking in muddy puddles, were we always filled with a sense of the richness and clearness of this fountain wherein we might bathe ourselves. Little petty particles of good will give us no content, when we are 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 bounty; yet since it is in his hands, we are to approve of his actions, and not to have an ill will towards him for his goodness, or towards those he is pleased to make the subjects of it. Since all his blessings 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 them the felicity those things might move them to aspire to. It is to wish God more contracted, and thy neighbour 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, Psal.* 139, 14. What could be the most natural reflection, when we be-

hold 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 endeavours of a grateful acknowledgment, though we should despair of rendering any thing 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 relish, 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, Psal.* 148, to bear a part in this work of praise; not that they are able to do it actively, but to shew 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 honour; all the coin he requires to be paid with for his expence, is the *offering of thanksgiving*, *Psal.* 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 shew forth all his praise*, *Psal.* 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 favours he hath 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 are not forced into 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 good, nor opportunities of benefiting 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: He praised God, *Acts* 3. 8. When we want any thing that is good, let the goodness of divine nature move us to *David's* practice, to *thirst after God*, *Psal.* 42. 1. And when we feel the motions of his goodness to us, let us imitate the temper of the same holy man; *Bless the Lord, O my soul; and forget not all his benefits*, *Psal.* 103. 2. 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. *Do good to them that hate you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good*, *Matt.* 5. 44, 45. As holiness is a resemblance of God's purity, so charity is a resemblance of God's goodness: and this our Saviour calls perfection; *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*, verse 48. 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 splendour and loveliness of all christian graces, as goodness is the splendour 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 raises 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 himself to view and relieve the miseries of poor creatures? Why hath God increased the gifts of his treasures to some more than others? Was it merely for themselves, or rather that they might have a bottom, to attain the honour 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 shrink 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 persons. If he hath given much to any of us, it is rather to lay aside part for the income of 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 endeavour 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 any thing from God, than the worst can be to receive from us. How kind is God to those that blaspheme him! He gives them the same sun, and the same showers, that he does 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 seven-fold 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; *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good, Rom. 12. 21*. When we took up arms against God, his goodness contrived not our ruin, but our recovery. This is such 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 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 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 has the worse thoughts of the sun for shining upon the earth, that sends up vapours to cloud it? It can be no disgrace to resemble God; if his hand and heart be open to us, let not ours be shut to any.

# GOD'S DOMINION.

---

---

*Psalm 103. 19.*

THE LORD HATH PREPARED HIS THRONE IN THE HEAVENS :  
AND HIS KINGDOM RULETH OVER ALL.

---

---

## PART I.

THE DOMINION OF GOD CONFIRMED, &c.

---

*General observations—Explication of the text—Division of it—Propositions to establish the truth of it—Sovereign dominion inseparable from the notion of a Creator—Such a dominion cannot be renounced by God himself—It is incommunicable—Founded on the excellence of his nature—In his act of creation—Lord of all—Preservation of all things—Benefits he bestows upon his creatures.*

---

**T**HE psalm begins with the praise of God, wherein the penman excites his soul to a right and elevated management of so great a duty; *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name*, ver. 1; 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,<sup>1</sup> 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 true 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 *reminded 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 heart to recognise 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; *Who forgives all thy iniquities, and heals all thy diseases*, ver. 3. His redemption from death or eternal destruction; his expected glorification thereupon, which he speaks of with that certainty as if he were present; *Who redeems thy life from destruction, who crowns thee with loving kindness and tender mercies*, ver. 4. He makes his progress to the mercy manifested to the church in protection of it against, or delivery of it from, oppressions; *The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment, for all that are oppressed*, ver. 6. In the discovery of his will and law, and the glory of his merciful name to it; *He made known his name unto Moses, and his acts unto the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy*, ver. 7, 8; 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, *He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according*

to our iniquities, ver. 10; and then extols the perfection of divine mercy in the pardoning of sin, ver. 11, 12; the paternal tenderness of God, ver. 13; the eternity of his mercy, ver. 17; but restrains it to the proper object, *to them that fear him*, i. e. to them that believe in him, ver. 11, 17; 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 the true blessings grow up from *the pardon of sin*. Ver. 3, *Who forgives all thine iniquities*. That is the first blessing, the crown of all other favours, 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 favour 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; verse 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 of his blood, to heal the wounds we feel in our nature. *The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed, Isa. 53. 5*. 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 me-

rited by me, not the cure of one disease can I owe to my own power, and the strength of my free will, 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 shew 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 frame, 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 rigour.

6. Growth in grace is always *annexed* to true sanctification. Ver. 5, *So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's*. Interpreters trouble themselves much about the manner of the eagle's renewing its youth, and regaining its vigour:\* 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

\* Amyrald. in loc.

accompanies grace, as well as nature, in the body ; not that it is without its qualms and languishings, 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 vigour 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 growth 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. Ver. 11, 12, *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us*. The east and the 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. Ver. 17, *The mercy of the Lord is to them that fear him, to them that remember his commandments to do them*. 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. Ver. 19, *The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all*. He brings in this of his dominion, just after he had largely treated of his mercy, either 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, or, 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 heart is 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.

Again, the Psalmist introduces the dominion of God, 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 controul him, none below him to resist him, that hath performed all the acts of grace to thee. If God by his supreme authority pardon 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 every thing, and swaying all by his sceptre?

The Psalmist meditates on the dominion to render his *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, employments, 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 lie 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 soundings of the di-



vine bowels, he urgeth him by his *dwelling in heaven, the habitation of his holiness, His kingdom ruleth over all, Isaiah 63, 15.* None therefore hath any authority to make him break his covenant or violate his promise.

Finally, the dominion of God is introduced 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 honourable 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 honour 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, Malachi 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.*] 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 *peculiarity* 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, *Psa.* 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 immoveable 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 for ever. 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 a 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.* 66. 1. And there-

fore heaven is sometimes put for the authority of God. *After that thou shalt have known, that the heavens do rule, Dan. 4. 26*; 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. *Psa. 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 glitter 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; *I have said ye are gods, Psa. 82. 6*: 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 naturally addresses to for corn, wine, and oil, above which there is no superior but the Lord. *The earth hears the corn, wine, and oil; the heavens hear the earth, and the Lord hears the heavens, Hos. 2. 21, 22.*

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 behold 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. *The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, Psa. 14. 2.* 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, Psa. 115. 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 motion he can cause streams to issue 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 dissolution. 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 does not muffle and cloud himself up 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. *The heaven, and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God: the earth also with all that is therein, Deut. 10. 14.* He hath right to dispose of all as he pleases. He does 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; That 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 host of heaven, standing on his right hand and on his left, which can be understood of no other than of 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, *Psal.* 24. 10. You find him called a *great king*; *the Most High*, *Psal.* 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; *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 honour 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, 1 Chron. 29. 11, 12. 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 may 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. *The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof: the world, and all that dwell therein, Psal. 24. 1.* The earth, with the riches and treasures in the bowels of it; the habitable world, with every thing that moves upon it, are his; he has the sole right, and what right soever any others have, is derived from him. In regard also of possession; *The Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, Gen. 14. 22.* 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 shew wherein this right of dominion is found-

ed. 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 vigour 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 underhim.

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 possesses, 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 a heart 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 creature's 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 wave the offering, or shake it to and fro, *Exod.* 29. 24, which the Jews say, was customary 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 of 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. 11. 6. To acknowledge him a rewarder, is to acknowledge him a governor: rewards being the marks of dominion. The very name of a 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 an 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 villanies 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 dominion and the exercise of it are united in God, so entirely in him, so intrinsically 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*, *Isaiah 42. 1*: and Christ, in that prophetic psalm of him, calls God his *Lord*. *O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord, Psal. 16. 2*. 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

\* Maccov. Colleg. Theolog. 10 Disput. 18. p. 6. 7. or thereabout.

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*, i. e. children in understanding, *Isa. 3. 4.*

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 of 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 inflict 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. Thing, *wherein* the dominion of God is founded.

1. On the *excellency* of his nature. Indeed a bare

\* Maccovii Colleg. Theolog. Disp. 18. p. 12, 13.

excellency of nature bespeaks a fitness for government, but does 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 counsels, 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 from 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. *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, Psal. 86. 8.* Though his benefits are great engagements to our obedience and affection, yet his infinite majesty and perfection requires the first place in our acknowledgments and adorations. Upon this account God claims it: *I am God, and there is none like me, I will do all my pleasure, Isa. 46. 9.* And the prophet Jeremiah upon the same account acknowledgeth it: *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, Jer. 10. 6, 7.* 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 controul the soul and mind, it is an usurpation against nature, not a rule according to nature; the excellency therefore of the divine nature is the natural foundation for his dominion. He hath wisdom to know what is fit for them to do, and an immutable righteousness whereby he cannot do any thing base and unworthy. He hath a fore-knowledge whereby he is able to order all things to answer his own glorious designs, and the end of his government; that nothing can go wrong, 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 has, or 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, induces the relation of an absolute Lord; he that gives being, life, motion, that is the sole cause of the being of a thing, which was before

\* Raynaud. Theolog. Nat. p. 757.

† Camero. p. 371. Amyrald. Dissert. p. 72. 73.

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 has 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 wave 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 *The Lord is a great King above all gods, the sea is his, and he made it, Psal. 95. 3, 5*. And so the apostle in his sermon to the Athenians; as he *made the world, and all things therein*, he is stiled *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, Psal. 89. 7*. 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 arises from the relation of all things to himself as their entire Creator, and their natural and inseparable dependance upon him in regard of their being and well beings. It depends not upon the election of men; God has a natural dominion over us as creatures, before he has a dominion by consent over us as converts. As soon as ever any thing 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 steal his own work from him. The work has no propriety in itself; the right must lie in the immediate framer,

or in the person that employed him. The first cause of every thing has 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 only from the addition of a new figure from his skill; as a limner over his picture, the cloth whereof he never made, nor the colours wherewith he draws it, were ever 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 has a right to a piece of brass, or gold, by his purchase, but when by his engraving he has 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 passed 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 a 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 has 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 linner hath a sovereignty over the picture he is framing, or has framed; but the end for which he framed it, either his profit he designed from it, or the honour and credit of skill he aimed at in it, hath a dominion over the linner 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 works; 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 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

\* Stoughton's Righteous Man's Plea, Sermon 6. p. 28.

† Vid. Lessium de perfect. Divin. p. 77, 78.

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*. *The Lord is a great King above all Gods, Psa. 95. 3, 4: 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 every thing, 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 אֲדֹנָי, 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 vigour of all things, conducts them in their operations, so that nothing that they are, nothing that they have, but is owing to this 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 *immense benefits*, he bestows upon his creatures. The benefits he confers upon us after creation, are not the original ground of his dominion. A man has not authority over his servant from the kindness he shews to him, but his authority commenceth before any act of kindness, and is founded upon a right of purchase, conquest, or compact. Dominion does not depend upon mere benefits; then inferiors might have dominion 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 favourite 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 favourite 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.

*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished children, and they have rebelled against me, Isa. 1. 2.* 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 adds a stronger right of dominion to God; since he has 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 has a sovereignty of grace as well as nature, and the ransomed ones belong to him as Redeemer, as well as Creator. *Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price, 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20;* 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 people 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 shew 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.

## PART II.

THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF JEHOVAH'S  
DOMINION.

---

*An independent dominion—Absolute—As to freedom and liberty—Extent—Supreme dominion—Irresistible—Not tyrannical—The wisdom of it—Its righteousness—Goodness—Extends to all creatures—In heaven—In hell—On earth—The dominion of God is eternal.*

---

**T**HE third thing proposed is, the *nature* of this dominion. And,

(1.) It is an independent dominion. 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.

\* Raynaud, Theolog. Natural. p. 760, 761, 762.

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*, *Psa. 95. 3.* Needing no licence 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 receives 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 does by his subjects, he can do by himself: *The government is upon his shoulders*, *Isa. 9. 6,* to shew that he needs not any supporters. All other governments flow from him, all other authorities depend upon him; *dei gratia*, or *dei providentia*, is in the stile 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 honour 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 controul 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. \*

1. Absolute in regard of *freedom and liberty*.

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.

*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

\* Sueton de. Tiberio, cap. 27.

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.

*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.

May he not impose what *terms* he pleases? May he not impose what laws he please, and exact what he will of his creature without promising any rewards? May he not use his own for his own honour, as well as men use for their credit what they do possess by his indulgence?

*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 own? 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 for ever. 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? Does not every man think he has 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? Does 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 does 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.

*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 honour 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.

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 has over his creature, which is as absolute over his work, as the potter's power is over his own clay, *Jerem.* 18. 6. *Rom.* 9. 21. \* May not the potter, after his labour, either set his vessel up to adorn his house, or break it in pieces, and fling it upon the dung hill; separate it to some noble use, or condemn it to some

\* Lessius de perfect. Divin. p. 66, 67.

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 a 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, *James 5. 15.* Speaking of a sick person, *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 parent's sin he was born blind; *Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, John 9. 3;* 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 honour, and therefore may be used in a serviceableness to the glory of the Creator.

2. 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 by 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. *He rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will, Dan. 4, 32. And he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, Rom. 9. 18.* 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 honour. 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.

3. 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 doest thou? Eccles. 8. 4.* It is an absurd thing for any to dispute with God. *Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Rom. 9. 20.* Thou, a man, a piece of dust, to argue with God, incomprehensibly above thy reason, about the reason of his works. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd 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. *Be still, and know that I am God, Psal. 46. 10.* 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.

4. His dominion is absolute in regard of *irresistibleness*. Other governments are bounded by law, so that what a governor has strength to do, he has not a right to do. Other governors have a limited ability, that what they have a right to do, they have not always 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 ἐπὶ τὸν, 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 pledged in his threatening, and in regard of 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*, *Psal.* 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 rejecting 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. 11. 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 enquiry. As at the first casting our eyes upon the sea, we behold its motion, colour, 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 favour 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 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 perfection 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 honour 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 dyed in blood, nor the throne secure, till established upon slain carcasses. But *justice and judgment are the foundation of the throne of God, Psal. 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, Psal. 47. 8.* As he reigns over the heathens, referring to the calling of the Gentiles after the rejecting 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, Psa. 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 any thing but what is conformable to it; since his dominion is founded upon the excellency of his nature, he will not do any thing but what is agreeable to it, and becoming his other perfections. Though he be 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 it 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 any thing 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 any thing 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 any thing 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 consciences. *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 *Law-giver* 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 any thing which savours of weakness; and what detracting is it from his authority, that he cannot do any thing unseemly for the dignity of his nature? It is rather from the infiniteness of his righteousness than the straitness of his authority; at the 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 Clearchas the tyrant of Heraclia, 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 colour, 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 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 of them any servile and fearful, but a generous

\* Causin. Poly. Histor. lib. 4. cap. 22.

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 any thing repugnant to the honour, dignity, and principles of such a nature ; not any thing 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 law 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 disposal 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 any thing foolishly, and unbecoming 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 affections 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, 8, 9, 10.* And if he *bind them in fetters*, it is to *shew them their*

*transgressions*, and *open their eyes to discipline*, and renewing commands in a more sensible strain, *to depart from iniquity*. What was said of Fabricius, You may as soon remove the sun from its course, as Fabricius from his honesty; may be more truly said 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 δὲ βασιλεὶ τῶν αἰώνων. And the same word is translated, *By whom also he made the worlds*, *Heb.* 1. 2, the same word is rendered worlds; *The worlds were framed by the word of God*, *Heb.* 11. 3. 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 has 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 looked upon, wheresoever he were, would be under his rule. Earthly kings may step out of their own country into the territory of a neighbour 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 ; *A multitude of the heavenly host praising God, Luke 2. 13,* and all this host he commands ; *My hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded, Isa. 45. 12.* He employs them 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 : *He calls the stars by name, Psal. 147. 4 ;* 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, *Judg. 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 the 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, vapours whereof hail and snow are formed, are part of

the army, and do not only receive, but fulfil his word of command, *Psal.* 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 say, 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* belongs 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 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. \* Satan by drawing men to sin acquires no right to himself over the sinner; for man by sin offends not Satan but God; and becomes guilty of punishment under God. When therefore Satan 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 does God those vile spirits. He does not ordinarily use

\* Suarez. vol. 2. lib. 8. cap. 20. p. 736.

the good angels in those offices of vengeance, but in the preservation of his people. When he would solely punish, he employs evil angels, *Psal.* 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 uses the natural malice of 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, belong to his authority, *Psal* 47. 7. God is King of *all the earth*, *Psal.* 59. 13, and rules to the end of it. Ancient atheists confined God's dominion to the heavenly orbs, and bounded it within the circuit of the celestial sphere; *He walks in the circuit of heaven*, *Job* 22. 14, 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,

1. 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; *The heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them*, *Gen.* 2. 1. And they are *all his servants*, *Psal.* 119. 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 he 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 angels, and the meanest worm; all the kinds of the smallest insects he presseth for his service. By this sovereignty he controuled the devouring nature of the fire, to preserve the three children, and let it loose to consume their adversaries; and if he speak the word, the stormy waves are hushed, as if they had no principle of rage within them, *Psal.* 89. 9. Since the meanest creature attains its end, and no arrow that

\* Eolduc. in loc.

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.

2. 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 hands, Job 34. 19.* Both the powers and weaknesses, the gentry 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 every thing, in his settlement, in his calling, in the ordering his very habitation; *He determines the bounds of their habitations, Acts 17. 26.* 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 has 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.

3. 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 graces princes and judges with the title of gods, *Psal. 82. 6*; but the highest prince is but a prince *according to the flesh*, as the apostle calls masters in relation of their servants, *Colos. 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 on 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 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* of 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 colours, as to 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* and 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, *Psal.* 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 his 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 characterized in one of their prophets, that he should be *numbered with transgressors*, *Isa.* 53. 12. He can make a man if 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 wheresoever he will*, *Prov.* 21. 1, without any limitation. He speaks of the hearts of princes; because 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, *Psal.* 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 in magnifying and glorifying of God's dominion; *Now unto the king eternal, &c. be honour and glory for ever 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 any 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 effect 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 their consciences 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 inward soul 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, when 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. Proposition. 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 over-spread a great part of the world, hath lost most of its feathers, and is confined to a narrow compass. The dominion of God flourisheth from one generation to another; *He sits King for ever, Psal.* 29. 10. His session signifies the establishment, and for ever, the duration; and he sits now, his sovereignty is absolute, as powerful as ever. How many lords and princes hath this or that kingdom had? In how many families hath the sceptre lodged? Whereas 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, Lament.* 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 splendour 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 double and eternal punishment to them that resist him.

## PART III.

### THE DOMINION OF GOD IN LEGISLATION.

---

*The first act of sovereignty is making laws—In this the dominion of God is supreme—His dominion is seen in the extent of his laws—In the reason of some laws—In the moral law—In the obligations of the law—The dominion of God in punishing transgressors.*

---

IV. **W**HEREIN this dominion of sovereignty *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; *The Lord is our Law-giver, the Lord is our King, Isa. 53. 22.* Legislative power being the great mark of royalty. God as a king enacts 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 dependance 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 does not suppose the promiser either superior or inferior to the person to whom the pro-

\* Suarez. de Legib. p. 23.

mise 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 proposes and encourages to an embracing of it; but commanding supposes always an authority in the person giving the precept; it obliges the person to whom the command is directed. A promise obliges the person by whom the promise is made. God by his command binds the creature, by his promise 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 Law-giver, 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 will be manifest,—1. In the *supremacy* of it. The sole power of making laws originally resides in him. *There is one Law-giver, who is able to save, and to destroy, James 4. 12.* 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 Law-giver, 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. 16*; 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 a 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 law-givers among the heathens, 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 of the world, was by the the secret influence of God upon their spirits; *By me princes decree justice, Prov. 8. 15*; 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 Law-giver 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, 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 Law-giver 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 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 does brutes, and in a way inferior to his rule of men. Some sinned, all might have sinned in regard of 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, honour, 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 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 shew 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; that since man could not claim a propriety in any thing, he was to meddle with nothing but by leave of his sovereign; either discovered by a special or general licence. Thus God shewed 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 neighbour, hath enforcing reasons, viz. the conjunction in blood, and 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 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 easy 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 on the table 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 a 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 presequi*. They can make no addition by their authority to bind it; it is a flower in the crown of divine sovereignty only.

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 honour 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 has a right to dispense with the ordinary laws of nature in the inferior creatures; he has 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 has 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, restrain the rage of the fire, and the fury of the 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 neighbouring countries. He can dispense with the natural laws of the

whole creation, and strain every string 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 significance: as before it was a useful shadow, it would afterwards have been an empty one. Had not God taken away this, christianity had not in all likelihood been propagated among the Gentiles. This was the *partition* wall between Jews and Gentiles, *Eph. 2. 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 for ever incapable of practising the main and essential parts of them: for the temple being the pillar of the legal service, by demolishing that, God has taken away the right 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 has by his providence changed his own law, as well as by his precept.

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 in 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*; 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 dispensed, 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 of 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 Law-giver. So was the vengeance God would take upon the Amalekites. *The Lord hath sworn, that the Lord will have war, Exod. 17. 16.* The Hebrew is, *The hand upon the throne of the Lord*, as in the margin. As a Law-giver 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 Law-giver, appointing what laws he pleases, yet he is not an arbitrary judge. As he commands nothing but what he has a right to command, so he punishes none but whom he has 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; *He sits King upon the floods, Psal. 29. 10.* Upon the deluge of waters where-with 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 Law-giver and Judge of all the earth, to subject criminals to his vengeance, after they have rendered themselves abominable in his eyes, and carried themselves as unworthy subjects of so great and glorious a king. The first name whereby God is made known in scripture, is *Elohim*; *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, Gen. 1. 1.* A name which signifies his power of judging, in the opinion of some critics; from him it is derived to earthly magistrates; their judgment therefore is said 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, Psal.*

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, Psal. 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, Psal. 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 does not presently shoot his arrows into the vitals 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 honour 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 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 passes sentence on him according to the rule he had before acquainted him with.

4. The *means* whereby he punisheth, shews his domi-

nion. Sometimes he musters up hail and mildew ; sometimes he sends regiments of wild beasts, so he threatens Israel, *Levit.* 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, see the 8th, 9th, and 10th chapters of *Exodus*.

---

## PART IV.

### JEHOVAH'S AUTHORITY AS PROPRIETOR OF HIS CREATURES.

---

*His choice of some from eternity.—Bestowing grace where he pleases.—In dispensing the means of grace only to some.—In their various effects.—In giving more knowledge to some than to others.—Calling some to more special service.—Bestowing wealth and honour.—The seasons of dispensing his benefits.*

---

*Secondly.* **T**HIS dominion is 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 some apart from eternity wherein he will display the invincible efficacy of his grace, and thereby infallibly bring them to the fruition of glory. *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, *Eph.* 1. 4, 5. Why does 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 does 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, 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 condemns 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, 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, Rom.* 9. 13, 15. 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 flatten 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 lie 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 does not satisfy in this enquiry, 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 alledged, 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 ; *Chosen us in him, and predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ*, Eph. 1. 4. 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

\* Amyrald. dissert. p. 101, 102.

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 honour, 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 defiled with original guilt? 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 lie wallowing in their own blood; and what could the 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 putrify 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.

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 a holiness, not for a holiness preceding his determination. He hath chosen us, *that we might be holy* before him; *Eph.*

1. 4 ; 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 every thing 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 foresces 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 honour of our salvation cannot be challenged by our works, much less the honour 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 does not influence the electing act of God ; it is called *The faith of God's elect ; Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, Tit.* 1. 1. 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 any thing 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 select 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 persons 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 neighbour? 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 shews 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, Exod. 33. 19, 20:* and he said, *Thou canst not see my face.* 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 endeavours 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 renewed 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 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 another 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 does he strike off the chains from some, and tear the veil from the heart, while he leaves others under their natural slavery and Egyptian darkness? Why do some lay under the bands of death, while another is raised to a spiritual life? What reason is there for all this, but his absolute will?

\* This was Dr. Goodwin's Speech when he was in Trouble.

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* 1. 8. Why does 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 for *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 suffers 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 over-power 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 feeling 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 seizes 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 prepared 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 intrusted 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; even 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 sink 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 Cretans 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? *Tit. 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 stream from such corrupt sources 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 offensive snuffs fit of themselves to be kindled by, and become, a lodging for a gospel beam? What invitations could he have from lying, beastliness, gluttony, but only from his own sovereignty? By this he plucked fire-brands 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, honour, or any civil station in the world; he dispenseth not ordinarily those treasures to those that the mistaken world foolishly admire and doat upon; *Not many mighty, not many noble, 1 Cor. 1. 26.* 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 honour, 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 languishes, 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, but offended 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 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 alledged 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

\* *Claudes sur la parabole des Noces*, p. 29.

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 lie 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 he does by a sovereign authority, the second by a sovereign bounty; he was obliged to neither of them; punishment was a debt due to all of them: if he would remit upon the condition, he did relax his sovereign right; and if he would by his largeness 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, and equally, derived from their parents a depraved nature; but that he would shew 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 alledged 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 honoured 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 a 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 does he not give all his converts an equal measure of his sanctifying grace; some have mites, and some have treasures? Why does 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 snatches 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 Sovereign, yet as a promiser of grace to them that ask it. God does 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 has 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 honoured 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 tells us, is *according to the commandment of the living 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 honour them with the *depositum* of his oracles. *To them were committed the oracles of God, Rom. 3. 2.* In which regard all other nations are said to be *without God*, as being destitute of so great a privilege, *Eph. 2. 12.* 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, Psal. 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 time were much defaced. We read but of one Jonah sent to Nineveh, but of 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 neighbour nations) declared them to be a people favoured 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. 16; 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 abhorrence 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 of the world, to sit down with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*, *Matt.* 8. 11, i. e. to partake with them of the promises of the gospel. The people that were accounted accursed for the Jews, enjoy the means of grace, which have been hid from those, that were once dignified, these 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 remain 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 honour 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 Alexan-

der's time? *Acts* 16. 6, 7, 9, 10. Why should Chorazin 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 apostacies 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 manifested 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 outward impurities, but not those of the spirit. The gospel spiritualizes some, and only moralizes 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 labourers have been but few; at another time it hath been small, when the labourers 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 laboured all night and day too, and caught nothing; *The Lord added to the church daily, Acts 2. 47*. The gospel chariot does not always return with captives chained to the sides of it, but sometimes blurred and reproached, wearing the marks of infernal 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. The apostles had a power of publishing the gospel, and working miracles, but under the divine conduct; it was an instrumentality *dur ante 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 in their sleep longer. Why does not God spirit it at one season as well as at another, but set his distinct periods of time; but because he will shew 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 dryer than we came, that God may confute our false opinion, and pre-

serve the honour of his own sovereignty. Sometimes we leap with John Baptist at the first appearance of Christ; sometimes we lie upon the bed of sloth when he knocks from heaven. Sometimes the fleece is dry and sometimes wet, and God with-holds 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 it is 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 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 has 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, has 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. *I create the fruit of the lips of peace, Isa. 57. 19.*

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 dependance, is the way to be owned by him as subjects in a way of favour.

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 sun-beam makes 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 does he give Bezaleel and Aholiab the gift of engraving, and making curious works for the tabernacle, *Exod. 31. 3,* and not others ? Why does 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 furnishes *babes* with a stock of knowledge, and leaves the *wise* and *prudent* empty of it ; *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight, Matt. 11. 26.*

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 child; 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 frame. Why are not stones alike? Some have a more sparkling light, as gems, more orient than pebbles. Some are stars of first, and others of 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 garnishes 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 labour, and carves a more excellent figure, upon those stones that he designs for a more honourable 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 selecting him out for such an end, was the fruit solely of his sovereign pleasure. As when he resolved to make a creature, actually 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 captive 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 magistracy, 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 this servant to do the noblest work, and another to labour 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 toil 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 abominations 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 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 honourable vessels in his house. As he formed man, that was to govern the creatures, of the same clay and earth whereof the 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 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 honour upon some*, and not vouchsafing it to *the more industrious labours 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 labour 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 adorns one man's body, while another wraps himself in 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 Benjamin 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 wool that warms us; *I will take away, not your corn and wine, but my corn, my wine, my wool*, *Hosea, 2. 8, 9*. His right to dispose of the goods of every particular person is unquestionable; he can take away from one, and passes 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 needle-work, are brought to make use of a *cord*; as the vulgar translates *rent*, a rag or list of cloth, *Isaiah 3. 24*; and sack-cloth for a stomacher instead of silk. This is the sovereign act of God, as he is the Lord of the world; *Promotion comes neither*

*from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but God is Judge, he pulls down one, and sets up another, Psal. 71. 6, 7.* 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 inequalities 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, Psal. 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 in 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 he should be from the infancy of the world, so long wrapped up in 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 does 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? Have 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 the more immediate ancestors lying upon them.

This therefore cannot be a reason, but as it was the sovereign pleasure of God to foretel 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 Lord of his own grace, so he is 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 does 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 want of an exercise of reason? Why does 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 does 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 7. 26.*

## PART V.

## THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

---

*His dominion in disposing of states and kingdoms—Wars subservient to his designs—His dominion over the spirits of men—Restraining their furious passions—Defeating their purposes—The dominion of God visible in the judgments he inflicts—Appointing every man his station in the world—Means and occasions of conversion—Disposing of the lives of men—The dominion of Jehovah displayed in the work of redemption.*

---

Thirdly, **T**HE dominion of God is manifested as a Governor, as well as a Law-giver and Proprietor.

1. In *disposing* of states and kingdoms; *God is Judge, he pulls down one and sets up another, Psal. 75. 7*; Judge is to be taken not in the same sense that we commonly use in the world 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 been torn in pieces; and unheard of nations plucked off the wings of the Roman eagle,

\* Mr. Mede in one of his letters.

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: *And now I have given all those lands, Jer. 27, 6, 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. 50. 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, shewed 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

\* Josephus.

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 conqueror is the sword of the Lord, and receives its charges and commission from the great Sovereign, *Jer. 47. 6, 7.* We are apt to confine 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 bonds 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 overthrowes 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 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 *non 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 wolfish 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 arrests 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, as the Father of spirits, communicates 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 pleaseth, 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, in 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, 4, 5, 6. They expose him to the waves, and the waves expose him to the view of Pharaoh'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 endeavoured 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 Hebrew's children, ver. 6; i. e. one of that race whom her father had devoted to the hands of an executioner, yet God, that by his sovereignty rules 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 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 reformation of the city, and temple of Jerusalem, *Isa.* 44. 28. and 45. 5; tells them in the prophesy, 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 re-built, the spirits of the people were raised up, not by themselves, but by God. *Whose spirit God had raised to go up*, *Ezra* 1. 5. 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 favour 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. *So I prayed to the God of heaven, Neh. 2. 4.* The heathens had some glance of this; it is an expression that Cicero hath some where, “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 does 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, 27, 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 destitute 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 restraint upon them? Though it ap-

pears 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 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 empires 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 favour 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 rendezvous and cabals, in their associations and counsels; *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 commotions 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. Which *stills the noise of the sea, and tumults of the people, Psal. 65. 7.* And David owns God's sovereignty more than his own, *in subduing the people under him, Psal. 18. 47.* In this his empire is illustrious; *The Lord sitteth upon the floods, yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever, Psal. 29. 10;* 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. *The waters where the whore sits, are people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues, Rev. 17. 1, 5.* 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 controuling 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 does as well accomplish that which they never dreamed of, as disappoint that which they confidently designed. He is present at all cabals, laughs at men's formal and studied counsels, 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. *He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprize. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong, Job 5. 12.* 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 sun-shine, and the enemies' sun-shine 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 does God do in this case? *He shall gather them, ver. 12.* i. e. those conspiring nations, as *sheaves into the floor*; then he sounds a trumpet to Sion, *Arise, and thrash, 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, then, 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 *grobe 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 does 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*, *Psal. 76. 12*, either from the world by death, or from the execution of their projects by some unforeseen interruption, or from favouring those contrivances, which before they cherished by a change of their minds? How often has 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 rejoiced in the spoils of the proud expectant of victory?

\* Phydias 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 un-gained 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 gun-powder plot traitors in our own country, 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 greater toil and labour, find their enterprizes 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*

\* Causin, symb. lib. 2. cap. 65.

*to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour 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 ability, but according to the over-ruling 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, Jerem. 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 Cesar, and Cesar 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 12. 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 *snareth the wicked in the work of his own hands, Psal. 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 manifested in *sending his judgments* upon whom he pleases. *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 has 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 pleases, 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 neighbours, 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 either to break or preserve us.

Judgments move according to God's order. "When the sword hath a charge against Askelon 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, *Jer.* 47. 6, 7. When the prophet spake to the sword, *Oh 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 Askelon? there hath he appointed it.* If he hath appointed a judgment against any 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 their 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 pleases. 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, does 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 Cesar, not only to make him a prisoner, but a preacher, in Cesar's court, and renders 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*, 1 *Phil.* 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, *Phil.* 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 has done that at one time, which has

often before fallen without any fruit. Many have come to enjoy 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 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 another, not himself; man must expect his call and grant, to dispose of the life of his body. Why does he cut the thread of this man's life, and spin another's out to a longer term? Why does one die an inglorious death, and another more honourable? One silently drops away in the multitude, while another is made a sacrifice for the honour of God, or the safety of his country. This is a mark of honour 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 does 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, Psal. 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.

9. The dominion of God is manifest in his being a *Redeemer*, as well as *Law-giver*, *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 Law-giver to men and angels, and prescribed them rules according to the council 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 as 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 pleasure, 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 ; *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, Psal. 16. 2.* 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 mediation 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, Zechariah, 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 indulgencies 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 rights 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 manifested 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 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; *Who gave him-*

*self for our sins according to the will of God, Gal. 1. 4,* to which may be referred that expression of his being possessed by God in the beginning of his way, *Prov. 8. 22.* Possession is the dominion of a thing vested 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. 31, wherein Christ speaks of his *rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth*, the earth of the great God, who had 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 prophesy, *Lo I come, I delight to do thy will, Psal. 40. 7, 8;* which are put together, *Lo I come to do thy will, O God, Heb. 10. 7.* The designing Christ to this work was an act of mercy, but founded on his sovereignty. His compassionate heart might have pitied us without his being sovereign, but without it could not have relieved us. It was the counsel of his own will, as well as of his heart: none was his counsellor or persuader to that mercy he shewed; *Who hath been his counsellor? Rom. 11. 34,* 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 au-

thority 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 upon 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; *The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all, Isa. 53. 6.* He made them all to meet upon him; *He hath made him to be sin for us, 2 Cor. 5. 21.* He was made so by the sovereign will 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 does 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 for ever 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 had 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 Law-giver, 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 to him, but put into his heart, as the law of nature was in the heart of man at first; *Thy law is within my heart*, Psal. 40. 7, 8. 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 neces-



sary 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 wouldst 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, has by virtue of that union a natural right to some kind of jurisdiction over the whole kingdom, because she is one with the king. But to wave this, the Scripture places 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. *All power is given me, Matt. 28. 28.* 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 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; *David my servant shall be king over them, and my servant David shall be their prince for ever, Ezek. 37. 24, 25.* He shall be a *prince* over them,

\* Lessius de perfect. divin. lib. 10. p. 65.

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.

---

## PART VI.

### THE SUBJECT IMPROVED.

---

*Contempt of the dominion of God—All sin a contempt of it—The sin of Adam—Usurpations of men—Laws contrary to the laws of God—Making additions to his laws—Preferring the laws of men to the laws of God—Envy—Idolatry—Impatience—Limiting God—Pride and presumption—Careless worship—Omission of Duty—Censuring others.*

---

FIRST. **T**HE use 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 Law-giver 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 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; *Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof*; *Prov. 1. 25. 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 expence of judgments in the world, to assert his own empire to the teeth and consciences of men. *Lord, consume them in wrath, and let them know that God rules in Jacob, to the ends of the earth, Psal. 59. 13.*

The dominion of God is not slighted by any creature of this world but man; all others observe it by observing this order, whether in their natural motions, or preternatural eruptions; they punctually enact 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. *They like men have transgressed my covenant. Hos. 6. 7.* \*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

\* Munster.

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 to the authority of the Lawgiver, *Deut.* 27. 26; so every breach of it is a conspiracy against the sovereignty of the Lawgiver; setting up our will against the will of God is an articing against his authority, as setting up our reason against the methods of God, is an articing 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 dishonouring God*, *Rom.* 2. 23, a robbing him of 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, for that is above the reach of a creature, nor in any thing 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; *Go up against the land of Merathaim, or rebels*, *Jer.* 50. 21; 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, in that expression, *The carnal mind is enmity against God*, *Rom.* 8. 7, 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 tittle; so much does 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 sovereignty*, which was probably the first thing Satan 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, *lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into condemnation of the devil*, 1 Tim. 3. 6; 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 discernable; the ancients generally conceived it to be an affecting the throne of God, grounding it on *Isaiah 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 is 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 an 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 a 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 endeavour 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 endeavoured to be like the Most High before his banishment, as he hath attempted to be like the Most High since. And since Satan 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 favours; he is therefore called *Belial*; *What concord hath Christ with Belial, 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15*; 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 dominion, *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 dependance on him as their Governor, he would not acknowledge his own dependance 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 any thing from him to his own use. The language all his posterity speaks, *Let us break his bands, and cast away his cords from us, Psal. 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? *Am I my brother's keeper? Gen. 4. 9,* 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, has endeavoured to usurp the prerogatives of God: the pope will prohibit what God has 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

\* Trap. in loc.



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 over-reached 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 his servant.

Add to this the pardon 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 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 honour from the Jew without a breach of his law by theft from the christian. Granting many years' indulgencies upon slight performances, the repeating so many *Ave-maries* and *Paternosters* in a day; canonizing saints; claiming the keys of heaven, and disposing of the honours and glory of it; and proposing creatures as objects of religious worship, wherein he answers the character of an apostle, *shewing himself that he is God*, 2 *Thess.* 2. 4, 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 controuling 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 call-

ing 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 Law-giver.

The sovereignty of God is contemned when laws are made, and urged any state *contrary* to the law of God. It is part of God's sovereignty to be a Law-giver; 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, controuling his to establish their own; such are not content to be as gods, subordinate to the supreme God, to sit at his feet; nor co-ordinate with him, to sit equal upon his throne; but paramount to him, to overtop 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 God*, 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 worship without license from a doting

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 fighting against God, but Gamaliel, ver. 39. 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.

The sovereignty of God is contemned in making additions to the laws of God. The authority of a sovereign Law-giver is invaded and vilified, when an inferior presumes to make orders equivalent to his edicts. It is a *præmunire* against heaven, to set up an authority distinct from that of God, or to enjoin any thing as necessary in matters of worship, for which a divine commission cannot be shewn. God was always so tender of this part of his prerogative, that he would not have any thing wrought

\* Trap. in loc.

† Faucheur, vol. 2. p. 663, 664.

in the tabernacle, not a vessel, not an instrument, but what himself had prescribed; *According to all that I shewed 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 any thing 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 Jeshurun; 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 any thing in the framing the tabernacle or temple of their own heads. God barred them from any thing of that nature, by giving them an exact pattern, so dear to him was always this jewel 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, Ephes. 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 any thing 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 were 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 favour 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 ordinance of God in new and gaudy habits, 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 has 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 controul 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 has 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 put their own heads 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 shew where God hath resigned this part of his authority to them. If their exposition of that place, *Upon this rock I will build my church*, *Matt.* 16. 18, be granted to be true, and that the persons 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.

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 law 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, *In singleness of heart fearing God*, *Coloss.* 3. 22; 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 sove-

reignty 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 inbrue 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 as 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 form 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 has 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 dependance 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 by *envy*. When we are not as 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 humour, and ask our leave to what subjects he should dispense his favours.

All envy is either a tacit accusation of God as an *usurper*, and assuming a right to dispose of that which does 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 casting a slur upon his wisdom and righteousness. When God punishes envy, he vindicates his own sovereignty, as though this passion chiefly endeavoured to blast this perfection ; *As I live, saith the Lord, I will do according to thy anger, and according to thy envy, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, Ezek. 25. 11, 12*. The sin of envy in 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 know-



ledge above himself. This base humour 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.

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 intrusted with, but against God as the absolute and universal proprietor, having a right thereby to confer his own goods upon whom he pleases; as well as against God as a Lawgiver forbidding such a violence. The taking 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 licence 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.

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 passes 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 intrusted with them; when we deny

ourselves a due and lawful support for 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 any thing upon the relief of others ; hence uncharitableness comes under the same title, appropriating that to ourselves, as if we were the lords, when we are 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 honour 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 favour of their lusts, which God intended for the checking of them, and make interpretations of it according to their humours, 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, first, in *idolatry*. Since worship is an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, to adore any creature instead of God, or to pay to any thing that homage or 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 rank, as well as with one of a mean condition. While men create any thing 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 any thing, or any person in the world, the chief object 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, Psal.* 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 call them gods to be adored, it was. It is not unlawful to have wealth and honour, 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 any thing 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 follow after the stars, depend barely upon their influences, without looking up to the great director of the sun, it is to pay adoration to a captain in a regiment,

which is due only 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, chap. 31. 25 to 28. It is to prefer the authority of earth before that of heaven, and honour 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 any thing to be exalted 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 does 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 does, 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 honour they greedily desired, they bark at God, and revile his government. They are angry God doth not more respectfully observe them, as though he hath nothing to do in their affairs, 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 hand 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 doating prophet." The same you find in the Jews, when they were under God's 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 neighbours, 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 humours, and our humours should be in the place of a god to him, to direct him what was fit to do in our own cause. When things go not according to our vote, our impatience is a wish, that God were deposed from his throne, that he would surrender his seat to some that would deal more favourably, 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 to 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 favours, 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 imagination, and assume a power to give laws to our sovereign. Thus the *Israelites limited the holy one of Israel*, *Psal.* 78. 41. They would controul 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 quarreled with God for bringing them out of Egypt, and not presently giving them a place of seed, of figs, vines, and pomegranates, *Numb.* 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 favour, 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 wisdom enough to govern himself, would govern 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 licence, as if ourselves were the lords of our time, and of our lives, and God were to follow after us: *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, James 4. 13, 15.* 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; 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. Exod. 15. 9.* 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, *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, Isa. 10. 13, 14, &c.* which God declares to

be a wrong to his sovereignty, by the title wherewith he prefaceth his threatening against him; *Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness,* &c. ver. 16. 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, does not only spurn at it, but usurp it, and assume divine honours, 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 condemn 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, *Ezek. 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 majestical 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 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 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 pleases 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 any thing 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 any thing in the world, to our advantage; *They say unto God, depart from us; what can the Almighty do for them?* *Job* 22. 17. They will have no commerce with him in a way of duty, because they imagine him to have no sovereign power to do any thing for them in a way of benefit, as if his dominion were an empty title, and as much destitute of any authority to command a favour 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; *He that speaks evil of his brother, and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judgeth the law: There is one Law-giver who is able to save and to destroy; who art thou that judgest another? Jam. 4. 11, 12.* 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.

## PART VII.

IMPROVEMENT OF THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

---

*God actually governs the world—Can do no wrong—Merit excluded—Kings and magistrates under the dominion of God—Dreadful to sinners—Punishment of rebellion against it unavoidable—The comfort derived from the consideration of God's dominion by true believers—They should reflect much upon it, and devoutly acknowledge it.*

---

**H**ENCE it follows, II. That God *actually governs* 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 solaces 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 humour? 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, *Psal.* 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 does 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 comes 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 sweetnesses so unpleasant and sour to him? Has he not given frequent notices and memorials, that he holds a curb over corrupt inclinations, puts obstacles in the way of malicious attempters, and often oversets the disturbers of the peace of the world?

III. Information. God can do *no wrong*, since he is absolute sovereign. Man may do wrong, princes may oppress and rife, 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 clamours of creatures are; because he can do nothing but what he has a sovereign right to do. If he takes away your goods, he takes not away any thing 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 any thing 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 medical 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.* Has not God as much right over any 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 the one as the other. There is not any part of the world 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 every thing he does, 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 honour ; and shall it be thought a wrong in God to do such things ? Besides the occasion he has 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.

IV. 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 any thing 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 any thing from us, but by promising something to us.

V. 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 in the world are no other than his lieutenants, moveable 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

\* Austin.

want of the due sense of their subordination to God, has 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 controul him, nor any in heaven able to be a match for him. Darius had never published such a doting edict, as to prohibit any petition to God. Nero had never fired Rome, and sung at the sight of the devouring flames. 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. 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 neighbours' estates; the flames of cities had not been so bright, nor the streams of blood so deep, nor the cries of innocents so loud.

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 honour, 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 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. Does human authority ever give commission to any to rebel against itself? Did God ever depute any earthly sovereignty against his glory, and give them leave to out-law 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*, *Psal.* 2. 10, 12, i. e. to observe his orders, and pay him homage as the governor.

What a silly stupid 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 has 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.

Again, 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, does so exercise his government, it is a duty incumbent upon them to do the same: since they are not the creators of the 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. 12.* 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 are placed over the rest of mankind, and not exercise their authority in a licentious way, but conformable to that justice and righteousness wherein God administers his government, and for the preservation of those that are committed to them.

Finally: Magistrates must then be *obeyed, when they act according to God's order*, and within the bounds of divine commission. They are no friends to the sovereignty of God, that are enemies to magistracy, 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 Cæsar. 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 does he check Aaron and Miriam for speaking against Moses his servant; *Were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses, Numb. 12. 8;* against Moses as related to you in the capacity of a governor; against Moses as related to me in the capacity of my servant. To speak any thing 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.

SECOND Use. 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 has his 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 on 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 him and his posterity; for though divines take notice of

\* Chrysost. in Gen. Hom. 16.

other sins in the fall of Adam, yet God in his trial chargeth him with none but this, and puts upon this question an emphasis of his authority, *Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded ye, that thou shouldest not eat?* Gen. 3. 11. This I am displeas'd with, that thou shouldest disown my dominion over thyself and this garden. This was the inlet to all 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 extravagancies of a creature. Every sin against the sovereign Lawgiver is worthy of death. The transgression of this positive command deserved death, and procur'd it to spread itself over the face of the world. God's dominion cannot be despis'd, without meriting the greatest punishment.

Punishment *necessarily follows* upon the doctrine of sovereignty. It is a faint and 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 dependance between God the Sovereign and man the subject, if God did not vindicate the rights of 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 displays it most eminently when men proudly exalt themselves against him; *In the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he will be above them,* Exod. 18. 11. When Pharaoh thought himself able to contend with 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,* Dan. 4. 16, 17. *The demand is by the word of the Holy One, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men;* 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 has 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 honour, 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 has 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.

This punishment is *unavoidable*. None can *escape* him. He hath the sole authority over hell and death, the keys of both are in his hand; the greatest Cæsar 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*, Job 34. 20, i. e. without instruments. 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.

What *comfort* then 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 fly 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 controul him, if he will overthrow us? Who is there to call him to account, and say to him, What doest 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 favourite 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 lie 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.

By his sovereign authority, God can make any creature *the instrument of his vengeance*; he has all the creatures at his beck, and can commission any of them to be a dreadful scourge. Strong winds and tempests *fulfil his word*, Psal. 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 choak us,

or a vapour congealed into rheum in our heads, shall drop down and putrify 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.

This punishment must be *terrible*. How does 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, *Psal.* 6. and 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 to a poor subject, Prov.* 19. 10, how great is the wrath of the King of kings, that cannot be set forth by the terror of all the amazing vollies of thunder that have been since the creation, if the noise of all were gathered into one single point? As there is an inconceivable ground of joy in the special favour 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, Psal.* 76. 12. What a folly is it then to rebel against so mighty a sovereign?

THIRD Use 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 often prefaces 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 shew 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; *Ask of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the works of my hands command you me*, *Isaiah 45. 11.* Some read it by way of question, as a corrective presumption. Do you ask of me 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, I 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 earthly governors! He that might command, by the absoluteness of his authority, not only does that, but intreats 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; *As though God did beseech you by us, 2 Cor. 5. 20.* And when he may challenge as a due by the right of 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 earthly 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? *I, even I am he, that blots out thy transgressions for my name's sake, Isa. 43. 25.* 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 establishes a pardon. Since we are under the dominion of God, if he pardons who can reverse it? If he does not, what will the pardons of men profit us in regard of an eternal state? If God be a king for ever, then he whom God forgives, he in whom God reigns, shall live for ever. Else he would want subjects on earth, and have none of his lower creatures, which he formed upon the earth, to reign over 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. *He will subdue our iniquities, Micah 7. 19.* If the outward enemies of the church shall not bear up against his dominions, 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 spirits, by changing them, or curbing them, more than over men's bodies, by 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*. *Hearken to the voice of my cry, my King, and my God. Psal. 5. 2.* 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 has 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 authority, and is pleased with prayer, which is an acknowledgment of his dominion, an honouring of that which he delights to honour. 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 store-house 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 dreggy 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 afflictions*. 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, *Isaiah* 16. 4. Again, God chasteneth as a Sovereign, but teacheth as a *Father*, *Psal.* 99. 12. The exercise of his authority is not without an exercise of his goodness. He does 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 used with a parental kindness. 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 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 move 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 over-reaching 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 dispatched 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 opposer 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 does he often burst in pieces the most mischievous designs, and conducts the oppressed to a happy port.

He often turns the severest tempest 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, and beat the waves before her to a foam, been swallowed up of that element, over which she rode a little before. God never comes to deliver his church as a governor, but in a wrathful posture; *Surely, saith the Lord, with a mighty hand, and with an out-stretched arm, and with fury poured out will I rule over you, Ezek. 20. 32.*

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*, *Psal. 76, 12*; i. e. cuts off their designs, as men do 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 does not change their projects, he can make them abortive, and way-lay them in their attempts. Laban marched with fury, but God put an effectual restraint upon 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 favour 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*, *Jerem. 39. 11*. His people cannot want deliverance from him who has all the world at his command, when he is pleased to bestow it: he hath as many instruments of deliverance as he has 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, and even insects to quell the stubborn hearts of his enemies. He can range his thunders and lightnings, the cannon and grenades 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. 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, *I will cry unto God Most High, Psal.* 57. 1, 2. This dominion of God is the true tower of David, wherein there are *a thousand shields*, for defence and encouragement, *Cant.* 4. 4.

FOURTH Use. 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 acknowledgement they held all in chief of him. The practice of offering first fruits for an acknowledgement 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 dependance 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 dependance 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. *Am I my brother's keeper?* Gen. 4, 9; 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 manifestations 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 on this would,

1. Fix us on him as an object of *trust*. It is upon his sovereign dominion as much as upon any thing, that safe and secure confidence is built; for if he had any superior above him, to controul 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 gainsaid 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 wave a reliance on his promise, to depend upon the breath of a changing favourite. None but an ignorant man would change the security he may have upon the height of a rock, to expect it from a mole-hill. 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 motions. 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. *Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain, Zech. 10. 1*; 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 dependance 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 second causes are opened to relieve us, as well as when they are concealed from us.

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*, pre-faceth 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 any thing 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 garishness and lightness.

The Jews, says Capel, on the 1 *Tim. 1. 17.* repeat this expression, מלך הן נלם *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 cloathed 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 honour 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 honoured 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 host, 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 intrusted 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 acknowledgment that we have a greater income from him; we should be ready to give the inconsiderable pittance he requires 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 kept to her first argument against the serpent, she had not been instrumental to that destruction, which mankind yet feel the smart of: *God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, Gen. 3. 3.* The great governor of the world has 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

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 unhumbled 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 favours, 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 ourselves* to God in every thing. 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, *It is the Lord, let him do what seems good*, 1 Sam. 3. 18. We should not commence a suit against God, when he does 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 humour? 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 ejection, to exclude him from any propriety in any thing 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, *If I will, that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me, John 21. 22.* 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 enquiries.

---

## PART VIII.

THE SUBJECT IMPROVED IN VARIOUS EXHORTATIONS.

---

*The dominion of God should teach us humility—Thankfulness—Fear and reverence of God—Prayer to God and trust in him—Holy obedience—Motives to obedience—The manner and kind of our obedience—Motives to patience—The nature of patience, as it respects the dominion of God.*

---

FIFTH USE, 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 man vaunt before God when the 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.

We should be humble 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 an humble posture withdraw 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 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 man is a mere mote, compared to the goodness and holiness of God, so is the authority of 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 very handsomely shamed the flattery of his courtiers that cried him up as lord of the 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 jumble out all thoughts of the supreme prerogative of God, and give thereby occasion to frequent rebellions against him.

We should be humble with reference to *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 for 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, 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 has a property in his goods by the law of the land? Is any thing 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 esses 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* results from this doctrine of the sovereignty of God. He is to be praised for his *royalty*, *I will extol thee my God, O king, Psal. 145. 1.* The Psalmist calls upon men five times, to sing praise to him as the king of all the earth; *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, Psal. 47. 6, 7.* 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, as to bring us out of 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 tedder 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 doest 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 does not oppress us by the greatness of his majesty; he enters into covenant with us, and allures us by the cords of a man, and shews himself as much a merciful as an absolute Sovereign.

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 any thing from the creature to serve our turn, it is by the order of the chief proprietor. He is the spring of honour, 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 dry chip. It is the divine will in every thing that does good; every favour 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 own 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 favour 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 honour of his dominion. His property ought to be thankfully owned in every thing 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, under the earth, and in the sea, were heard by John to ascribe blessing, honour, 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; hath 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?



How should we be induced from hence to *promote* the honour of this Sovereign? We should advance him as supreme, and all our actions should concur in his honour. We should return to his glory, what we have received from his sovereignty, and enjoy by his mercy: 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 honour 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 honour 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 being ought to be consecrated to his honour, though we should have no reward, but the honour of having been subservient to the end of our creation; so much does the excellency and majesty of God, infinitely elevated above us, challenge of us. Subjects use to value the safety, honour, 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. Does 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 Cæsar, 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 does not deny itself for God. He that makes himself his own end, makes himself his own sovereign.

To hide a gift he hath bestowed upon us, or to employ what we possess, solely to our own glory, to use any thing 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 honour of God; he retains the dominion and lordship, though he grants us the use; we are but stewards, not proprietors, in regard of God who expects an account from us, how we have employed his goods to his honour. The kingdom of God is to be advanced by us, we are to pray that his *kingdom may come*, we are to endeavour 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 be perfected, that none may rule but the great and rightful sovereign. Thus while we endeavour to advance the honour of his throne, we shall not want an honour to ourselves. He is too gracious a sovereign to neglect them that are mindful of his glory; those *that honour him, he will honour*, 1 Sam. 2. 30.

\* Arrian in Epictet.

Again, *fear* and *reverence* of God in himself, and in his actions, is a duty incumbent on us from this doctrine. *Who would not fear thee, O King of nations! Jer. 10. 7.* 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. *All the nations shall worship before thee, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is governor among the nations, Psal. 22. 27, 28.* 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 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 has so many armies at his command in the heavens above, and 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 to their bar! How should such an earth-worm, such a mean animal as man, be afraid to speak irreverently of so great a king! 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 can reverence more.

*Prayer* to God, and trust in him is also inferred from his sovereignty. If he be the supreme sovereign, holding heaven and earth in his hand, disposing all things here below, not committing every thing to the influence of the stars, or the humours 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* concludes the Lord's prayers both as a motive to pray, *Matt. 6. 13*, 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-reed 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 any thing else, we disown his supremacy and dominion over all things, we have as good an opinion of ourselves, or of some creature, 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 dependance on him does in a special manner; desiring the exercise of his authority, and the preservation of it in ordering the affairs of the world.

Lastly, *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 every thing, 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 does 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. *Why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?* Luke 4. 46. 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 the authority that enacted them, and the prudence that framed them.

SIXTHLY, This doctrine affords us motives to obey, and directs us to the manner of obedience,

I. *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 controul the just orders of his Lord, and endeavour to subject his master's will to his own, much more to expect God should serve our humour, 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 community, and the other defaces 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 *honourable* 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 honour to a mean person, to be under his

immediate commands, and enrolled in his service. It is more honour 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 to 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. *If you keep my statutes, you shall live in them, I am the Lord, Levit. 18. 5.* Is there any thing 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. *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? 1 Sam. 22. 7.* 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 violences of men, and at last to crown you with eternal honour. 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 creatures. The second thing in which he manifested his sovereignty, was that of a Lawgiver to Adam, after that of a Proprietor in giving him possession of the garden; one followed immediately the other. *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. Gen. 2. 15, 16.* 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 finish-

\* Servire Deo regnare est.

ing 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 the *Lord*, sweetness in *God*, the one to enjoin the other to allure obedience; and God enforceth several of the commandments with the same title. And as he begins many precepts with it, so he concludes them with the same title, *I am the Lord, Levit. 19. 37,* and in other places.

In all the 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 favour 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 condescensions 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 urges 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 presses them to their duty, when he had seemed to lay it for the demeanour 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, in obedience to his authority, and imitation of his example.

4. *All creatures obey him.* All creatures punctually observe the law he has imprinted on their nature, and in their several capacities acknowledge him their sovereign, they move according to the inclination he imprinted on them. The sea contains itself in its bounds, and the sun steps not out of his sphere, the stars march in their order; *They continue this day according to thy ordinance, for all are thy servants, Psal. 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 touches not a hair of the children he will preserve. The hunger-starved lions suspend their ravenous nature when Daniel is to be preserved. 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.

II. 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 a 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 convenience 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 prophesy 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 honour 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 delighting 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 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: he being a *great King*, he must have the *best in our flock*, *Mal. 1.* 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 servants, the exactest obedience is due to God *Jure servitutis.* *When you have done all, say you are unprofi-*

*table 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 honour 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, Acts 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 recompence 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 jumble 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 has 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 does 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 imposes 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 casts 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. It 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 controuling 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 this 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, 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 in their obedience to a great prince, than to a mean peasant: because the quality of the master renders the service more honourable. 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, pronounce 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*, *Psal. 119. 24*. Our understandings must take pleasure in know-

ing 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 *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. 10. 20. 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.

*Patience* also 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. Is it 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 shews us the nature of patience.—It *first* affords us motives to patience.

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 has not tempered us so strong in our bodies, drawn us with as fair colours, 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 pleases? Would you be content your servant should check your pleasure, in dispensing your own favours? 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 charged 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 uses 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 self-abhorrence before him as a Sovereign, rather than as a Judge. When he pinches us, and deprives 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 of the earth* is his, it is 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 from us what he please. He did but deposit in our hands for a while 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 reassume 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 reassumes 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 dung-hill, 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, 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 does 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 ours. This is a reason to stifle all complaints against God, but not to make us careless of pre-

venting afflictions, or emerging out of them by all just ways. The hare has 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 shews 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. *It is the Lord, let him do what seems good in his sight*, 1 Sam. 3. 18. Job was of the same strain; *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord*, Job. 1. 21. He considers God as a sovereign who was not to be reproached, or have any thing 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, Psal. 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 disposes 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 does.

THE  
**PATIENCE OF GOD.**

---

---

*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 WHIRL-WIND, AND IN THE STORM, AND THE CLOUDS ARE THE DUST OF HIS FEET.

---

---

**PART I.**

INTRODUCTION.

---

*Commentary on the text in its connection—Jehovah jealous of his glory—Terrible to his enemies—But slow to anger—Great in power—The finally impenitent cannot escape his avenging power—Why said to have his way in the whirl-wind and in the storm—Rule of providence—Management of wars—Executes judgment with ease—Suddenly—Terribly—Irresistibly—Patience a property of the divine nature—Patience of God in his works of Providence.*

---

**T**HE 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 the 17th chap. ver. 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, *The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him*, ver. 7. 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,

I. 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 neighbour, by predicting to them the ruin of their feared adversary.

II. 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. III. 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; *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*, ver. 2. 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 lie as a mighty weight upon the heads 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 honour 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.* כעל המה, *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 shew 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's 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 affection. 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, *O Lord rebuke me not in thy anger, nor chasten me in thy sore displeasure, Psal. 6. 1*; with a fury untempered with grace, and insupportable wrath.

\* Ribera in loc.

*He reserves wrath for his enemies.* He lays it up in his treasury, to be brought out, and expended in a due season. The term *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 רָזַם רָזַם *he reserves it.* He that hath an infinite wrath, he reserves it, that has a strength and power to execute it.

Verse 3. *The Lord is slow to anger.* Heb. פֶּסַח אֲנִי 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 nostril.* And the anger whereby the wicked are consumed, is called the breath of his 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 the *74th Psalm, ver. 1, Why doth thy anger smoke,* Heb. *Why 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 spirits, which fume up, and break out in dilated nostrils. But where the passages are straiter, 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 manner of men; Jeremiah prays, *Jer. 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 thine 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 *Let the power of my Lord be great*, *Numb. 14. 17*, saith Moses' when he pleads 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 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, i. e. 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, "Your 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 toward 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,\* 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 does 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.

\* For so long it was before Nineveh was destroyed after this threatening, as Ribera in loc. p. 359. col. 1. computes from the years of the reign of the kings of Judah.

*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, *Ezek.* 18. 25. Is not my way equal? 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, whirlwind, storms, clouds; his way is in all their walks, in the whirlings and blustering 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 them 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 does, 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.

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, Psal. 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 surprizing 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 blackening the heavens.

6. The *confusion of the offenders* upon God's proceeding. A whirlwind is not only a boisterous wind, that hurls and rolls every thing out of his 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 touches 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 wilfulness bears all before it, displaces 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: *As the whirlwind passes, so is the wicked no more, Prov.* 10. 25. 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 a breast upon them, and batter down their mighty towers, which that city had in multitudes upon their walls.

The words I intend to insist upon, to treat of the patience of God, are, *The Lord is slow to anger.*

Doct. 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 hearts 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 does 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, *Psal. 103. 8,* sometimes by long suffering, which is a patience with duration; *Psal. 145. 8,* and *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 *Psal. 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 thunder-bolts; sin hath a loud cry, but God seems to stop his ears, not to hear the clamour 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, *I will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, Ezek. 21. 3.* This is one remarkable letter in the name of God, he himself proclaims it, † *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful, gracious, and long suffering, Exod. 34. 6;* and Moses pleads it in the behalf of the people, *Numb. 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;

\* Rhodigi. l. 6. c. 14.

† Δῆλον δὲ ὅτε ἐγχειρίδιον τῆς πτωχείας καλεῖται, καλεῖται δὲ τῷ τῆς εὐχρηστίας τῆς ἐγχειρίδιος μακροθυμίαν ὀνομάζει. Theodoret in loc.

*These things hast thou done, and I kept silence, Psal. 50. 21,* אלה עשׂית והתך שתי, 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, honour, 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 does not deliver his people, because he would try them, and takes not revenge upon the unrighteous, because in patience he bears with them. Patience is the life of his providence in this world. He charges 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, 1. Let us consider the nature of this patience. 2. Wherein it is manifested. 3. Why God doth exercise so much patience. 4. The use.

## PART II.

## THE NATURE OF JEHOVAH'S PATIENCE.

---

*How it differs from goodness and mercy—Not an insensible patience—Not constrained—God's patience from a fulness of power over himself—Founded in the death of Christ—His patience not prejudicial to his veracity—To his justice and righteousness.*

---

I. **T**HE 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 of his mercy, *Psal.* 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 mercy the butt and mark of its operations; *He waits that he may be gracious, Isa.* 30. 18. 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 sacrifice prepared for them; *God spared not the angels, but delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment, 2 Pet. 2. 4;* i. e. he had no patience for them; for patience is properly a temporary sparing a person, with a waiting for his relenting, and a change of his injurious demeanour; 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 does 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 publishes also his resolution, to set sin in order before their eyes; *I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thy eyes. Psal. 50. 21.* Think me not 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. *Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Psal. 44. 23.* 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 Pct. 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 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 there-



fore 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 has done to one, he may do to another; any signal judgment he has 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, 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 does 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 has 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 ruleth his own spirit, than he that taketh a city, Prov. 16. 32.* He that can restrain his anger, is stronger than the Cæsars and Alexanders of the world, that have filled the earth with their slain, 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, Hosea 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 shew his power, *What if God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, Rom. 9. 22.* To shew 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 bore such a weight of provocations from vessels of wrath, prepared for ruin, that he might *γνωρίσαι τὸ δυνατὸν αὐτοῦ*, shew 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, that it could 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 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 of 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 was denounced, no slowness to anger intimated. It must be therefore upon the 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

• Testard. de Natur. and Grat. Thes. 119.

a beast was accepted for the sin of a 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 savour* 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 fix 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 Nineveh; *Yet forty days, and Nineveh 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 eat-*

*est 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 honour. 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 obnoxious 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 saith, *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.

\* Perv. in loc.

2. His justice and righteousness are not *prejudiced* by his patience. There is a hatred of the sin in his holiness, and a sentence passed against the sin in his justice, though the execution of that sentence be suspended, and the person reprieved by patience, which is implied, *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, Eccles. 8. 11.* Sentence is passed, but a speedy execution is stopped.

Some of the heathens, who would not imagine God unjust, and yet seeing the villanies 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. But 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 other, would they not think it a very unworthy, if not an 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 dispatch made of mankind ? Would not the world be a shambles, and men rush forward to one another's destruction, 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 consistency 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 surgeons, because they

cut not off a corrupt member this day as well as to-morrow? And is it just to asperse God, because he does 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 accomplices 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 convicted 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 does not by his patience dispense with the holiness of his law, nor cut off any thing 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 does stubble put into it, which has 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 judges 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 has 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 has a heaven, and justice a hell, to display itself to eternity, but long-suffering has 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 has 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 has 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 pa-



tience; 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 honour, 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.

## PART III.

THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH GOD DISPLAYS HIS  
PATIENCE.

---

*Patience manifested to our first parents—To the Gentiles  
—To the Israelites—In giving warning of judgments  
—In delaying judgments threatened—Unwillingness to  
execute judgments—Moderating judgments—Giving  
great mercies after provocations—Provocations nume-  
rous.*

---

II. **T**HE second thing, *how* his 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 parley with 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 work in his heart; but he took no notice of any of their embryo sins, till they came to a ripeness, and started out 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 nine hundred and thirty 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 demeanour 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 has for this grace five thousand 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 to nothing else, but the effect of an admirable patience.

2. His slowness to anger is manifest to the *gentiles*. What they are, we need no other witness than the Apostle Paul, who sums up many of their crimes, *Rom.* 1. 29, 30, 31, 32. He prefaces 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 naturalized in wickedness, that they had no delight and found no sweetness in any thing 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 stop 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 by art, and men's device; ὑπεριδών overlooked 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 curtail- ing 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, Psal. 95. 10. *Yet he suffered their manners*, Acts 13. 18. He bore with their ill behaviour, and sauciness to- wards 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 defiled themselves with the idolatry of the nations, Judg. 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 alter-

ing 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 fifteen hundred 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 common-wealth, not till about 40 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, 1. In his *giving warning 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 pour 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 ; *I will chastise them as their congregation hath heard, Hos. 7. 12.* 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 ; *Gather yourselves together, yea gather together, O nation, not desired, Zeph. 2. 1, 2* ; 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, *Amos 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 latter time. And in other parts of the world, and in the latter 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.

He often gives warning of judgments. He comes not to extremity, till he hath often shaken the rod over men ; he thunders often before he crushes them with his thunder-bolt ; he does not till after the first and second admonition punish a rebel, as he would have us reject a heretic. *He speaks once, yea twice, and man perceives it not, Job 33. 14* ; he sends one message after another, and waits the success of many messages, before he strikes. Eight prophets were ordered to acquaint the old 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 preserva-*

tion; He was the eighth preacher, in order from the beginning of the world, that endeavoured 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, *Then began men to call on the name of the Lord, Gen. 4. 26*; *Then it was he began to call on the name of the Lord, Heb. τὸ ὄνομα τῷ χριστῷ θεῷ.* 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 *קָרָא* signifies to preach, or to call upon men by preaching; *Wisdom crieth, or preaches, Prov. 1. 21*; 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 deluged 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 years, Ahaz sixteen, Hezekiah twenty nine years: now take nothing 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,

\* Vide Gells. ἀγγελιοκρατία.

† Sanctins. Prolegom. in Hosea. Prolog. the 3d.

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. 15 ; 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.

He *often* gives 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 of 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.*

2. His patience is manifest, in *long delaying* his threatened judgments, though he finds no repentance in the rebels. He sometimes delays his lighter punishments, because he does not delight in torturing his creatures; but he longer delays 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 honour 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. *My Spirit shall not always strive with man, yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years, Gen. 6. 3*, 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.* 18. 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 clamour. 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 Jereboam 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*, chaps. 15, 16, 17 by the reign of the succeeding kings. So forty years after the most horrid villainy 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 does 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. *Wherefore hidest thou thy face and forgettest our affliction, and oppression?* *Psal.* 44. 24. 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 recompence for our offences, and his forbearance.

3. 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* *Lamen.* 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*, *Isaiah* 26. 21. *Micah* 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 inkhorn 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 day's works are, *Gen.* 1. 8.

When God punishes he does 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

\* Mercer in *Gen.* 1. 5.

† Cressol. Decad 2. p. 163.

the one, but is not earnest to persuade him to the other. When he comes to strike, he does it with a sigh or groan. *Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me on my enemies, Isaiah 1. 24.* <sup>117</sup> *Ah*, a note of grief. So *Hos. 6. 4, O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, 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 does it with a conflict in himself. *How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? Hosea 11. 8.* As if he solemnizes 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? *Many a time turned he his anger away. Ps. 78. 38.* 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 calls 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 has been before his favourite, 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 shew, 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.

His patience is manifest, in that when he begins to send out his judgments, *he does it by degrees*. His judgments are *as the morning light*, which goes forth by degrees in the hemisphere; *Hos. 6. 5*. He does 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†, says, 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*. *Therefore will I be to the house of Ephraim as a moth, Hos. 5. 12*. Rivet translates it, *I have been*: 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 reforma-

\* Pierce sinner implead. Page 227.

† Kimchi.

tion, 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 loath to depart, and abandon the place and people. He walks so leisurely with the 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 spoken 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 honour the inflicting the remainder.

4. His patience is manifest in *moderating his judgments*, when he sends them. Does 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, Psal. 78. 38*; he does 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 selects 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, Psal. 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 does, 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.

5. 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 provokers' 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 demeanour towards God. *Psal.* 73. 3, 4, 5. He does 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 does 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 provoked God, by quarrelling with his servant Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, and mis-judging 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 creatures, 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.

6. 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 all 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 prays 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 stiff-necked people; flesh and blood cannot bear them, nor any created spirit of a greater might.

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 Pharaoh? Who is the Lord that I should obey him? How many question 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 every thing, 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 does not shew 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.

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 endeavoured 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 *imaginations of the thoughts of the heart of man were 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, contempts of religion, the open idolatries of Turks and heathens, the more spiritual and refined idolatries of others.

Add to these 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

\* Lessius p. 152.

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 centered in one sinful end and object. What are the offences all the men of the world receive 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, or 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 invasions of kings, the oppressions exercised upon men, all the private and public sins that have been committed in the world ever since it began. The Gentiles were described by the apostle, *Rom.* 1. 29, 30, 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 honour 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.

Consider the *long time* 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.

Finally: 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 disparages 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 their malice is exact. The subsisting of the world under such weighty provocations, so numerous, so

long a 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*, labours with an insufficiency clearly to display it.

---

## PART IV.

### REASONS FOR EXERCISE OF DIVINE PATIENCE.

---

*God exercises his patience to shew himself appeasable—  
To wait for men's repentance—For the propagation of  
mankind—For the continuance of the church—Patient  
to the wicked for the sake of the church—To manifest  
the equity of his future justice upon the wicked.*

---

III. **WHY** God exercises 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 favour, but that he was appeasable, that he was not an implacable enemy, but that they might find him favourable 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. And since he did not utterly root up mankind, his sparing patience was a prologue of some further favours, 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, Psal. 19. 1, 2, 3, 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 favour to the world lay hid in that patience. Paul applies this to the preaching of the gospel. 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. Rom. 10. 18.*

Redeeming grace could not be found out by them in a clear notion, but yet they declared 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, nor could have been expected. They could not but read in those things favourable 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 conclusion 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; 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, Acts 14. 17.* 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 reconcileableness of God 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 comprehend 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 mis-employed 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 favourably, 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 harboured 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 likely 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, 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, Rom. 2. 4;* 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 favour of God, no more than a rebel can conclude himself in the favour 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 reconcileable 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 shewed 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 shew 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 shew 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 gentle 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, Pet. 3. 15*, i. e. hath a tendency to salvation, in its being a solicitation of men to the means of it; for

\* Amyraldus moral. tom. p. 186.

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*, Ἀγει, it conducts, which is more than barely to invite; it as it were takes us by the hand, and points 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 pangs 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 does 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 does in all men; as the apostle, *They know the judgment of God, that those that do such things*, which he had mentioned before, *are worthy of death*, *Rom. 1. 22*. 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*, *Hosea* 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 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 does 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 shews himself ready to receive men to mercy upon their return. To what purpose does he invite men to repentance, if he intended to receive 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, 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 honour of God, and the continuance of men, without which one had been in part impaired, and the other totally lost.

4. He exercises 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 things towards the Lord God of Israel*, 1 Kings 14. 13. Had Ahaz been cut off 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-bush, 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 honour 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 recompence 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 indebted immediately to this attribute, for all the seed he hath in the

world; it is for his *name's sake* he *defers* his *anger*, and for his *praise*, that he refrains 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. *As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one says, destroy it not for a blessing is in it; so will I do for my servant's sake, that I may not destroy them all: as a husbandman spares a vine for some good clusters in it, Isa.* 65. 8, 9. 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 does 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.

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

\* Smith on Creed, p. 404.

the reason, but a large 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 clamour of the sins of the multitude. Judea was ripe for the sickle, but God would put a restraint 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 imbruing his hands in 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 savour of Christ in them that perish, as well as in them that were saved by the acceptation of their message, 2 Cor. 2. 15. Both are fragrant to God, his mercy is glorified by the one's acceptance of it, and 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 their 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.* \* After the despising of patience, there can be no suspicion of an irregularity in the acts of justice. Man has no reason to charge injustice 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 silences 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 insolences of men, and cut them off after two or three sins, he would not have opportunity to shew 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; *What if God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction? Rom. 9. 22.* The proper

\* Minuc. Felix, page 41.

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, *Plead with your mother, plead, Hos. 2. 2*; 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 נאמזוה 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 does 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 proceedings. God will lay open men's guilt, and repeat the measures of his patience, to justify the severity of his wrath; *Sins will testify to their face, Hos. 7. 10*. 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.

---

---

## PART V.

### THE PRACTICAL USE OF THE SUBJECT.

---

---

*The patience of God abused—How abused—By misinterpretations of it—Continuing in a course of sin—Resting in the commission of sin—Taking encouragement from it to sin—The greatness of this sin—The patience of God will have an end—Abuse of patience will aggravate wrath—The delay of wrath will make it more dreadful—Why he suffers the enemies of the church to oppress it—And sin to remain in the regenerate—The consolations of divine patience—Should employ our thoughts—The advantages of meditation—Admiration of it, and thankfulness for it—Considerations to induce thankfulness—Caution against presumption—Patience of God to be imitated.*

---

FIRST. **T**HE subject is of use for instruction.

1. 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. *Thou art more righteous than I, thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil,* 1 Sam. 24. 17. And shall we not relent at God's wonderful long-suffering, and silencing his anger so much? He could cut off our lives, but he will not, and yet we endeavour to strip him of his being, though we cannot.

I. 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, *Because I kept silence, thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself.* Psal. 50. 21. His silence makes them conclude him to be an abettor of, and a comfort 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. *He hath said in his heart God hath forgotten,* Psal. 10. 11. Thinking his patience proceeds not from the sweetness of his nature, but a weakness of his mind. How base is it instead of admiring 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, *To be a God gracious and long-suffering*, *Exod.* 34, 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; *I have held my peace, even of old, and thou fearest me not*, *Isa.* 57. 11, 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, lie 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 with them. Thus that patience which should melt us, often hardens 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 their sum amounts above their ability of payment.

But let it be considered,

1. 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 does 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.

2. 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*. *O that thou hadst known in this thy day?* *Luke 19. 43*. 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 carcase 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 has 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. 51. 13*, which is set forth by the ephah, *Zach. 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 grasshoppers are

not sent to devour, and the kindled fire is not blown up to consume, *Amos 7*, from ver. 1 to ver. 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 break the bow in Jezreel, *Hos. 1. 5*, take away the strength of the nation by the death of Zachariah, 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 Tiglath Pilezar, who carried captive two tribes and a half. If this would not reclaim them, then follows *Loruhama, I will not have mercy, I will sweep them out of the land, ver. 6.* If they did not repent they should be Loammi, 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 for ever 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 any thing 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; *Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah, Hos. 5. 8.* 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, *Psal. 12. 13.* Though he be long a drawing the one out of its scabbard, and long a 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 a while 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 lays 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 transcends all creatures in the measures of the one, so he transcends 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 loses 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 sharper it will be. The heavier the cannons are, the more difficultly are they drawn to the besieged town, but when arrived, they recompence 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 recompence 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 expence 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 recompence 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 e'er he draws his sword out of his scabbard, yet when once he does it, he dispatches 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*, *Hosea 5. 7*. One fatal month puts a period to the many years peace and security of a sinful nation. His arrows wound *suddenly*, *Psal. 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. 42. 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 defers 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*, *Psal. 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 heads, that they may encrease 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 honour 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 presently destroyed 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, 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 shew his power over himself, as well as over the heads of his enemies, to shew 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 shew 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; *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, 2 Pet. 3. 9.* Hereby he shews, 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 shew 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 shew 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.

The SECOND use is 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 refractory sinners. His continued patience to all, speaks a possibility of the cure 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 for ever 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. 11. 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; *Their defence is departed from them*, *Numb. 14. 9*; 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; *The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded*, *Rom. 15. 5*; all interpreters understand it *effectively*.

The God that inspires you with comfort, 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, which was to *bear with the infirmities of the weak*, ver. 1; which he presses them to *by the example of Christ*, ver. 3; and *by the patience of God to them*, ver. 5, 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 *savour 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 shewn 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*, follows 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 has 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 apostacy, than to execute the threatening of the law. He still discovers 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 as a bruised reed, that can emit no sound at all, or one very harsh and ungrateful, he does 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 most patient angels would hardly be able to bear with the follies of good men in acts of worship.

The THIRD Use is for exhortation.

1. *Meditate* often on the patience of God. The devil labours 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 morsel of bread, and every 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, shews 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 discovers 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 to 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 burthen, 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 have not 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 relentings 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

does not annihilate those creatures, or at least imbitter 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!* 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? *Do you thus requite the Lord? Deut. 32. 6,* would be the heart-breaking reflection. How would it give men a fuller prospect of the depravation of their nature, than any thing 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 for 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. *Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities do deserve, Ezra. 9. 19.* 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 shew 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 re-kindled, when our ancestors had but six years of patience between the rise of Edward the VI. 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 neighbour'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, 53, 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 vile, guilty men, 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 torments, 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 discouraging world, and under the weight and hinderances of a body of death, as he doth; *For this cause I obtained mercy, that Christ might shew forth all long suffering; Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen, 1 Tim. 1. 16, 17*: 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 savour 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 from 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, had shaken 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 epithet, 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

\* Pont. part. 1. 22

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.

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? Psal. 8:* אנוש miserable, incurable man, derived from a word that signifies to be incurably sick. Man is *Adam*, earth from his earthly original, and *Enosh* incurable from his corruption. Is it not worthy to be admired, that a God of infinite glory should wait on such Adam's worms of earth, and be as it were a servant and attendant to such *Enoshes*, 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 of the cursed quality of sin, and infinitely more detesting it.

4. Consider *how long* he hath forborne his anger. A relieve for a week or a month, is accounted a great

favour 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. But how great a favour it is to be reprieved thirty years for many offences, every one of which deserves death more at the hands of God, more 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 does he elevate divine *long-suffering*? Certainly there are many who have more reason, as having larger quantities of patience communicated to them, who have lived to see their own grey 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 had 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 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 moment's space of repentance, hath prolonged the life of many a sinner in the world to innumerable moments, to four hundred and twenty thousand minutes in the space of a year, to eight millions and four hundred thousand 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

\* Cod. Lib. 9. Titul. 47. 6. 20.



arrows have flown about our heads, passed over us, and struck in the heart of a neighbour. 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 surprized 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 hath 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 moment of his debaucheries and excessive intemperance, 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 broken 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. Exhortation. 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; *God is angry with the wicked every day.* *Psal. 7. 3.* 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 recal, 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 expence 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 does not assure us, that he is actually appeased. Men may hope that *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. 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 threatnings, the world would not only be an *aceldama*, 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 honour, that must bloody their sword for a trifle, and write their revenge in wounds and death? When God hath his glory every day insulted, 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, that bite and devour upon every slight occasion: but to be patient, is to be divine, and to shew 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 power over ourselves, which is more noble than to be a monarch over others.

THE  
**PROVIDENCE OF GOD.**

---

---

2 Chron. 16. 9.

FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD RUN TO AND FRO THROUGH-  
OUT THE WHOLE EARTH, TO SHEW HIMSELF STRONG IN  
THE BEHALF OF THEM WHOSE HEART IS PERFECT TO-  
WARDS HIM.

---

---

**PART I.**

PROVIDENCE DESCRIBED.

---

*The text gives a clear view of divine Providence—As immediate—Rapid in operation—Extensive—Diligent—Efficacious—Jehovah's right to govern the world—He only qualified for it—There can be no reason against it—What his providential government implies.*

---

**I**N the beginning of the chapter you find Baasha king of Israel raising walls, and fortifying Ramah, a place about twelve miles from Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judah, intending by that means to block Asa up, because Ramah lay just upon the road between Jerusalem and Samaria, the seats of the two kings, ver. 1. Baasha was probably afraid of the revolt of Israel to Judah, upon that reformation of religion wrought by Asa, and there-

fore would fortify that place to be a hinderance, and to intercept any that should pass upon that account. And to this purpose he makes great preparation, as appears ver. 6, for with the provision Baasha had made for the fortification of Ramah, Asa after the seizing of these materials builds two towns, Gaba and Mispah.

Asa seeing Baasha so busy about this design, and fearing the consequence of it, hath recourse to carnal policy rather than to God; and therefore enters into league with Benhadad, a neighbour, though an idolatrous prince, and purchaseth his assistance with the sacrilegious price of the treasure of the temple, ver. 2, 3, and hereby engages him to invade the king of Israel's territories, that he might thereby find work for Baasha in another part, and so divert him from that design upon which he was so bent. *Go break thy league with Baasha, that he may depart from me*, ver. 3. Benhadad is easily persuaded by the quantity of gold, &c. to break his league, and make an inroad, and proves victorious, and takes many cities where the magazines and stores were laid up, ver. 4. Baasha now to save his country, and make head against his enemies, is forced to leave Ramah; whereupon Asa, who watched his opportunity, seizeth the materials he had left for the fortifying of Ramah, and puts them to another use, ver. 5, 6.

Hananiah the seer is presently sent by God with a threatening of war, because he applies himself to a heathen prince, rather than to the Lord of hosts, ver. 7; his sin is aggravated by God's former kindness to him, and the experience he had given him of his miraculous providence in his success against that vast army of the Ethiopians and Lubims, or Lybians, and that upon his recourse to, or reliance on God. And that he should afterwards have recourse to the arm of flesh, was a disparagement to God's providential kindness, ver. 8. He further aggravates his sin by the consideration of God's general providential care of his creatures, and the particular end of it, and of all his providences, viz. the good of his church and people, ver. 9, *For the eyes of the Lord*, &c. *Eyes of the Lord*, in scripture, signify,

1. His *knowledge*: *For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he sees all his goings, Job. 34. 21. All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do, Heb. 4. 13.\** 2. The eyes of the Lord denote his *providence*.

1. For good, so it notes his grace and good will; so his eyes and his heart are joined together; *Mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually, 1 Kings 6. 3, viz. in his temple, the place which he had hallowed to put his name there for ever. I will guide him with mine eye, Psal. 32. 8, that is, I will counsel him, and direct him in a gracious and favourable way. Therefore to be cut off from the eye of the Lord, is to be deprived of his favour, Psal. 31. 22, for none can be cut off from a simple knowledge of God; so seven eyes upon one stone, Zach. 3. 9, that is, the providence of God was in an especial manner with Christ in the midst of his passion.*

2. For evil, so it notes his anger and vindictive justice. *Their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory, Isa. 3. 8.* Kindness and anger appear first in the eye, one by its pleasantness, the other by its redness.

In the verse, we have, I. A description of God's providence, II. The end of it.

I. The *description* of God's providence.—1. The *immediateness* of it; *his eyes*, his own eyes, not another's. Not like princes, who see by their servant's eyes more than by their own, what is done in their kingdoms; his care is immediate. Though angels are ministers of his providence, the guardians and watchers of the world, yet God is their captain, and is always himself upon the watch.—2. *Quickness* and *speed* of providence, his eyes *run*, his eyes do not only walk, but run the round; they are not slumbering eyes, not drowsy eyelids, their motion is quick and nimble.—3. *Extent* of providence, *the whole earth*, all things in the earth, all the hairs on the heads of these men: the meanest worm as well as the mightiest prince,

\* *τραχηλός* significat spinam dorsi, & in mactatis animalibus per spinam omnia apparent interiora, ita ut nihil latere potest. Glassius, vol. 3. l. 106.

the lowest shrub as well as the tallest cedar, every corner or chink of the earth.—4. *Diligence* of providence, his eyes run *to and fro*. His care is repeated, he looks this way and that way, again and again, his eyes are not confined to one place, fixed on one object, but are always rolling about from one place to another.—5. The *efficacy* of his providence; his care engages his strength; he not only discovers dangers, but prevents them; he hath eyes to see, and power to order all things according to his pleasure; he is wise to see, and strong to save.

II. The end of providence *to shew himself strong, &c.*  
 1. *Finis cujus*, [to shew himself strong.] *Heb.* to make himself strong, but best translated, to shew himself strong. It is not an addition of strength, but an exercise of strength, that is here meant.—2. *Finis cui*, or the persons for whom, those that are perfect in heart.

Doctrines.—1. There is a providence exercised by God in the world.—2. All God's providences in the world, are in order to the good of his people.—3. Sincerity in God's way gives a man an interest in all God's providences, and the good of them.

1. For the FIRST, there is *a providential inspection and government of all things* in the world by God: it is not a bare sight of things that is here meant, but a sight and knowledge in order to the governing and disposing of them. View this doctrine at your leisure, preached by God himself, with inconceivable elegance.

Some observe that the society of angels and heavenly creatures is represented, *Ezek.* 1, by a quaternarian number, because the world is divided into four dimensions, east, west, north, and south, as intimating the extension of God's providence over all parts.\* Things are not ordered in the world *cæco impetu*; not by blind fortune, but an all-seeing Deity, who hath the management of all sub-lunary affairs. *Τίςμεγάλη δύναμις τῆς προνοίας† πάντα ὑπ' αὐτοῦ γίνεται*, was the theological maxim of the stoics. Before I come particularly to explain the providence of God, I

\* Hudson's Divine Right of Government, chap. 6. p. 3.

† Clement ad Corinth, p. 34.



shall lay down some propositions as the foundations of this doctrine.

1. God hath *an indisputable and peculiar right* to the government of the world. None ever questioned God's right, no nor his act, but those that were swelled with an unreasonable ambition, such as Nebuchadnezzar, who for this cause underwent the punishment of a seven years' banishment from the society of men, *Dan.* 4. 17. None indeed that acknowledge a God, did or can question his right, though they may question his will and actual exercise of his right. He is the Creator, and therefore the Sovereign Lord and Ruler. The world is his family, and as a Master, he hath an undoubted right to govern his own family; he gave all creatures their beings, and therefore hath a right to enact their laws, appoint their stations, and fix their ends. It is as much his property and prerogative to rule, as it is to create. Creation is so peculiarly proper to God, that it is not communicable to any creature, no not to angels, though of vast capacity in other things, and that because they are creatures themselves. It is as impossible for one creature, or all, to govern the world, and manage all the boisterous passions of men to just and glorious ends, as to create them. It is true God uses instruments in the executive part of his providence; but he does not design the government of the world only by instruments. He uses them not for necessity, but ornament. He created the world without them, and therefore can govern the world without them.

*Virtus creativa est fundamentum providentiæ et argumentum ad providentiam.* This right is founded upon that of creation, as he is the efficient cause of it. It is also founded upon the excellency of his being. That which is excellent having a right to rule in the way of that excellency that which is inferior; every man hath a natural right to rule another in his own art and skill wherein he excels him. If it be the right of a chief magistrate to manage the concerns of his kingdom, with what reason can we deny that right to God?

2. *God only is qualified* for the universal government of the world. All creatures, as they were unable to cre-

ate themselves, so are they unable to manage themselves without the direction of a superior power, much more unable to manage the vast body of the world. God only is qualified in regard of his,

1. *Power*: *Conservation* is *continuata creatio*; that power which is fit to create, is only fit to preserve. A continued creation belongs as much to Omnipotence as the first creation. The government of it requires no less power, both in regard of the numerousness of the objects, and the strange contrariety of passions in rational creatures, and qualities in irrational; conservation is but one continued act with creation, following one from an instant to duration, as a line from its mathematical point.\*

2. *Holiness and righteousness*. If he that hates right is not fit to govern, *Job* 34. 17, then he that is infinitely righteous, and hath an infinite love to righteousness, is the fittest to undertake that task; without righteousness there would be nothing but confusion in the whole creation. Disorder is the effect of unrighteousness as order is the effect of justice. The justest man is fittest for subordinate government among men, and the infinite just God is fittest for the universal government of the world.

3. *Knowledge*. An infinite knowledge to descry all the contrivances and various labyrinths of the heart of men, their secret intentions and aims, is necessary. The government of the world consists more in ordering the inward faculties of men touching their hearts, and tuning them to promote his own praise, than in all external things. No creature hath the skill or power to work immediately upon the will of man; neither angels nor devils can do it immediately, but by proposing objects, and working upon the fancy, which is not always successful. He that created the heart, knows all the wards of it, and hath only the skill to turn it, and incline it as he pleases; he must needs know all the inclinations of the creatures and their proper activities, since he alone conferred all those several principles and qualities upon them. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world, Acts*

\* Taylor's exemplar, preface, c. 31.

15. 8, viz. the particular natures, inclinations, inward motions, which no creature fully understands ; he needs no deputy to inform him of what is done, he is every where, and sees all things ; worldly governors cannot be every where essentially present. God is so perfect in his knowledge of all things, that he cannot be imposed upon by the evil suggestions and flatteries of men or angels. In nature it is so, the eye guides the body, because that is the chief organ of sensitive knowledge ; the mind, which is the seat of wisdom, guides the whole.

4. *Patience.* Infinite patience is requisite to the preservation and government of the world in the circumstances wherein it hath stood ever since the fall ; what angel, though the meekest, or can all the angels in heaven, be masters of so much patience as is needful for this work of governing the world, though for the space of one day ? Could they bear with all those evils which are committed in the world in the space of twenty-four hours ? Might we not reasonably conceive, that they would be so tired with the obliquities, disorders, deformities which they would see in the acts of men, (besides all the evil which is in the hearts of men, which lie without the verge of their knowledge) that they would rather call for fire from heaven to burn the world to ashes. \* Averroes thought that because of God's slowness to anger, he meddled not with sublunary concerns ; this rather fits him for it, because he can bear with the injuries of wicked men, otherwise the world would not continue a moment. Angels, though powerful, holy, wise, and patient creatures, yet being creatures, they want the infinity of all these qualifications which are necessary to this government ; though they are knowing, yet they know not men's hearts ; though they are wise, yet they may be charged with a folly incapable of this ; though holy, yet not able in this respect to manage it to the ends and designs of an infinite holiness, though nimble, yet they cannot be in all parts of the world at every turn ; but the providence of God is infallible, because of his infinite wisdom ; indefa-

\* Trap. in Exod. 34.

tigable, because of his omnipotency ; and righteous, because of his goodness.

3. There can be *no reason rendered* why God should not actually govern the world, since he only hath a right and fitness. If God does not actually govern it, it is either because he cannot, or because he will not. Not because he *cannot*, this inability must be either for want of knowledge, or want of power. The one if asserted, would deny his omnipotence, the other his omniscience; the one would make him a weak God, the other an ignorant God, and consequently no God. Not because he *will not* ; if he can and will not, it is, say some, a testimony of envy, that he maligns the good of his creatures ; but not to insist upon this ; this must be either because of the

*1st. Difficulty.* This cannot be ; what difficulty can there be in a single word, or one act of his will, which can be done by God without any molestation, were there millions of worlds as well as this ; for still they would be finite, and so governable by an infinite superior. May we not more reasonably think the forming such a mass would require more pains than the government of it ? The right stringing of an instrument is more trouble to a skilful musician, than the tripping over the strings afterwards to make an harmony. What difficulty can it be to omnipotence ? Is it greater labour to preserve and govern, than it was to create it ? Does not the soul order every part of the body, and all its functions, without any pain to it ? and shall not the God that made that soul so indefatigable, much more manage the concerns of the world without labour to himself ? Is it not as easy with God to guide all things by one single act of his will, as for me by an act of my soul to do many things without a distinct act of cogitation or consideration before ? Can it be more laborious to him, to govern the world, than it is to know all things in the world ? He sees all things in an instant by one act of his understanding, and he orders all creatures in a moment by one act of his will. Can one act of his will be more painful, than one act of his understanding ? Can he with a word make this great ball, and can he not with as much

ease order all to conform to the law of his own righteous will? Can a continual eruption of his goodness be a difficulty to an infinite Being, which we find natural to the sun, to the fountains, to the sea, to many works of that omnipotent goodness? Or,

2d. *Disparagement*, denial of God's providence over the lesser things of the world, arises from the consideration of the state of monarchs, who thought it an abridgment of their felicity and dignity, to stoop to such low considerations as the *minutula* of their estates might exact from them, but left them to their vicegerents. But they consider not that the felicity of God as it respects the creature, is to communicate his goodness to as many subjects as he hath made capable of his care. If it were his glory to create the world, can it be his dishonour to govern it? The glorifying his wisdom is as honourable to him as the magnifying his power; though both are eminent in creation and providence, yet his wisdom is more signal in the governing, as his power was in framing of the world.

Why was it not as much a disparagement to God to create things contemptible in our eyes, as since he hath created them, to take care of them, and marshal them for his own glorious ends? The sun in the heavens is a shadow of God, which doth not disdain to communicate its natural goodness, and emit its beams to the meanest creatures, and let the little flies sport themselves in them, as well as the greatest princes: and transmits its influences upon things obscure and at a distance from it, whereby it manifests an universal regard to all. And would it not be a disparagement to an infinite goodness to be outstripped by a creature, which he hath set up for a natural communication of goodness, to the rest of the world? The very consideration of the sun, and the nature of it, gives us as much an account of God, as any inanimate being whatsoever: it is as much the sun's honour to produce a small insect, as the growth of the greatest plant.

\* Have not all creatures a natural affection in them to

preserve and provide for their own? Hath not God much more, who endued all creatures with that disposition? Whatsoever is a natural perfection in creatures, is eminently an infinite perfection in God. If it be therefore a praise to you to preserve your own, can it be a disgrace to God? You may as well say, it is as much a dishonour to him to be good, as to have a tender regard to his creatures. Censure him, as well you may, for creating them for your delight as preserving and governing them for the same end. They are all good, for he pronounced them so; and being so, a God of goodness will not account them unworthy of his care. Are they now the products of his omnipotent wisdom, and shall not they be the objects of his directing wisdom? If they are not unworthy of God to create, how can they be unworthy of God to govern them? It would be as much below him to make them, as to rule them when they were made.

4. Therefore, God doth *actually* preserve and govern the world; though angels are in ministry in some particular works of his providence, yet he is their Lord, who gives out his particular orders to them. Jacob's ladder had the top in heaven, where God stood to keep it firm: its foot on earth, and the angels going up and down upon several errands at their master's beck. As God made all things for himself, so he orders the ends of all things made by him, for his own glory. For being the most excellent and intelligent agent, he reduces all the motions of his creatures to that end for which he made them. This actual government of the world by God, brancheth itself out in three things.

1. Nothing is acted in the world *without God's knowledge*. The vision of the wheels in Ezekiel, presents us with an excellent portraiture of providence, there are eyes round about the wheels. *Their wings were full of eyes, &c. Ezek. 18.* The eye of God is upon the whole circle of the creature's motion. In all the revolutions in the world, there is the eye of God's omniscience to see them, and the arm of his omnipotence to guide them: Not the most retired corner, or the darkest cell, not the deepest cavern, or most inward project, nor the most secret

wickedness, not the closest goodness, but the eye of the Lord beholds it. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, Prov. 15. 3.* He hears the words, sees the actions, knows the thoughts, registers the gracious discourses, bottles up the penitent tears, and considers all the ways of men; not a whispered oath, not an atheistical thought, though only rising in the heart, and sinking down again in that mass of corruption; not a disorderly word, but he knows and marks it. The soul hath a particular knowledge of every act, because it is the spring of every act in any member; and nothing is done in this little world, but the soul knows it. Surely then there is not an act done in the world, nor the motion of any creature, but as God concurs in it, he must needs know what he concurs in. The knowledge and ordaining every thing, is far less to the infinite being of God, than the knowledge and ordaining every motion of the body is to a finite soul.

Or suppose a soul clothed with a body of as big a proportion as the matter of the whole creation, it would actuate this body, though of a greater bulk, and know every motion of it? How much more God, who hath infinity, and excellency, and strength of all angels and souls, must needs actuate this world, and know every motion of it? There is nothing done in the world but some creature or other knows it; he that acts it at least, knows it. If God did not know it, the creatures then in that particular knowledge would be superior to God, and know something more than God knows; can this be possible?

2. Nothing is acted in the world *without the will of God.* His will either commands it or permits it; *He works all things after the counsel of his own will, Eph. 1. 11; Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, Psal. 135. 6.* Even the sins of the world, his will permits them, his power assists in the act, and his wisdom orders the sinfulness of the act for holy ends. The four chariots in *Zech. 6. 2, 3, 4, 5,* by which some understand angels, are sent upon commission into the several parts of the world, and compared to chariots, both for their strength, their swiftness, their employment in a

military way to secure the church. These are said to come out of two mountains of brass, which signify the irreversible decrees of God, which the angels are to execute. He alarums up the winds, when he would have Jonah arrested in his flight. He sounds a retreat to them, and locks them up in their chambers.\* Bread hath a natural virtue in it to nourish, but it must be accompanied with his secret blessing, *Matt.* 4. 4.

Virtute primi actus, agunt agentia omnia quicquid agunt.

3. Nothing subsists without *God's care and power*. His eyes running to and fro, implies not only knowledge but care. He doth not carelessly behold what is done in the world, but like a skilful pilot, he sits at the helm, and steers the world in what course it should sail. Our being we owe to his power, our well-being to his care, our motion and exerting of every faculty to his merciful providence and concurrence; *In him we live and move, and have our being, Acts* 17. 28. He frames our being, preserves our life, concurs with our motion. This is an idea that bears date in the minds of men with the very notion of a God. Why else did the heathen in all their straits fly to their altars, and fill their temples with cries and sacrifices? To what purpose was this, if they had not acknowledged God's superintendency, his taking notice of their cause, hearing their prayers, considering their cries? Why should they do this, if they thought that God did not regard human affairs, but stood untouched with a sense of their miseries?

If all things were done by chance, there could be no predictions of future things, which we frequently find in scripture, and by what ways accomplished. Impossible it is that any thing can be continued without his care. If God should in the least moment withhold the influence of his providence, we should melt into nothing, as the impression of a seal upon the water vanishes as soon as the seal is removed; or as the reflection of the face in the glass disappears upon the first instant of our removal from

\* Reynolds. *Psal.* 107. 25. 29.



it. The light in the air is by participation of the light of the sun; the light in the air withdraws upon the departure of the sun. The physical and moral goodness of the creature would vanish upon the removal of God from it, who is the fountain of both.

What an artificer works may continue, though the workman dies, because what he does is materially, as to the matter of it, ready to his hands; he creates not the matter, but only sets materials together, and disposes them into such a form and figure; but God gives being to the matter, and form to all things, and therefore the continuance of that being depends upon his preserving influence.\* God upholds the world, and causes all those laws which he hath impressed upon every creature, to be put in execution; not as a man that makes a watch, and winds it up, and then suffers it to go of itself; or that turns a river into another channel, and lets it alone to run in the graff he hath made for it; but there is a continual concurrence of God to this goodly frame. For they do not only live, but move in him, or by him; his living and omnipotent power runs through every vein in the creation, giving it life and motion, and ordering the acts of every part of this great body. All the motions of second causes are ultimately resolved into the providence of God, who holds the first link of them in his hands, *Hos.* 2. 21, 22.

\* Stillingfleet Orig. sacræ. lib. 3. cap. 3. sec. 3.

## PART II.

## THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD UNIVERSAL.

---

*Providence over all creatures—Over Jesus Christ—Good angels and men—Evil angels and men—The meanest of creatures—All the actions and motions of the creature Natural actions—Civil—Preternatural—Supernatural and miraculous—Fortuitous—Voluntary—Good actions --Evil actions---Permitting them---Ordering them.*

---

THE nature of providence may be explained by considering, FIRST, the *universality* of it. *His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth.* His providence is over *all creatures*; the *highest* and the *lowest*.

I. The *highest* and *most magnificent* pieces of the creation.

1. Over *Jesus Christ*, the first-born of every creature. God's providence was in an especial manner conversant about him, and fixed upon him. It was *by the determinate counsel of God*, that he was delivered up, *Acts 2. 23.* His providence was diligently exercised about him in his whole course. Christ answers his mother's solicitousness with the care his Father took of him; *Wist you not that I must be about my Father's business? Luke 2. 49.* Do you not know that I am about those things my Father takes care of? This exposition best agrees with his reproof, who blames them for creating so much trouble to themselves upon their missing him in the town. It is not why do you interrupt me in my dispute with the

Jewish doctors? But, *How is it that you sought me?* Do you think I am not under the care of my Father? That care was particularly exercised on him in the midst of his passion.\* *Seven eyes were upon the stone, Zach. 3. 9.*; seven, a number of perfection, a perfect and peculiar care of God attended him.

2. Over *angels and men.* The soul of the least animal, and the smallest plant, is formed and preserved by God, but the breath of mankind is more particularly in his hand: *in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. Job 12. 10.*

1. Over *good angels and men.* He charges his angels with folly and weakness. They cannot direct themselves without his wisdom, nor preserve themselves without his power. God hath a book of providence, wherein he writes down who shall be preserved, and this book Moses understands, *Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book; Exod. 32. 33.* not the book of election, no names written there are blotted out; but out of the book of providence. As it is understood, *Isa. 4. 3.* Every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem, i. e. every one whom God designs to preservation and deliverance.† That God, surely, that hath a care of the mean animals, will not be careless of his affectionate worshippers. He that feeds the ravens, will not starve his doves. He that satisfies the ravening wolf, will not famish his gentle lambs and harmless sheep. He shelters Jacob from Laban's fury, and tutors him how he should carry himself towards the good man. *Gen. 2. 9.* He brought Haman out of favour, and set Mordecai in his place for the deliverance of the Jews which were designed for slaughter.

2. Over *evil angels and men.* God's power preserves them, his patience suffers them, his wisdom orders them, and their evil purposes and performances to his own glory. The devil cannot arrest Job, nor touch a lamb of his flock, nor a hair of his head, without a commission from God.

\* ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς. Hammond in loc.

† Horton's Serm. Ps. 27. p. 56.

He cannot enter into one filthy swine in the Gadarenes' herd, without asking our Saviour leave. Whatever he does, he hath a grant or permission from heaven for it. God's special providence is over his people, but his general providence over all kingdoms and countries. He takes care of Syria, as well as of Judea; and sends Elisha to anoint Hazael king of Syria, as well as Jehu king of Israel. *1 Kings* 19. 13. Though Ishmael had mocks for Isaac, yet the God of Isaac provided for the wants of Ishmael. *Gen.* 25. 16, 17, 18. *He causeth his sun to shine upon the unjust*, as well as the just, to produce fruits and plants for their preservation.

II. Over the *meanest* creatures. As the sun's light, so God's providence disdains not the meanest worms. It is observed, that in the enumeration of the works of creation, *Gen.* 1. 21, only the great whales and small creeping things are mentioned, and not the intermediate creatures; to shew, that the least as well as the greatest are under his care. It is one of his titles to be the preserver of beasts as well as men. *Neh.* 9. 6. He is the great caterer for all creatures. *The young lions seek their meat from God.* *Psal.* 104. 21. They attend him for their daily portion, and what they gather and meet with in their pursuit, is God's gift to them, ver. 27, 28. He listens to the cries of the young ravens, though they are birds of prey. *He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.* *Psal.* 147. 9. In *Psalm* 104. David throughout the whole reads a particular lecture of this doctrine, wherein you may take a prospect of God's providence all over the world. He acts them by a commandment and imprinted law upon their natures, and makes them observe exactly those statutes he enacts for the guidance of them in their proper operations. *He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth, and his word runs very swiftly,* *Psal.* 147. 15. viz. his word of providence. God keeps them in the observation of their first ordinance. *They continue this day according to thy ordinances, for all are thy servants*, i. e. *the earth and what is upon it.* *Psal.* 119. 91. They observe their stations the law God hath set them, as if they had a rational knowledge of their duty

in their particular motions; *the sun knoweth his going down*, *Psal.* 104. 19. Sometimes he makes them instruments of his ministry to us; sometimes executioners of his judgments. Lice and frogs arm themselves at his command to punish Egypt. He makes a whale to attend Jonah's dropping into the sea, to be an instrument both to punish and preserve him? Yea, and which is more wonderful, the multitude of the very cattle is brought among others as a reason of a people's preservation from destruction, *Jonah* 4. 11; the multitude of the cattle are joined with the multitude of the infants, as an argument to spare Nineveh. He remembers Noah's cattle as well as his sons, *Gen.* 8. 1. God remembered Noah and every living thing, and all the cattle that were with him in the ark. He numbers the very hairs of our heads, that not one falls without his will. Not only the immortal soul, but the decaying body; not only the vital parts of that body, but the inconsiderable hairs of the head, are under his care.

1. This is *no dishonour to God*, to take care of the meanest creatures. It is as honourable for his power to preserve them, and his wisdom to govern them, as for both to create them. It is one part of a man's righteousness to be *merciful to his beasts* which he never made; and is it not a part of God's righteousness, as the rector of the world, to take care of those creatures which he did not disdain to give a being to.

II. It rather conduceth to his *honour*.

1. The honour of his *goodness*. It shews the comprehensiveness of his goodness, which embraceth in the arms of his providence, the lowest worm, as well as the highest angel. Shall infinite goodness frame a thing, and make no provision for its subsistence? At the first creation he acknowledged whatever he had created, good in his kind, good in themselves, good in order to the end for which he created them; it is therefore an honourable thing for his goodness to conduct them to that end which in their creation he designed them for; and not leave them in wild disorder, unsuitable to the end of that goodness which

first called them into being. If he grow out of love with the operations of his hands, he would seem to grow out of love with his own goodness that formed them.

2. The honour of his *power* and *wisdom*. The power of God is as much seen in making an insect full of life and spirit in all the parts of it, to perform all the actions suitable to its life and nature, as in making creatures of a greater bulk; and is it not for the honour of his power to preserve them, and the honour of his wisdom to direct these little animals to the end he intended in their creation; for as little as they seem to be, they have an end, and a glorious end too, for *natura nihil facit frustra*. It seems not to consist with his wisdom to neglect that which he hath vouchsafed to create. And though the apostle seems to deny God's cares of brutes, *Doth God take care for oxen?* 1 Cor. 9: it is true God did not in that law only take care of oxen, i. e. with a legislative care, as making a law only for them, though with a providential care he does; but the apostle there does not deny God's care for oxen, but makes an argument *a minori ad majus*.

2. Providence extends to all the *actions* and *motions* of the creature. Every second cause implies a dependence upon a first cause in its operation. If God did not extend his providence over the actions of creatures, he would not every where, and in all things and beings, be the first cause.

1. To *natural actions*. What an orderly motion is there in the natural actions of creatures, which evidence a guidance by an higher reason, since they have none of their own? How do fish serve several coasts at several seasons, as if sent upon a particular message by God? This cannot be by any other faculty than the instinct their Maker hath put into them. Plants that grow between a barren and fruitful soil, shoot all their roots towards the moist and fruitful ground; by what other cause than a secret direction of providential wisdom?\*

\* Andrew's Catechistical Doctrine, p. 60.

There is a law impressed upon them and their motions, that are so orderly, as if they were acted according to a covenant and agreement between them and their Creator, and therefore called the *covenant* of the *day* and *night*, *Jer.* 33. 20. What avails the toil and labour of man in ploughing, trading, and watching, unless God influence, unless he bless, unless he keep the city? The proceed of all things depends upon his goodness in blessing, and his power in preserving. God signified this, when he gave the law from mount Sinai, promising the people, that if they kept his commandments, he would give them rain in due season, and that the earth should bring forth her fruit. *Lev.* 26. 3, 4. Evidencing thereby, that those natural causes can produce nothing without his blessing; that though they have natural principles to produce such fruits according to their natures, yet he can put a stop to their operations, and make all their fruits abortive. He weighs the waters, how much shall be poured out in showers of rain upon the parched earth. He makes a decree for the rain, and gives the clouds commission to dissolve themselves so much and no more. *Job* 28. 23, 24, 25, 26. Yea, he orders the conduct of them by counsel, as employing his wisdom about these things which are of concern to the world. *He scattereth his bright cloud, and it is turned round about by his counsels, that they may do whatsoever he commands them upon the face of the world in the earth, Job* 37. 11, 12.

2. To civil actions. Counsels of men are ordered by him to other ends than what they aim at, and which their wisdom cannot discover. God stirred up Sennacherib to be the executioner of his justice upon the Jews, and afterwards upon the Egyptians, when that great King designed only the satisfaction of his ambition in the enlarging his kingdom, and supporting his greatness. *I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath: howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations, not a few, Isa.* 10. 6, 7. His thoughts and aims were far different from God's thoughts. The hearts of kings are in his hands, as wax in the hands of a man,

which he can work into what form and shape he pleases. He hath the sovereignty over, and the ordering the hearts of magistrates ; *the shields of the earth belong unto God, Psa. 47. 9.* The counsels of men for the good of his people, are his act. The princes advised Jeremiah and Baruch, *Jer. 36. 19,* to hide themselves, which they did, yet ver. 26, it is said *the Lord hid them.* Though they followed the advice of their court friends, yet they could not have been secured, had not God stepped in by his providential care, and covered them with his hand. It was the courtiers' counsel, but God challenges the honour of the success. *Military* actions are ordered by him. Martial employments are ordered by his providence. He is the great general of armies. It is observed that in the two prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, God is called the Lord of Hosts no less than a hundred and thirty times.\*

3. To *preternatural* actions. God commands creatures to do those things which are no way suitable to their inclinations, and gives them sometimes for his own service a writ of ease from the performance of the natural law he hath impressed upon them. A devouring raven is made by the providence of God the prophet's caterer in time of famine ; *1 Kings 17. 4.* God instructs a ravenous bird in a lesson of abstinence for Elijah's safety, and makes it both a cook and a serving man to the prophet. The whale that delights to play about the deepest part of the ocean, approaches to the shore, and attends upon Jonah to transport him to the dry land. The fire was slacked by God, that it should not singe the least hair of the three children's heads, but was let loose to consume the officers of the court. The mouths of the ravenous lions which had been kept with an empty stomach, were muzzled by God, that they should not prey upon Daniel, and yet they tore his accusers in a trice.

4. To all *supernatural* and *miraculous* actions of the creatures which are as so many new creations. As when the sun went backward in Hezekiah's time ; when it stood

\* Arrowsmith Chain of Principles, Exercit. 1. Sect. 1.



still in the valley of Ajalon, that Joshua might complete his victory on the Canaanites. The boisterous waves stood on a heap like walls to secure the Israelites' passage; but returning to their natural motion, were the Egyptians' sepulchre. When creatures have stepped out of their natural course, it could not be the act of the creature, it being so much against and above their natures, but it must be by the order of some superior power.

5. To *all fortuitous* actions. What is casual to us, is ordained by God; as effects stand related to the second cause, they are many times contingent; but as they stand related to the first cause, they are acts of his counsel, and directed by his wisdom. God never left second causes to straggle and operate in a vagabond way; though the effect seem to us to be a loose act of the creature, yet it is directed by a superior cause to a higher end than we can imagine. The whole *disposing* of the *lot* which is *cast into the lap, is from the Lord*. A soldier shoots an arrow at random, 1 *Kings* 22. 34, and God guides it to be the executioner of Ahab for his sin; which death was foretold by Micaiah, ver. 17, 28. God gives us a certain rule to judge of such contingencies; and *if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand, Exod.* 21. 13; a man accidentally kills one another, but it is done by a secret commission from God. *God delivered him into his hands*. Providence is the great clock, keeping time and order, not only hourly, but instantly to its own honour. \*

6. Providence extends to *all voluntary* actions, good or evil.—To *good* actions. Not by compelling, but sweetly inclining, and determining the will; so that it doth that willingly, which by an unknown and unseen necessity cannot be omitted. It constrains not a man to good against his will, but powerfully moves the will to do that by consent, which God hath determined shall be done. *The way of man is not in himself*; the motion is man's the action is man's, but the direction of his steps

\* Fuller's Eccles. Hist. Cent. 6. Look 2. p. 51.

is from God. *It is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps, Jer. 10. 23.*

2. Providence extends to *evil actions*, in *permitting* them to be done. Idolatries and follies of the heathen were permitted by God. He checked them not in their course, but laid the reins upon their necks, and suffered them to run what race they pleased; *Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, Acts 14. 16.* Not the most execrable villany that ever was committed in the world, could have been done without his permission. Sin is not *amabile propter se*, and therefore the permission of it is not desirable in itself, but the permission of it is only desirable, and *honestatur ex fine*. God is good, and wise, and righteous in all his acts: so likewise in this act of permitting sin: and therefore he wills it out of some good and righteous end, which belongs to the manifestation of his glory, which is that he intends in all the acts of his will; of which this is one. Wicked men are said to be a staff in God's hand; as a man manages a staff which is in his own power, so doth God manage wicked men for his own holy purposes, and they can go no further than he gives them licence.

But the providence of God extends also to evil actions in *ordering* them. God governs them by his own unsearchable wisdom and goodness, and directs them to the best and holiest ends. Contrary to the nature of the sins, and the intentions of the sinner. Joseph's brothers sold him to gratify their revenge, and God ordered it for their preservation in a time of famine. Pharaoh's hardness is ordered by God for his own glory, and that king's destruction. God decrees the delivering up Christ to death; and Herod, Pilate, the Pharisees, and common people, in satisfying their own passion, do but execute what God had before ordained; *For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done, Acts 4. 28.* The covetousness of Judas, and the devil's malice, are ordered by God to execute his decree for the redemption of the world. The ambition of Titus, the emperor, led him to Jerusalem, but God's end is the fulfilling of threatenings, and the taking revenge upon the Jews for their murdering

of Christ. The aim of the physician is the patient's health, when the intent of the leeches is only to suck the blood. God hath holy ends in permitting sin, while man hath unworthy ends in committing it. The rain which makes the earth fruitful is exhaled out of the salt waters, which would of themselves spoil the ground and make it unfruitful. *The deceiver and the deceived are his, Job 12. 16.* Both the action of Satan the seducer, and of wicked men the seduced, are restrained by God within due bounds, in subserviency to his righteous will.

---

### PART III.

#### THE MYSTERIES OF PROVIDENCE.

---

*Providence above human methods—The ends of it—The wisdom of God conspicuous—The means of providence—Actions and events not ascribed to any other cause—Restraining the passions of men—Sudden changes upon the spirits of men—Causing enemies to act against their own rules of policy—Infatuating the counsels of men—Making them subservient to the ends they were designed to frustrate—And to their own ruin.*

---

SECONDLY, **AS** providence is universal, so it is *mysterious*. Who can trace the motions of God's eyes in their race? He makes the *clouds his chariot*, in his motions about the earth, and his throne is in the dark. He walks upon the wings of the wind; his providential speed makes it too quick for our understanding. His ways are mys-

terious, and put the reason and wisdom of men to a stand. The clearest-sighted servants of God do not see the bottom of his works, the motion of God's eyes is too quick for ours. John Baptist is so astonished at the strange condescension of his Saviour to be baptized of him, that he forbids it; man is a weak creature, and cannot trace or set out the wisdom of God. But this mysteriousness and darkness of providence adds lustre to it. As stones set in ebony, though the grounds be dark, make the beauty and sparkling the clearer.

1. His ways are *above human methods*. Dark providences are often the groundwork of some excellent piece he is about to discover to the world. His methods are like a plaited picture, which on the one side represents a negro, on the other a beauty. He lets Sarah's womb be dead, and then brings out the root of a numerous progeny. He makes Jacob a cripple, and then a prince to prevail with God; he gives him a wound, and then a blessing. He sends not the gospel till reason was nonplussed, and that the world in that highest wisdom it had at that time attained unto, was not able to arrive to the knowledge of God; *After that the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, 1 Cor. 1. 21.*

2. His ends are of a *higher strain than the aims of men*. Who would have thought that the forces Cyrus raised against Babylon to satisfy his own ambition, should be a means to deliver the Israelites, and restore the worship of God in the temple? God had this end, which Cyrus never dreamed of. It is he *that saith of Cyrus, thou art my shepherd, and shalt perform all my pleasure, even saying that Jerusalem shall be built, &c. Isa. 44. 28. & 45. 1;* and this a long time before Cyrus was born. Pharaoh sent Israel away in the very night, at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, the time prefixed by God; he could not keep them longer because of God's promise, he would not because of God's plagues. God aims at the glorifying his truth, in keeping touch with his word. Pharaoh designs not the accomplishing of God's will, but his deliverance from God's judgments.

There is an observable consideration to this purpose, how God's ends are far different from man's, in the taxing the whole world by Augustus, *Luke 2. 1. 4.* Augustus out of pride to see what a numerous people he was prince of, would tax the whole world. Some tell us he had appointed the enrolling the whole empire twenty-seven years before the birth of our Saviour, and had proclaimed it at Tarracon, in Spain. But soon after this proclamation, Augustus found a breaking out of some stirs, and thereupon deferred his resolution to some other fit time, which was the very time of the birth of Christ. See now God's wise disposal of things, in changing Augustus's resolution, and deferring it till the forty-fourth year of his reign, when Christ was ready to come into the world! And by this giving occasion, yea, necessitating Mary to come from Nazareth, where Joseph and Mary dwelt, who perhaps being big with child, without this necessity laid upon her by the emperor's edict, would not have ventured upon the journey to Bethlehem; there she falls in travail, that so Christ the seed of David being conceived in Nazareth should be born at Bethlehem, where Jesse lived, and David was born. How wisely does God order the ambition and pride of men to fulfil his own predictions, and to publish the truth of Christ's birth of the seed of David, for the names of Joseph and Mary were found in the records of Rome in Tertullian's time.

3. God hath *several ends in the same action.* Jacob is oppressed with famine, Pharaoh enriched with plenty, but Joseph's imprisonment is in order to his father's relief, and Pharaoh's wealth; his mistress's anger casts him into a prison. Joseph is wronged, and hath captivity for a reward of his chastity. God makes it a step to his advancement, and by this way brings him from a captive to be a favourite. What is God's end? Not only to preserve the Egyptian nation, but Jacob and his family. Was this all that God aimed at? No, he has a further design, and lays the foundation of something to be acted in the future age. By this means Jacob is brought into Egypt, leaves his posterity there, makes way for that glory in the working of the future miracles for their deliverance, such an

action that the world should continually ring of, and which should be a type of the spiritual deliverance by Christ.

4. God has more *remote ends* than short-sighted souls are able to espy. He does not eye the present advantage of himself and his creature, but has an eye to his own glory in all, yea, in the very last ages of the world. In small things, there are often great designs laid by God, and mysteries in the least of his acts. Isaac was delivered from his father's sword, when he was intentionally dead, to set forth to the world a type of Christ's resurrection; and a ram is conducted thither by God, and entangled in the thickets, and appointed to sacrifice, whereby God sets forth a type of Christ's death.\* He uses the captivities of the people, to enlarge the bounds of the gospel. The wise men were guided by a star to Christ as king of the Jews, and come to pay homage to him in his infancy; but when was the foundation of this remarkable event laid? Probably, in Balaam's prophecy, *Numb. 24. 17*, transmitted by tradition to those wise men, and perhaps renewed by Sibilla Chaldæa, and confirmed in their minds by the Jews, whilst in the Babylonish captivity they conversed with them. Thus God, many ages before, in this prophecy, had an end in promoting the readier entertainment of Christ among this people, when he should be born; what the wise men's end was, the Scriptures do not acquaint us; but however, their gifts were a means to preserve our Saviour, Joseph and Mary, from the rage of a tyrant, and affording them wherewithal to support them in Egypt, whither they were ordered by God to fly for security. So God threatens by the prophet, the nobleman for his scoffing unbelief, that though he should see the plenty, that he should not taste of it; *2 Kings 7. 1, 2. 17*. See how God orders second causes, naturally to bring about his own decree? The king gives this person charge of the gate; whilst the people crowd for provision to satisfy their hunger, they accomplish the threatening which they had no intentions to do, and trod him to

\* Hall's Contempl. p. 796.

death. Now I come to show, that there is a providence.

I. Were there not a providence, the *wisdom of God* would not be so perspicuous in the world. It is eminent in the creation, but more illustrious in the government of the creatures. A musician discovers more skill in the touching an instrument, and ordering the strings, to sound what notes he pleaseth, than in the first framing and making of it. *Isa.* 28. 29. All God's providences are but his touch of the strings of this great instrument of the world. And all his works are excellent, because they are the fruit of his wonderful counsel, and unsearchable wisdom, which is most seen in his providence, as in reading the verses before. His power is glorified in creating and upholding this fabric; how shall his wisdom be glorified but in his government of it? Surely God will be no less intent upon the honour of his wisdom, than upon that of his power. For if any attribute may be said to excel another, it is his wisdom and holiness, because those are perfections which God hath stamped upon the nobler part of his creation. Inferior creatures have more power and strength than man, but wisdom is the perfection of a rational creature. Now it is God's wisdom to direct all things to their proper end, as well as to appoint them their ends, which direction must be by a particular providence, especially in those things which know not their end, and have no reason to guide them; we know in the world it is not a part of wisdom to leave things to chance, but to state our ends, and lay a platform of those means which direct to an attaining of them. And wisdom is most seen in drawing all things together, and making them subservient to the end he hath fixed to himself; and therefore one of the great things that shall be admired at last, next to the great work of redemption, will be the harmony and consent of those things which seemed contrary, how they all conspire to bring about that end which God aimed at.

II. The *means* whereby God acts, discover a providence. He acts,

1. By *small means*. The most considerable actions in

the world have usually very small beginnings. As of a few letters, how many thousand words are made? Of ten figures how many thousand numbers? And a point is the beginning of all geometry. A little stone flung into a pond, makes a little circle, then a greater, till it enlargeth itself on all the sides. So from small beginnings, God causes an influx through the whole world. He useth small means in his *ordinary works*. The common works of nature spring from small beginnings. Great plants are formed from small seeds. The clouds which water the great garden of the world, are but a collection of vapours. The noblest operations of the soul are wrought in an organ, viz. the brain, composed of coagulated phlegm. Who would imagine that Saul in seeking his father's asses, should find a kingdom? In his *extraordinary works* he useth small means. Elisha that waited upon Elijah, and poured water upon his hands, shall do greater miracles than his master. And the apostles shall do greater works than Christ, *John* 14. 12; that the world may know that God is not tied to any means that men count excellent; that all creatures are his, and act not of themselves, but by his Spirit and power.

God also employs similar means in his extraordinary works of *justice*. He makes a rod in the hand of Moses to confound the skill of the Egyptian magicians; he commissioned frogs and flies to countercheck a powerful and mighty people; when Benhadad was so proud as to say, the dust of Samaria should not suffice for handfuls for his army, God scattered his army by the lacqueys of the princes, about two hundred and thirty two, *1 Kings* 20. 14. 15. The little sling in the hand of David a youth, guided by God's eye and hand, is a match for a blasphemous giant, and defeats the strength of a weaver's beam.

As in his extraordinary works of mercy, he makes use of trivial means in the *deliverance of a people or person*. A dream was the occasion of Joseph's greatness, and Joseph's preservation. He used the cackling of geese to save the Roman capital from surprize by the Gauls. He chooses Gideon to be a general, who was least in his



father's esteem, *Judg.* 6. 15 ; and what did his army consist of, but a very few men, and those very fearful, *Judg.* 7. 6, 7 ; those that took water with their hands, (which as Josephus saith, is a natural sign of fear) did God choose to overthrow the Midianites who had overspread the land as grasshoppers, to show that he can make the most fearful men to be sufficient instruments against the greatest powers, when the concernments of his church and people lie at stake. God so delights in thus baffling the pride of men, that Asa uses it as an argument to move God to deliver him in the strait he was in, when Zerah the Ethiopian came against him with a great multitude, when he was but a small point and centre in the midst of a wide circumference. *Lord, it is nothing with thee to help with many or with few, 2 Chron.* 41. 11. Hereby God sets off his own power, and evidences his superintendent care of his people. It was more signally the arm of God for Moses to confound Pharaoh with his lice and frogs, than if he had beaten him in a plain field with his six hundred thousand Israelites.

And thus he works in the *salvation of the soul*. Our Saviour himself though God, the great Redeemer of the world, was so mean in the eyes of the world, that he calls himself *a worm and no man, Psal.* 22. 6. He selects many times the most unlikely persons to accomplish the greatest purposes for men's souls. He lodges the treasures of wisdom in vessels of earth ; he chose not the cedars of Lebanon, but the shrubs of the valley ; not the learned pharisees of Jerusalem, but the poor men of Galilee ; *out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, he ordains praise to himself*. The apostles' breeding was not capable of ennobling their minds, and fitting them for such great actions as Christ employed them in. But after he had new-moulded and inflamed their spirits, he made them of fishermen, greater conquerors of the world, than the most magnified grandees could pretend to be. Thus salvation is wrought by a crucified Christ ; and that God who made the world by wisdom, would save it *by the foolishness of preaching* ; and make Paul, the least of the apostles, as

he terms himself, more successful than those who had been instructed at the feet of Christ. 2 *Cor.* 15. 9, 10.

2. By *contrary means*. God by his providence makes contrary things contribute to his glory, as contrary colours in a picture do to the beauty of the piece. Nature is God's instrument to do whatsoever he pleases; and therefore nothing is so contrary, but he may bring it to his own ends: as in some engines you see wheels have contrary motions, and yet all in order to one and the same end. God cured those by a brazen serpent, who were stung by the fiery ones; whereas brass is naturally hurtful to those that are bit by serpents.\* He works by *afflictions*. Joseph is sold for a slave, and God sends him as an harbinger; his brothers sold him to destroy him, and God sends him to save them. Paul's bonds in the opinion of some might have stifled the gospel; but he tells us, that they had fallen out to the furtherance of the gospel, *Phil.* 1. 12. The *sins* of men subserve his purpose, † God often effects his just will by our weakness; neither thereby justifying our infirmities, nor blemishing his own action; Jacob gets the blessing by unlawful means, telling no less than two falsehoods to attain it. But hereby God brings about the performance of his promise, which Isaac's natural affection to Esau would have hindered Jacob of. The breach of the first covenant was an occasion of introducing a better. Man's sinning away his first stock, was an occasion to God to enrich him with a surer. The loss of his original righteousness made way for a clearer and more durable righteousness. The folly of man made way for the evidence of God's wisdom; and the sin of man for the manifestation of his grace; and by the wise disposal of God, opens a way for the honour of those attributes, which would not else have been experimentally known by the sons of men.

3. *Casual means*. The viper which leaped upon Paul's hand out of the bundle of sticks, was a casual act, but

\* Grotius *Mat.* 20. 16. *Æs naturaliter nocet τοῖς ὀφιοδῆχκοις.*

† Hall *Contempl.* book 3. p. 806. 807.

designed by the providence of God for the propagation of the gospel. Pharaoh's daughter comes casually to wash herself in the river, but is indeed conducted by the secret influence of God upon her, to rescue Moses, exposed to a forlorn condition, and breed him up in the Egyptian learning, that he might be the fitter to be his kindred's deliverer. Saul had been hunting David, and at last had lodged him in a place whence he could not well escape, and being ready to seize upon him in that very instant of time, a post comes to Saul, and brings the news that the Philistines had invaded the land, which cut out other work for him, and David for that time escapes, 1 *Sam.* 23. 26, 27, 28.

III. Such actions and events of things are in the world, which *cannot rationally be ascribed to any other cause*, than a supreme providence. It is so in common things, men have the same parts, the same outward advantages, the same industry, and yet they prosper not alike. One labours much, and gets little; another uses not altogether such endeavours, and hath riches flowing in upon him. Men lay their projects deep, and question not the accomplishment of them, and are disappointed by some strange and unforeseen accident. And sometimes men attain what they desire in a different way, and many times contrary to the method they had projected. This is evidenced,

1. By the *restraints* upon the *passions* of men: the waves of the sea, and the tumults of the people are much of the same impetuous natures, and are quelled by the same power, *Which stilleth the noise of the sea, and the tumult of the people, Psal.* 65. 7. Tumults of the people could no more be stilled by the force of a man, than the waves of the sea by a puff of breath. How strangely did God qualify the hearts of the Egyptians willingly to submit to the sale of their land, when they might have risen in a tumult, broke open the granaries, and supplied their wants, *Gen.* 47. 19, 21. Indeed if the world were left to the conduct of chance and fortune, what work would the savage lusts and passions of men make among us? How is it possible that any but an almighty power can temper

so many jarring principles, and rank so many quarrelsome and turbulent spirits in due order? If those brutish passions which boil in the hearts of men, were let loose by that infinite power that bridles them, how soon would the world be run into inconceivable confusions, and be rent in pieces by its own disorders?

2. By the *sudden changes* which are made upon the *spirits of men for the preservation of others*. God takes off the spirit of some, as he did the wheels from the Egyptian chariots, in the very act of their rage. Paul was struck down, and changed while he was *yet breathing out threatenings*. God sees all the workings of men's hearts; he saw all those cruel intentions in Esau against his brother Jacob; but God on a sudden turns away that torrent of hatred, and disposes Esau for a friendly meeting, *Gen. 33. 4*. And he who had before an exasperated malice by reason of the loss of his birthright and blessing, was in a moment a changed man. Thus was Saul's heart changed towards David, and from a persecutor, turns a justifier of him, confesseth David's innocence, and his own guilt; *Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil, 1 Sam. 24. 17, 18, &c.* What reason can be rendered for so sudden a change in Saul's revengeful spirit, which had all the force of interest to support it, and considered by him at that very time? For ver. 24, he takes special notice that his family should be disinherited, and David be his successor in the throne. How suddenly did God turn the edge of the sword, and the heart of an enemy from Jehoshaphat. *Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him, and God moved them to depart from him, 2 Chron. 18. 31.* The Holy Ghost emphatically ascribes it to God's motion of their wills, by twice expressing it. But stranger is the preservation of the Jews from Haman's bloody designs, after the decree was gone out against them. Mordecai the Jew is made Ahasuerus's favourite by a strange wheeling of providence: First, the king's eyes are held waking, and he is inclined to pass away the solitariness of the night with a book, rather than a game, or some other court pastime; no book did he fix on but the re-

cords of that empire, no place in that voluminous book, but the Chronicle of Mordecai's service in the discovery of a treason against the king's life; he doth not carelessly pass it over, but inquires what recompence had been bestowed on Mordecai for so considerable a service and this just before Mordecai should have been destroyed; had Ahasuerus slept, Mordecai and all his countrymen had been sacrificed, notwithstanding all his loyalty. Could this be a cast of blind chance which had such a concatenation of evidences in it for a superior power?

3. In causing *enemies* to do things for others which are *contrary to all rules of policy*. It is wonderful, that the Jews, a people known to be of a stubborn nature, and tenacious of their laws, wherein they differed from all the nations, should in the worst of their captivities be so often befriended by their conquerors, not only to rebuild their city, and re-edify their temple, but at the charge of their conquerors too. The very enemies that had captived the Jews, though they knew them to be a people apt to rebel; that the people whose temple they helped to build, would keep up a distinct worship and difference in religion, which is usually attended with the greatest animosities; and when they knew it to be so strong in situation, as to be a fort as well as a place of worship: That for this, their enemies should furnish them with materials, when they were not in a condition to procure any for themselves, and give them money out of the public, exchequer, and timber out of the king's forest, as we read, *Ezra* 1. 1, 2, 4, 7; & 4. 12, 15, 19; & 6. 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 22. And all this they looked upon as the hand of God. *The Lord had turned the heart of the King of Assyria unto them to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God.* And the heathen Artaxerxes takes notice of it. Cicero tells us, that in his time gold was carried out of Italy for the ornament of the temple. They had their rites in religion preserved entire under the Roman government, though more different from the Roman customs than any nation subdued by them. Dion, and Seneca, and others observe, that wherever they were transplanted, they

prospered and gave laws to the victors. And this was so generally acknowledged, that Haman's cabinet council (who were surely none of the meanest statesmen) gave him no hopes of success, when he appeared against Mordecai, because he was of the race of the Jews: so much did God own them by his gracious providence; they were also so entire in all their captivities before their crucifying of our Lord and Saviour, that they count their genealogies.

4. In *infatuating the counsels of men*. God sets a stamp of folly upon the wisdom of men, *That turns the wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolishness. And makes their counsels as chaff and stubble, Isa. 44: 25. Ye shall conceive chaff, and shall bring forth stubble, Isa. 33. 11.* Herod was a crafty person, insomuch that Christ calls him *fox*. How foolish was he in managing his project of destroying Christ, his supposed competitor in the kingdom, when the wise men came to Jerusalem, and brought the news of the birth of a King of the Jews? He calls a synod of the ablest men among the Jews. The result of it is to manifest the truth of God's prediction in the place of our Saviour's birth, and to direct the wise men in their way to him. Herod had no resolutions, but cruelty, concerning Christ, *Matt. 2. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.* God blinds his mind in the midst of all his craft, that he sees not those rational ways, which he might make use of for the destruction of that which he feared; he sends the wise men, mere strangers to him, and intrusts them with so great a concern; he goes not himself, nor sends any of his guard with them, to cut him off immediately upon the discovery, but leaves the whole conduct of the business to those he had no acquaintance with, and of whose faithfulness he could have no assurance. God crosses the intentions of men. Joab slew Abner, because he thought him his rival in David's favour, and then imagined he had rid his hands of all that could stand in his way; yet God raised up Benaiah, who drew Joab from the horns of the altar and cut him in pieces at Solomon's command. God does so order it, many times, that when the most rational counsel is given to men, they have not hearts to follow it. Ahitophel gave as suitable counsel for Absalom's design,

as the best statesman in the world could give, 2 *Sam.* 17. 1, 2. To surprize David while his attention was engaged by his son's rebellion, and dejected with grief at so unnatural an action; and whilst his forces had not yet made their rendezvous, and those that were with him were tired in their march. Speed was best in attempts of this nature. David in all probability had been cut off, and the hearts of the people would have melted at the fall of their sovereign. But Absalom inclines rather to Hushai's counsel, which was not so proper for the business he had engaged in, ver. 7. to ver. 14. Now this was from God. *For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahitophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.* So foolish were the Egyptians against reason, in entering into the Red sea after the Israelites; for could they possibly think that that God who had by a strong hand, and an army of prodigies brought Israel out of their captivity, and conducted them thus far, and now by a miracle opened the Red sea, and gave them passage through the bowels of it, should give their enemies the same security in pursuing them, and unravel all that web he had been so long in working?

5. In making *the counsels of men* subservient to the very ends they are designed to frustrate. God brings a cloud upon men's understandings, and makes them the contrivers of their own ruin wherein they intend their own safety, and gains honour to himself by outwitting the creature. The Babel projectors fearing to be scattered abroad, would erect a power to prevent, and this proved the occasion of dispersing them over the world in such confusion, that they could not understand one another, *Gen.* 11. 4, 8. God ordered Pharaoh's policies to accomplish the end against which they were directed; he is afraid Israel should grow too mighty, and so wrest the kingdom out of his hands, and therefore he would oppress them to hinder their increase, which made them both stronger and more numerous. Exercise strengthens men, and luxury softens the spirit. The Jews fear, if they suffered Christ to make a farther progress in his doctrine and miracles, they should lose Cæsar's favour, and expose

their country as a prey to a Roman army; this caused their destruction by those very enemies they thought by this means to prevent: God ordering it so, that a Roman army was poured in upon them, which swept them into all corners of the earth. Priests and pharisees sit close together in counsel, how to hinder men's believing in Christ, and the result of their consultation was to put him to death, and no man then would believe in a dead person, not capable of working any miracles, for the amusing of the people, *John* 11. 47, 48, 49, 50; and by this means there were a greater number of believers on him, than in the time of his life, according to his own prediction, *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me, John* 12. 32.

6. In making *the fancies of men* subservient to *their own ruin*. God brings about strange events by the mere imaginations and conceits of men, which are contrary to common and natural observation, and the ordinary course of rational consequences. *2 Kings* 3. 22, 23. The army of the Moabites which had invaded Israel, thought the two kings of Judah and Israel had turned their swords against one another, because the rising sun had coloured those unexpected waters, and made them look red, which they took for the blood of their enemies, and so disorderly run without examination of the truth of their conceit; but instead of dividing the spoil, they left their lives upon the points of the Israelites' swords. So the Syrian army are scared with a panic fear, and scatter themselves upon an empty sound, *2 Kings* 7. 6. Thus a dream struck terror into the Midianites, and the noise of the broken potsherds made them fear some treason in their camp, and caused them to turn their swords into one another's bowels; *The Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, Judges* 7. 19, 22.



## PART IV.

## OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

---

*God being the author of sin—Unequal distribution of providences—Justice and wisdom of God in them—Seeming inequality necessary—No argument of carelessness—Not so great as we suppose—It is not well with bad men however prosperous—Nor bad with the righteous however afflicted—Why God does not immediately punish notorious offenders—This an argument for his patience, not against his providence.*

---

**T**HERE are various objections urged against the doctrine of divine providence, some of which it may be proper to notice.

First, it is asked, If God's providence orders all things in the world, and concurs to every thing, how will you free God from being *the author of sin*? Answer, in several propositions.

1. It is *certain*, God hath a hand about *all the sinful actions in the world*. The selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites, was the act of his brethren; the sending him into Egypt, was the act of God. *He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant, Psa. 105. 17.* And again, *It was not you that sent me hither, but God, Gen. 45. 8.* Where Joseph ascribes it more to God than to them. Their wicked intention was to be rid of him, that he might tell no more tales of them to his father; God's gracious intention was to ad-

vance him for his honour and their good; and to bring about this gracious purpose, he makes use of their sinful practice. God's end was righteous, when theirs was wicked. It is said, God moved David to number the people, *The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go number Israel and Judah, 2 Sam. 24. 1.* Yet Satan is said to provoke David to number the people, *And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel, 1 Chron. 21. 1.* Here are two agents; but the text mentions God's hand in it out of justice to punish Israel; Satan's end, no question, was out of malice to destroy. Satan wills it as a sin; God as a punishment. God, say some, *permissive*, Satan *efficaciter*. In the most villanous and unrighteous action that ever was done, God is said to have an influence on it. God is said to deliver up Christ; *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, Acts 2. 23.* *For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done, Acts 4. 28.* Not barely as an act of his prescience, but his counsel, and that determinate, i. e. stable and irreversible. He makes a distinction between those two acts. In God it was an act of counsel, in them an act of wickedness, there was God's counsel about it, an actual tradition. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, Rom. 8. 32.* All the agents had several ends. God in that act aimed at the redemption of the world; Satan at preventing it; Judas to satisfy his covetousness; the Jews to preserve themselves from the Roman invasion, and out of malice to him for so sharply reprovng them. God had a gracious principle of love to mankind, and acted for the salvation of the world in it; the instruments had base principles and ends, and moved freely in obedience to them. So in the affliction of Job, both God and Satan had an hand in it. *The Lord said unto Satan, behold, all that he hath is in thy power, Job 1. 12.* *Touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face,* ver. 11; their ends were different; the one righteous for trial, the other malicious,

against God that he might be cursed, against Job that he might be damned. God's end was the brightening of his grace, and Satan's end was the ruin of his integrity, and despoiling him of God's favour.

2. In all God's acts about sin, there is *no stain to his holiness*. \* In second causes, one and the same action proceeding from divers causes, in respect of one cause may be sinful; in respect of the other, righteous. As when two judges condemn a guilty person, one condemns him out of love to justice, because he is guilty; the other condemns him out of a private hatred and spleen: one respects him as a malefactor only, the other as a private enemy chiefly. Here is the same action with two concurring causes, one being wicked in it, the other righteous. Much more may we conceive it in the concurrence of the Creator, with the action of the creature.

1. God moves every thing in his ordinary providence *according to their particular natures*. He moves every thing ordinarily according to the nature he finds in it. Had we stood in innocency, we had been moved according to that originally righteous nature; but since our Fall we are moved according to that nature introduced by us with the expulsion of the other. Our first corruption was our own act, not God's work; we owe our creation to God, our corruption to ourselves. Now, since God will govern his creature, I do not see how it can be otherwise, than according to the present nature of the creature, unless God be pleased to alter that nature. God forces no man against his nature; he does not force the will in conversion, but graciously and powerfully inclines it. He never forces nor inclines the will to sin, but leaves it to the corrupt habits it hath settled in itself. *So I gave them up to their own hearts lusts, and they walked in their own counsels, Psa. 81. 12*; counsels of their own framing, not of God's. He moves the will which is *sponte mala*, according to its own nature and counsels. As a man flings several things out of his hand, which are of several figures, some spherical, tetragons, cylinders,

\* Senguer Metaph. lib. 2. cap. 15. sect. 5.

conics, some round, and some square; though the motion be from the agent, yet the variety of their motions is from their own figure and frame; and if any will hold his hand upon a ball in its motion regularly, it will move according to his nature and figure; and a man by casting a bowl out of his hand, is the cause of the motion, but the bad bias is the cause of its irregular motion. The power of action is from God, but the viciousness of that action from our own nature. As when a clock or watch hath some fault in any of the wheels, the man that winds it up, or putting his hand upon the wheels, moves them, he is the cause of the motion; but it is the flaw in it, or deficiency of something, is the cause of its erroneous motion; that error was not from the person that made it, or the person that winds it up, and sets it on going, but from some other cause; yet till it be mended it will not go otherwise, so long as it is set upon motion. Our motion is from God; *In him we move, Acts 17. 28*, but not the disorder of that motion. It is the foulness of a man's stomach at sea is the cause of his sickness, and not the pilot's government of the ship.

2. God doth not *infuse the lust, or excite it*, though he doth present the object about which the lust is exercised. God delivered up Christ to the Jews, he presented him to them; but never commanded them to crucify him, nor infused that malice into them, nor quickened it; but he seeing such a frame, withdrew his restraining grace, and left them to the conduct of their own vitiated wills. All the corruption in the world ariseth from lust in us, and not from the object which God in his providence presents to us; *The corruption that is in the world through lust, 2 Pet. 1. 4*. The creature is from God, but the abuse of it from corruption. God created the grape, and filled the vine with a sprightliness; but he doth never infuse a drunken frame into a man, or excite it. Providence presents us with the wine, but the precept is to use it soberly. Can God be blamed if that which is good in itself, be turned into poison by others? No more than the flower can be called a criminal because the spider's nature turns that into venom which is sweet in itself. Man

hath such a nature not from creation, wherein God is positive, but from corruption, wherein God is permissive. Providence brings a man into such a condition of poverty, but it does not encourage his stubbornness and impatience. There is no necessity upon thee from God to exercise thy sin under affliction, when others under the same exercise their graces. The rod makes the child smart, but it is its own stubbornness makes it curse. In short, though it be by God's permission that we can do evil, yet it is not by his inspiration that we will to do evil; that is wholly from ourselves.

3. God supports the faculties wherewith a man sinneth, and supports a man in that act wherein he sinneth, *but concurs not to the sinfulness of that act.* No sin doth properly consist in the act itself, as an act, but in the deficiency of that act from the rule. No action wherein there is sin, but may be done as an action, though not as an irregular action. Killing a man is not in itself unlawful, for then no magistrate should execute a malefactor for murdering another, and justice would cease in the world; man also must divest himself of all thoughts of preserving his life against an invader; but to kill a man without just cause, without authority, without rule, contrary to rule, out of revenge, is unlawful. So that it is not the act, as an act, is the sin, but the swerving of that act from the rule makes it a sinful act. So speaking, as speaking, is not a sin, for it is a power and act God hath endowed us with; but speaking irreverently and dishonourably of God, or falsely and slanderously of man, or any otherwise irregularly, therein the sin lies. So that it is easy to conceive that an act and the viciousness of it, are separable. That act which is the same in kind with another, may be laudable, and the other base and vile in respect of its circumstances. The mind wherewith a man doth this or that act, and the irregularity of it makes a man a criminal. There is a concurrence of God to the act wherein we sin, but the sinfulness of that act is purely from the inherent corruption of the creature. As the power and act of seeing is communicated to the eye by the soul, but the seeing doubly or dimly is from

the viciousness of the organ, the eye. God hath no manner of immediate efficiency in producing sin; as the sun is not the efficient cause of darkness, though the darkness immediately succeeds the setting of the sun, but it is the deficient cause: so God withdraws his grace, and leaves us to that lust which is in our wills; *Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, Acts 14. 16.* He bestowed no grace upon them, but left them to themselves. As a man who lets a glass fall out of his hand is not the efficient cause that the glass breaks, but its own brittle nature; yet he is the deficient cause, because he withdraws his support from it. God is not obliged to give us grace, because we have made a total forfeiture of it. He is not a debtor to any man by way of merit, of any thing but punishment. He is indeed in some sense a debtor to those that are in Christ, upon the account of Christ's purchase and his own promise, but not by any merits of theirs.

4. God's providence is conversant about sin, as a punishment, *yet in a very righteous manner.* God did not will the first sin of Adam as a punishment, because there was no punishment due to him before he sinned, but he willed the continuance of it as a punishment to the nature *sub ratione boni.* This being a judicial act of God, is therefore righteously willed by him. Punishment is a moral good; it is also a righteous thing to suit the punishment to the nature of the offence, and what can be more righteous than to punish a man by that wherein he offends? Hence God is said to give up men to sin; *For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; and to send strong delusions that they may believe a lie, Rom. 2. 26, 27.* And the reason is rendered, *That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, 2 Thess. 2. 11. 12.* What more righteous than to make those vile affections, and that unrighteousness their punishment which they made their pleasure, and to leave them to pursue their own sinful inclinations, and make them, as the psalmist speaks, *fall by their own counsels? Psal. 5. 10.* A drunkard's beastliness is his punishment as well as his sin. Thus God

delivers up some to their own lusts as a punishment both to themselves and others. As he hardened Pharaoh's heart for the destruction both of himself and his people.

5. God by his providence *draws glory to himself, and good out of sin.* It is the highest excellency to draw good out of evil, and it is God's right to manifest his excellency when he pleases, and to direct that to his honour, which is acted against his law. The holiness of God could never intend sin as sin: But the wisdom of God foreseeing it, and decreeing to permit it, intended the making it subservient to his own honour. He would not permit it but for some good, because he is infinitely good, and could not, by reason of that goodness, suffer that which is purely evil, if by his wisdom he could not raise good out of it. It is purely evil as it is contrary to law; it is good *ratione finis* as God orders it by his providence; yet that goodness flows not from the nature of sin, but from the wise disposal of God.

As God at the creation framed a beautiful world out of a chaos, out of matter without form, and void: so by his infinite wisdom he extracts honour to himself out of the sins of men. As sin had dishonoured him at its entrance, in defacing his works, and depraving his creature? so he would make use of the sins of men in repairing his honour, and restoring the creature.

It is not conceivable by us, what way there could be more congruous to the wisdom and holiness of God, as the state of the world then stood, to bring about the death of Christ, which in his decree was necessary to the satisfaction of his justice, without ordering the evil of some men's hearts to serve his gracious purpose. If we could suppose that Christ could commit some capital crime for which he should deserve death, which was impossible by reason of the hypostatical union, the whole design of God for redemption had sunk to the ground. Therefore God doth restrain or let out the fury of men's passions, and the corrupt habits of their wills to such a degree as should answer directly to the full point of his most gracious will, and no further. He lets out their malice so far as was conducing to the grand design of his death, and restrains

it from every thing that might impair the truth of any prediction, as in the parting his garments, or breaking his bones. If God had put him to death by some thunder or otherwise, and after raised him, how could the voluntariness of Christ appear, which was necessary to make him a perfect oblation? How would his innocency have appeared? The strangeness of the judgment would have made all men believe him some great and notorious sinner. How then could the gospel have been propagated? Who would have entertained the doctrine of one whose innocency could not be cleared? If it be said, God might raise him again, what evidences would have been had that he had been really dead? But as the case was, his enemies confess him dead really, and many witnesses there were of his resurrection.

1. God orders the sins of men to the *glory of his grace*. As a foil serves to make the lustre of a diamond more conspicuous, so does God make use of the deformities of men to make his own grace more illustrious, and convey it with a more pleasing relish to them. Never does grace appear more amiable, never is God entertained with so high admiration, as by those who of the worst of sinners are made the choicest of saints. Paul often takes occasion from the greatness of his sin, to admire the unsearchable riches of that grace which pardoned him.

2. God orders them to bring forth *temporal mercies*. In providence there are two things considerable. First, Man's will. Second, God's purpose. What man's will intends as a harm in sin; God in his secret purpose orders to some eminent advantage. In the selling of Joseph, his brothers intend the execution of their revenge; and God orders it for the advancement of himself, and the preservation of his unrighteous enemies, who might otherwise have starved. They sent him to frustrate his dream, and God to fulfil it. Our Reformation and return from under the yoke of antichrist, was by the wise disposal of God occasioned by the three great idols of the world, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life; lust, covetousness, and ambition, three vices notoriously eminent in Henry the Eighth, the first instrument



in that work. What he did for the satisfaction of his lust is ordered by God for the glory of his mercy to us. And though the papists upon that account reflect upon our Reformation, they may as well reflect upon the glorious work of Redemption, because it was in the wisdom of God brought about by Judas's covetousness, and the Jews' malice.

3. God orders them for the glory of his justice upon others. Nathan had threatened David, that one in his house should lie with his wives in the sight of the sun, *2 Sam.* 12. 11. Ahitophel adviseth Absalom to do so; not with any design to fulfil God's threatening, but secure his own stake, by making the quarrel between the father and the son irreconcilable, because he might well fear that upon a peace between David and Absalom he might be offered up as a sacrifice to David's justice. God orders Ahitophel's counsel, and Absalom's sin, to the glory of his justice in David's punishment.

The ambition of Vespasian and Titus was only to reduce Judea to the Roman province after the revolt of it: but God orders hereby the execution of his righteous will in the punishment of the Jews for their rejecting Christ, and the accomplishment of Christ's prediction. *For the days shall come, that thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, &c. Luke* 19. 43. To conclude, if we deny God the government of sin in the course of his providence, we must necessarily deny him the government of the world, because there is not an action of any man's in the world, which is under the government of God, but is either a sinful action, or an action mixed with sin. God therefore in his government advances his power in the weakness, his wisdom in the follies, his holiness in the sins, his mercy in the unkindness, and his justice in the unrighteousness of men;\* yet God is not defiled with the impurities of men, but rather draws forth glory to himself, as a rose does a greater beauty and sweetness from the strong smell of the garlic set near it.†

\* Vid. Ovid Amor. lib. 3. Eleg. 3. ver. 1. and ver. 27.

† Boetius de. Conso. lib. 1.

Second question. If there be a providence, how come those *unequal distributions* to happen in the world? How is it so bad with good men as if they were the greatest enemies to God; and so well with the wicked, as if they were the most affectionate friends? Does not virtue languish away in obscurity, whilst wickedness struts about the world in triumph? What is the reason that splendid virtue is oppressed by injustice, and notorious vices triumph in prosperity? It would make men believe that the world was governed rather by a blind and unrighteous, than by a wise, good, and just Governor, when they see things in such disorder as if Satan had, as he pretends, the whole power of the world delivered to him, *Luke* 4. 6; and God had left all care of it to his will.

Ans. This consideration has heightened the minds of many against a providence. It was the notion of many heathens,\* when they saw many who had acted with much gallantry for their countries when afflicted, they questioned whether there were a superintendent power over the world. This hath also been the stumbling-block of many taught in a higher school than that of nature, the Jews; *Ye say every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them, and where is the God of judgment? Mal.* 2. 17. Yea, and the observation of the outward felicities of vice, and the oppressions of goodness, have caused fretting commotions in the hearts of God's people, the seventy third *Psalms*, is wholly designed to answer this case. Jeremiah though fixed in the acknowledgement of God's righteousness, would debate the reason of it with God. *Righteous art thou, O Lord, yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root, they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit, Jer.* 12. 1. He perceiving it a universal case, that all such were happy, did not know how to reconcile it with the righteousness of God. Nor Habakkuk with the holiness of God: *Thou art of*

\* See instances in Jackson. vol. 1. 8. chap. 4. sect. 5.

*purser eyes than to behold iniquity, wherefore holdest thou thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? Hab. 1. 14.* In point of God's goodness too, Job expostulates the case with God. *Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thy hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked? Job. 10. 3.* You see upon the account of holiness, righteousness, goodness, the three great attributes of God, it hath been questioned by good men, and upon the account of his wisdom by the wicked Jews.

1. Answer in general, *Is it not a high presumption for ignorance to judge God's proceedings?* In the course of providence such things are done that men could not imagine could be done without injustice; yet when the whole connection of their end is unravelled, they appear highly beautiful, and discover a glorious wisdom and righteousness. If it had entered into the heart of man to think that God should send his Son in a very low estate to die for sinners, would it not have been judged an unjust and unreasonable act, to deliver up his Son for rebels, the innocent for the criminals, to spare the offender, and punish the observer of his law? Yet when the design is revealed and acted, what an admirable connection is there of justice, wisdom, mercy, and holiness, which men could not conceive of. It will be known to be so at last in God's dealing with all his members. We are incompetent judges of the righteousness and wisdom of God, unless we were infinitely righteous and wise ourselves; we must be God's, or in another state, before we can understand the reason of all God's actions. We judge according to the law of sense, and self, which are inferior to the rules whereby God works. *Judge nothing then before the time, 1 Cor. 4. 5.* It is not a time for us to pass judgment upon things. A false judgment is easily made, when neither the counsels of men's hearts, nor the particular laws of God's actions are known to us. In general it is certain, that God righteously orders his providences; he may see some inward corruptions in good men to be demolished by afflictions, and some good moral affections,

some useful designs, or some services he employs wicked men in, to be rewarded in this life.

2. God is *Sovereign* of the world. He is *sui juris*. *The earth is his, and the fulness thereof*, and may he not do what he will with his own? Who shall take upon them to controul God, and prescribe laws to him how to deal with his creatures? Why should a finite understanding prescribe measures and methods to an infinite majesty?

3. God is *wise and just*, and *knows how* to distribute. If we question his providence, we question his wisdom. Is it fit for us who are but of yesterday, and know nothing, to say to an infinite wisdom, what doest thou? and to direct the only wise God as to the method of his actions? His own wisdom will best direct him to the time when to punish the insolence of the wicked, and relieve the miseries of his people: we see the present dispensations, but are we able to understand the internal motives? May there not be some sins of righteous men's parents that he will visit upon their children? some virtues of their ancestors, that he will reward even in their wicked posterity? He may use wicked men as instruments in some service. It is part of his distributive justice to reward them. They aim at these things in their service, and he gratifies them according to their desires. Let not then his righteousness be an argument against his providence; it is righteous with God not to be in arrears with them. Sometimes God gives them not to them as rewards of any moral virtue, but puts power into their hands, that they may be instruments of his justice upon some offenders against him, *Isa.* 10. 5. The staff in the Assyrian's hand was God's indignation.

4. There is *a necessity for some seeming inequality*, at least, in order to the good government of the world. Can all, in any community of men, be of an equal height? A house hath not beams and rafters of an equal size, some are greater and some less. The world is God's family. It is here as in a family, all cannot have the same office, but they are divided according to the capacities of some persons, and the necessities of others; providence would

not be so apparent in the beauty of the world, if all men were alike in their stations. Where would the beauty of the body be, if all the members had one office, and one immediate end? Man would cease to be man, if every member had not some distinct work, and a universal agreement in the common profit of the body. All mankind is but one great body, constituted of several members, which have distinct offices, but all ordered to the good of the whole; the apostle argues this excellently in a parallel case of the diversity of gifts in the church, *If all were one member where were the body?* 1 Cor. 12. 19; *Those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon those we bestow more abundant honour,* ver. 23; *God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked,* ver. 24. What harmony could there be, if all the voices and sounds were exactly the same in a concert? Who can be delighted with a picture that hath no shadows? The afflictions of good men are a foil to set off the beauty of God's providence in the world.

5. Unequal dispensations do not argue *carelessness*. A father may give one child a gayer coat than he gives another, yet he extends his fatherly care and tenderness over all; according to the several employments he puts his children upon, he is at a greater expence, and yet loves one as well as another, and makes provision for all. As the soul takes care of the lowest member, and communicates spirits to every part for their motions: so though God place some in a higher, some in a lower condition, yet he takes care of all. *God divides to every man as he will,* 1 Cor. 12. 11. Every man hath a several share according to God's pleasure, of goodness in the world, as well as of gifts in the church.

6. Yet upon due consideration, the inequality will not appear *so great as the complaint of it*. If the wants of one, and the enjoyment of another were weighed in the balance, the scales might not appear so uneven: we see such a man's wealth, but do you understand his cares? Health, "the salt of blessing," as one calls it, is bestowed upon a labourer, when many that wallow in abundance, have those torturing diseases which embitter their plea-

tures. If some want those worldly ornaments which others have, may they not have more wisdom than those that enjoy them; more of that wisdom which is the noblest perfection of a rational creature; *The merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold, Prov. 13. 14. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith, Prov. 15. 16.* As some are stripped of wealth and power, so they are stripped of the incumbrances they bring with them. One hath that serenity and tranquillity of mind, which the cares and fears of others will not suffer them to enjoy, and a grain of contentment is better than many pounds of wealth. It is not a desirable thing to be a great prince, attended with as many cares and fears as he hath subjects in his empire. He made a true estimate of his greatness, that said he would not stoop to take up a crown if it lay at his feet. But let us attend more particularly to the parts of this case.

I. It is *not well* with *bad men* here. Is it well with them who are *tortured by their own lusts*? What peace can worldly things bestow upon a soul filled with impurity? In *2 Cor. 7. 1*, sin is called filthiness, can it be well with them that have unholy, impure souls? Is it well with them who are racked by pride, stung with cares, gnawn with envy, distracted by insatiable desires, and torn in pieces by their own fears? Can it be well with such who have a multitude of vipers in their breasts, sticking all their stings into them, though the sun shine, and the showers drop upon them? You are spectators of their felicity, but do you understand their inward pangs? *Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, Prov. 14. 13.* Can silken curtains or purple clothes confer happiness upon those who have a mortal plague, poisoning their bodies, and are ready to expire? Sin is their plague, whatever is their happiness, *1 Kings 8. 38.* Their insolent lusts are a far greater misery than the possession of all the kingdoms in the world can be a happiness.

Is it well with them who have *so great an account to make, and know not how to make it*? Those that enjoy much, are more in God's debt, and therefore more ac-

countable. The account of wicked men is the greater, because of their abundance; and their unsfitness to make that account is the greater, because of their abuse. Would any reckon themselves happy to be called upon to give an account of their stewardship for talents, and know not how to give a good account of one farthing? *Give an account of thy stewardship, Luke 16. 2.*

Is it well with them who are *the worse for what they have*? Is it a happiness to command others, and be more slaves to the worst of creatures, than any can be to them? The wicked man's well-spread table sometimes proves his snare, and his destruction is bound up in his very prosperity; *The prosperity of fools shall destroy them, Pro. 1. 32.* Prosperity falling upon an unregenerate heart, like the sun and rain upon bad ground, draws forth nothing but weeds and vermin. Would you think it your happiness to be masters of their concerns, and slaves to their pride? Is stubbornness against God so desirable a thing, which is strengthened by those things in the hands of the wicked?

Is it well with them who in the midst of their prosperity *are reserved for the infliction of justice*? Can that traitor be accounted happy that is fed in prison by the prince with better dishes than many a loyal subject hath at his table, but only to keep him alive for his trial, and a public example of justice? God raises some for greater falls; miserable was the felicity of Pharaoh, to be raised up by God for a subject to shew in him the power of his wrath, *Exod. 9. 16.* It is but a little time before they shall be *cut down as grass, and wither as the green herb, Psal. 37. 2.* None would value the condition of that soldier, who leaping into a river to save a King's crown, and putting it upon his own head, that he might be enabled to swim out with it, was rewarded for saving it, and executed for wearing it. God rewards wicked men for their service, and punishes them for their insolence.

II. Neither is it bad here with *good men*, if all be well considered. Other men's judgment of a good man is frivolous, they cannot rightly judge of his state and concerns, but he can make a judgment of theirs; *A spiritual man judgeth all things, but he himself is judged of no man,*

1 Cor. 2. 15. No man can make a sound judgment and estimate of a righteous man's state in any condition, unless he hath had experience of the like in all the circumstances, the inward comforts as well as the outward crosses. For,

Adversity cannot be called absolutely *an evil*, as prosperity cannot be called absolutely *a good*. They are rather indifferent things, because they may be used either for the honour or dishonour of God. As they are used for his honour, they are good, and as used for his dishonour they are evil. The only absolutely bad thing in the world is sin, which cannot be in its own nature, but a dishonour to God. The only absolutely good thing in the world is holiness, and a likeness to God, which cannot be in its own nature, but for his glory. As for all other things, I know no true satisfaction can be in them, but as they are subservient to God's honour, and give us an advantage for imitating some one or other of his perfections. Crosses in the scripture are not excluded from those things we have a right to by Christ, when they may conduce to our good; *Life and death, things present, and things to come, are yours, and you are Christ's*, 1 Cor. 3. 22. Since the revelation of the gospel, I do not remember that any such complaint against the providence of God fell from any holy man in the New Testament; for our Saviour had given them another prospect of those things. The holy men in the Old Testament comforted themselves against this objection by the end of the wicked which should happen, and the rod cease, *Psal. 73*. In the New Testament we are more comforted by the certain operation of crosses to our good and spiritual advantage. Our Saviour did not promise wealth and honour to his followers, nor did he think it worth his pains of coming and dying, to bestow such gifts upon his children; he made heaven their happiness, and the earth their hell; the cross was their badge here, and the crown their reward hereafter; they seemed not to be a purchase congruous to so great a price of blood. Was God's providence to Christ the more to be questioned because he was poor? Had he the less love to him because he was *a man of sorrows*, even while he was the God of glory?



Such groundless conceits should never enter into Christians, who can never seriously take up Christ's yoke without a proviso of affliction, who can never be God's sons without expecting his corrections.

God never leaves good men *so destitute but he provides for their necessity.* *The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly, Psal. 84. 11.* If any thing be good, an upright man may expect it from God's providence; if it be not good, he should not desire it: Howsoever grace, which is necessary for preparing thee for happiness and glory, which is necessary for fixing thee in it, he will be sure to give; we have David's experience for it, through the whole course of his life. *Psal. 37. 5.*

The little good men have, is *better than the highest enjoyments of wicked men.* *A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked, Psal. 37. 16;* not better than many riches of the wicked, but better than the riches of many wicked, better than all the treasures of the whole mass of the wicked world; others have them in a providential way, good men in a gracious way; *Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right, Prov. 16. 8;* without a covenant right. Wicked prosperity is like a shadow that glides away in a moment, whereas a righteous man's little is part of Christ's purchase, and part of that inheritance which shall endure for ever, *Psal. 37. 18.* God regards the state of the righteous, whether good or evil, in all that befalls them. God does all with a respect to his everlasting inheritance. No man hath worldly things without their wings. And though the righteous have worldly things with their wings, yet that love whereby they have them, hath no wings ever to fly away from them; how can those things be good to a man that can never taste them, nor God in them?

*No righteous man would,* in his right mind, be willing to make an exchange of his smartest afflictions for a wicked man's prosperity, with all the circumstances attending it. It cannot therefore be bad with the righteous in the worst condition: Would any man be ambitious of snares, that

knows the deceit of them? Can any but a madman exchange wholesome food for poison? Is it not more desirable to be upon a dunghill with an intimate converse with God, than upon a throne without it? They gain a world in prosperity, a righteous man gains his soul by afflictions, and possesses it in patience; is the exchange of a valuable consideration? God strips good men of the enjoyment of the world, that he may wean them from the love of it; keeps them from idolatry by removing the fuel of it; sends afflictions that he may not lose them, nor they their souls. Would any man exchange a great goodness laid up for him that fears God, for a lesser goodness laid out upon them that are enemies to him? *Psal.* 31. 19. Who would exchange a few outward comforts with God's promise, inward comforts with assurance of heaven, godliness with contentment, a sweet and spiritual life, sovereignty over himself and his lusts, though attended with sufferings, for the government of the whole world?

It is not ill with the righteous *in afflictions*, because they have *high advantages by them*. That cannot be *absolutely evil* which conduceth to a *greater good*.

As, first, sensible experience of the tender providence of God over them. If the righteous had not afflictions in this life, God would lose the glory of his providence, and they the sweetness in a gracious deliverance from them in ways which make the affliction the sweeter, as well as the mercy; they would lose the comfort of them in not having such sensible evidences of God's gracious care. The sweetness of the promises made for times of trouble would never be tasted. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, Psal.* 38. 19; that is, they shall be mightily encouraged and supported. God's people best understand God's strength, when they feel the smart of men's malice. The apostle says, *the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, 2 Tim.* 4. 17. He had never felt so much of God's strength, if he had not tasted much of man's wickedness in forsaking him. *He is their strength, Psal.* 37. 39: when in times of trouble they experience more of his care in preserving them, and his strength in supporting them, than at other times. Abundance of

consolations are manifested in abundance of sufferings. 2 *Cor.* 1. 5. 1 *Pet.* 4. 13, 14. A greater sense of joy and glory lights upon them in storms of persecutions. Men see the sufferings of the godly, but they do not behold that inward peace which composeth and delights their souls, worth the whole mass of the world's goodness, and pleasures of the unrighteous.

Afflictions promote *inward improvement*. Opportunities to manifest more love to God, more dependence on him, the perfection of the soul. Now *she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusts in God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day*; 1 *Tim.* 5. 5. there is a ground of more exercise of trust in God, and supplication to him. The poor and desolate have an advantage for the actual exercise of those graces, which a prosperous condition wants: God changeth the metal by it: what was lead and iron, he makes come forth as gold; *When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold, Job.* 23. 10. Crosses and sufferings, which fit good men for special service here, and eternal happiness hereafter, can no more be said to be evil, than the fire which refines the gold, and prepares it for a prince's use. If there were not such evils, what ground could you have to exercise patience? What heroic acts of faith could you put forth without difficulties? How could you believe against hope, if you had not sometimes something to contradict your hopes? And if a good man should have a confluence of that which the ignorant and pedantical world calls happiness, he might undervalue the pleasures of a better life, deface the beauty of his own soul, and withdraw his love from the most gratifying, as well as the most glorious object, unto that which is not worth the least grain of his affection.

The afflictions of the righteous prepare for *future glory*. The great inquiry at the day of Christ's appearing, will be how good men bare their sufferings, what improvements they had; and the greater their purity by them, the greater will be their praise and honour. *That the trial of your faith, by manifold temptations, may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus*

*Christ, 1 Pet. 1. 7.* For a good improvement by them, they will have public praise from God's mouth, and a crown of honour set upon their heads. Providence sends even light afflictions as so many artificers, to make the crown more massy and more bright; *Our light affliction works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. 4. 17.* They are at work about a good man's crown, while they make him smart. They prepare him for heaven, and make it more grateful to him when he comes to possess it. A christian carriage in them prepares for greater degrees of glory. Every stroke does but more beautify the crown.

The sufferings of good men for the truth *highly glorifies the providence of God.* This is a matter of glory and honour. *If any man suffer as a christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. 1 Pet. 4. 16.* They thereby bear testimony to the highest act of providence that God ever exercised, even the redemption of the world by the blood of his Son. And the church, which is the highest object of his providence in the world, takes the deeper root, and springs up the higher; the foundation of it was laid in the blood of Christ, and the growth of it is furthered by the blood of martyrs. The carriage of the righteous in them, makes the truth they profess more valued. It enhanceth the excellency of religion, and manifests it to be more amiable for its beauty than for its dowry; since they see it desirable by the sufferers, not only without worldly enjoyments, but with the sharpest miseries. This consideration hath wrought upon many to embrace the religion of the sufferers. If it reaches as far as death, they are but dispatched to their Father's house, and the day of their death is the day of their coronation; and what evil is there in all this?

To conclude: This argument is stronger, upon the infallible righteousness of God's nature, for a day of reckoning after this life, than against providence. It is a more rational conclusion, that God will have a time to justify the righteousness and wisdom of his providential government, and repair the honour of the righteous, oppressed

by the injustice of the wicked. And indeed, unless there be a retribution in another world, the question is unanswerable, and all the reason in the world knows not how to solve the holiness and righteousness of God in his providential dispensations in this life; since we see here goodness unrewarded, and debased to the dunghill, vice glorying in impunity, and ranting to the firmament. We cannot see how it can consist with the nature of God's wisdom, righteousness, and holiness, if there were not another life wherein God will manifest his righteousness in punishing sin, and rewarding goodness: for it is impossible that a God of infinite justice should leave sin unpunished, and grace unrewarded here or hereafter. The scripture gives us so full an account of a future state, that may satisfy all christians in this business.

The wicked rich man is in his purple, and Lazarus in his rags, yet Abraham's bosom is prepared for the one, and an endless hell for the other. Jeremiah resolves the case in his dispute with God about it; *Pull them out like sheep to the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter, Jer. 12. 3.* They are but fattening for the knife of justice, and the day will come when they shall be consumed, like the fat of lambs in the sacrifice, which shall wholly evaporate into smoke; so the psalmist resolves it in *Psa. 37. 20*, a psalm written for the present case. God laughs at their security in a way of mockery; *The Lord shall laugh at him, for he sees that his day is coming, Psa. 37. 13.* God's day for the justification of his proceedings in the world, and the wicked man's day for his own destruction, wherein they shall all be destroyed together, *Psa. 37. 38.* The whole mass of them in one bundle. Who then will charge God with unequal distributions at that day, which is appointed for the clearing up of his righteousness, which is here masked in the world? Who can be fond of the state of the wicked? Who would be fond of a dead man's condition, because he lies in state, whose soul may be condemned, whilst his body with a pompous solemnity is carried to the grave, and both body and soul joined together at the resurrection, adjudged to eternal misery?

What hath been said in this, will also answer a third question, *Why God doth not immediately punish notorious offenders*, since the best governments in the world are such as call the violaters of the law to a speedy account, to keep up the honour of justice? Thus the epicures charge God with neglects of providence, because if he punishes wicked men, it is later than is fit and just; *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, Eccl. 8. 11.* Delay of justice is an encouragement to sin.

Answ. This is an argument for *God's patience*, none against *his providence*, should he make such quick work, what would become of the world? Could it have held out to this day? If God had instantly taken revenge upon those that thus disparage his providence, the frame of such an objection had not been alive. No man is so perfectly good, but he might fall under the revenging stroke of his sword, if he pleased to draw it. Suffer God to evidence his patience here, since after the winding up of the world, he will have no time to manifest it. God does indeed sometimes send the sharp arrow of some judgment upon a notorious offender, to let him understand that he hath not forgotten how to govern; but he does not always do so, that his patience may be glorified in bearing with his rebellious creature. Again,

God is *just in that wherein the question supposeth him unjust*; he suffers wicked men to continue to be the plagues of the places where they live, and the executioners of his justice upon offenders against him, *Psa. 17. 13.* The wicked are God's *sword*. *Jer. 47. 6.* Those that God would stir up against the Philistines, are called the *sword of the Lord*, *Isa. 10. 5.* Ashur is said to be the *rod of his anger*; would it consist with his wisdom to drop the instruments out of his hand, as soon as he begins to use them? To cast his rods out of his hand as soon as he takes them up? The rules of justice are as much unknown to us, as the communications of his goodness to his people are unknown to the world.

Let me ask such a one, whether he never injured

another man, and whether he would not think it *very severe, if not unjust*, that the offended person should presently take revenge of him? If every man should do the like, how soon would mankind be dispatched, and the world become a shambles, men running furiously to one another's destruction for the injuries they have mutually received? Do we praise the lenity of parents to their children, and dispraise the mercy of God, because he does not presently use his right? Is then forbearance of revenge accounted a virtue in man, and shall it be an imperfection in God? With what reason can we thus blame the eminent patience of God, which we have reason to adore, and of which every one of us are monuments?

---

## PART V.

THE ABSURDITY AND EVIL OF DENYING PROVIDENCE.

---

*The denial of providence gives liberty to all sin—Destroys all religion—Highly dishonours God—A sin against natural light—The grounds of it—Pride—False notions of the character of God—Guilt of conscience—How providence is denied and abused—Walking contrary to the checks of providence—Omission of prayer—Looking wholly to human aid—Not acknowledging God in his benefits—Departing from the principles of moral honesty—Distrust of God—Obduracy under his hand—Envy—Impatience—Presumption.*

---

I. **T**HE use of this subject is I. of *information*.

How unworthy and absurd a thing is it to deny providence? Some of the heathens fancied, that God walked his circuit in heaven, or sat with folded arms

there, taking no cognizance of what was done in the world ; some indeed upon some great emergencies have acknowledged the mercies and justice of God, which are the two arms of his providence. The barbarians owned his justice, when they saw a viper leap upon Paul's hand ; they say among themselves, *No doubt this man is a murderer, whom though he has escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffers not to live, Act. 28. 4.* The mariners in Jonah implored his mercy in their distress at sea, yet they generally attributed affairs to blind chance, and worshipped Fortune as a deity ; for this vain conceit, the Psalmist calls the atheist a fool ; *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God, Psal. 14. 1.* Potiphar acknowledged it, he saw that the Lord was with Joseph, and favoured his designs ; *And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all things that he did to prosper in his hand, Gen. 39. 3.*

It will not be amiss to consider this, for the root of the denial of providence is in the hearts of the best men, especially under affliction. Asaph was a holy man ; saith he, verily *I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. Psal. 73. 13.* He had taken much pains with his heart, and had been under much affliction. *All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning, ver. 14.* And the consideration of this, that he should have so much affliction with so much holiness, so strangely puzzled him, that he utters that dreadful speech, as if he had a mind to cast off all cares about the worship of God, and sanctifying his heart, and repent of all that he had done in that business ; as much as to say, had I been as very a villain as such or such a man, I might have prospered as well as they, but I was a fool to have any fear of God.

Therefore we will consider, 1. The evil of denying providence. 2. The grounds of the denial of it by the heathen, which we shall find in our own hearts. 3. The various ways wherein men practically deny providence.

1. The evil of denying it.

1. It gives a liberty to all sin. It gives an occasion for an unbounded licentiousness ; for what may not be



done, where there is no government? The Jews tell us, that the dispute between Cain and Abel was this :\* Cain said, because his sacrifice was not accepted, that there was no judge, no reward of good works, or punishment of bad, which when Abel opposed, Cain slew him ; they ground it upon the discourse of God with Cain, *Gen.* 4. 7, 8, which had been about his providence and acceptance of men, if they did well, and punishment of men if they did ill ; whence they gather the discourse, Cain had with his brother, was about the same subject, for Cain talked with Abel, and upon that discourse rose up against him, and slew him. And his discourse afterwards with God seems to favour it. *Am I my brother's keeper?* ver. 9. Thou sayest thou art the Governor of the world, it is not my concern to look after him. This conjecture is not improbable. And if it were so, we see how early this opinion began in the world, and what was the horrid effect of it, the first sin, the first murder that we read of after the sin of Adam. And what confusion would still grow upon the entertainment of such a notion.

Indeed the scripture every where places sin upon this root. *God hath forgotten, he hides his face, he will never see it, Psal.* 10. 11. He hath turned his back upon the world. This was the ground of the oppression of the poor by the wicked which he mentions, ver. 9, 10. So *Isa.* 26. 10, *The wicked will not learn righteousness, he will deal unjustly ; the reason is, he will not behold the majesty of the Lord ; he will not regard God's government of the world, though his hand be lifted up to strike.* There is no sin, but receives both its birth and nourishment from this bitter root. Let the notion of providence be once thrown out, or the belief of it faint, how will ambition, covetousness, neglect of God, distrust, impatience, and all other bitter gourds grow up in a night? It is from this topic all iniquity will draw arguments to encourage itself ; for nothing so much discountenances those rising corruptions, and puts them out of heart, as an actuated belief, that God takes care of human affairs.

\* Targum Hierosolymit Mercer in *Gen.* 4. 7.

Upon the want of this actuated knowledge, God charges all the sin of Ephraim. *They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness, Hosea. 7. 2. Heb.* they speak not to their hearts; as if God were blind and did not see, or stupid and did not concern himself, or of a very frail memory soon to forget.

2. It destroys *all religion*. The foundation of all religion is, first, the being, secondly the goodness of God in the government of the world. *He that comes to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. 11. 6.* He is the object of religion, as he is the Governor of the world. This denial would shut up bibles and temples, and bring irreligious disorders into all societies.—It would exclude all *worship*. He that hath not design to govern, is supposed to expect no homage; if he regards not his creatures, he cares for no worship from them. How is it possible to persuade men to regard him for God, who takes no care of them? Who will adore him, who regards no adoration?—It would exclude *prayer*. To what purpose should they beg his directions, implore his assistance in their calamities, if he had no regard at all to his creatures? What favour can we expect from him who is regardless of dispensing any?—It would exclude all *praise*. Who would make acknowledgments to one, from whom they never received any favour, and hath no mind to receive any acknowledgments from them, because he takes no care of them? If the Deity have no relation to us, how can we have relation to him? To what purpose will it be either to call upon him, or praise him, which are the prime pieces of religion, if he concern not himself with us?

The denial of providence would destroy all *dependance, trust, and hope*. What reason have we to commit our concerns to him, and to depend upon him for relief? Hence the apostle says, The Gentiles were *without hope, and without God in the world, Eph. 2. 12.* The reason they were without hope, was because they were without God, they denied a settled providence, and acknowledged a blind chance, and therefore could have no sound hope;

so some understand it of a denial of God's government. It might well give occasion to people to utter Pharaoh's speech, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go, Exod. 5. 2.* What is God that I should serve him? I have no such notion of a God that governs the world. The regardlessness of his Creator discharges the creature from any service to him.

3. It is a high *disparagement of God*. To believe an impotent, ignorant, negligent God, without care of his works, is as bad, or worse, than to believe no God at all. The denial of his providence is made equal with the denial of God, *The fool hath said in his heart there is no God, Psal. 14. 1.* He denied God, *Elohim*, which word denotes God's providence; not there is no *Jehovah*, which denotes his essence; he denied not God *quoad essentiam*, but *quoad providentiam*, whereupon the psalmist dubs the atheist fool. It strips God of his judicial power. How shall he judge his creatures, if he know not what they think, and regards not what they do? How easy will it be for him to be imposed upon by the fair pretences and lying excuses of men? It is diabolical: the devil denies not God's right to govern, but he denies God's actual government, for he saith, *The power and glory of the world is delivered unto him, and to whomsoever, saith he, I will, I give it, Luke 4. 6.* God had cast off all care of all things, and made Satan his deputy. He that denies providence, denies most of God's attributes; he denies at least the exercise of them: he denies his omniscience, which is the eye of providence; mercy and justice, which are the arms of it; power, which is the life and motion of providence; wisdom, which is the rudder of providence whereby it is steered; and holiness, which is the compass and rule of the motion of providence.

4. It is clearly against *natural light*. Socrates, an heathen, could say, whosoever denied providence, did *Δαιμονιᾶν*, was possessed with a devil.\* Should God create a man anew with a sound judgment, and bring him into

\* Montague against Selden, p. 525.

the world, when he should see the harmony, multitude, virtues, and operations of all creatures, the stated times and seasons, must he not needs confess that some invisible, inconceivable wisdom both framed and governs all the motions of it? And it is a greater crime in any of us to deny providence either in opinion or practice, than it was or could have been in heathens; because we have not only that natural reason which they had, sufficient to convince us; but supernatural revelation in the Scripture, wherein God hath declared these methods of his providence, at which reason could not arrive. As to deny his creation of the world, is a greater crime in a man that knows the scripture, than in a heathen, because that hath put it out of doubt. And the asserting of this, being the end of all God's judgments in the world, *wrath brings the punishment of the sword, that you may know there is a judgment*, i. e. providence; the denial of it is a sin against all past or present judgments, which God hath or doth exercise. The Scripture frequently declaring the reason of such and such judgments to be, that men may know that *the Lord is God*.

The second thing is, the *grounds* of the denial of providence. This atheism has been founded,

1. Upon an overweening *conceit of men's own worths*; when men saw themselves frustrated of the rewards they expected, and saw others that were instruments of tyranny and lust, graced with the favours they thought due to their own virtue, they ran into a conceit that God did not mind the actions of men below. So that it was pride, interest, self-conceit, and opinion of merit, rather than any well-grounded reason, introduced this part of atheism into the world; for upon any cross this opinion of merit swelled up into blasphemous speeches against God. When we have any thoughts, as we are apt to have, by our religious acts to merit at God's hand, we act against the absoluteness of his providence, as though God could be obliged to us by any other than his own promise. Methinks Job has some spice of this in speaking so often of his own integrity, as though God dealt injuriously with him in afflicting him: and God seems to charge him with this,

*Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous? Job 40. 8.* As though in speaking so much of his own integrity, and in complaining expressions, he would accuse God of injustice, and condemn him as an unrighteous governor; and in Job's answer you find no syllable or word of his integrity to God, but a self-abhorency; *Wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes, Job 42. 26.* I doubt that from this secret root arise those speeches which we ordinarily have among men, What have I done that God should so afflict me? Though in a serious way it is a useful question tending to an enquiry into the sin that is the cause of it. But I doubt ordinarily there is too much of reflection upon God, as though they had deserved other dealings at his hands. Let us take heed therefore of pride and conceit of our own worth, we shall else be led by it to disparaging inconsistent notions of God, which indeed are the roots of all actions contradictory to God's will.

2. It is founded upon *pedantical* and *sensual* notions of God; as though it might detract from his pleasures and delight to look down upon this world; or, as though it were a molestation of an infinite power, to busy himself about the cares of sublunary things. They thought it unsuitable to the felicity of God, that it should interrupt his pleasure, and make a breach upon his blessedness. As though it were the felicity of a prince not to take care of the government of his kingdom, nor so much as provide for the well-being of his children. I doubt that from such, or as bad conceptions of God, may spring ordinarily our distrust of God upon any distress; take heed therefore of entertaining any conceptions of God, but what the scripture furnishes you with.

3. Or else, this sort of atheism was ushered in by a *flattering conceit* of the majesty of God. They thought it unbecoming the excellency of the divine Majesty to descend to regard the petty things of the world; this seems to be the fancy of those who are spoke of; *How doth God know? is there knowledge in the most high? Psa. 37. 11.* They think him too high to know, too high to consider. How unreasonable is it to think God

most high in place, and not in perfection ; and if in perfection, not in knowledge and discerning? They imagined of him as of a great prince, taking his pleasure upon the battlements of his palace, and not beholding the worms upon the ground ; as *how doth God know? Can he judge through the dark clouds? thick clouds are a covering to him, that he sees not, and he walks in the circuit of heaven, Job 22. 13, 14.* We cannot indeed have too high apprehensions of God's majesty and excellency ; but must take heed of entertaining superstitious conceits of God, and such as are dishonourable to him, or make the grandeur and ambition of men, the measures of the greatness and majesty of God. Upon this root sprung superstition and idolatry, and the worship of dæmons, who according to the heathen's fancy, were mediators between God and men. And I doubt such a conceit might be the first step to the introducing the popish saint worship into the christian world ; and this lies at the root of all our omissions of duty, or neglects of seeking God. Let us therefore have raised thoughts of God's majesty, and admiring thoughts of his condescension, who notwithstanding his greatness, humbles himself to behold what is done upon the earth. The psalmist sets a pattern for both, *Psa. 113. 5, 6.*

4. From their wishes upon any *stings of conscience.* They found guilt staring them in the face, and were willing to comfort themselves with the embraces of this doctrine, wherein they might find security and ease to their prostituted consciences, and unbounded liberty in the ways of sin. Those in Zephaniah, were first settled upon their lees, and then to drive away all fears of punishment; deny God's government ; *The Lord, say they, will not do good, neither will he do evil, Zeph. 1. 12.* A brave liberty for a city to be without a magistrate, a house without a governor, a ship without a pilot, exposed to the mercy of winds and waves ; a man to be without reason, that passion and lust should act their pleasure ; a liberty that beasts themselves would not have, to be without a shepherd, and one to take care of them. Such wishes certainly there are in men upon a sense of guilt ; they wish

for their own security there were no providential eye to inspect them. Take heed therefore of guilt which will draw you to wish God deprived of the government of the world, and all those attributes which qualify him for it. The readiness to entertain the motions of Satan, rather than the motions of the Spirit, implies a willingness in them that Satan might be the God of the world, who favours them in sin, rather than the Creator who forbids it. But indeed the fears of conscience evidence a secret belief in men of a just providence, whatever means they use to stifle it; else why is man upon the commission of some notorious sinful act, afraid of some evil befalling him? Why is he restless in himself? There is no sinner unless extremely hardened, but hath some secret touch of conscience upon notorious enormities; while the work of the law is written in their heart, their conscience will bear witness and accuse them, *Rom. 2. 14.* In the most flagitious courses which the apostle reckons up, *Rom. 1. 29, 30, 31, 32,* they cannot put off the knowledge of the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, that is, worthy of death by the judgment of God, which judgment is discovered in the law of nature.

The third thing is, the *various ways wherein men practically deny providence*, or abuse it, or contemn it.

1. When we will walk on in *a way contrary to checks of providence*, when we will run against the will of God manifested in his providence, we deny his government, and refuse subjection to him; when we will be peremptory in our resolves against the declaration of God's will by his checks of providence, we contend with him about the government of us and our actions. Such a dispute had Pharaoh with God, notwithstanding all the checks by the plagues poured out upon him, he would march against Israel to take them out of God's hand into his own service again; *The enemy said, 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, Exod. 15. 9.* Here is the will of man vaunting against the governor of the world, resolved to dispute God's royalty with him in

spite of all the blastings of his designs, and the smart blows he had had from that powerful arm, which cost him and his subjects their lives; they would not understand the taking off their wheels, but would run headlong into the Red Sea.

A remarkable example of this is in a good man not so peremptory in words, but against the revelations of God's mind, both by the prophet and his providence. Jehoshaphat had made a league with Ahab, *2 Chron.* 18. 1, 2, 3, and God had ordered Micaiah to acquaint him with the ill success of the affair they went about, ver. 16, 19, which Jehoshaphat found true, for his own life was in danger, he was hardly beset by the enemy upon a mistake, ver. 31, 32, he had an eminent answer of prayer, for upon his cry he had a quick return; God engaged his providence over his enemies' hearts for him, ver. 13, the Lord helped him, and God moved them to depart from him. And for this conjunction, and continuance in it against Micaiah's prophesy, God sends a prophet to reprove him; *Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from the Lord,* *2 Chron.* 19. 2, he reproves him sharply for this confederacy, yet Jehoshaphat afterwards had a signal providence in delivering him from another army, *2 Chron.* 20. 24. But after this he goes on in this way, *2 Chron.* 20. 35; *after this*, i. e. after reproof by a prophet, *after* ill success in his league, *after* eminent care of God in his deliverance, *after* a signal freeing him from a dangerous invasion in a miraculous way, he enters into a league with Ahab's son, as wicked as his father, ver. 36, he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish, and *after* that a third prophet is sent to reprove him, and the ships were broken, ver. 37. Here is a remarkable opposition to checks of providence, and manifest declarations of God's will, as if he would be the commander of the world instead of God. Abner's action is much of the same kind, who would make the house of Saul strong against David, though he knew and was satisfied that God had promised the kingdom to David.

2. In omissions of prayer. One reason to prove the



fool's denying God's government of the world, is, that they call not upon the Lord; *The Lord looked down from heaven to see if there were that did understand and seek God, Psal. 14. 1, 4.* It is certainly either denying God's sufficiency to help us, when we rather beg of every creature, than ask of God; or a charging him with a want of providence, as though he had thrown off all care of worldly matters; *Is it not because there is not a God in Israel that you go to inquire of Baalzebub the God of Ekron, 2 Kings 1. 3.* Seeking of any thing with a neglect of God, is denying the care of God over his creature. Do we not in this case make ourselves our own governors and lords, as though we could subsist without him, or manage our own affairs without his assistance? If we really believed there was a watchful providence, and an infinite powerful goodness to help us, he would hear from us oftener than he does. Certainly those who never call upon him, disown his government of the world, and do not care whether he regards the earth or no. They think they can do what they please without any care of God over them. The restraining prayer is a casting off the fear of God. *Thou castest off fear, why? and restrainest prayer before God, Job 15, 4.* The neglect of prayer arises from a conceit of the unprofitableness of it. *What profit should we have if we pray unto him? Job 21. 15.* Which conceit must be grounded upon a secret notion of God's carelessness of the world; such fruit could not arise, but from that bitter root. But the prophet Malachi plainly expresses it, *Ye have said it is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance? Mal. 3, 14.* Whence did this arise, but from a denial of providence upon the observation of the outward happiness of the wicked? *And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.* Sometimes it arises from an apprehension that God in the way of his providence deals unjustly with us. A good prophet utters such a sinful speech in his passion, *Behold this evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer? 2 Kings 6. 33.*

3. When men will turn every stone to gain the fa-

*avourable assistance of men in their designs, and never address themselves to God for his direction or blessing.* When they never desire God to move the hearts of those whose favour they court, as though providence were an unuseful and unnecessary thing in the world. It was the case of those Elihu speaks of, *They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty, but none saith, where is God my Maker who gives songs in the night, &c. Job 35. 9, 10;* none in the midst of their oppressions and cries under them, considers either the power of God in the creation, as he was their Maker, nor his providence in the government of the world, as he raised up men from low estates, and gave matter of cheerfulness even in a time of darkness. This was the charge God by his prophet brought against Asa, *Thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, herein thou hast done foolishly, 2 Chron. 16. 7,* where he sets reliance on the creature, and reliance on God, in direct opposition. In several cases men do thus deny and put contempt on God as the governor of the world, when we will cast about to find out some creature refuge rather than have recourse to God for any supply of our necessities. Does not he slight his father's care that will not seek to him in his distress? This was Asa's sin, *in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians, 2 Chron. 16. 12.* The Jews think that one reason why Joseph continued two years in prison, was his confiding too much upon the butler's remembrance of him, and interest for his deliverance, which they ground upon the request he makes to him, *But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness to me and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house, Gen. 40. 14.* I must confess the expressions are very urgent, being so often repeated, and seem to carry a greater confidence at present in the arm of flesh, than in God. We do not read that Joseph prayed so earnestly to God, though no doubt but being a good man he did; methinks the setting down his request with that repetition in the scripture, seems to intimate a probability of the Jews' supposition. Or also when we do seek to him, but it is out of a general belief

of his providence and sufficiency, not out of an actuated consideration; or when we seek to him with colder affections than we seek to creatures, as if we half despaired of his ability or will to help us; as when a man thinks to get learning by the sagacity of his own wit, his indefatigable industry, and never desires with any ardent affection the blessing of God upon his endeavours. When we lean to our own wisdom, we distrust the providence of God, *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding, Pro. 3. 5.* Trust in God, and leaning to our own wisdom, are opposed to one another as inconsistent: or when a man hath some great concern, suppose a suit at law, to think to carry his cause by the favour of friends, the help of his money, the eloquence of his advocate, and never interest God in his business; this is not to acknowledge God in his ways as he is commanded, *In all thy ways acknowledge him, Prov. 6.* Not to do this, is to take our affairs out of God's hand, and put them into the hands of men. To trust in our wealth, it is to make God a dead and a stupid God, and disown his providence in the bestowing it upon us. The apostle seems to intimate this in the opposition which he makes between uncertain riches, and the living God, *1 Tim. 6. 17.* These and many more actions suitable to them, are virtual denials of God's superintendency, as though God had left the government of the world to the wits or rather follies of men. These are to magnify the things we seek to, above God, as the chief authors of all our good. It is to imagine him less careful than man, and more insufficient than man. It is a departure from a full fountain to a shallow stream: not to desire God's assistance, is either from some check of conscience that our business is sinful, that we dare not interest him in it, or disowning his care, as if we could hide our counsels from him, *Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their Counsel from the Lord, and they say, who seeth us, and who knoweth us? Isa. 29. 15.* Such men are, as if they would bring their purposes to pass before he shall know of it; at least it is a slighting God's government, since we will not engage God by prayer in the

exercise of it on our behalf, and disdain to acquaint him with our concerns. It is a reflection upon God's wisdom to do so, which the prophet mentions with a woe; *Woe unto them that go down to Egypt for help, but they look not to the Holy One of Israel yet he also is wise, Isa. 31. 1. 2.* It is a disparagement to God's providential wisdom, not to look to him in our concerns, yea, and of his righteousness too. *They look not to the holy One of Israel, Isa. 31. 1.* In this they neither regard his holiness nor his wisdom. When we consult not with him upon emergent occasions, we trust more to our own wisdom, counsel, and sufficiency, than to God's; and set up ourselves as our own lords, and independent upon him, as though we could manage things according to our pleasure.

4. When upon the receiving any good, they *make more grateful* acknowledgment to the instruments than to God the principal author of it. As if God had no hand in bestowing those blessings upon them, as if the instruments had dispossessed God of his governing providence, and engrossed it in their own hands. This men are guilty of when they ascribe their wealth to their own wit and fortune, their health to their own care, or the physician's skill; their learning to their own industry, their prosperity to their friends or merits. When men thus return their thank-offering to second causes, and ascribe to them what is due to God, they give the glory of his providence to a miserable creature. Thus was the foolish boasting of the Assyrian. *By the strength of my hands I have done this, and by my wisdom: for I am prudent, for I have removed the bounds of the people, &c. Isa. 10. 13, 14.* Belshazzar's offence also: *Thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, and praised the gods of silver, Dan. 5. 23,* as though they were the authors of all thy greatness: *They sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their drag, because by them their portion is fat, Hab. 1. 16.* Alluding to those that worshipped their warlike weapons, and the tools whereby they had got their wealth, in the place of God, as the heathen used to do.\* How base a usage is this of God, to rifle him of all his glory,

\* Dought Analect. Sacr. Excurs. 182.

and bestow it upon the unworthiest instruments, inanimate creatures? It is as high idolatry as that of the heathens, inasmuch as it is a stripping God of the glory of his providential care, though the object to which we direct our acknowledgments, is not so mean as their's which was a stock or stone.

But is it not the same injury to a person to rifle him of his goods to bestow them upon a beggar, as to give them to a prince? It is depriving a man of his right: yet, is not this ordinary? \* Do not men ascribe more to the physician that saves an eye in danger of being lost by a defluxion, than to God who hath given them both with the enjoyment of the light of the sun; yea more to the medicine, than to that God, who hath a witness of his Deity in every drug? It is as if the kindness a prince shews to his subjects should be attributed to a menial of his household rather than to himself. This is to belie God, and say it is not he, *Jer. 5. 12.* It is applicable to the case of mercies as well as afflictions and judgments, of which it is properly meant. And this contempt is the greater by how much the greater mercy we have received in a way of providence. *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.* She that had most reason to know, because she had enjoyed so much; she that had experienced how by a strong and mighty hand I brought her out of Egypt into the land now possessed by her. She would not know that I gave her those good things she prepared for Baal. It would be a natural consequence from this scripture, that those that employ the good things they enjoy upon their depraved propensities deny the providential goodness of God in their possession and enjoyment of them, because they prepare God's goodness for their sinful pleasures, as though their own lusts had been the authors of them; and also their instruments, that receive too high and flattering thanks of this nature, are much like Herod, that pleased himself with the people's applause, that his voice was the voice of God, and not of man.

\* *Amirant de les religions.*

5. When we use *indirect courses*, and *dishonest ways* to gain wealth or honour. This is to leave God, to seek and adore the providence of Satan above God's: when God does not answer us, like Saul we will go to the witch of Endor, and have our ends by hell, when heaven refuses us. It is covenanting with Satan, and striking an agreement with hell, and acknowledging Satan to be the god of the world. No man will doubt but in express covenants with the devil, as witches and conjurers are reported to make, that he shall give them such knowledge, such wealth, or bring them to such honour; it is no doubt, I say, but such acknowledge the devil the god of the world, because they agree by articles to have those things conferred upon them by Satan, which are only in the power of God absolutely to promise or bestow. So when a man will commit sin to gain the ends of his ambition or covetousness, does he not implicitly covenant with Satan who is the head of sinners, and set up his sin in the place of God, because he hopes to attain those things by sinful means, which are only in the hand of God, and on whom he only can have a dependance?

This is Satan's design out of enmity to providence. He tempted Christ to be his own carver, thereby to put him upon a distrust of his Father's care of him; *Command that these stones be made bread, Matt. 4. 3*, as though God would not provide for him; which design is manifest by our Saviour's answer. This is to prostitute providence to our own passions, and to pull it down from the government of the world, to be a lackey to our sinful pleasure; to use means which God prohibits is to set up hell to govern us, since God will not govern our affairs in answer to our greedy desires. It is to endeavour that by God's curse which we should only expect by God's blessing: for when God hath forbid sinful ways, severely threatened them, perhaps cursed them in examples before our eyes, what is it but to say, that we will rather believe God's curse will further us than his blessing? It is to disparage his blessing, and prefer his curse, to slight his wisdom and adore our own folly. When we go out of God's way, we go out of God's protection; we have no

charter for the blessing of providence without that condition. *Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed, Psal. 37. 3.* To do evil then is not to trust in God, or have any regard to his providential care.

6. When we distrust God because there is no visible means of deliverance. A distrust of God renders him impotent, or false and mutable, or cruel and regardless. We detract from his power, as if it depended upon creatures, or that he were like an artificer that could not act without his tools. As if God were tied to means, and were beholden to creatures for his operating power; as if that God who created the world without instruments, could not providentially apply himself to our particular exigences without the help of some of his creatures. If he cannot work without this or that means by which you expected your mercy; it supposes that God hath made the creature greater than himself, and more necessary to thy well-being, than himself is; or else we suppose him false or foolish, as if he had undertaken a task of government too hard for him, as if he were grown weary of his labour, and must have some time to recruit his strength, or as if he were unfaithful, not walking by rules of unerring goodness; or if we acknowledge him wise and able and faithful, yet it must then be a denial of his gracious tenderness, which is as great as his power and wisdom, and a perfection equal with any of the rest.

If his caring for us be a principal argument to move us to cast our care upon him, as it is, *casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you: 1 Pet. 5. 7*; then if we cast not our care upon him, it is a denial of his gracious care of us, this is to imagine him a tenderer governor of beasts than of men, as though our Saviour had spoke a palpable untruth, when he told us not an hair of our heads doth fall without his leave: as if he regarded sparrows only, and not his children; or else it implies that God cannot mind us in a crowd of business, in such multitudes in the world, which he hath to take care of. But certainly, as the multitude of things does not hinder his knowledge of them, so neither do they hinder his care.

The arms of his goodness are large enough to embrace all creatures, as the eyes of his omniscience are to behold them. From this root do all our fears of the power of men grow, *Who art thou that art afraid of a man that shall die, &c. and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, &c.* Our forgetfulness at least, if not a secret denial of God's power in the works of creation and providence, ushers in distrust of him, and that introduceth the fear of man.

If they that know his name, will put their trust in him; *For thou O Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee, Psal. 9. 10;* then distrust of him discovers ignorance and inconsideration of his name and his ways of working, and implies his forsaking of his creature. He that trusts in any thing besides God, denies all the powerful operations of God, and conceives him not of strength sufficient for him; that man does not *make God his strength, who trusts in the abundance of his riches, Psal. 52. 7.* How gross is it not to trust God under the very sense of his powerful goodness, but question whether he can or will do this or that for us? When we have jealousies of him when he compasses us round about with mercy, and encircles us with his beams, it is to question whether the summer sun will warm me, though it shine directly upon me, and I feel the vigour of its beams upon my body: much more base is this, than to distrust him when we have no means. What does this imply, but that he cares not what becomes of children, that no advantage can be expected from him, that his intentions towards us are not gracious even while we feel him?

7. Stoutness under God's afflicting or merciful hand, is a denial or contempt of providence. This was the aggravation of Belshazzar's sin. *And the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified, Dan. 5. 23;* he glorified not God in the way of his providence, but was playing the epicure, and was sacrilegiously quaffing in the vessels of the temple when the city was besieged; he seemed to dare the providence of God upon a presumption that the city was impregnable by reason of Euphrates, and the provision



they had within their walls, which Xenophon saith, was enough for twenty years, yet was taken that night when the hand-writing appeared. And by how much God's judgments have been more visible to us, and upon some well known by us, or related to us, so much the greater is the contempt of his providential government. *And thou his son Belshazzar hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this, &c.* ver. 22. He had known God's judgments upon his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, a domestic example of God's vindicating his government of the world, and yet went in the same steps; *Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction, they have made their faces harder than a rock: Jer. 5. 3.* what is the reason? *They are foolish, for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God,* ver. 4. Correction calls for submission, but they, like a rock, under God's hand, were correction proof, they would not consider the ways of God's providence, and the manner of them: it is as if by our peevishness we would make God weary of afflicting us, which is the worst case that can happen.

This is God's complaint of the ten tribes; *Gray hairs are upon them, and they know it not, strangers have devoured his strength, &c.* *Hos. 7. 9.* There was a consumption of their strength, the Assyrians and Egyptians to whom they gave gifts, had drained their treasure, but they would not consider God as the author, or acknowledge whence their misery came; *They would not seek God for all this,* ver. 10. It is like a man's committing robbery or murder under the gallows in contempt of justice;\* whereas good men are both affected with, and remember God's judgments. Eber called his son *Peleg*, division, because in his days the earth was divided, that in the daily sight of the sun he might remember that sharp providence in scattering of the Babel-builders. Judgments affect us when they are before our eyes, as the thunder and plagues did Pharaoh; but when they are removed, men return to their beloved ways, as though God had shot away all his arrows, and was departed, to

\* Jenkin.

mind them no more. Take heed of this, it is a sin highly provoking: God is so jealous that his providence should be minded and improved, that a sin of this nature he follows with his displeasure in this life at least; *And in that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and mourning, and behold joy, and gladness, eating flesh, and drinking wine: Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die, Isa. 22. 12, 13.* When God in any judgment shews himself to be *Lord God of Hosts*, and calls us to weeping, and we behave ourselves in a light and trifling manner in spite of his government, it is a sin he will remember, and bind the guilt of it upon us; *And it was revealed in my ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die,* ver. 14.

8. *Envy* also is a denial of providence. To be sad at the temporal good, or the gifts of another, as counting him unworthy of them, is a reflection upon the author of those gifts, an accusing providence of an unjust or unwise distribution.\* Since God may do what he will with his own; if our eye be evil, because God is good, we intrench upon his liberty, and deny him the disposal of his own goods, as if he were but our steward, and we his lords. It is a temper we are all subject to, *Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity, Psa. 37. 1.* It is peculiarly the product of self-love, which affects the principality in the world, and particularly affects the conduct of God in distributing his goods, that he must not give but to whom they please. It arises indeed from a sense of our wants; but the language of it is, God is unjust in his providence to me, because he bestows not upon me that good which he gives to another. It is such a sin that it seems to be a companion of our first parents' pride, which was the cause of their fall. They envied God a felicity by himself for they would be like him, they *would be as gods.* Hence perhaps, the Jews say Cain denied the providence of God, as envying his brother, because God accepted Abel's sacrifice and not his. Jonah's passion arose from

\* Cajetan Summal. p. 4, 28.

this pride, for fear he should be accounted a false prophet, whereupon he envies God the glory of his mercy, and the poor Ninevites the advantage of it, he would have God confirm the way of his providence to his pleasure and reputation. Indeed it is to envy God the honour of his providence in those gifts or good things another possesses, whereby he is instrumental to glorify God and advantage others. Thus we would direct God what instruments he should employ, when no artificer in his own art would endure to be directed by any ignorant person what tools he should use in his work.

9. *Impatience* under cross providences is a denial and contempt of God's government. Men quarrel with God's revealed will, and therefore no wonder that they quarrel with his providential will; whereby we deny him his right of governing, and slight his actual exercise of his right. As if God were accountable to us for his dispensations, and must have only a respect to us or our humour in his government: *He tears himself in his anger; shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place? Job 18. 4.* Must God alter the scene of his affairs according to our model and platform? And because he does not observe our rules and methods, must we tear ourselves in anger? This is a secret cursing of God, and flying in his face when we see providence so cross, that there seems to be no help at any time either in heaven or earth; *They shall fret themselves, and curse their King and their God, and look upwards, and they shall look unto the earth, and behold trouble and darkness, Isa. 8. 21, 22.* Take heed of fretting at God's management of things in the world, or thy own particular concerns; this may lead to a cursing of God, and is indeed an initial secret swelling against him, and cursing of him. Man is ambitious to become a god. Adam's posterity have in one sort or other imitated him. This

1. Is a wrong to the *sovereignty* of providence. It was a good admonition of Luther's to Melancthon when he was troubled much about the affairs of the church, *monendus est Philippus ut desinat esse rector mundi.* By this temper we usurp God's place, and set ourselves on

his throne ; we invade his supremacy by desiring every thing to be at our beck, and are displeas'd with him, because he does not put the reins of the world's government into our hands. As if we would command his will, and become his sovereigns. It is striving with our Maker for the superintendency, when we will sit judge upon him, or censure his acts, and presume to direct him. *Woe to him that strives with his Maker ! shall the clay say to him that fashions it, what makest thou ? or thy work, he hath no hands ? Isa. 45. 9.* How do men summon God to the bar of their interest, and expostulate with him about his works, why he did not order them thus and thus ; and if he does so, to tell him he hath no hand of providence in the world ? The design of that place is to stop such peevishness and invasions of God's right ; I will not have my sovereign will disputed, as if I were but the creature's servant ; I am content you should *ask of me things to come*, ver. 11, and pray to me, but notwithstanding you must submit to my pleasure without peevishly endeavouring to wrest the sovereignty out of my hand, and pull the crown from my head.

2. It is a wrong to the *goodness and righteousness* of providence. It is a charging God with ill management, and an implicit declaration, that if we were the commanders of providence, things should be managed more justly and righteously ; as it was Absalom's pretence in wishing to be the king of Israel in David's stead, *2 Sam. 15. 4.* If patience be a giving God the honour of his righteousness in his judgments, *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me, Psa. 119. 75 ;* impatience must be a charge against God for unrighteousness in his judicial proceedings, and saying *the way of the Lord is not equal, Ezek. 18. 25.* It is implied in that complaint, *They ask of me the ordinances of justice, &c. Wherefore have we fasted and thou seest not ? wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge ? Isa. 58. 2, 3.* We demand justice of thee, since thou dost not seem to do that which is fit and righteous, in not regarding us in our suits, and not bestowing that which we have fasted for. God

governs the world according to his will, our murmuring implies that God's will is not the rule of righteousness. We affront the care of God towards his creatures, as if the products of our shallow reasons were more beautiful and just than God's contrivances for us, who hath higher and more glorious ends in every thing, both for ourselves and the world, of which we are members, and for his own glory, to which we ought to subject ourselves, when perhaps our projects tend immediately to gratify some sensual or spiritual lust in us. It is the commendation the Holy Ghost gives of Job, chap. 1. 22, *In all this Job sinned not, neither charged God foolishly*, as a character peculiar to him, implying that most men in the world do, upon any emergency, charge God with their crosses, as dealing unjustly with them, in inflicting punishment when they think they have deserved rewards: Jeremiah is not innocent in this case; *O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived*, Jer. 20. 7, in the ill success of his prophecy, as though an immense goodness would, and a sovereign power needed, to deal in a fraudulent way with his creatures to bring his ends about.

3. It is a wrong to the *wisdom* of providence. We would degrade his omniscience and wisdom, and sway him by our foolish and purblind dictates; it is as if we would instruct him better in the management of the world, and direct him to a reformation of his methods; *Shall he that contends with the Almighty, instruct him? He that reproves God let him answer it*, Job 40. 2. It is a reproving God, and reproofs imply a greater authority, or righteousness, or wisdom, in the person reproving; we reprove God as if he should have consulted with us, and asked our advice; it is to take upon us to be God's counsellors, and to judge the only wise God by our imperfect reason; *Who hath been his counsellor?* Rom. 11. 34. It is a secret boasting of some excellency in ourselves, as if God did not govern well, or we could govern better. Shall a silly passenger, that understands not the use of the compass, be angry that the skilful pilot will not steer the vessel according to his pleasure? Must we give out our orders to God, as though the counsels of infinite

wisdom must roll about according to the conceits of our fancy? Is not the language of our hearts in our fits of impatience, as prodigiously proud against God's providence as the speech of that monster was against the creation, who said if he had been by God at the creation of the world, he could have directed him to a better platform? All this, and much more, is virtually in this sin of impatience.

10. In charging *our sins, and miscarriages by them*, upon providence, we condemn it. Some think Cain does so, *Am I my brother's keeper*, Gen. 4. 9. Thou art the keeper and governor of the world, why didst thou not hinder me from killing my brother? It is certain the first man did so; *The woman thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree*, Gen. 3. 12; thy gift is the cause of my sin and ruin. It is as certain David laid the sin of Uriah's murder at the door of providence, when he heard that Uriah was dead; *The sword, saith he devours one as well as another*, 1 Sam. 11. 25. Man conjures up trouble to himself, when by his folly he brings himself into sin, and from thence to misery, and then *his heart frets against the Lord*, and lays the blame both of his sin and following mischiefs upon him. *The foolishness of man perverts his way, and his heart, frets against the Lord*, Prov. 19. 3.

There are many other ways wherein we deny or slight providence; as when we do things with a respect to *the pleasure of men, more than of God*. As though God were careless both of himself, and his own honour, and regarded not the principles and ends of our actions.— We deny or slight providence in vain *boasting and vaunting* of ourselves. As Benhadad would have such a multitude of men in his army as that there should not be dust enough in Samaria to afford every man a handful; wherein he swaggers with God, and vaunts as if he were the governor of the world; yet this man with his numerous host was routed by a troop of lackeys, 2 Kings 15, 20; such is the folly of men against the orders of God, when they boast in their hearts that their house shall continue for ever, 2 Kings 20. 10. *Psal. 49. 11*. We deny or slight providence by *oppression*. *They*

slay the fatherless, and say, *The God of Jacob shall not regard it, Psal. 94. 6, 7.* Their denial of providence was the cause of their oppression of the poor, and where this is found in any, it is an argument that it ariseth principally from a like cause; this is also made the cause why they eat up God's people *as they eat bread, Psal. 14. 1, 4.* *Misinterpretations* of providence deny and slight it. Such cursed jealousies had the Jews of God: and *wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? Psal. 14. 3.* As though God in that mighty deliverance had cheated them with a design to destroy them in the wilderness, when one of those plagues poured out upon Pharaoh being turned upon their heads, had destroyed them in Egypt. So foolish are they to think that God would ruin them upon dry land, who might have drowned them as well as their enemies in the Red sea: so unreasonable is man in his disputes against God.—Finally, in *limiting providence* we sin against the wisdom of it. In bounding it to time, manner, and other circumstances, as they did, *They limited the holy one of Israel, for they remembered not his hand, Psal. 78. 41.* As though God must manage every thing according to the will of a simple creature. It was a forgetfulness of providence, at least, that was the cause of it.

## PART VI.

THE COMFORT AND DUTIES ARISING FROM THE  
DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE.

---

*Man a special object of providence—Holy men most so—Supported amidst all the storms of the world—Security against want—Duties inferred from providence—We should seek all we need from God—Trust providence—In the greatest extremities—In the way of means—With attention to precept—We should trust in providence solely—Submission to providence—Without murmuring—Providence to be studied—Ascribe the glory of it to God.*

---

AS the justice and righteousness of God is the highest comfort to a good man, in the evangelical dispensation; in that he hath to deal with a righteous God, who can as soon deny himself as his righteousness: so it is none of the meanest comforts, that we acknowledge and worship that God, who exercises himself in the constant government of the world, and leaves not any thing to the capriciousness of that which we call fortune and chance. What satisfaction can any man in his sober wits have to live in a world cast off from all care of the Creator of it? Wisdom without providence would make any man mad, and the greatest advantage would be to be a stupid and senseless fool: Can there be any worse news told to men than this, that let them be as religious as they will, there is no eye above takes notice of it?\*

\* It was an excellent speech of a Stoic, *ἐκ' ἐπι ζῆν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κενῶ θείων καὶ προνοίας.*



to a rational man than that God should be careless of the world? What a door would be opened by it for all sin in the wicked, and despair in the godly; it is as great a matter of joy to the godly, that God reigns, as it is of terror to the wicked. *The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice, Psal. 97. 1. The Lord reigns, let the people tremble, Psal. 99. 1.*

It is a comfort, 1. That man is a *special object* of providence. God provides for all creatures, even those that are the works of his hands; much more for man, who is more peculiarly the work of his head, in whose creation he took counsel. *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, Gen. 1. 26.* The work of his heart in being made according to his image, and intended as a subordinate end of his whole creation next to the principal, that of God's glory, he is the preserver of man and beast; of man principally, of beasts in subserviency to man's good and preservation.

2. Holy men are more *special objects* of it. God preserves and provides for all things, and all persons: but his eye is more peculiarly fixed upon those that fear him. *Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy, Psal. 33. 18;* so fixed, as if he had no regard to any thing else. If God hath a care of man created after his own image, though his image be depraved, much more of those wherein his image is restored. If God loves himself, he loves his image and his works. A man loves the works which he hath made of some external matter, much more does a father love his son, much more does God love his own, and therefore will work their good, and dispose of them well. God exercises a special providence over the actions of a good man, as well as his person. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his ways, Psal. 37, 23;* it is special, because a delightful providence, he delights in his way; how highly may it cheer a man to be in covenant with that God, who rules the world, and hath all things at his beck, to be under, not only the care of his wisdom, but of his goodness? The governor of the world, being such an only friend,

will do him no hurt, being such an only Father, will order all things to his good; he is the world's sovereign, but a good man's Father; he rules the heavens and the earth, but he loves his holy ones. Other things are the objects of his providence, and a good man is the end of it. For, *his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong for him whose heart is perfect toward him*

3. Hence it will follow, that the spirits of good men have *sufficient grounds to bear up in their innocent sufferings* and storms in the world. Innocent sufferings: there is a righteous Governor, who orders all, and will reward them for their pains, as well as their service; *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, Heb. 6. 10*; there is one that presides in the world, who sees all their calamities, and cannot be mistaken in their cause, who hath as much power and wisdom, as will to help them. It would be an affliction indeed, if there were no sovereign power to whom they might make their moan in their distress, to whom they might ease their consciences, if there were no governor to whom they might offer up their petitions. How does the presence of a skilful pilot in a weather-beaten ship cheer the hearts of the fearful passengers? What a dread would it be to them to have the vessel wherein their lives and all are concerned, left to the fury of winds and waves, without an able hand to manage it? God hath a bridle to check the passions of men, and power to marshal them according to his pleasure; they are all but his instruments in the government, not the lords of it. God can lay a plot with more wisdom for a good man's safety, than the enemy can for his destruction; he can countermine their plots with more power than they can execute them; he can outwit their craft, overpower their strength, and turn their designed cruelty against them, as a sword into their own breasts.

4. Hence follows a certain *security against a good man's want*. If God take care of the hairs, the ornamental superfluities, why should we doubt his care of our necessary supply? If he be the guardian of our hairs which

fall off without our sense of their departure, shall he be careless of us when we are at a pinch for our all? Will God reach out his care to beasts, and deny it to his children? What would you judge of that father who should feed his servants and starve his sons? He supplies his enemies, and hath he no bowels for his friends? The unjust as well as the just are enlightened by his sun, and refreshed by his rain, and shall he not have a providence for those that have a special interest in that Mediator, whose interposition kept up those standing mercies after our forfeiture of them by sin? If he bless with those blessings, those who are the objects of his curse, will he not bless those who are in his special favour with them, so far as they may prove blessings to them? *The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing, Psal. 34. 10; For there is no want to them that fear him, ver. 9.*

A good man shall have what he needs, though not always what he thinks he needs. Providence intends the supply of our necessities, not of our desires; he will satisfy our wants, but not our wantonness. When a thing is not needful, a man cannot properly be said to want it; when it is needful, a good man shall not be without it; what is not bestowed upon us, may not be so beautiful at that time wherein we desire it, for every thing is *beautiful in its season*. He that did not want God's kindness to renew him, shall never want God's kindness to supply him; his hand shall not be wanting to give where his heart hath been so large in working. Others live that have an interest only in common providence, but good men have providence cabinetted in promise, and assured to them by a deed of covenant-conveyance; he was a provider before, he hath made himself now your debtor. You might pray for his providential care before, with a common faith, now with a more special expostulation. For in his promise he hath given a good man the key of the chest of his providence, because it is the *promise of this life, and that which is to come, 1 Tim. 4. 8*; of this life, not to our desires, but necessities; of the life to come to both, wherein they shall

have whatsoever they can want, and whatsoever they can desire.

Again consider, God does exercise a more special providence over men, as clothed with miserable circumstances, and therefore among his other titles, this is one to be a helper to the fatherless, *Psal.* 18. 14. It is the argument the church used, to express her return to God, *For in thee the fatherless find mercy, Hos.* 14. 5. Now what greater comfort is there than this, that there is one presides in the world who is so wise he cannot be mistaken, so faithful he cannot deceive, so pitiful he cannot neglect his people; and so powerful that he can even turn stones into bread, if he please?

Further, take this for a comfortable consideration, God does not govern the world only by his will as an absolute monarch, but by his *wisdom and goodness as a tender Father*. It is not his greatest pleasure to shew his sovereign power, or his inconceivable wisdom, but his immense goodness, to which he makes the other attributes subservient. What was God's end in creating, is his end in governing, which was the communication and diffusion of his goodness; we may be sure from hence that God will do nothing but for the best, his wisdom appointing it with the highest reason, and his goodness ordering it to the most gracious end; and because he is the highest good, he does not only will good, but the best good in every thing he acts. What greater comfort can there be than that we are under the care of an infallible, unwearied, and righteous Governor? Infallible because of his infinite wisdom, unwearied because of his incomprehensible omnipotence, and righteous because of his unbounded goodness and holiness.

3. Use of exhortation.—The duties arising from hence will run as a thread through the web of our whole lives, and all the motions of them. This doctrine has an influence upon our whole course, there is nothing we meet with but is an act of providence; and there is no act of providence but calls for some particular duty. Is there any good we want? We must seek it at his hands, we must

depend upon him for it, we must prescribe no methods to him, but leave the conduct of it to his own wisdom. Is it a cross providence, and contrary to our desires and expectations? Murmur not at it. Is it afflictive and troublesome? Submit to it. Is it either good or bad, and present? We must study to understand it. Is it a good, and present? Give God the glory of it.

1. *Seek* every thing you need at the hands of God. It is not only the skilfulness of the pilot, but a favourable gale from heaven, which must conduct the ship to the intended port. As his providence is the foundation, so it is the encouragement of all prayer. The end of the Lord's prayer is, *for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory*: the providential kingdom belongs to God, he hath power to manage it, and his glory is the end of all; seek to him, therefore, for the exercise of his power in thy concerns, and his directing them to his glory in his providential administrations. Every one of our days, and both the mercy and the misery of them, depend upon him; *Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth, Prov. 27. 1*; but God foresees all events; have recourse, therefore to his care for every day's success; what are our contrivances without the leave and blessing of providence? Like the bubbles blown up from a nut-shell, easily broken by the next puff; our labour will be as fruitless as Peter's; we shall catch nothing, till God speaks the word, and sends the fish into our net, *Luke 5. 5*.

The way of man is not in himself; *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walks to direct his steps, Jer. 10. 13*. Dangers are not within the reach of our eye to foresee, nor within the compass of our power to prevent. Human prudence may lay the platform, and God's power blast the execution, when it seems to be grown up nearest to maturity. Hezekiah was happy in his affairs, because he was assisted by God; Ahaz unhappy, because he is deserted by God. If we would have a clock go well, we must look to the motion of the chief wheel; a failure in that makes an error in all the rest; nothing can terminate its motion to our benefit without providence. Coloured

glass can reflect no beams without the sun's light, nor fruits be ripened without its influence. Our dependance on God is greater than their's on the sun. God lets men play with their own wit and strength, and come to the brink of executing of their designs, and then blows upon them, that they may know there is a God in the earth. Pythagoras could say it was γελοῖον, a ridiculous thing, to seek that which is brave and virtuous any where else than of God.\* Cyrus is a brave pattern, who is mentioned in scripture, and represented by Xenophon calling upon God when he was first chosen general; and in his speech to his captains to encourage them to hope for a good success of the expedition, tells them they might expect it, because I have begun with God, which you know, saith he, is my custom, not only when I attempt great matters, but also the τὰ μικρά, things of lesser concernment.

The seeking of God should be the prologue to all our affairs; we are enjoined first to pray, and then determine; *Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee, Job 22. 27.* The interesting providence in our concerns, is the high way to success. The reason we miscarry, is because we consult not God, but determine without him; and then we have no reason to complain of him for not prospering our way, when we never commended our affairs to his conduct. It hath been the practice of holy men. Nehemiah first petitioned God before he would use his interest in the king's favour; *Then the king said unto me, for what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king, &c. Neh. 2. 4.* So Abraham's steward puts up his request to God, before he would put the business he came upon, in execution, *Gen. 24. 12.* David did so frequently in particular cases, *1 Sam. 23. 9. 2 Sam. 2. 1, & 19. 23.* God only does what he pleases in heaven and in earth; He only can bless us, he only can blast us. Shall we be careless in any undertaking, whe-

\* Jamblich. vita. Pithag. lib. 1. cap. 18. p. 89. Xenophon ὡρι κυρος παῖς. lib. 1. p. 23.

ther we have his favour or no? It is a ridiculous madness to resolve to do any thing without God, without whose assisting and preserving of us, we had not been able to make that resolution.

2. *Trust providence.* To trust God when our warehouses and bags are full, and our tables spread, is no hard thing; but to trust him when our purses are empty, and when there is but a handful of meal and a cruse of oil left, and all ways of relief stopped, herein lies the wisdom of a christian's grace. Yet none are exempted from this duty; all are bound to acknowledge their trust in him by the daily prayer for daily bread; even those that have it in their cupboards as well as those that want it; the greatest prince as well as the meanest beggar. Whatever your wants are, want not faith, and you cannot want supplies. It is the want of this binds up his hand from doing great works for his creatures: the more we trust him, the more he concerns himself in our affairs. The more we trust ourselves, the more he delights to cross us; for he hath denounced such an one *cursed that maketh flesh his arm*, because it is a *departing from the Lord*, *Jer. 17. 5.* No wonder then that God departs from us, and carries away his blessing with him; while we trust ourselves, we do but trouble ourselves, and know not how to reconcile our various reasons for hopes and fears; but the committing our way to the Lord renders our minds calm and composed; *Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established*, *Prov. 16. 3.* Thou shalt have no more of those quarrelling disturbing thoughts what the success shall be.

*Trust providence in the greatest extremities.* He brings us into straits, that he may see the exercise of our faith; *I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord*, *Zeph. 3. 12.* When we are most desolate, we have most need of this exercise, and have the fittest season to practise it; he is always our refuge and our strength, but in time of trouble a present help, *Psal. 46. 1.* Daniel's new advancement by Belshazzar but a day before the city was taken by the enemy, *Dan. 5. 29*; the king slain and no doubt many

of his nobility, and those that were nearest in authority with him, it being the interest of the enemy to dispatch them, was a danger; yet God by ways not expressed, preserved Daniel, and gave him favour with the conqueror. God sometimes leads his people into great dangers, that they may see and acknowledge his hand in their preservation. Daniel had not had so signal an experience of God's care of him, had he been in the lower condition he was in before his new preferment. God's eye is always upon them that fear him; not to keep distress from them, but to quicken them in it, and give them as it were a new life from the dead; *To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine, Psal. 23. 18, 19.*

God brings us into straits, that we may have more lively experiments of his tenderness in his seasonable relief; if he be angry, *he will repent himself for his servants, when he sees their power is gone*; because then the glory of his providence is appropriated to himself; *See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive, Deut. 32. 36, 39.* No creature can have any pretence to share in it; he delights thereby to kindle new ardours of affection to him, and admiration of him, and to store up in us a treasure of experience to encourage our trusting in him in the like straits. We should therefore repose ourselves in God in a desert, as well as in the cities; with as much faith among savage beasts, as in the best company of the most sociable men;\* and answer the greatest strait with Abraham's speech to Isaac, *God will provide.* For we have to do with a God who is bound up to no means, is at no expence in miraculous succours, who delights to perfect his strength in the creature's weakness. We have to do with a God, who only knows what may further our good, and accordingly orders it; what may hinder it, and therefore prevents it. He can set all causes in such a posture, as shall conspire together as one link to bring about success, and make even contrary motions meet in a gracious end; as the rivers which run from north and south, the contrary quarters of the world, unite in the surges of one

\* Durant de Tentat. p. 168.



sea. Though providences may seem to cross one another, they shall never cross his word and promise, which he hath magnified above all his names. And his providence is but a servant to his truth.

Trust it in *the way of means*. Though we are sure God has decreed the certain event of such a thing, yet we must not encourage our idleness, but our diligence. Though Moses was assured of the victory, when Amalek came armed against him, yet he commands Joshua to draw up the valiant men into a body, himself goes to the mount to pray, and is as diligent in the use of all means, as if he had been ignorant of God's purpose, and had rather suspected the rout of his own than his enemies' forces. Neither does Joshua afterwards, though secured by promise in his conquest of Canaan, omit any part of the duty of a wise and watchful general; he sends spies, disciplines his forces, besiegeth cities, and contrives stratagems. Providence directs us by means; not to use them, is to tempt our guardian; where it intends any great thing for our good, it opens a door, and puts such circumstances into our hands as we may use without the breach of any command, or the neglect of our own duty.

God could have secured Christ from Herod's fury, by a miraculous stroke from heaven upon his enemy, but he orders Joseph and Mary's flight into Egypt as a means of his preservation. God rebukes Moses for praying, and not using the means in continuing the people's march; *Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel that they go forwards, Exod. 14. 15.* To use means without respect to God is proudly to contemn him; to depend upon God without the use of means, is irreligiously to tempt him; in both we abuse his providence. In the one we disobey in not using the means he hath appointed; in the other we presumptuously impose upon him for the encouragement of our laziness. Diligence on our part, and the blessing on God's, Solomon joins together; *The hand of the diligent makes rich, Pro. 10. 4.* but ver. 22. *The blessing of the Lord maketh rich. Our works are in the hand of God, So Eccles. 9. 1.* our works, but God's blessing; God's blessing, but

not without our works. It was the practice of good men. Jacob wrestles with God to divert his brother's fury, yet sends a present to his brother to appease him, *Gen. 32. 9, 13.* David trusts in the name of the Lord his God in his duel with Goliath, but not without his sling; our labour should rather be more vigorous than more faint, when we are assured of the blessing of providence by the infallibility of the promise.

3. Trust providence in *the way of precept.* Let not any reliance upon any ordinary providence induce you into any way contrary to the command. *Dan. 1. 8, 9, 10, &c.* *Daniel* had many inducements from an appearance of providence to eat the king's meat, his necessity of compliance in his captivity, probability of preferment by learning the wisdom of the country, whereby he might both have advanced himself, and assisted his countrymen, the greatness of the consideration for a captive to be fed from the king's table, the ingratitude he might be accused of for despising so kind a treatment: but none of these things moved him against a command; because the law of God forbad it, he would not eat of the king's meat. *Daniel* might have argued, I may wind myself into the king's favour, do the church of God a great service by my interest in him, which may be dashed in pieces by my refusal of this kindness; but none of these things wrought upon him. No providences wherein we have seeming circumstances of glorifying God, must lead us out of the way of duty; this is to rob God one way, to pay him another. God brought *Daniel's* ends about, he finds favour with the governor, his request is granted, the success is answerable, and all those ends attained, which he might in a sinful way by an ill construction of providence have proposed to himself, all which he might have missed of, had he run on in a carnal manner; this, this is the way to success. *Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass, Psa. 37. 5.* Commit thy way to the guidance of his providence, with an obedience to his precept, and reliance on his promise, and refer all success in it to God. If we set up our golden calfs made of our own ear-rings, our wit and strength

and carnal prudence, because God seems to neglect us, our fate may be the same with theirs, and the very dust of our demolished calf may be a bitter spice in our drink, as it was in theirs.

Trust him *solely* without prescribing any methods to him; leave him to his wise choice, wait upon him because he is a *God of judgment*, who goes judiciously to work, and can best time the execution of his will. The wise God observes particular periods of time for doing his great works. *My hour is not yet come, woman, what have I to do with thee?* John 2. 4. Which man is no competent judge of; I will do this miracle, but the season is not yet come wherein it will be most beautiful. God hath as much wisdom in the time of performing his promise, as mercy at first to make it. How presumptuous would it be for the shallow world, a thing worse than nothing and vanity, to prescribe rules to the Creator? Much more for a single person, a little atom of dust, infinitely worse than nothing and vanity to do it. Since we had no hand in creating the world or ourselves, let us not presume to direct God in the government of it; *Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth, declare if thou hast understanding?* Job 38. 4. Would it not be a disparagement to God to stoop to thy foolish desires? Yea, would you not yourselves have a lower conceit of him, if he should degrade his wisdom to the wrong bias of your blind reason?

3. *Submit to providence.* It is God's right to govern the world, and dispose of his creature; it is his glory in heaven to do what he will, let us not by our unsubmitive carriage deprive him of the same glory on earth; he brings to pass his will by ways the creature cannot understand. *Our God is in the heaven, he hath done whatsoever he pleased,* Psa. 115. 3. It is the wisest speech in that medley of fooleries, the Turkish Alcoran: \* We must walk by the rule of reason which God hath placed in us for our guide; yet if providence brings to pass any other event contrary to our rational expectations, because

\* Deus triumphat in sua causa, &c.

it is a clear evidence of his will, we must acquiesce. As when a traveller has two ways to come to his journey's end, the one safe, and the other dangerous, reason persuades him to chuse the safest way, wherein he falls among thieves ; now having used his reason, which in that case was to be his director, he must acquiesce : God's providence brings forth an event, which he could not without violence to his reason avoid. And therefore it is a great vanity, when a man hath resolved the most probable way in a business, and fails in it, to torment himself ; because though our consultations depend upon ourselves, yet the issues of them are solely in the hand of God. It concerns us therefore to submit to God's disposal of us and our affairs, since nothing can come to pass but by the will of God effecting it, or permitting it. If the fall of a sparrow is not without his will, much less can the greater events which befall men, the nobler creatures, be without the same concurrence of God's pleasure ; therefore submit : For,

Whatsoever God does, he does *wisely*. His acts are not sudden and rash, but acts of counsel ; not taken up upon the present posture of things, but the resolves of eternity. As he is the highest wisdom, so all his acts relish of it, and he guides his will by counsel. *Working all things after the counsel of his own will, Eph. 1. 11.* If God took counsel in creating the world, much more in laying a platform of government, and much more still in the act of government ; for men can frame models of government, that can never reduce them into practice. Now God being infinitely wise, and his will infinitely good, it must needs be that goodness and wisdom are the rules whereby he directs himself in his actions in the world. And what greater motive can there be to persuade our submission, than wisdom and goodness transacting all things ? God's counsel being the firmest, as well as the wisest, it is a folly both ways to resist it.

God *discovers his mind* to us by providences. Every work of God being the result of his counsel, when we see it actually brought forth into the world, what does it discover to us, but that counsel and will of his ? Every single

providence hath a language wherein God's mind is signified, much more of a train and context of them; *Tell John what things you have seen and heard, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, to the poor the gospel is preached, Luke 7. 22.* Our Saviour informs John's disciples from acts of providence, he gives him no other answer, but turns him over to interpret and construe his works in the case. Providence therefore must not be resisted, when God's mind in it is discovered; it is disingenuous to act against his pleasure and manifest mind; it is the devil's sin. Aaron, when he lost his two sons in so judicial a manner, by fire from heaven, yet *held his peace*; because God had declared his mind positively, *I will be glorified, Levit. 10. 1, 2, 3.* It is dangerous to resist the mind of God, for the word of his providence shall prosper in spite of men and devils; *My word that goes forth of my mouth, shall not return unto me void, it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it, Isa. 55. 11:* and therefore a resisting of it is termed *θεομαῖν*, a fighting against God by Gamaliel, who was a great friend to the church, *Acts 5. 38, 39.*

4. *Murmur* not at providence. Though we do not clearly resist it, if there be a repining submission, it is a partial opposition to the will of God. We might as well murmur at God's creation, as at his providence; for that is as arbitrary as this; he is under no law but his own righteous will; we should therefore leave the government of the world to God's wisdom, as we acknowledge the frame of it to be an act of his power. If God should manage his ways according to our prescriptions, what satisfaction would God have? What satisfaction would the world have? He might be unjust to himself, and unjust to others. Your own complaints would not be stilled, when you should feel the smart of your own counsels; yet if they were, what satisfaction could there be to the complaints of others, whose interests, and therefore judgments and desires, lie cross to yours? Man is a cross creature. The Israelites exclaimed to God against Pharaoh, and when the scene was changed, they did no

less murmur against Moses in the wilderness. They were as troublesome when they were delivered, as when they were afflicted. In Egypt they would have their liberty, and in the wilderness they long for the onions and garlic, though attended with their former slavery.

Let God govern the world according to his own wisdom and will, till all mankind can agree in one method to offer to him, and that I think will never be, though the world should last for ever. Murmur not therefore; whatsoever is done in the world, is the work of a wise agent, who acts for the perfection of the whole universe; and why should I murmur at that which promotes the common happiness and perfection, that being better and more desirable, than the perfection of any one particular person? Must a lutinist break all his strings because one is out of tune? And must God change his course because things are out of order with one man, though in regard of divine providence things are not out of order in themselves, or without any care, for God is a God of order? This temper will hinder our prayers; with what face can we pray to that God whose wisdom we thus repine at? If God does exercise a providence in the world, why do we murmur? If he does not take care of those things, why do we pray to him? It is a contradiction. It also hinders us from giving God the glory, and ourselves the comfortable sight of his providence. God may have taken something from us, which is the matter of our sorrow, and given another thing to us, which might be the matter of our joy. Jacob lost a joint, and got a blessing, *Gen. 23. 29, 31.* What advantage can it be to murmur? Can all your cries stop the motions of the heavens, when a storm reaches you? Can your clamours make the clouds move the faster, or persuade the showers from drenching us? Murmuring at any afflictive providence, is the way to make the rod smarter in itself, and sharper to us.

5. *Study* providence. It is a part of atheism not to think the acts of God in the world worth our serious thoughts. And if you would know the meaning of his administrations, grow up in the fear of God; *The secret*

of the Lord is with them that fear him, *Psal. 25. 14.* God is highly angry with those that mind him not; *Because they regard not the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up, Psal. 28. 5.* He shall utterly root them out.

Study providence *universally*.—The *darkest*; God brings order out of the world's confusion, even as he framed a beautiful heaven and earth out of a rude mass. The *most terrible*; these offer something worth our observation; the dreadful providence of God makes Sodom an example to after ages; *They are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, &c. Jude 7.* The *smallest*; God is a wise agent, and so the least of his actions are significant. There is nothing superfluous in those acts we account the meanest; for to act vainly and lightly, argues imperfection, which cannot be attributed to God. The wisdom of God may be much seen in those providences the blind world counts small; as a little picture is oft times of more value, and hath more of the workman's skill, than a larger which an ignorant person might prize at a higher rate; from the lilies, flowers, and sparrows, our Saviour raises excellent observations.

Study providence *regularly*.—By the *word*; compare providence and the promise together; God's manner of administrations, and the meaning of them, is understood by the word; *Thy way, O God is in the sanctuary, Psal. 73. 17.* By *faith*; we many times correct our sense by reason, when we look through a blue or green glass, and see all things blue or green; though our sense represents them so, yet our reason discovers the mistake; why should we not correct reason by faith? Indeed our purblind reason stands in as much need of a regulation by faith, as our deceitful sense does of regulation by reason. We may often observe in the gospel, that the Holy Ghost, taking notice of the particular circumstances in the bringing Christ into the world, and in the course of his life, often hath these expressions, *As it was written, that the scriptures might be fulfilled.* There is not a providence happens in the world, but there are some general rules in the word, whereby we may apprehend the meaning of it.

From God's former work discovered in his word, we may trace his present footsteps. Observe the timings of providence wherein the beauty of it appears, since *God hath made every thing beautiful in its time.*

Divine providences must be studied *entirely*.—View them in their *connexion*. A harsh touch single would not be pleasing, but may rarely affect the concert: The providences of God bear a just proportion to one another, and are beautiful in their entire scheme; but when regarded apart, we shall come far short of a delightful understanding of them. As in a piece of arras folded up, and afterwards particularly opened, we see the hand or foot of a man, the branch of a tree; or if we look on the outside, we see nothing but knots and threads, and uncouth shapes that we know not what to make of; but when it is fully opened, and we have the whole web before us, we see what histories and pleasing characters are interwoven in it. View them in their end; there is no true judgment to be made of a thing in motion, unless we have a right prospect of the end to which it tends. Many things which may seem terrible in their motion, may be excellent in their end. Providence is crowned by the end of it. Asaph was much troubled about the prosperity of the wicked, and affliction of the godly, but he was well satisfied when he understood their end, which was the end of providence too; *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary, then understood I their end, Psal. 73. 16, 17.* The rod of Moses was a serpent in its motion upon the ground; but when taken up, it was a rod again to work miracles. God set us a pattern for this in creation. He views the creatures as they came into being, and pronounced them *good*; he takes a review of them afterward in their whole frame, and the subordination of them to one another, and the ends he had destined them to, and then pronounceth them *very good*; the merciful providences of God, if viewed singly, will appear good, but if reviewed in the whole web, and the end of them, they will commence very good in our apprehensions.

Study providence *calmly*.—Take heed of passion in this



study, that is a mist before the eye of the mind ; sensual pleasures also disturb and stifle the nobler operation of the intellective part, and all improving thoughts of God's Providence ; *And the harp, and the viol, and wine, are in their feasts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operations of his hands, Isa. 5. 12.* All thoughts of them are choked by the pleasures of sense. Passions and sensual pleasures, are like flying clouds in the night, interposing themselves between the stars and our eyes, that we cannot observe the motions of them. Turbulent passions or swinish pleasures prevailing, obscure the providence of God. Our own humour and interest we often make the measures of our judgment of providence. Shimei, when Absalom rebels against his father, looks no further than his own interest, and therefore interprets it as a judgment of God in revenging the house of Saul ; *The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned, 2 Sam. 16. 7, 8.* Therefore the Spirit of God takes particular notice that he was of the house of Saul, ver. 5 ; when indeed this judgment was quite another thing, for David's sin in the matter of Uriah was written in the forehead of it.

Providence must be studied *seriously*. It is not an easy work ; for the causes of things are hid as the seminal virtues in plants, not visible till they manifest themselves. Providence is God's lanthorn in many affairs ; if we do not follow it close, we may be left in the dark, and lose our way. With much prayer ; for we cannot of ourselves find out the reason of them ; being shallow creatures, we cannot find out those infinite wise methods God observes in the managing them ; but if we seriously set to work, and seek God in it, God may inform us, and make them intelligible to us. Though a man may not be able of himself to find out the frame and motions of an engine, yet when the artificer hath explained the work, discovered the intent of the fabric, it may easily be understood ; if it be dark, whilst you seriously muse on it, God may send forth a light into you, and give you an understanding of it, Joseph thought of those things, and whilst he thought

on them, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream; God made them known to him, *Mat.* 1. 20. The Israelites saw God's acts in the bulk of them, but Moses saw his way and the manner how he wrought them. *He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel, Psal.* 103. 7. Moses had more converse with God than they, and therefore was admitted into his secrets.

We must study the providence of God *holily*. With a design to conform to that duty providence calls for. Our motions should be according to the providence of God, when we understand the intent of them. There is a call of providence. *In that day the Lord called to weeping and mourning, Isa.* 22. 12; sometimes to sorrow, sometimes to joy. If it be a providence to discover our sin, let us comply with it by humiliation; if it be to further our grace, suit it by lively and fresh actings. As the sap in plants descends with the sun's declination, and ascends at the return of the sun from the tropic; there are several graces to be exercised upon several acts of providence; either public to the church and nation, or particular to our own persons. Sometimes faith, sometimes joy, sometimes patience, sometimes sorrow for sin. There are spiritual lessons in every providence, for it not only offers something to be understood, but some things to be practised, *Mark* 10. 15. A child is brought to Christ, and Christ from thence teaches them a lesson of humility, *Luke* 13. 1, 2, 3. When Christ discourses of that sad providence of the blood of the Galileans, and the tower of Siloam, he puts them upon the exercise of repentance. The ruler enquired the time when his son began to recover, that his faith in Christ might be confirmed, for upon that circumstance much depended; and in doubtful cases after a serious study of it, and thou knowest not which way to determine, consider what makes most for God's glory and thy spiritual good, for that is the end of all: let us therefore study providence; not as children do histories, to know what men were in the world, or to please their fancy only; but as wise men to understand the motions of states, and the intrigues of counsels; to enrich them with a knowledge whereby they might be

serviceable to their country. So let us enquire into the providence of God, to understand the mind of God, the interest of the church, the wisdom and kindness of God, and our own duty in conformity thereunto.

6. *Ascribe the glory of every providence to God.* Abraham's steward petitioned God at the beginning of his business, *Gen. 24. 12*, and he blesses God at the success of it, ver. 26, 27. We must not thank the tools which are used in the making an engine, and ascribe unto them what we owe to the workman's skill: man is but the instrument, God's wisdom is the artist. Let us therefore return the glory of all where it is most rightly placed: we may see the difference between Rachel and Leah in this respect, when Rachel had a son by her maid Bilhah, she ascribes it to God's care, and calls his name Dan, which signifies judging: *God hath judged me, and heard my voice, Gen. 30. 6*. That the very name might put her in remembrance of the kindness of God in answering her prayer. And the next Naphtali, she esteems as the fruit of prayer, ver. 8, whereas Leah takes no notice of God, but vaunts of the multitude of her children, ver. 11: behold *a troop comes*. She imposes the name of Gad upon them, which also signifies *fortune* or *good luck*. And the next Asher, ver. 13, which is *fortune* or *blessed*. And we find Leah of the same mind afterward, ver. 17. It is said, *God hearkened unto her*, so that her son Issachar was an answer of prayer; but she ascribes it to a lower cause which had moved God; because she had given her maid to her husband, ver. 18. *Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but to thy name be the glory.*

END OF VOL. III.









