

12.D.6.

DISCOURSES

UPON THE

Existence and Attributes of God,

ABRIDGED

From the Writings of the late learned and venerable

STEPHEN CHARNOCK, B.D.

BY THE

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THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM, AND THE
KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY IS UNDERSTANDING.

Prov. ix. 10.

THIS IS LIFE ETERNAL THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW THEE THE ONLY
TRUE GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST WHOM THOU HAST SENT.

John xvii. 3.

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PREFACE

TO THIS ABRIDGMENT.

IT is readily granted that the existence of God lies at the very foundation of all religion, and that it is absolutely requisite for those who come to God to believe, that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him ; therefore nothing can be more important or interesting to the enquiring mind, than suitable ideas of that infinitely Holy Being, who is the alone object of religious worship, the Father of our spirits, and the God of all flesh ; for in proportion to the knowledge we have of God, we fear, love, and adore him ; and as I have not seen any author who has exceeded, or very probably equalled, Mr. CHARNOCK, ON THE EXISTENCE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD, I thought it might be of some service (under the divine blessing) for the world to be more acquainted with his sentiments ; therefore I have endeavoured, according to the best of my judgment, to select from the first volume of his works, the chief of his leading thoughts upon the above subjects, and what I consider as the cream of his ideas ; well knowing that the magnitude, price, and scarcity of his writings, are an unfurmountable obstacle to their perusal, in the way of common readers.

The

The above treatises, in my humble opinion, are of infinite value, and worthy of the study of all students in divinity, as well as of the serious attention of every christian. The subjects are grand, sublime, and beyond description interesting. What so fit for constant meditation, as the greatest and best of all Beings, and those transcendently glorious perfections with which he is clothed? Angels contemplate them with unceasing raptures, and everlasting pleasure. The unspeakable glory of a Triune Jehovah, as revealed to the unnumbered myriads of pure intelligences above, is incomprehensible by mortal men; but those parts which shine forth in his works of creation, providence and redemption, fall under the cognizance of his inferior creatures on earth; and these are in a great measure presented to view in this admirable work.

Our author likewise enters deeply into polemical divinity; without rancour or railing, he establishes truth, as the best method to confute error; with great learning and ability explains and defends the more disputable doctrines of revelation, and with peculiar sweetness, and holy zeal, expatiates upon the more practical; so that the learned and judicious may find high entertainment, and the vulgar abundant instruction: here the believer may view, with admiration and profound humility, the grand designs of infinite love, and how all the attributes of God sweetly and wonderfully harmonize in the death of the cross, and are displayed to eternal advantage in the gospel of Christ; these truths cannot fail to warm and profit the spiritually minded,
and

and create in them an increasing desire to feel more of their genuine influence, that they may be conformed daily to the moral image of the Redeemer, and grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, and thus be prepared to dwell in the beatific presence for ever and ever. As to the manner how the above subjects are handled by the venerable Author, take the sentiments of those worthy men, VEEL and ADAMS, who published his works, “ The dress is compleat and decent, yet
“ not gaudy or theatrical ; the rhetoric masculine
“ and vigorous, such as became a pulpit, and was
“ never borrowed from the stage ; the expressions
“ full, clear, apt, and such as are best suited to the
“ weightiness and spirituality of the truths here delivered. It is plain he was no empty preacher,
“ but was more for sense than sound ; filled up his
“ words with matter, and chose rather to inform
“ his hearer’s minds than to gratify any itching
“ ears ; in a word, he handles the great truths of
“ the gospel with that perspicuity, gravity, and
“ majesty, which best become the oracles of God ;
“ and we have reason to believe, that there is no
“ judicious and unbiassed reader, but will acknowledge this to be incomparably the best practical
“ treatise the world ever saw in English upon this
“ subject.”

The reader will find the author’s reasoning strong, perspicuous, and convincing ; the arguments just and conclusive ; the style good and nervous ; the inferences pertinent and practical ; and
the

the Editor is fully persuaded, that before the pious reader peruses half of this volume, he will clearly see that so far from any exaggeration of the work in this preface, the half was not told him ; for here the most precious truths are well explained, and therefore calculated to inform the judgment, enrich the mind, influence the affections, and lead forth the whole man in holy love and unfeigned obedience, to the great Author of eternal salvation.

Here let me stand and adore those eternally glorious perfections, of the one God in three persons ; and whilst enabled by faith to view them graciously displayed in the contrivance, execution, and application, of unmerited mercy to my guilty soul, and through the atonement of Christ all engaged for my everlasting security, may it be my only and supreme ambition, to glorify God with my body and spirit, which are his ; and from the deepest sense of infinite obligations to discriminating love, devote myself to his service, which is my highest honour, and the end of all my wishes.

I have taken no further liberty with the Author's style, than now and then to put in a customary word, instead of one that is become obsolete ; for I consider his language as not only intelligible, but pleasant, even to a modern taste ; a competent judge of proper diction, paid Mr. CHARNOCK a fine compliment, when he spoke of him as defending the gospel, “ with his masculine style, and an inexhaustable vein of thought.”* Considerable
pains

* See Hervey, Diss. “ page 206, London edit.

pains have been taken to modernize the orthography, and thus to render the work more acceptable; not that I presume to say that it is now altogether modern: for to extract the ideas of the author, and clothe them in a modern dress, was a task I did not think myself equal to; and were that done, in the opinion of many, the work would not have been so much the author's, as it is in its present form. As it stands it is particularly designed for common readers, who have but little time, and frequently less patience to read books, and who are struck with despair at the very sight of a large folio; but it may serve also as a remembrancer to those who have read the original, inasmuch as the principal thoughts upon every subject are carefully preserved, in the same order that the author himself placed them; many of his sub-divisions, which appeared useless and rather perplexing, are left out, but the sense is kept entire. There are, I acknowledge, many valuable reflections which appeared to me more remote from the subject, as well as some corollaries, inferences and uses, altogether omitted, that the work might be reduced to its present size; but with an humble dependence upon the blessing of God, who accomplisheth the greatest designs by the weakest means, and thus effectually secures the glory to himself and hides pride from man, I trust, and sincerely pray, that the work, even in this contracted state (though it falls as much short of the perfection as it does of the length of the original) may prove a seasonable
antidote



antidote against the increasing prevalence of atheism and infidelity; or, at least, establish the minds of the wavering, and furnish them with arguments to silence and confound their gainfayers.

I have not words, sufficiently to express my esteem for the works of this amiable writer. I account it one of the greatest blessings of my life, that providence put them into my hands; for the pleasure and profit which I have derived from them was one of the chief motives in determining me to undertake this Abridgment. Having also consulted several judicious friends, well acquainted with Mr. CHARNOCK's works, whether such an undertaking appeared eligible, they encouraged my design. The chain or connection of ideas is so well kept up through the whole treatise, that few readers will perceive any thing wanting; and truly the work, in its present abridged state, is a good *Body of Divinity*.

The only apology that I shall make for thus intruding upon the public is, that what I have done is with a sincere desire to serve the best interests of mankind. How far my intention will, in the mind of the public, atone for my failings, I know not. That the great Head of the Church may accompany the whole with his presence and blessing, is the earnest prayer of the reader's servant for Christ's sake,

GRIFFITH WILLIAMS.

GATE-STREET, LINCOLN'S-INN-FIELDS,

JAN. 27, 1797.

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DISCOURSES, &c.

On the Existence of God.

Pfalm xiv. 1.

THE FOOL HATH SAID IN HIS HEART, THERE IS NO GOD;
THEY ARE CORRUPT, THEY HAVE DONE ABOMINABLE
WORKS: THERE IS NONE THAT DOETH GOOD.

THIS psalm is a description of the deplorable corruption by nature of every son of Adam, since the withering of that common root. Some restrain it to the Gentiles, as a wilderness full of briars and thorns, as not concerning the Jews, the garden of God, planted by his grace, and watered by the dew of heaven: but the apostle, the best interpreter, rectifies this in extending it by name to Jews, as well as Gentiles, Rom. iii. 9; and verses 10, 11, 12, cite part of this psalm, and other passages of scripture for the further evidence of it, concluding, by Jews and Gentiles, every person in the world naturally in this state of corruption.

The text then is a description of man's corruption.

First, Of his mind: *The fool hath said in his heart.* No better title than that of a fool is afforded to the atheist.

Secondly, Of the other faculties. 1. In sins of commission, exprest by the loathsomeness, *corrupt, abominable.* 2. In sins of omission, *there is none that doeth good:* He lays down the corruption of

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the mind as the cause, the corruption of the other faculties as the effect.

1. It is a great folly to deny or doubt of the existence or being of God.—Or, an atheist is a great fool.

2. Practical atheism is natural to man in his corrupt state. It is against nature as constituted by God; but natural, as nature is depraved by man: the absolute disowning of the being of a God is not natural to men, but the contrary is natural; but an inconsideration of God, or misrepresentation of his nature, is natural to man as corrupt.

3. A secret atheism, or a partial atheism, is the spring of all the wicked practices in the world. The disorders of the life spring from the ill dispositions of the heart.

For the first, every atheist is a grand fool. If he were not a fool, he would not imagine a thing so contrary to the stream of the universal reason of the world, contrary to the rational dictates of his own soul, and contrary to the testimony of every creature and link in the chain of the creation: If he were not a fool, he would not strip himself of humanity, and degrade himself lower than the despicable brute.

It is a folly; for though God be so inaccessible, that we cannot know him perfectly, yet he is so much in the light, that we cannot be totally ignorant of him: as he cannot be comprehended in his essence, he cannot be unknown in his existence; it is as easy by reason to understand that he is, as it is difficult to know what he is.

The demonstrations reason furnisheth us with for the existence of God, will be evidences of the atheist's folly; one would think there were little need of spending time in evidencing this truth, since in the principle of it, it seems to be so universally owned, and at the first proposal and demand, gains the assent of most men.

But,

But, doth not the growth of atheism among us render this necessary? may it not justly be suspected, that the swarms of atheists are more numerous in our times, than history records to have been in any age, when men will not only say it in their hearts, but publish it with their lips, and boast that they have shaken off those shackles which bind other men's consciences? Doth not the bare-faced debauchery of men evidence such a settled sentiment, or at least a careless belief of the truth, which lies at the root and sprouts up in such venomous branches in the world? Can men's hearts be free from that principle wherewith their practices are so openly depraved? It is true, the light of nature shines too vigorously for the power of man totally to put it out; yet loathsome actions impair and weaken the actual thoughts and considerations of a deity, and are like mists that darken the light of the sun, though they cannot extinguish it: their consciences, as a candlestick, must hold it, though their unrighteousness obscure it, Rom. i. 18. *Who hold the truth in unrighteousness.* The engraved characters of the law of nature remain, though they daub them with their muddy lusts to make them illegible: so that since the inconsideration of a deity is the cause of all the wickedness and extravagancies of men; and as Austin saith, "the proposition is always true, the fool hath said in his heart," &c. and more evidently true in this age than any, it will not be unnecessary to discourse of the demonstrations of this first principle.

The apostles spent little time in urging this truth; it was taken for granted all over the world, and they were generally devout in the worship of those idols they thought to be gods: that age run from one God to many, and our age is running from one God to none at all.

The existence of God is the foundation of all religion. The whole building totters if the foundation

dation be out of course: if we have not deliberate and right notions of it, we shall perform no worship, no service, yield no affection to him. If there be not a God, it is impossible there can be one; for eternity is essential to the notion of a God; so all religion would be vain, and unreasonable to pay homage to that which is not in being, nor can ever be. We must *first believe that he is*, and that he is what he declares himself to be, before we can seek him, adore him, and devote our affections to him: we cannot pay God a due and regular homage, unless we understand him in his perfections, what he is; and we can pay him no homage at all, unless we believe that he is.

It is fit we should know why we believe, that our belief of a God may appear to be upon undeniable evidence, and that we may give a better reason for his existence, than that we have heard our parents and teachers tell us so, and our acquaintance think so. It is as much as to say there is no God, when we know not why we believe there is, and would not consider the arguments for his existence.

It is necessary to depress that secret atheism which is in the heart of every man by nature. Though every visible object which offers itself to our sense, presents a deity to our minds, and exhorts us to subscribe to the truth of it; yet there is a root of atheism springing up sometimes in wavering thoughts and foolish imaginations, inordinate actions, and secret wishes. Certain it is, that every man that doth not love God, denies God; now can he that disaffects him, and hath a slavish fear of him, wish his existence, and say to his own heart with any cheerfulness, there is a God, and make it his chief care to persuade himself of it? he would persuade himself there is no God, and stifle the seeds of it in his reason and conscience, that he might have the greatest liberty to entertain the allurements of the flesh.

It

It is necessary to excite men to daily and actual considerations of God and his nature, which would be a bar to much of that wickedness which overflows in the lives of men.

Nor is it unuseful to those who effectually believe and love him; for those who have had a converse with God, and felt his powerful influences in the secrets of their hearts, to take a prospect of those satisfactory accounts which reason gives of that God they adore and love; to see every creature justify them in their owning of him, and affections to him: indeed the evidences of a God striking upon the conscience of those who resolve to cleave to sin as their chiefest darling, will dash their pleasures with unwelcome mixtures.

I shall further premise this,

That the folly of atheism is evidenced by the light of reason. Men that will not listen to scripture, as having no counterpart of it in their souls, cannot easily deny natural reason, which riseth up on all sides for the justification of this truth. There is a natural as well as a revealed knowledge, and the book of the creatures is legible in declaring the being of a God, as well as the scriptures are in declaring the nature of a God; there are outward objects in the world, and common principles in the conscience, whence it may be inferred:

For God, in regard of his existence, is not only the discovery of faith, but of reason. God hath revealed not only his being, but some sparks of his eternal power and godhead in his works, as well as in his word. Rom. i. 19, 20. *God hath shewed it unto them*—how? in his works; by the things that are made, it is a discovery to our reason, as shining in the creatures; and an object of our faith, as breaking out upon us in the scriptures: it is an article in our faith, and an article of our reason. Faith supposeth natural knowledge, as grace supposeth nature. Faith indeed is properly

of things above reason, purely depending upon revelation: what can be demonstrated by natural light, is not so properly the object of faith; though in regard of the addition of a certainty by revelation it is so.

The belief that God is, which the apostle speaks of, is not so much of the bare existence of God, as what God is in relation to them that seek to him, viz. a rewarder. The apostle speaks of the faith of Abel, the faith of Enoch; such a faith that pleases God: but the faith of Abel testified in his sacrifice, and the faith of Enoch testified in his walking with God, was not simply a faith of the existence of God. Cain in the time of Abel, other men in the world in the time of Enoch, believed this as well as they: but it was a faith joined with the worship of God, and desires to please him in the way of his own appointment; so that they believed that God was such as he had declared himself to be in his promise to Adam, such an one as would be as good as his word, and bruise the serpent's head. He that seeks to God according to the mind of God, must believe that he is such a God that will pardon sin, and justify a seeker of him; that he is a God of that ability and will, to justify a sinner in that way he hath appointed for the clearing the holiness of his nature, and vindicating the honor of his law violated by man.

No man can seek God or love God, unless he believe him to be thus; and he cannot seek God without a discovery of his own mind how he would be sought. For it is not a seeking God in any way of man's invention, that renders him capable of this desired fruit of a reward: he that believes God as a rewarder, must believe the promise of God concerning the Messiah. Men under the conscience of sin, cannot tell without a divine discovery, whether God will reward, or how he will reward the seekers of him; and therefore cannot
act

act towards him as an object of faith. Would any man seek God merely because he is, or love him because he is, if he did not know that he should be acceptable to him? The bare existence of a thing is not the ground of affection to it; but those qualities of it and our interest in it, which render it amiable and delightful. How can men whose consciences fly in their faces, seek God or love him, without this knowledge, that he is a rewarder? Nature doth not show any way to a sinner, how to reconcile God's provoked justice with his tenderness. The faith the apostle speaks of here, is a faith that eyes the reward as an encouragement, and the will of God as the rule of its acting; he doth not speak simply of the existence of God.

I have spoken the more of this place, because the Socinians use this to decry any natural knowledge of God, and that the existence of God is only to be known by revelation; so that by that reason, any one that lived without the scripture hath no ground to believe the being of a God.

The scripture ascribes a knowledge of God to all nations in the world, Rom. i. 19. not only a faculty of knowing, if they had arguments and demonstrations; as an ignorant man in any art hath a faculty to know; but it ascribes an actual knowledge, ver. 19, *manifest in them*, ver. 21, *they knew God*; not they might know him, they knew him when they did not care for knowing him: the notices of God are as intelligible to us by reason, as any object in the world is visible; he is written in every letter.

We are often in the scripture sent to take a prospect of the creatures for a discovery of God. The apostles drew arguments from the topics of nature, when they discoursed with those that owned the scripture, Rom. i. 19. As well as when they treated with those that were ignorant of it; as Acts xiv. 16, 17. And among the philosophers of

Athens, Acts xvii. 27, 29. such arguments the Holy Ghost in the apostles thought sufficient to convince men of, the existence, unity, spirituality, and patience of God. Such arguments had not been used by them, and the prophets, from the visible things in the world, to silence the Gentiles with whom they dealt, had not this truth, and much more about God, been demonstrable by natural reason: they knew well enough that probable arguments would not satisfy piercing and inquisitive minds.

In Paul's account, the testimony of the creatures was without contradiction; God himself justifies this way of proceeding by his own example, and remits Job to the consideration of the creatures, to spell out something of his divine perfections; and this is so convincing an argument of the existence of God, that God never vouchsafed any miracle, or put forth any act of omnipotency, besides what was evident in the creatures, for the satisfaction of the curiosity of any atheist, or the evincing of his being, as he hath done for the evidencing those truths which were not written in the book of nature, or for the restoring a decayed worship, or the protection or deliverance of his people: Those miracles in publishing the gospel, indeed did demonstrate the existence of some supreme power; but they were not seals designedly affixt for that, but for the confirmation of that truth, which was above the ken of purblind reason, and purely the birth of divine revelation: yet what proves the truth of any spiritual doctrine, proves also in that act the existence of the divine author of it: the revelation always implies a revealer, and that which manifests it to be a revelation, manifests also the supreme revealer of it. By the same light the sun manifests other things to us, it also manifests itself. But what miracles could rationally be supposed to work upon an atheist, who

who is not drawn to a sense of the truth proclaimed aloud by so many wonders of the creation?

Let us now proceed to the demonstration of the atheists folly.

It is a folly to deny or doubt of a sovereign being, incomprehensible in his nature, infinite in his essence and perfections, independent in his operations, who hath given being to the whole frame of sensible and intelligible creatures, and governs them according to their several natures, by an inconceivable wisdom; who fills the heavens with the glory of his majesty, and the earth with the influences of his goodness.

It is a folly inexcusable, to renounce in this case all appeal to universal consent, and the joint assurances of the creatures.

It is a folly to deny or doubt of that which hath been the acknowledged sentiment of all nations, in all places and ages. There is no nation but hath owned some kind of religion, and therefore no nation but hath consented in the notion of a supreme creator and governor.

1. This hath been universal.
2. It hath been constant and uninterrupted.
3. Natural and innate.

First, It hath been universally assented to by the judgments and practices of all nations in the world.

No nation hath been exempt from it. All histories of former and latter ages have not produced any one nation but fell under the force of this truth. Though they have differed in their religions, they have agreed in this truth; here both Heathen, Turk, Jew and Christian, center without any contention. No quarrel was ever commenced upon this score; though about other opinions wars have been sharp and enmities irreconcilable: the notion of the existence of a deity was the same in all, Indians as well as Britons; Americans as well as Jews.

It

It hath not been an opinion peculiar to this or that people, to this or that sect of philosophers; but hath been as universal as the reason whereby men are differenced from other creatures; so that some have rather defined man by *animal religiosum*, than *animal rationale*. It is so twisted with reason, that man cannot be accounted rational, unless he own an object of religion: therefore he that understands not this, renounceth his humanity when he renounceth a divinity.

No instance can be given of any one people in the world that disclaimed it. It hath been owned by the wise and ignorant, by the learned and stupid, by those who had no other guide but the dimmest light of nature, as well as by those whose candles were snufft by a more polite education, and that without any solemn debate and contention. Though some philosophers have been known to change their opinions in the concerns of nature, yet none can be proved to have absolutely changed their opinion concerning the being of a God; one died for asserting one God; none in the former ages upon record hath died for asserting no God. Go to the utmost bounds of America, you may find people without some broken pieces of the law of nature, but not without this signature and stamp upon them, though they wanted commerce with other nations; except as savage as themselves, in whom the light of nature was as it were sunk into the socket, who are but one remove from brutes, who clothe not their bodies, cover not their shame, yet were they as soon known to own a God, as they were known to be a people: they were possessed with the notion of a supreme being, the author of the world; had an object of religious adoration, put up prayers to the deity they owned for the good things they wanted, and the diverting the evils they feared: no people so untamed where absolute perfect atheism hath gained a footing.

Not

Not one nation of the world known in the time of the Romans that were without their ceremonies, whereby they signified their devotion to a deity. They had their places of worship, where they made their vows, presented their prayers, offered their sacrifices, and implored the assistance of what they thought to be a God. And in their distresses, run immediately, without any deliberation, to their gods; so that the notion of a deity was as inward and settled in them as their own souls, and indeed runs in the blood of mankind: the distempers of the understanding, cannot utterly deface it, you shall scarce find the most distracted bedlam in his raving fits to deny a God, though he may blaspheme and fancy himself one.

Nor doth the idolatry and multiplicity of gods in the world weaken, but confirm this universal consent. Whatsoever unworthy conceits men have had of God in all nations, or whatsoever degrading representations they have made of him, yet they all concur in this, that there is a supreme power to be adored. Though one people worshipped the sun, others the fire, and the Egyptians, gods out of their rivers, gardens, and fields; yet the notion of a deity existent, who created and governed the world, and conferred daily benefits upon them, was maintained by all, though applied to the stars, and in part to those fordid creatures. All the dagon's of the world establish this truth, and fall down before it. Had not the nations owned the being of a God, they had never offered incense to an idol: had there not been a deep impression of the existence of a deity, they had never exalted creatures below themselves to the honour of altars: men could not so easily have been deceived by forged deities, if they had not a notion of a real one. Their fondness to set up others in the place of God, evidenced a natural knowledge that there was one, who had a right to be worshipped. If there
were

were not this sentiment of deity no man would ever have made an image of a piece of wood; worshipped it, prayed to it, and said *deliver me, for thou art my God*. They applied a general notion to a particular image. The difference is in the manner, and immediate object of worship, not in the formal ground of worship. The worship sprung from a true principle, though it was not applied to a right object: while they were rational creatures, they could not deface the notion; yet while they were corrupt creatures, it was not difficult to apply themselves to a wrong object from a true principle. A blind man knows he hath a way to go as well as one of the clearest sight, but because of his blindness he may miss the way and stumble into a ditch. No man would be imposed upon to take a Bristol stone instead of a diamond, if he did not know there were such things as diamonds in the world: nor any man spread forth his hands to an idol, if he were altogether without the sense of a deity. Whether it be a false or a true god men apply to, yet in both, the natural sentiment of a God is evidenced; all their mistakes were grafts inserted in this stock, since they would multiply gods rather than deny a deity.

How should such a general submission be entered into by all the world, so as to adore things of a base alloy, if the force of religion were not such, that in any fashion a man would seek the satisfaction of his natural instinct to some object of worship? This great diversity confirms this consent, to be a good argument, for it evidenceth it not to be a cheat, combination, or conspiracy to deceive, or a mutual intelligence, but every one finds it in his climate, yea in himself. People would never have given the title of a god to men or brutes, had there not been a pre-existing and unquestioned persuasion, that there was such a being; how else should the notion of a god come into their mind?

mind? the notion that there is a god must be more ancient.

This universal consent is not prejudiced by some few dissenters. History doth not reckon twenty profest atheists in all ages in the compass of the whole world: and we have not the name of any one absolute atheist upon record in scripture: yet it is questioned, whether any of them, noted in history with that infamous name, were down-right deniers of the existence of God, but rather because they disparaged the deities commonly worshipped by the nations where they lived, as being of a clearer reason to discern, that those qualities, vulgarly attributed to their gods, as lusts and luxury, wantonness and quarrels, were unworthy the nature of a God. But suppose they were really what they are termed to be, what are they to the multitude of men, that have sprung out of the loins of Adam? not so much as one grain of ashes is to all that were ever turned into that form by any fires in your chimnies. And many more were not sufficient to weigh down the contrary consent of the whole world, and bear down an universal impression. Should the laws of a country, agreed universally to, by the whole body of the people be accounted vain, because a hundred men of those millions disapprove of them, when not their reason, but their folly and base interest, persuade them to dislike them and dispute against them? What if some men be blind, shall any conclude from thence that eyes are not natural to men? shall we say that the notion of the existence of God is not natural to men, because a very small number have been of a contrary opinion? shall a man in a dungeon, that never saw the sun, deny that there is a sun, because one or two blind men tell him there is none, when thousands assure him there is? Why should then the exceptions of a few, not one to millions, discredit that which is voted certainly true by the joint

joint consent of the world? Add this to, that if those who are reported to be atheists had had any considerable reason to step aside from the common persuasion of the whole world, it is a wonder it met not with entertainment by great numbers of those, who, by reason of their notorious wickedness, and inward disquiets, might reasonably be thought to wish in their hearts that there were no God. It is strange if there were any reason on their side, that in so long a space of time, as hath run out from the creation of the world, there could not be engaged a considerable number to frame a society for the profession of it. It hath died with the person that started it, and vanished as soon as it appeared.

To conclude this, is it not folly for any man to deny or doubt of the being of a God, to dissent from all mankind, and stand in contradiction to human nature? What is the general dictate of nature, is a certain truth. It is impossible, that nature, can naturally and universally lie; and therefore, those that ascribe all to nature, and set it in the place of God, contradict themselves, if they give not credit to it in that which it universally affirms. A general consent of all nations is to be esteemed as a law of nature. Nature cannot plant in the minds of all men an assent to a falsity, for then the laws of nature would be destructive to the reason and minds of men. How is it possible, that a falsity should be a persuasion spread through all nations, engraven upon the minds of all men, men of the most towering, and men of the most creeping understanding; that they should consent to it in all places, and in those places where the nations have not had any known commerce with the rest of the known world? A consent not settled by any law of man to constrain people to a belief of it: and indeed it is impossible, that any law of man can constrain the belief of the mind. Would not he deservedly be accounted a fool, that should deny that to be
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gold, which hath been tried and examined by a great number of knowing goldsmiths, and hath past the test of all their touch-stones? what excess of folly would it be for him to deny it to be true gold, if it had been tried by all that had skill in that metal in all nations in the world?

Secondly, It hath been a constant and uninterrupted consent. It hath been as antient as the first age of the world; no man is able to mention any time, from the beginning of the world, wherein this notion hath not been universally owned; it is as old as mankind, and hath run along with the course of the sun, nor can the date be fixed lower than that.

In all the changes of the world, this hath been maintained. In the overturnings of the government of states, the alteration of modes of worship, this hath stood unshaken. The reasons upon which it was founded were in all revolutions of time accounted satisfactory and convincing; nor could absolute atheism in the changes of any laws ever gain the favour of any one body of people to be established by a law. When the honour of the heathen idols was laid in the dust, this suffered no impair. The being of one god was more vigorously owned, when the unreasonableness of multiplicity of gods was manifest; and grew taller by the detection of counterfeits. When other parts of the law of nature have been violated by some nations, this hath maintained its standing. The long series of ages hath been so far from blotting it out, that it hath more strongly confirmed it, and maketh further progress in the confirmation of it. Time, which hath eaten out the strength of other things, and blasted mere inventions, hath not been able to consume this. The discovery of all other impostures, never made this by any society of men to be suspected as one. It will not be easy to name any imposture that hath walked perpetually in the world without

without being discovered, and whipped out by some nation or other. Falsities have never been so universally and constantly owned without public control and question: and since the world hath detected many errors of the former age, and learning been increased, this hath been so far from being dimmed, that it hath shone out clearer with the increase of natural knowledge, and received fresh and more vigorous confirmations.

The fears and anxieties in the consciences of men have given them sufficient occasion to root it out, had it been possible for them to do it. If the notion of the existence of God, had been possible to have been dashed out of the minds of men, they would have done it, rather than have suffered so many troubles in their souls upon the commission of sin; since they did not want wickedness and wit in so many corrupt ages to have attempted it and prospered in it, had it been possible. How comes it therefore to pass, that such a multitude of profligate persons, that have been in the world since the fall of man, should not have rooted out this principle, and dispossessed the minds of men of that which gave birth to their tormenting fears? How is it possible, that all should agree together in a thing which created fear, and an obligation against the interest of the flesh, if it had been free for men to discharge themselves of it? No man, as far as corrupt nature bears sway in him, is willing to live controlled.

The first man would rather be a god himself than under one: why should men continue this notion in them, which shackled them in their vile inclinations, if it had been in their power utterly to deface it? If it were an imposture, how comes it to pass that all the wicked ages of the world could never discover that to be a cheat, which kept them in continual alarms? Men wanted not will to shake off such apprehensions; as Adam so all his posterity
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are desirous to hide themselves from God upon the commission of sin, and by the same reason they would hide God from their souls. What is the reason they could never attain their will and their wish, by all their endeavours? Could they possibly have satisfied themselves that there were no God, they had discarded their fears, the disturbers of the repose of their lives, and been unbridled in their pleasures. The wickedness of the world would never have preserved that which was a perpetual molestation to it, had it been possible to be rased out.

But since men under the turmoils and lashes of their own consciences could never bring their hearts to a settled dissent from this truth, it evidenceth, that as it took its birth at the beginning of the world, it cannot expire, no not in the ashes of it, nor in any thing but the reduction of the soul, to that nothing from whence it sprung. This conception is so perpetual, that the nature of the soul must be dissolved before it is rooted out, nor can it be extinct while the soul endures.

Let it be considered also by us that own the scripture, that the devil deems it impossible to root out this sentiment. It seems to be so perpetually fixed, that the devil did not think fit to tempt man to the denial of the existence of a deity, but persuaded him to believe he might ascend to that dignity, and become a God himself, Gen. iii. 1. *Hath God said?* and he there owns him, ver. v. *Ye shall become as gods.* He owns God in the question he asks the woman, and persuades our first parents to be gods themselves. And in all stories, both antient and modern, the devil was never able to tincture mens minds with a professed denial of the deity, which would have opened a door to a world of more wickedness than hath been acted, and took away the bar to the breaking out of that evil, which is naturally in the hearts of men, to

the greater prejudice of human societies. He wanted not malice to raze out all the notions of God, but power: he knew it was impossible to effect it, and therefore in vain to attempt it. He set up himself in several places of the ignorant world as a God, but never was able to overthrow the opinion of the being of a God: the impressions of a deity were so strong as not to be struck out by the malice and power of hell.

What a folly is it then in any to contradict or doubt of this truth, which all the periods of time have not been able to wear out; which all the wars and quarrels of men with their own consciences have not been able to destroy; which ignorance and debauchery, its two greatest enemies, cannot weaken; which all the falsehoods and errors, which have reigned in one or other part of the world, have not been able to banish; which lives in the consents of men in spite of all their wishes to the contrary, and hath grown stronger and shone clearer by the improvements of natural reason.

Thirdly, Natural and innate; which pleads strongly for the perpetuity of it. It is natural, though some think it not a principle writ in the heart of man; it is so natural that every man is born with a restless instinct to be of some kind of religion or other, which implies some object of religion. The impression of a deity is as common as reason, and of the same age: it is a relic of knowledge after the fall of Adam, like fire under ashes, which sparkles as soon as ever the heap of ashes is opened. A notion sealed up in the soul of every man; else how could those people who were unknown to one another, separate by seas and mounts, differing in various customs, and manner of living; had no mutual intelligence one with another, light upon this as a common sentiment, if they had not been guided by one uniform reason in all their minds, by one nature common to them all:

all: though their climates be different, their tempers and constitutions various, their imaginations in some things as distant from one another as heaven is from earth, the ceremonies of their religion not all of the same kind; yet wherever you find human nature, you find this settled persuasion. So that the notion of a God seems to be twisted with the nature of man, and is the first natural branch of common reason; or upon either the first inspection of a man into himself and his own state and constitution, or upon the first sight of any external visible object. Nature within man, and nature without man agree upon the first meeting together to form this sentiment, that there is a God: it is as natural as any thing we call a common principle: one thing which is called a common principle and natural is, that the whole is greater than the parts. If this be not born with us, yet the exercise of reason essential to man settles it as a certain maxim; upon the dividing any thing into several parts, he finds every part less than when they were altogether. By the same exercise of reason, we cannot cast our eyes upon any thing in the world, or exercise our understandings upon ourselves, but we must presently imagine, there was some cause of those things, some cause of myself and my own being; so that this truth is as natural to man as any thing he can call most natural, or a common principle.

It must be confessed by all, that there is a law of nature writ upon the hearts of men, which will direct them to commendable actions, if they will attend to the writing in their own consciences. This law cannot be considered without the notice of a law-giver: for it is but a natural and obvious conclusion, that some superior hand engrafted those principles in man, since he finds something in him twitching him upon the pursuit of uncomely actions, though his heart be mightily inclined to them:

man knows he never planted this principle of reluctance in his own soul; he can never be the cause of that which he cannot be friends with. If he were the cause of it, why doth he not rid himself of it? No man would endure a thing that doth frequently molest and disquiet him, if he could cashier it. It is therefore sown in man by some hand more powerful than man, which riseth so high and is rooted so strong, that all the force which man can use cannot pull it up. If therefore this principle be natural in man, and the law of nature be natural, the notion of a law-giver must be as natural as the notion of a printer, or that there is a printer is obvious upon the sight of a stamp impress. After this, the multitude of effects in the world step in to strengthen this beam of natural light, and the direct conclusion from thence is, that the same power which made those outward objects, implanted this inward principle: this is sown in us, born with us, and sprouts up with our growth; or, as one saith, “It is like letters carved upon the bark of a young plant, which grows up together with us, and the longer it grows the letters are more legible.”

This is the ground of this universal consent, and why it may well be called natural.

This will more evidently appear to be natural, because this consent could not be by mere tradition; nor by any mutual intelligence of governors, to keep people in awe, which are two things the atheist pleads; the first hath no strong foundation, and the other is as absurd and foolish as it is wicked and abominable. Nor was it fear first introduced it.

It could not be by mere tradition.—Many things indeed are entertained by posterity which their ancestors delivered to them, and that out of a common reverence to their fore-fathers, and an opinion that they had a better prospect of things than the
increase

increase of the corruption of succeeding ages would permit them to have. But if this be a tradition handed from our ancestors, they also must receive it from theirs; we must then ascend to the first man; we cannot else escape confounding ourselves with running into infinite. Was it then the only tradition he left to them? is it not probable he acquainted them with other things in conjunction with this—the nature of God, the way to worship him, the manner of the world's existence, his own state? We may reasonably suppose him to have a good stock of knowledge, what is become of it? it cannot be supposed, that the first man should acquaint his posterity with an object of worship, and leave them ignorant of a mode of worship, and the end of worship. We find in scripture his immediate posterity did the first in sacrifices, and without doubt they were not ignorant of the other. How came men to be so uncertain in all other things, and so confident of this, if it were only a tradition? how did debates and irreconcilable questions start up concerning other things, and this remain untouched, but by a small number? Whatsoever tradition the first man left besides this is lost, and no way recoverable, but by the revelation God hath made in his word.

How comes it to pass this of a God is longer lived, than all the rest which we may suppose man left to his immediate descendants? How came men to retain the one, and forget the other? What was the reason this survived the ruin of the rest, and surmounted the uncertainties into which the other sunk? Was it likely it should be handed down alone without other attendants on it at first? Why did it not expire among the Americans, who have lost the account of their own descent, and the stock from whence they sprung, and cannot reckon above eight hundred or a thousand years at most? Why was not the manner of the worship of a God

transmitted as well as that of his existence? How came men to dissent in their opinions concerning his nature, whether he was corporeal or incorporeal, finite or infinite, omnipresent or limited? Why were not men as negligent to transmit this of his existence as that of his nature? No reason can be rendered for the security of this above the other, but that there is so clear a tincture of a deity upon the minds of men, such traces and shadows of him in the creatures, such indelible instincts within, and invincible arguments without, to keep up this universal consent. The characters are so deep that they cannot possibly be rased out, which would have been one time or other, in one nation or other, had it depended only upon tradition, since one age shakes off frequently the sentiments of the former.

I cannot think of above one which may be called a tradition, which indeed was kept up among all nations, viz. Sacrifices, which could not be natural but instituted: what ground could they have in nature, to imagine that the blood of beasts could expiate and wash off the guilt and stains of a rational creature? yet they had in all places (but among the Jews, and some of them only) lost the knowledge of the reason and end of the institution, which the scripture acquaints us was to typify and signify the redemption by the promised seed. This tradition hath been superannuated and laid aside in most parts of the world, while this notion of the existence of a God hath stood firm.

But suppose it were a tradition, was it likely to be a mere intention and figment of the first man? Had there been no reason for it, his posterity would soon have found out the weakness of its foundation: what advantage had it been to transmit so great a falshood to kindle the fears or raise the hopes of his posterity, if there were no God? It cannot be supposed he should be so void of that natural affection, men in all ages bear to their descendants, as
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so grossly to deceive them, and be so contrary to the simplicity and plainness which appears in all things nearest their original.

Neither was it by any mutual intelligence of governors among themselves to keep people in subjection to them. If it were a political design at first, it seems it met with the general nature of mankind very ready to give it entertainment.

It is unaccountable how this should come to pass. It must be either by a joint assembly of them, or a mutual correspondence. If by an assembly, who were the persons? let the name of any one be mentioned—when was the time? where was the place of this appearance? by what authority did they meet together? who made the first motion, and first started this great principle of policy? by what means could they assemble from such distant parts of the world? human histories are utterly silent in it, and the scripture, the antientest history gives an account of the attempt of Babel, but not a word of any design of this nature.

What mutual correspondence could such have, whose interests are for the most part different, and their designs contrary to one another? How could they who were divided by such vast seas have this mutual converse? How could those who were different in their customs and manners, agree so unanimously together in one thing to gull the people? If there had been such a correspondence between the governors of all nations, what is the reason some nations should be unknown to the world till of late times? how could the business be so secretly managed, as not to take vent, and issue in a discovery to the world? Can reason suppose so many in a joint conspiracy, and no man's conscience in his life under sharp afflictions, or on his death bed, when conscience is most awakened, constrain him to reveal openly the cheat that beguiled the world? How came they to be so unanimous

in this notion, and to differ in their rites almost in every country? why could they not agree in one mode of worship throughout all the world, as well as in this universal notion? If there were not a mutual intelligence, it cannot be conceived how in every nation such a state-engineer should rise up with the same trick to keep people in awe. What is the reason we cannot find any law in any one nation to constrain men to the belief of the existence of a God, since politic stratagems have been often fortified by laws? besides, such men make use of principles received to effect their contrivances, and are not so impolitic as to build designs upon principles that have no foundation in nature: some heathen law givers have pretended a converse with their gods to make their laws be received by the people with a greater veneration, and fix with stronger obligation the observance and perpetuity of them; but this was not the introducing of a new principle, but the supposition of an old received notion, that there was a God, and an application of that principle to their present design. The pretence had been vain had not the notion of a God been ingrafted: politicians are so little possessed with a reverence of God, that the first mighty one in the scripture, (which may reasonably gain with the atheist the credit of the ancientest history in the world) is represented without any fear of God. An invader and oppressor of his neighbours, and reputed the introducer of a new worship, and being the first that built cities after the flood (as Cain was the first builder of them before the flood) built also idolatry with them; and erected a new worship, and was so far from strengthening that notion the people had of God that he endeavoured to corrupt it; the first idolatry in common histories being noted to proceed from that part of the world, the ancientest idol being at Babylon, and supposed to be first invented by this person; whence, by the way, perhaps Rome is
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in the Revelations called Babylon, with respect to that similitude of their saint worship, to the idolatry first set up in that place. It is evident politicians have often changed the worship of a nation, but it is not upon record that the first thoughts of an object of worship ever entered into the minds of people by any trick of theirs.

But to return to the present argument: the being of a God is owned by some nations that have scarce any form of policy among them. It is as wonderful how any wit should hit upon such an invention, as it is absurd to ascribe it to any human device, if there were not prevailing arguments to constrain the consent. Besides, how is it possible they should deceive themselves? What is the reason the greatest politicians have their fears of a deity upon their unjust practices, as well as other men, they intended to befool? How many of them have had forlorn consciences on a death bed, upon the consideration of a God to answer an account to in another world? Is it credible they should be frightened by that where-with they knew they beguiled others? No man satisfying his pleasures would impose such a deceit upon himself to render and make himself more miserable than the creatures he hath dominion over.

It is unaccountable how it should endure so long a time. That this policy should be so fortunate as to gain ground in the consciences of men, and exercise an empire over them, and meet with such universal success. If the notion of a God were a state-engine, and introduced by some politic grandees for the ease of government, and preserving people with more facility in order, how comes it to pass the first broachers of it were never upon record? There is scarce a false opinion vented in the world, but may as a stream be traced to the first head and fountain. The inventors of particular forms of worship are known, and the reasons why they prescribed them known; but what grandee was the author of this?
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who can pitch a time and person that sprung up this notion? If any be so insolent as to impose a cheat, he can hardly be supposed to be so successful as to deceive the whole world for many ages: impostures pass not free through the world without examination and discovery; falsities have not been universally and constantly owned without control and question. If a cheat imposeth upon some towns and countries, he will be found out by the more piercing enquiries of other places; and it is not easy to name any imposture that hath walked so long in its disguise in the world, without being unmasked and whipped out by some nation or other: if this had been a mere trick, there would have been as much craft in some to discern it as there was in others to contrive it. No man can be imagined so wise in a kingdom, but others may be found as wise as himself; and it is not conceivable, that so many clear-sighted men in all ages should be ignorant of it, and not endeavour to free the world from so great a falsity. It cannot be found that a trick of state should always beguile men of the most piercing insights, as well as the most credulous; that a few crafty men should befool all the wise men in the world, and the world lie in a belief of it, and never like to be freed from it. What is the reason the succeeding politicians never knew this stratagem, since their maxims are usually handed to their successors?

This persuasion of the existence of God, owes not itself to any imposture or subtlety of men: if it had not been agreeable to common nature and reason, it could not so long have borne sway. The imposed yoke would have been cast off by multitudes; men would not have charged themselves with that which was attended with consequences displeasing to the flesh, and hindered them from a full swing of their rebellious passions: such a shackle would have mouldered of itself, or been broke by
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the extravagances human nature is inclined unto. The wickedness of men, without question, hath prompted them to endeavour to unmask it, if it were a cosenage, but could never yet be so successful as to free the world from a persuasion, or their own consciences from the tincture of the existence of a deity. It must be therefore of a more ancient date than the craft of statesmen, and descend into the world with the first appearance of human nature. Time, which hath rectified many errors, improves this notion, makes it shoot down its roots deeper and spread its branches larger.

It must be a natural truth that shines clear by the detection of those errors that have befooled the world; and the wit of man is never able to name any human author that first insinuated it into the beliefs of men.

Nor was it fear first introduced it.—Fear is the consequent of wickedness. As man was not created with any inherent sin, so he was not created with any terrifying fears; the one had been against the holiness of the Creator, the other against his goodness: fear did not make this opinion, but the opinion of the being of a deity was the cause of this fear, after his sense of angrying the deity by his wickedness. The object of fear is before the act of fear; there could not be an act of fear exercised about the deity, till it was believed to be existent, and not only so, but offended: for God as existent only, is not the object of fear or love; it is not the existence of a thing that excites any of those affections, but the relation a thing bears to us in particular. God is good, and so the object of love, as well as just, and thereby the object of fear. He was as much called Love, and *Mens* or Mind, in regard of his goodness and understanding, by the heathens, as much as by any other name. Neither of those names were proper to insinuate fear; neither was fear the first principle that made
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the heathens worship a God; they offered sacrifices, out of gratitude to some, as well as to others out of fear; the fear of evils in the world, and the hopes of relief and assistance from their gods, and not a terrifying fear of God, was the principal spring of their worship. When calamities from the hands of men, or judgments by the influence of heaven, were upon them, they implored that which they thought a deity: it was not their fear of him, but a hope in his goodness and persuasion of remedy from him, for the averting those evils that rendered them adorers of a God. If they had not had pre-existent notions of his being and goodness, they would never have made addresses to him, or so frequently sought to that they only apprehended as a terrifying object. When you hear men calling upon God in a time of affrighting thunder, you cannot imagine that the fear of thunder did first introduce the notion of a God, but implies that it was before apprehended by them, or stamp'd upon them, though their fear doth at present actuate that belief, and engage them in a present exercise of piety: and whe eas the scripture saith, *The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom*, or of all religion; it is not understood of a distracted and terrifying fear, but a reverential fear of him, because of his holiness; or a worship of him, submission to him, and sincere seeking of him.

Well then, is it not a folly for an atheist to deny that which is the reason and common sentiment of the whole world? to strip himself of humanity, run counter to his own conscience, prefer a private before an universal judgment, give the lie to his own nature and reason, assert things impossible to be proved, nay impossible to be acted, forge irrationalities for the support of his fancy, against the common persuasion of the world and against himself, and so much of God as is manifest in him and every man?

It is a folly to deny that which all creatures or
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all things in the world manifest. Let us view this in scripture since we acknowledge it, and after consider the arguments from natural reason.

The apostle resolves it, Rom. i. 19, 20. *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, so that they are without excuse.* They know, or might know, by the things that were made, the eternity and power of God; their sense might take a circuit about every object, and their minds collect the being, and something of the perfections of the deity. The first discourse of the mind upon the sight of a delicate piece of workmanship, is the conclusion of the being of an artificer and the admiration of his skill and industry. The apostle doth not say, the invisible things of God are believed, or they have an opinion of them, but they are seen and clearly seen: they are like crystal glasses which give a clear representation of the existence of a deity, like that mirror reported to be in a temple in Arcadia which represented to the spectator, not his own face, but the image of that deity which he worshipped.

The whole world is like a looking glass, which whole and entire, represents the image of God; and every broken piece of it, every little shred of a creature doth the like; not only the great ones, elephants and the leviathan, but ants, flies, worms, whose bodies rather than names we know: The greater cattle and the creeping things, Gen. i. 24. Not naming there any intermediate creature, to direct us to view him in the smaller letters, as well as the greater characters of the world. His name is glorious, and his attributes are excellent in all the earth, in every creature, as the glory of the sun is in every beam and smaller flash; he is seen in every insect, in every spire of grass: the voice of the Creator is in the most contemptible creature—the apostle adds that they are so clearly seen, that men are inexcusable

fable if they have not some knowledge of God by them ; if they might not certainly know them, they might have some excuse: so that his existence is not only probably but demonstratively proved from the things of the world.

Especially the heavens declare him, which God *stretches out like a curtain* ; or as some render the word, a *skin* ; whereby is signified, that heaven is as an open book, which was anciently made of the skins of beasts, that by the knowledge of them we may be taught the knowledge of God. Where scripture was not revealed the world served for a witness of a God ; whatever arguments the scripture uses to prove it, are drawn from nature, (though indeed it doth not so much prove as suppose the existence of a God) ; but what arguments it uses are from the creatures, and particularly the heavens, which are the public preachers of this doctrine: the breath of God sounds to all the world through those organ-pipes: his being is visible in their existence, his wisdom in their frame, his power in their motion, his goodness in their usefulness: they have a voice, and their voice is as intelligible as any common language ; and those are such plain heralds of a deity, that the heathen mistook them for deities, and gave them a particular adoration which was due to that God they declared. The first idolatry seems to be of those heavenly bodies, which began probably in the time of Nimrod. In Job's time it is certain they admired the glory of the sun, and the brightness of the moon, not without kissing their hands, as a sign of adoration. It is evident a man may as well doubt whether there be a sun when he sees his beams gilding the earth, as doubt whether there be a God when he sees his works spread in the world.

The things in the world declare the existence of a God. 1. In their production. 2. Harmony. 3. Preservation. 4. Answering their several ends.

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In their production. The declaration of the existence of God was the chief end for which they were created, that the notion of a supreme and independent eternal being, might easier incur into the active understanding of man, from the objects of sense dispersed in every corner of the world, that he might pay a homage and devotion to the Lord of all. Isa. xl. 12, 13, 18, 19, &c. *Have you not understood from the foundation of the earth, it is he that sits upon the circle of the heaven, &c.* How could this great heap be brought into being, unless a God had framed it? Every plant, every atom, as well as every star, at the first meeting whispers this in our ears—I have a creator, I am a witness to a deity. Who ever saw statues or pictures, but presently thinks of a statuary and limner? Who beholds garments, ships or houses, but understands there was a weaver, a carpenter, an architect? Who can cast his eyes about the world, but must think of that power that formed it, and that the goodness which appears in the formation of it hath a perfect residence in some being? Those things that are good must flow from something perfectly good: that which is chief in any kind is the cause of all that kind. Fire which is most hot, is the cause of all things which are hot. There is some being therefore which is the cause of all that perfection, which is in the creature; and this is God. All things that are, demonstrate something from whence they are. All things have a contracted perfection and what they have is communicated to them. Perfections are parcelled out among several creatures. Any thing that is imperfect cannot exist of itself. We are led therefore by them to consider a fountain which bubbles up in all perfection; a hand which distributes those several degrees of being and perfection to what we see; we see that which is imperfect, our minds conclude something perfect to exist before it; our eye sees the streams, but our understanding riseth to the head: as the eye
sees

sees the shadow, but the understanding informs us whether it be the the shadow of a man, or of a beast.

God hath given us sense to behold the objects in the world, and understanding to reason his existence from them; the understanding cannot conceive a thing to have made itself; this is against all reason. As they are made they spake out a maker; and cannot be a trick of chance, since they are made with such an immense wisdom, that is too big for the grasp of all human understanding. Those that doubt whether the existence of God be an implanted principle, yet agree that the effects in the world lead to a supreme and universal cause; and that if we have not the knowledge of it rooted in our natures, yet we have it by discourse, since by all masters of reason a *processus in infinitum* must be accounted impossible in subordinate causes.

This will appear in several things.

The world was not eternal or from eternity. The matter of the world cannot be eternal. Matter cannot subsist without form, nor put on any form without the action of some cause; this cause must be in being before it acted; that which is not cannot act. The cause of the world must necessarily exist before any matter was endued with any form; that therefore cannot be eternal before which another did subsist; if it were from eternity it would not be subject to mutation: if the whole was from eternity why not also the parts, what makes the changes so visible then, if eternity would exempt it from mutability?

Time cannot be infinite, and therefore the world not eternal; all motion hath its beginning, if it were otherwise, we must say the number of heavenly revolutions of days and nights, which are past to this instant, is actually infinite, which cannot be in nature: If it were so, it must needs be granted, that a part is equal to the whole: because infinite being equal to infinite, the number of days past in
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all ages to the beginning of one year being infinite, as they would be, supposing the world had no beginning, would by consequence be equal to the number of days, which shall pass to the end of the next; whereas that number of days past is indeed but a part, and so a part would be equal to the whole.

Generations of men, animals and plants could not be from eternity. If any man say the world was from eternity, then there must be propagations of living creatures in the same manner as are at this day: for without this the world could not consist; what we see now done must have been perpetually done, if it be done by a necessity of nature: but we see nothing now that doth arise but a mutual propagation from another: if the world were eternal therefore, it must be so in all eternity: take any particular species, suppose a man, if men were from eternity, then there were perpetual generations, some were born into the world and some died: now the natural condition of generation is, that a man doth not generate a man, nor a sheep a lamb, as soon as ever itself is brought into the world, but get strength and vigour by degrees, and must arrive to a certain stated age before they can produce the like, for whilst any thing is little and below the due age, it cannot increase its kind; men therefore and other creatures did propagate their kind, by the same law. not as soon as ever they were born, but in the interval of some time, and children grew up by degrees in the mothers womb till they were fit to be brought forth: if this be so, then there could not be an eternal succession of propagating: for there is no eternal continuation of time: time is always to be conceived as having one part before another: but that perpetuity of natiuities is always after some time, wherein it could not be for the weakness of age: if no man then can conceive a propagation from eternity, there must be then a
D beginning

beginning of generation in time, and consequently the creatures were made in time.

If the world were eternal, it must have been in the same posture as it is now, in a state of generation and corruption; and so corruption must have been as eternal as generation, and then things that do generate and corrupt must have eternally been and eternally not have been: there must be some first way to set generation on work. We must lose ourselves in our conceptions; we cannot conceive a father before a child, as well as we cannot conceive a child before a father: and reason is quite bewildered, and cannot return into a right way of conception, till it conceive one first of every kind: one first man, one first animal, one first plant from whence others do proceed. The argument is unanswerable, and the wisest atheist (if any atheist can be called wise) cannot unloose the knot. We must come to something, that is first in every kind, and this first must have a cause, not of the same kind, but infinite and independent; otherwise men run into inconceivable labyrinths and contradictions.

Man, the noblest creature upon earth, hath a beginning. No man in the world but was some years ago no man. If every man we see had a beginning, then the first man had also a beginning, then the world had a beginning: for the earth which was made for the use of man, had wanted that end for which it was made. We must pitch upon some one man that was unborn, that first man must either be eternal, that cannot be, for he that hath no beginning hath no end: or must spring out of the earth as plants and trees do: that cannot be: why should not the earth produce men to this day, as it doth plants and trees? he was therefore made; and whatsoever is made hath some cause that made it, which is God. If the world were uncreated, it were then immutable, but every creature upon the earth is in a continual flux, always changing: if
things

things be mutable, they were created ; if created they were made by some author ; whatsoever hath a beginning, must have a maker, if the world hath a beginning, there was then a time when it was not ; it must have some cause to produce it. That which makes is before that which is made, and this is God.

Secondly, As the production of the world, so the harmony of all the parts of it declare the being and wisdom of a God. Without acknowledging God, the atheist can give no account of those things : the multitude, elegancy, variety, and beauty of all things are steps whereby to ascend to one fountain and original of them.

Is it not folly to deny the being of a wise agent, who sparkles in the beauty and motions of the heavens, rides upon the wings of the wind, and is writ upon the flowers and fruits of plants. As the cause is known by the effects, so the wisdom of the cause is known by the elegancy of the work, and the proportion of the parts to one another. Who can imagine the world could be rashly made, and without consultation, which in every part of it is so artificially framed ? No work of art springs up of its own accord. The world is framed by an excellent art, and therefore made by some skilful artist : as we hear not a melodious instrument but we conclude there is a musician that touches it, as well as some skilful hand that framed and disposed it for those lessons ; and no man that hears the pleasant sound of a lute, but will fix his thoughts, not upon the instrument itself, but upon the skill of the artist that made it, and the art of the musician that strikes it, though he should not see the first when he saw the lute, nor see the other when he hears the harmony : so a rational creature confines not his thoughts to his sense, when he sees the sun in its glory and the moon walking in its brightness ; but riseth up in a contemplation and admiration of that

infinite Spirit that composed and filled them with such sweetness.

This appears in the linking contrary qualities together, and in the subserviency of one thing to another.

All things are compounded of the elements. Those are endued with contrary qualities, dryness and moisture, heat and cold. These would always be contending with and infesting one another's rights, till the contest ended in the destruction of one or both: where fire is predominant, it would suck up the water, where water is prevalent, it would quench the fire; the heat would wholly expel the cold, or the cold overpower the heat; yet we see them chained or linked one within another in every body upon the earth, and rendering mutual offices for the benefit of that body wherein they are seated, and all conspiring together, in their particular quarrels, for the public interest of the body. How could those contraries, which of themselves observe no order, that are always preying upon one another, jointly accord together of themselves, for one common end, if they were not linked in a common band, and reduced to that order by some incomprehensible wisdom and power, which keeps a hand upon them, orders their motions and directs their events, and makes them friendly pass into one another's natures? Confusion had been the result of the discord and diversity of their natures. No composition could have been of those conflicting qualities for the frame of any body, nor any harmony arose from so many jarring strings, if they had not been reduced, into concord by one that is supreme Lord over them, and knows how to dispose their varieties and enmities for the public good. If a man should see a large city or country, consisting of great multitudes of men of different tempers, full of frauds, factions, and animosities in their natures against one another, yet living together in good order and
peace,

peace, without oppressing and invading one another, and joining together for the public good, he would presently conclude, there were some excellent governor, who tempered them by his wisdom, and preserved the public peace, though he had never yet beheld him with his eye. It is as necessary to conclude a God, who moderates the contrarieties in the world; as to conclude a wise prince who overrules the contrary dispositions in a state, making every one to keep his own bounds and confines. Things that are contrary to one another subsist in an admirable order.

All the members of living creatures are curiously fitted for the service of one another, destined to a particular end, and endued with a virtue to attain that end, and so distinctly placed, that one is no hinderance to the other in its operations. Is not this more admirable than to be the work of chance, which is incapable to settle such an order and fix particular and general ends, causing an exact correspondence of all the parts with one another, and every part to conspire together for one common end? One thing is fitted for another; the eye is fitted for the sun, and the sun fitted for the eye. Several sorts of food are fitted for several creatures, and those creatures fitted with organs for the partaking that food.

All this subserviency of creatures centers in man. Other creatures are served by those things as well as ourselves, and they are provided for their nourishment and refreshment as well as ours; yet both they and all creatures meet in man as lines in their centers: things that have no life or sense are made for those that have both life and sense, and those that have life and sense are made for those that are endued with reason. When the Psalmist admiringly considers the heavens, moon and stars, he intimates man to be the end for which they were created, Psa. viii. 3, 4. *What is man that thou art*

mindful of him? He expresth more particularly the dominion that man hath *over the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea*, ver. 6, 7, 8. and concludes from thence the excellency of God's name in all the earth. All things in the world one way or other center in an usefulness for man, some to feed him, some to clothe him, some to delight him, others to instruct him, some to exercise his wit, and others his strength. Since man did not make them, he did not also order them for his own use. If they conspire to serve him who never made them, they direct man to acknowledge another, who is the joint creator both of the lord and the servants under his dominion. And therefore as the inferior natures are ordered by an invisible hand for the good of man; so the nature of man is by the same hand ordered to acknowledge the existence and the glory of the creator of him. This visible order man knows he did not constitute, he did not settle those creatures in subserviency to himself; they were placed in that order before he had any acquaintance with them, or existence of himself, which is a question God puts to Job, to consider of, Job xxxviii. 4. *Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth, declare if thou hast understanding?* All is ordered for man's use; the heavens answer to the earth as a roof to a floor, both composing a delightful habitation for man; vapors ascend from the earth, and the heaven concocts them, and returns them back in welcome showers for the supplying of the earth. The light of the sun descends to beautify the earth, and employs its heat to midwife its fruits, and this for the good of the community, whereof man is the head; and though all creatures have distinct natures, and must act for particular ends, according to the law of their creation; yet there is a joint combination for the good of the whole, as the common end; just as all the
rivers

rivers in the world, from what part soever they come, whether north or south, fall into the sea for the supply of that mass of waters; which loudly proclaims some infinitely wise nature, who made those things in so exact an harmony.

Thirdly, Add to the production and order of the world, and the creatures acting for their end, the preservation of them. Nothing can depend upon itself in its preservation, no more than it could in its being. If the order of the world was not fixed by itself, the preservation of that order cannot be continued by itself.

Though the matter of the world, after creation, cannot return to that nothing whence it was fetched, without the power of God that made it, (because the same power is as requisite to reduce a thing to nothing as to raise a thing from nothing,) yet without the actual exerting of a power that made the creatures, they would fall into confusion. Those contesting qualities which are in every part of it, could not have preserved, but would have consumed, and extinguished one another, and reduced the world to that confused chaos, wherein it was before the Spirit moved upon the waters. As contrary parts could not have met together in one form, unless there had been one that had enjoined them, so they could not have kept together after their conjunction, unless the same hand had preserved them. Natural contrarieties cannot be reconciled. It is as great power to keep discords knit, as at first to link them. Who would doubt, but that an army made up of several nations and humours, would fall into a civil war, and sheathe their swords in one another's bowels, if they were not under the management of some wise general, or a ship dash against the rocks without the skill of a pilot? As the body hath neither life nor motion, without the active presence of the soul, which distributes to every part the virtue of acting; lets every one in the

exercise of its proper function and resides in every part: so there is some powerful cause which doth the like in the world, that rules and tempers it. There is need of the same power and action, to preserve a thing, as there was at first to make it. When we consider that we are preserved, and know that we could not preserve ourselves; we must necessarily run to some first cause which doth preserve us. All works of art depend upon nature, and are preserved while they are kept by the force of nature: as a statue depends upon the matter whereof it is made, whether stone or brass; this nature therefore must have some superior by whose influx it is preserved. Since therefore we see a stable order in the things of the world, that they conspire together for the good and beauty of the universe; that they depend upon one another: there must be some principle upon which they do depend; something to which the first link of the chain is fastened, which himself depends upon no superior, but wholly rests in his own essence and being: It is the title of God to be the preserver of man and beast. The psalmist elegantly describeth it, Psa. civ. 24. &c. *The earth is full of his riches, all wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due season; when he opens his hand he fills them with good: when he hides his face they are troubled: if he take away their breath they die and return to dust: he sends forth his spirit, and they are created, and renews the face of the earth: the glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, and the Lord shall rejoice in his works:* Upon the consideration of all which the Psalmist, ver. 34. takes a pleasure in the meditation of God as the cause and manager of all those things; which issues into a joy in God and a praising of him. And why should not the consideration of the power and wisdom of God in the creatures, produce the same effect in the hearts of us, if he be our God? or as some render it, my meditation shall be sweet, or acceptable

acceptable to him ; whereby I find matter of praise in the things of the world and offer it to the Creator of it.

Fourthly, As the production and harmony, so particular creatures, pursuing and attaining their ends, manifest that there is a God. All particular creatures have natural instincts, which move them for some end: the intending of an end, is a property of a rational creature; since the lower creatures cannot challenge that title, they must act by the understanding and direction of another: and since man cannot challenge the honor of inspiring the creatures with such instincts, it must be ascribed to some nature infinitely above any creature in understanding. No creature doth determine itself. Why do the fruits and grain of the earth nourish us, when the earth which instrumentally gives them that fitness, cannot nourish us, but because their several ends are determined by one higher than the world?

Several creatures have several natures. How soon will all creatures, as soon as they see the light, move to that whereby they must live, and make use of the natural arms God hath given their kind, for their defence, before they are grown to any maturity to afford them that defence? The scripture makes the appetite of infants to their milk a foundation of the divine glory, Isa. viii. 3. *Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, hast thou ordained strength*; that is matter of praise and acknowledgement of God, in the natural appetite they have to their milk and their relish of it. All creatures have a natural affection to their young ones; all young ones, by a natural instinct, move to, and receive the nourishment that is proper for them. Some are their own physicians as well as their own caterers, and naturally discern what preserves them in life, and what restores them when sick.

sick. The swallow flies to its celendine, and the toad hastens to its plantain.

Can we behold the spiders nets, or silkworms web, the bees closets, or the ants granaries, without acknowledging a higher being than a creature, who hath planted that genius in them? The consideration of the nature of several creatures God commended to Job, (chap. xxxix. where he discourseth to Job of the natural instincts of the goat, the ostrich, horse, eagle, &c.) to persuade him to the acknowledgment and admiration of God, and humiliation of himself.

The spider, as if it understood the art of weaving, fits its web both for its own habitation, and a net to catch its prey. The bee builds a cell which serves for chambers to reside in, and a repository for its provision. Birds are observed to build their nests with a clammy matter without, for the firmer duration of it, and with a soft moss and down within, for the conveniency and warmth of their young: the stork knows his appointed time, Jer. viii. 7. and the swallows observe the time of their coming; they go and return according to the seasons of the year. This they gain, not by consideration, it descends to them with their nature; they neither gain nor increase it by rational deductions. It is not in vain to speak of these. How little do we improve by meditating on those objects which daily offer themselves to our view, full of instructions for us? And our Saviour sends his disciples to spell God in the lillies. It is observed also that the creatures offensive to man go single: if they went by troops, they would bring destruction upon man and beast. This is the nature of them for the preservation of others.

They know not their end. They have a law in their natures, but have no rational understanding, either of the end to which they are appointed, or the means fit to attain it; they naturally do what
they

they do, and move by no counsel of their own, but by a law imprest by some higher hand upon their natures.

What plant knows why it strikes its root into the earth? Doth it understand what storms it is to contest with, or why it shoots up its branches towards heaven? Doth it know it needs the droppings of the clouds to preserve itself, and make it fruitful? These are acts of understanding: the root is downward to preserve its own standing, the branches upward to preserve other creatures: this understanding is not in the creature itself, but originally in another. Thunders and tempests know not why they are sent, yet by the direction of a mighty hand, they are instruments of justice upon a wicked world.

Rational creatures that act for some end, and know the end they aim at, yet know not the manner of the natural motion of the members to it. When we intend to look upon a thing, we take no counsel about the natural motion of our eyes, we know not all the principles of their operations; or how that dull matter whereof our bodies are composed, is subject to the order of our minds. We are not to counsel with our stomachs about the concoction of our meat, or the distribution of the nourishing juice to the several parts of the body. Neither the mother nor the fœtus sit in council how the formation should be made in the womb. We know no more than a plant knows what stature it is of, and what medical virtue its fruit hath for the good of man; yet all those natural operations are perfectly directed to their proper end, by an higher wisdom than any human understanding is able to conceive, since they exceed the ability of an inanimate or fleshly nature, yea, and the wisdom of man. Do we not often see reasonable creatures acting for one end, and perfecting a higher than what they aimed at, or could suspect? When
Joseph's

Joseph's brethren sold him for a slave, their end was to be rid of an informer: but the action issued in preparing him to be the preserver of them and their families. Cyrus's end was to be a conqueror, but the action ended in being the Jews deliverer. Prov. xvi. 9. *A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directs his steps.*

Therefore there is some superior understanding and nature which so acts them. That which acts for an end unknown to itself, depends upon some over-ruling wisdom that knows that end. Who should direct them in all those ends, but he that bestowed a being upon them for such ends, who knows what is convenient for their life, security and propagations of their natures? An exact knowledge is necessary both of what is agreeable to them, and the means whereby they must attain it, which, since it is not inherent in them, is in that wise God, who puts those instincts into them, and governs them in the exercise of them to such ends. Any man that sees a dart flung, knows it cannot hit the mark without the skill and strength of an archer: or he that sees the hand of a dial pointing to the hours successively, knows that the dial is ignorant of its own end, and is disposed and directed in that motion by another. All creatures, ignorant of their own natures, could not universally in the whole kind, and in every climate and country, without any difference in the whole world, tend to a certain end, if some over-ruling wisdom did not preside over the world and guide them: and if the creatures have a conductor, they have a creator: all things are turned round *about by his council, that they may do whatsoever he commands them upon the face of the world in the earth.*

God is a Spirit.

John iv. 24.

GOD IS A SPIRIT, AND THEY THAT WORSHIP HIM, MUST
WORSHIP HIM IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.

THE words are part of the dialogue between our Saviour, and the Samaritan Woman. Christ, intending to return from Judea to Galilee, passed through the country of Samaria, a place inhabited not by Jews, but a mixt company of several nations, and some remainders of the posterity of Israel, who escaped the captivity and were returned from Assyria; and being weary with his journey, arrived about the sixth hour or noon, (according to the Jews reckoning the time of the day) at a well that Jacob had digged, which was of great account among the inhabitants for the antiquity of it, as well as the usefulness of it, in supplying their necessities: He being thirsty, and having none to furnish him wherewith to draw water, at last comes a woman from the city, whom he desires to give him some water to drink: the woman, perceiving him by his language or habit to be a Jew, wonders at the question, since the hatred the Jews bore the Samaritans was so great, that they would not vouchsafe to have any commerce with them, not only in religious, but civil affairs, and common offices belonging to mankind. Hence our Saviour takes occasion to publish to her the doctrine of the gospel; and excuseth her rude answer

answer by her ignorance of him; and tells her, that if she had asked him a greater matter, even that which concerned her eternal salvation, he would readily have granted it, notwithstanding the rooted hatred between the Jews and Samaritans; and bestowed a water of a greater virtue, the *water of life*. The woman is no less astonished at his reply, than she was at his first demand. It was strange to hear a man speak of giving living water, to one whom he had begged the water of that spring, and had no vessel to draw any to quench his own thirst. She therefore demands whence he could have this water that he speaks of, since she conceived him not greater than Jacob, who had digged that well and drunk of it. Our Saviour, desirous to make a progress in that work he had begun, extols the water he speaks of above this of the well, from its particular virtue, fully to refresh those that drank of it, and be as a cooling and comforting fountain within them, of more efficacy than that without. The woman conceiving a good opinion of our Saviour, desires to partake of this water, to save her pains in coming daily to the well, not apprehending the spirituality of Christ's discourse to her: Christ finding her to take some pleasure in his discourse, partly to bring her to a sense of her sin, before he did communicate the excellency of his grace, bids her return back to the city and bring her husband with her to him; she freely acknowledges that she had no husband, whether having some check of conscience at present for the unclean life she led, or loth to lose so much time in the gaining this water so much desired by her: our Saviour takes an occasion from this to lay open her sin before her, and to make her sensible of her own wicked life and the prophetic excellency of himself; and tells her, she had had five husbands to whom she had been false, and by whom she was divorced, and the person she

she now dwelt with was not her lawful husband, and in living with him she violated the rights of marriage, and increased guilt upon her conscience. The woman being affected with this discourse, and knowing him to be a stranger, that could not be certified of those things but in an extraordinary way, begins to have a high esteem of him as a prophet; and upon this opinion she esteems him able to decide a question which had been canvast between them and the Jews about the place of worship. Their fathers worshipping in that mountain, and the Jews affirming Jerusaleme to be a place of worship, she pleads the antiquity of the worship in this place: Abraham having built an altar there, Gen. xii. 7. and Jacob upon his return from Syria. And surely had the place been capable of an exception, such persons as they, and so well acquainted with the will of God, would not have pitched upon that place to celebrate their worship.

Antiquity hath too often bewitched the minds of men, and drawn them from the revealed will of God. Men are more willing to imitate the outward actions of their famous ancestors, than conform themselves to the revealed will of their Creator. The Samaritans would imitate the patriarchs in the place of worship, but not in the faith of the worshippers.

In the words there is, 1. A proposition, *God is a spirit*. The foundation of all religion.

2. An inference, *they that worship him, &c.* As God, a worship belongs to him; as a spirit, a spiritual worship is due to him. In the inference we have,

1. The manner of worship, *in spirit and truth*.

2. The necessity of such a worship, *must*.

The proposition declares the nature of God; the inference, the duty of man.

The observations lie plain, 1. God is a pure spiritual being—*he is a spirit*. 2. The worship due from

from the creature to God, must be agreeable to the nature of God, and purely spiritual. 3. The evangelical state is suited to the nature of God.

For the first, God is a pure spiritual being.

It is the observation of one, that the plain assertion of God being a spirit, is found but once in the whole bible, and that is in this place; which may well be wondered at; because God is so often described with hands, feet, eyes and ears in the form and figure of a man. The spiritual nature of God, is deducible from many places; but not any where, as I remember asserted, but in this text: Some alledge that place, 2 Cor. iii. 17. *the Lord is that spirit*, for the proof of it; but that seems to have a different sense: in the text the nature of God is described; in that place, the operations of God in the gospel. It is not the ministry of Moses, or that old covenant, which communicates to you that spirit it speaks of; but it is the Lord Jesus, and the doctrine of the gospel delivered by him, whereby this spirit and liberty is dispensed to you: he opposes here the liberty of the gospel to the servitude of the law. It is from Christ, that a divine virtue diffuseth itself by the gospel; it is by him, not by the law, that we partake of that spirit.

The spirituality of God, is as evident as his being. If we grant that God is, we must necessarily grant that he cannot be corporeal; because a body is of an imperfect nature. It will appear incredible to any that acknowledge God the first being and creator of all things, that he should be a massy heavy body, and have eyes and ears, feet and hands as we have.

For the explication of it — Spirit is taken various ways in scripture: it signifies sometimes an aerial substance, as Psalm xi. 6. *a horrible tempest*—Heb. *a spirit* of tempest. Sometimes the breath, which is a thin substance, Gen. vi. 17, *all flesh wherein is the breath of life*—Heb. *spirit* of life. A thin substance,
though

though it be material and corporeal, is called *spirit*. And in the bodies of living creatures, that which is the principle of their actions is called spirits; the animal and vital spirits: and the finer parts extracted from plants and minerals; we call spirits: those volatile parts separated from that gross matter wherein they were immerst, because they come nearest to the nature of an incorporeal substance: and from this notion of the word, it is translated to signify those substances that are purely immaterial, as angels and the souls of men. Angels are called spirits, Psal. civ. 4. *Who makes his angels spirits*; and not only good angels are so called, but evil angels, Mark i. 27. Souls of men are called spirits, Eccl. xii. 7. and the soul of Christ is called so, John xix. 30. God is called *the God of the spirits of all flesh*, Numb. xxii. 16, and spirit is opposed to flesh, Isa. xli. 3. *The Egyptians are flesh and not spirit*. And our Saviour gives us the notion of a spirit to be something above the nature of a body, Luke xxiv. 39. *not having flesh and bones*, extended parts, loads of gross matter. It is also taken for those things which are active and efficacious; because activity, is of the nature of a spirit. Caleb had another spirit, Num. xiv. 24. an active affection. The vehement motions of sin are called spirit, Hos. iv. 12. *the spirit of whoredoms*, in that sense; Prov. xxix. 11. *A fool utters all his mind*, all his spirit, he knows not how to restrain the vehement motions of his mind. So that the notion of a spirit is, that it is a fine immaterial substance, an active being, that acts itself and other things. A meer body cannot act itself; as the body of man cannot move without the soul, no more than a ship can move itself without wind and waves.

So God is called a spirit; as being not a body, not having the greatness, figure, thickness or length of a body, wholly separate from any thing of flesh and matter. We find a principle within us nobler
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than that of our bodies; and therefore we conceive the nature of God, according to that which is more worthy in us, and not according to that which is the vilest part of our natures. God is a most spiritual spirit, more spiritual than all angels, all souls: as he exceeds all in the nature of being, so he exceeds all in the nature of spirit: he hath nothing gross, heavy, material, in his essence.

When we say God is a spirit, it is to be understood by way of negation. There are two ways of knowing or describing God: by affirmation, affirming that of him in a way of eminency, which is excellent in the creature; as when we say, God is wise, good: the other, by way of negation, when we remove from God in our conceptions, what is tainted with imperfection in the creature. The first ascribes to him whatsoever is excellent; the other separates from him whatsoever is imperfect. The first is like a lining, which adds one colour to another to make a comely picture; the other is like a carving, which pares and cuts away whatsoever is superfluous, to make a compleat statue. This way of negation is more easy; we better understand what God is not, than what he is; and most of our knowledge of God, is by this way: as when we say God is infinite, immense, immutable, they are negatives: he hath no limits, is confined to no place, admits of no change. When we remove from him what is inconsistent with his being, we do more strongly assert his being, and know more of him when we elevate him above all, and above our own capacity. And when we say God is a spirit, it is a negation; he is not a body; he consists not of various parts, extended one without and beyond another: He is not a spirit so as our souls are, to be the form of any body: a spirit not as angels and souls are, but infinitely higher; we call him so, because in regard of our weakness, we have not any other term of excellency to express or conceive

conceive of him by: we transfer it to God in honour, because spirit is the highest excellency in our nature: yet we must apprehend God above any spirit, since his nature is so great, that he cannot be declared by human speech, perceived by human sense, or conceived by human understanding.

Some among the heathens imagined God to have a body; some thought him to have a body of air, some a heavenly body, some a human body: and many of them ascribed bodies to their gods; but bodies without blood, without corruption; bodies made up of the finest and thinnest atoms; such bodies, which if compared with ours, were as no bodies. The Sadducees also, who denied all spirits, and yet acknowledged a God, must conclude him to be a body and no spirit. Some among christians have been of that opinion. Tertullian is charged by some, and excused by others: and some monks of Egypt were so fierce for this error, that they attempted to kill one Theophilus, a bishop, for not being of that judgment.

But the wiser heathens were of another mind, and esteemed it an unholy thing to have such imaginations of God. And some christians have thought God only to be free from any thing of body, because he is omnipresent, immutable, he is only incorporeal and spiritual; all things else, even the angels are clothed with bodies, though of a neater matter and more active frame than ours; a pure spiritual nature they allowed to no being but God. Scripture and reason meet together to assert the spirituality of God. Had God had the lineaments of a body, the Gentiles had not fallen under the accusation of changing his glory into that of a corruptible man.

This is signified by the name God gives himself, *Exod. iii. 14. I am that I am*; a simple, pure, uncompounded being, without any created mixture; as infinitely above the being of creatures, as

above the conceptions of creatures, Job. xxxvii. 23. *Touching the almighty, we cannot find him out.* He is so much a spirit, that he is the father of spirits, Heb. xii. 9. The Almighty Father is not of a nature inferior to his children: the soul is a spirit, it could not else exert actions without the assistance of the body, as the act of understanding itself, and its own nature, the act of willing, and willing things against the incitements and interest of the body: it could not else conceive of God, angels and immaterial substances: it could not else be so active, as with one glance to fetch a compass from earth to heaven, and by a sudden motion, to elevate the understanding from an earthly thought, to the thinking of things as high as the highest heavens. If we have this opinion of our souls, which in the nobleness of their acts surmount the body, without which the body is but a dull inactive piece of clay, we must needs have a higher conception of God, than to clog him with any matter, though of a finer temper than ours: We must conceive of him by the perfections of our souls, without the vileness of our bodies. If God made man according to his image, we must raise our thoughts of God according to the noblest part of that image, and imagine the exemplar or copy, not to come short, but to exceed the thing copied by it. God were not the most excellent substance, if he were not a spirit: spiritual substances are more excellent than bodily; the soul of man more excellent than other animals; angels more excellent than men: they contain in their own nature, whatsoever dignity there is in the inferior creatures. God must have therefore an excellency above all those, and is entirely remote from the conditions of a body.

It is a gross conceit therefore to think that God is such a spirit as the air is; for that is to be a body as the air is, though it be a thin one; and if God were no more a spirit than that, or than angels, he
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would not be the most simple being: yet some think that the spiritual deity was represented by the air in the ark of the testament. It was unlawful to represent him by any image that God had prohibited: every thing about the ark had a particular signification: the gold, and other ornaments about it, signified something of Christ, but were unfit to represent the nature of God: a thing purely invisible and falling under nothing of sense, could not represent him to the mind of man: the air in the ark was the fittest, it represented the invisibility of God, air being imperceptible to our eyes. Air diffuseth itself through all parts of the world; it glides through secret passages into all creatures; it fills the space between heaven and earth; there is no place wherein God is not present.

To evidence this,

If God were not a spirit, he could not be creator. All multitude begins in, and is reduced to unity. As above multitude there is an absolute unity; so above mixt creatures, there is an absolute simplicity: you cannot conceive number without conceiving the beginning of it in that which was not number, viz. a unit: you cannot conceive any mixture, but you must conceive some simple thing to be the original and basis of it. The works of art done by rational creatures, have their foundation in something spiritual. Every artificer, watch-maker, carpenter, hath a model in his own mind of the work he designs to frame: the material and outward fabrick is squared according to an inward and spiritual idea. A spiritual idea speaks a spiritual faculty as the subject of it. God could not have an idea of the vast number of creatures he brought into being, if he had not had a spiritual nature. The wisdom whereby the world was created could never be the fruit of a corporeal nature; such natures are not capable of understanding and comprehending the things which are

within the compass of their nature, much less of producing them: and therefore beasts, which have only corporeal faculties, move to objects by the force of their sense, and have no knowledge of things as they are comprehended by the understanding of man. All acts of wisdom speak an intelligent and spiritual agent: the effects of wisdom, goodness, power, are so great and admirable, that they bespeak him a more perfect and eminent being, than can possibly be beheld under a bodily shape. Can a corporeal substance put wisdom in the inward parts, and give understanding to the heart?

If God were not a pure spirit, he could not be one. If God had a body, consisting of distinct members, as ours; or all of one nature, as the water and air are, yet he were then capable of division, and therefore could not be entirely one. Either those parts would be finite or infinite; if finite, they are not parts of God; for to be God and finite is a contradiction: if infinite, there are as many infinites, as distinct members, and therefore as many deities: suppose this body had all parts of the same nature as air and water hath, every little part of air is as much air as the greatest, and every little part of water is as much water as the ocean; so every little part of God would be as much God as the whole; as many particular deities to make up God, as little atoms to compose a body: what can be more absurd? If God had a body like a human body, and were compounded of body and soul, of substance and quality, he could not be the most perfect unity; he would be made up of distinct parts, and those of a distinct nature, as the members of a human body are: where there is the greatest unity, there must be the greatest simplicity; but God is one: as he is free from any change, so he is void of any multitude, Deut. vi, 4. *The Lord God is one Lord.*

If God had a body as we have, he would not
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be invisible. Every material thing is not visible: the air is a body yet invisible, but it is sensible; the cooling quality of it is felt by us at every breath; and we know it by our touch, which is the most material sense. Every body, that hath members like to bodies, is visible: but God is invisible. The apostle reckons it amongst his other perfections, 1 Tim. i. 17. *Now unto the King, eternal, immortal, invisible*: he is invisible to our sense, which beholds nothing but material and coloured things; and incomprehensible to our understanding, that conceives not but what is finite. God is therefore a spirit incapable of being seen, and infinitely incapable of being understood: if he be invisible, he is also spiritual: if he had a body, and hid it from our eyes, he might be said not to be seen, but could not be said to be invisible. When we say a thing is visible, we understand that it hath such qualities which are the objects of sense, though we may never see that which is in its own nature to be seen. God hath no such qualities as fall under the perception of our sense: his works are visible to us, but not his godhead. The nature of a human body is to be seen and handled; Christ gives us such a description of it, Luke xxiv. 39. *Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have*: But man hath been so far from seeing God, *that it is impossible he can see him*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. There is such a disproportion between an infinite object and a finite sense and understanding, that it is utterly impossible either to behold or comprehend him. But if God had a body more luminous and glorious than that of the sun, he would be as well visible to us as the sun, though the immensity of that light would dazzle our eyes, and forbid any close inspection into him by the virtue of our sense: we have seen the shape and figure of the sun, but no man hath ever seen the shape of God. If God had a body he were visible,

though he might not perfectly and fully be seen by us—as we see the heavens, though we see not the extension, latitude, and greatness of them. Though God hath manifested himself in a bodily shape, Gen. xviii. 1. *And elsewhere*; Jehovah appeared to Abraham: yet the substance of God was not seen, no more than the substance of angels was seen in their apparitions to men. A body was formed to be made visible by them, and such actions done in that body, that spake the person that did them, to be of a higher eminency than a bare corporeal creature: sometimes a representation is made to the inward sense and imagination, as to Michaiah, and to Isaiah, vi. 1. But they saw not the essence of God, but some images and figures of him proportioned to their sense or imagination. The essence of God no man ever saw, nor can see, John i. 18.

Nor doth it follow, that God hath a body, because Jacob is said to see God face to face, Gen. xxxii. 30. And Moses had the like privilege, Deut. xxxiv. 10. This only signifies a fuller and clearer manifestation of God, by some representations offered to the bodily sense, or rather to the inward spirit. For God tells Moses he could not see his face, Exod. xxxiii. 20. And that none ever saw the similitude of God, Deut. iv. 15. Were God a corporeal substance he might in some measure be seen by corporeal eyes.

If God were not a spirit, he could not be infinite. All bodies are of a finite nature: every body is material, and every material thing is terminated. The sun, a vast body, hath a bounded greatness: the heavens, of a mighty bulk, yet have their limits. If God had a body, he must consist of parts; those parts would be bounded and limited, and whatsoever is limited is of a finite virtue, and therefore below an infinite nature. Reason therefore tells us, that the most excellent nature, as God is, cannot be of a corporeal condition; because of the
limitation

limitation and other actions which belong to every body. God is infinite, for the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, 2 Chron. ii. 6. The largest heavens, and those imaginary spaces beyond the world, are no bounds to him. He hath an essence beyond the bounds of the world, and cannot be included in the vastness of the heavens. If God be infinite, then he can have no parts in him; if he had, they must be finite, or infinite: finite parts can never make up an infinite being. A vessel of gold, of a pound weight, cannot be made of the quantity of an ounce. Infinite parts they cannot be, because then every part would be equal to the whole, as infinite as the whole, which is contradictory. We see in all things every part is less than the whole bulk that is composed of it; as every member of a man is less than the whole body of a man: if all the parts were finite, then God in his essence were finite; and a finite God is not more excellent than a creature: so that if God were not a spirit, he could not be infinite.

If God were not a spirit, he could not be an independent being. Whatsoever is compounded of many parts, depends either essentially or integrally upon those parts; as the essence of a man depends upon the conjunction and union of his two main parts, his soul and body; when they are separated, the essence of a man ceaseth; and the perfection of a man depends upon every member of the body; so that if one be wanting the perfection of the whole is wanting: as if a man hath lost a limb, you call him not a perfect man; because that part is gone upon which his perfection as an intire man did depend: If God therefore had a body, the perfection of the deity would depend upon every part of that body; and the more parts he were compounded of, the more his dependency would be multiplied, according to the number of those parts of the body: for that which is compounded of many parts is
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more dependent than that which is compounded of fewer.

And because God would be a dependent being if he had a body, he could not be the first being; for the compounding parts are in order of nature before that which is compounded by them; as the soul and body are before the man which results from the union of them. If God had parts and bodily members as we have, or any composition, the essence of God would result from those parts, and those parts be supposed to be before God. For that which is a part, is before that whose part it is. As in artificial things you may conceive it: all the parts of a watch or clock, are in time before that watch which is made by setting those parts together. In natural things, you must suppose the members of a body framed, before you can call it a man; so that the parts of this body are before that which is constituted by them. We can conceive no other of God, if he were not a pure, intire, unmixed spirit: if he had distinct parts, he would depend upon them; those parts would be before him; his essence would be the effect of those distinct parts, and so he would not be absolutely and intirely the first being: but he is so, Isa. xliv. 6. *I am the first, and I am the last.* He is the first; nothing is before him: Whereas if he had bodily parts, and those finite, it would follow, God is made up of those parts which are not God; and that which is not God, is in order of nature, before that which is God. So that we see if God were not a spirit, he could not be independent.

If God were not a spirit, he were not immutable and unchangeable. His immutability depends upon his simplicity. He is unchangeable in his essence, because he is a pure and unmixed spiritual being. Whatsoever is compounded of parts, may be divided into those parts, and resolved into those distinct parts which make up and constitute the nature.

nature. Whatsoever is compounded, is changeable in its own nature, though it should never be changed. Adam, who was constituted of body and soul, had he stood in innocence, had not died; there had been no separation made between his soul and body whereof he was constituted, and his body had not resolved into those principles of dust from whence it was extracted: yet in his own nature he was dissoluble into those distinct parts whereof he was compounded. And so the glorified saints in heaven, after the resurrection, and the happy meeting of their souls and bodies in a new marriage knot, shall never be dissolved; yet in their own nature they are mutable and dissoluble, and cannot be otherwise, because they are made up of such distinct parts that may be separated in their own nature, unless sustained by the grace of God. They are immutable by will, the will of God, not by nature. God is immutable by nature as well as by will: as he hath a necessary existence, so he hath a necessary unchangeableness, Mal. iii. 6. *I the Lord change not.* He is unchangeable in his essence, as in his veracity and faithfulness: they are perfections belonging to his nature; but if he were not a pure spirit, he could not be immutable by nature.

If God were not a pure spirit, he could not be omnipresent. *He is in heaven above, and the earth below: He fills heaven and earth.* The divine essence is at once in heaven and earth; but it is impossible a body can be in two places at one and the same time. Since God is every where, he must be spiritual: had he a body, he could not penetrate all things; he would be circumscribed in place. He could not be every where but in parts, not in the whole; one member in one place, and another in another; for to be confined to a particular place, is the property of a body: but since he is diffused through the whole world; higher
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than heaven, deeper than hell; longer than the earth, broader than the sea; he hath not any corporeal matter. If he had a body wherewith to fill heaven and earth, there could be no body besides his own: it is the nature of bodies to bind one another, and hinder the extending of one another. Two bodies cannot be in the same place, in the same point of earth, one excludes the other: and it will follow hence, that we are nothing, no substances, mere illusions; there could be no place for any body else. If his body was as big as the world, as it must be, if with that he filled heaven and earth, there would be no room for him to move hand or foot, or extend a finger; there would be no place remaining for the motion.

If God was not a spirit, he could not be the most perfect being. The more perfect any thing is in the rank of creatures, the more spiritual and simple it is, as gold is the more pure and perfect that hath least mixture of other metals. If God was not a spirit, there would be creatures of a more excellent nature than God; as angels and souls, which the scripture calls spirits, in opposition to bodies. There is more of perfection in the first notion of a spirit, than in the notion of a body. God cannot be less perfect than his creatures, and contribute an excellency of being to them which he wants himself. If angels and souls possess such an excellency, and God want that excellency, he would be less than his creatures, and the excellency of the effect, would exceed the excellency of the cause. But every creature, even the highest creature, is infinitely short of the perfection of God; for whatsoever excellency they have, is finite and limited; it is but a spark from the sun, a drop from the ocean; but God is unboundedly perfect in the highest manner, without any limitation; and therefore above spirits, angels, the highest creatures that were made by him: an infinite sublimity,

sublimity, a pure act, to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken. *In him there is light and no darkness*; spirituality without any matter; perfection without any shadow or taint of imperfection. Light pierceth into all things, preserves its own purity, and admits of no mixture of any thing else with it.

Secondly, The worship due from the creature to God, must be agreeable to the nature of God, and purely spiritual. I shall therefore,

1. Lay down some general propositions.
2. Shew what this spiritual worship is.
3. Why we must offer to God a spiritual service.
4. The use.

First, Some general propositions. The right exercise of worship is founded upon and riseth from the spirituality of God. The first ground of the worship we render to God, is the infinite excellency of his nature, which is not only one attribute, but results from all: for God, as God, is the object of worship; and the notion of God consists not in thinking him wise, good, just, but all those infinitely beyond any conception. And hence it follows that God is an object infinitely to be beloved and honoured. Psa. cxxx. *There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.* Fear in the scripture dialect, signifies the whole worship of God. Acts x. 35. *But in every nation he that fears him is accepted of him.* If God should act towards men according to the rigors of his justice due to them for the least of their crimes, there could be no exercise of any affection but that of despair, which could not engender a worship of God, which ought to be joined with love, not with hatred. The beneficence and patience of God, and his readiness to pardon men, is the reason of the honour they return to him: and this is so evident a motive, that generally the idolatrous world ranked those creatures in the number of their Gods, which they perceived
useful

useful and beneficial to mankind; as the sun and moon, the Egyptians, the ox, &c. and the more beneficial any thing appeared to mankind, the higher station men gave it in the rank of their deities, and bestowed a more peculiar and solemn worship upon it. Men worshipped God to procure or continue his favour, which would not have been acted by them, had they not conceived it a pleasing thing to him to be merciful and gracious.

Sometimes his justice is proposed to us as a motive of worship. Heb. xii. 28, 29. *Serve God with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire*; which includes his holiness, whereby he doth hate sin, as well as his wrath, whereby he doth punish it. Who but a mad and totally brutish person, or one that was resolved to make war against heaven, could behold the effects of God's anger in the world, consider him in his justice as a consuming fire, and despise him, and rather be drawn out by that consideration to blasphemy and despair, than to seek all ways to appease him? Now though the infinite power of God, his unspeakable wisdom, his incomprehensible goodness, the holiness of his nature, the vigilance of his providence, the bounty of his hand, signify to man, that he should love and honour him, and are the motives of worship; yet the spirituality of his nature is the rule of worship, and directs us to render our duty to him with all the powers of our soul. As his goodness beams out upon us, worship is due in justice to him; and as he is the most excellent nature, veneration is due to him in the highest manner with the choicest affections.

So that indeed the spirituality of God comes chiefly into consideration in matter of worship: all his perfections are grounded upon this: he could not be infinite, immutable, omniscient, if he was a corporeal being: we cannot give him a worship unless we judge him worthy, excellent and deserving a
worship

worship at our hands: and we cannot judge him worthy of a worship, unless we have some apprehensions and admirations of his infinite virtues: and we cannot apprehend and admire those perfections, but as we see them as causes shining in their effects. When we see therefore the frame of the world to be the work of his power; the order of the world to be the fruit of his wisdom, and the usefulness of the world to be the product of his goodness, we find the motives and reasons of worship; and weighing that this power, wisdom, goodness, infinitely transcend any corporeal nature, we find a rule of worship, that it ought to be offered by us in a manner suitable to such a nature, as is infinitely above any bodily being. His being a spirit, declares what he is; his other perfections declare what kind of spirit he is. All God's perfections suppose him a spirit; all center in this: his wisdom doth not suppose him merciful, or his mercy suppose him omniscient: there may be distinct notions of those, but all suppose him, of a spiritual nature. How cold and frozen will our devotions be, if we consider not his omniscience, whereby he discerns our hearts? How carnal will our services be, if we consider him not as a pure spirit? In our offers to, and transactions with men, we deal not with them as mere animals, but as rational creatures; and we debase their natures if we treat them otherwise; and if we have not raised apprehensions of God's spiritual nature in our treating with him, but allow him only such frames as we think fit enough for men; we debase his spirituality to the littleness of our own being: we must therefore possess our souls with this, we shall else render him no better than a fleshly service. We do not much concern ourselves in those things, of which we are either utterly ignorant, or have but slight apprehensions of.

That is the first proposition; the right exercise
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of worship is grounded upon the spirituality of God.

2. This spiritual worship of God is manifest by the light of nature, to be due to him. In reference to this, consider.

The outward means or matter of that worship which would be acceptable to God, was not known by the light of nature. The law for a worship, and for a spiritual worship, by the faculties of our souls was natural, and part of the law of creation; though the determination of the particular acts, whereby God would have this homage testified, was of positive institution, and depended not upon the law of creation. Though Adam in innocence knew God was to be worshipped; yet by nature he did not know by what outward acts he was to pay this respect, or at what time he was more solemnly to be exercised in it than at another: this depended upon the directions God, as the sovereign governor and law-giver, should prescribe. You therefore find the positive institutions of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; and the determination of the time of worship; Gen. ii. 3—17. Had there been any such notion in Adam naturally, as strong as that other, that a worship was due to God, there would have been found some relics of these modes universally consented to by mankind, as well as of the other: but though all nations have by an universal consent concurred in the acknowledgment of the being of God, and his right to adoration, and the obligation of the creature to it; and that there ought to be some public rule and polity in matters of religion; (for no nation hath been in the world without a worship, and without external acts and ceremonies to signify that worship) yet their modes and rites have been as various as their climates, unless in that common notion of sacrifices, not descending to them by nature, but tradition from Adam; and the various ways of worship have been more provoking than pleasing: every nation

nation suited the kind of worship to their particular ends and politics they designed to rule by. How God was to be worshipped, is more difficult to be discerned by nature with its eyes out, than with its eyes clear. The pillars upon which the worship of God stands, cannot be discerned without revelation, no more than blind Samson could tell where the pillars of the Philistines theatre stood, without one to conduct him. What Adam could not see with his sound eyes, we cannot with our dim eyes; he must be told from heaven, what worship was fit for the God of heaven: it is not by nature that we can have such a full prospect of God as may content and quiet us; this is the noble effect of divine revelation; he only knows himself, and can only make himself known to us. It could not be supposed, that an infinite God should have no perfections but what were visible in the works of his hands; and that these perfections should not be infinitely greater, than as they were sensible in their present effects: this had been to apprehend God a limited being, meaner than he is. Now it is impossible to honour God as we ought, unless we know him as he is; and we could not know him as he is, without divine revelation from himself; for none but God can acquaint us with his own nature: and therefore the nations void of this conduct, heaped up modes of worship from their own imaginations, unworthy of the majesty of God, and below the nature of man: a rational man would scarce have owned such for signs of honor, as the scripture mentions in the services of Baal and Dagon, much less an infinitely wise and glorious God: and when God had signified his mind to his own people, how unwilling were they to rest satisfied with God's determination, but would be warping to their own inventions, and make gods, and ways of worship to themselves? as in the matter of the golden calf, as was lately spoken of.

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Though the outward manner of worship acceptable to God, could not be known without revelation, and those revelations might be various; yet the inward manner of worship with our spirits was manifest by nature: and not only manifest by nature to Adam in innocence, but after his fall, and the scales he had brought upon his understanding by that fall. When God gave him his positive institutions before the fall, or whatsoever additions God should have made, had he persisted in that state; or when he appointed him after his fall to testify his acknowledgment of him by sacrifices, there needed no command to him to make those acknowledgments by those outward ways prescribed to him, with the intention and prime affection of his spirit: this nature would instruct him in without revelation: for he could not possibly have any semblance of reason to think, that the offering of beasts, or presenting the first fruits of the increase of the ground, as an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty over him and his bounty to him, was sufficient, without devoting to him that part wherein the image of his creator did consist: he could not but discern by a reflection upon his own being, that he was made for God as well as by God: Rom. xi. 36. *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, &c.* That the whole whereof he did consist was due to God; and that his body, the dreggy and dusty part of his nature, was not fit to be brought alone before God, without that nobler principle, which he had by creation linked with it. Nothing in the whole law of nature, as it is informed of religion, was clearer, next to the being of God, than this manner of worshipping God with the mind and spirit. And as the Gentiles never sunk so low into the mud of idolatry, as to think the images they worshipped were really their gods, but the representations, or habitations of their gods; so they never deserted this principle in the notion
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of it, that God was to be honoured with the best they were, and the best they had: as they never denied the being of a God in the notion, though they did in the practice, so they never rejected this principle in notion, though they did in the inward observation of it: it was a maxim among them that God was *mens, animus*; mind and spirit, and therefore was to be honoured with the mind and spirit: that religion did not consist in the ceremonies of the body, but the work of the soul; whence, the speech of one of them; “Sacrifice to the gods not so much clothed with purple garments as a pure heart:” and of another, “God regards not the multitude of the sacrifices, but the disposition of the sacrificer.” It is not fit we should deny God the cream and flower, and give him the flotten part and the stalks. And with what reverence and intention of mind they thought their worship was to be performed, is evident by the priests crying out often, *hoc age*, mind this, let your spirits be intent upon it.

This must result from the knowledge of ourselves. It is a natural principle, *God hath made us, and not we ourselves*, Ps. c. 1, 2. Man knows himself to be a rational creature: as a creature he was to serve his creator, and as a rational creature, with the best part of that rational nature he derived from him. By the same act of reason that he knows himself to be a creature, he knows himself to have a creator: that this creator is more excellent than himself, and that an honour is due from him to the creator for framing of him; and therefore this honour was to be offered to him by the most excellent part which was framed by him. Man cannot consider himself as a thinking, understanding being; but he must know that he must give God the honour of his thoughts, and worship him with those faculties whereby he thinks, wills, and acts. He must know his faculties were given him to act,

and to act for the glory of that God who gave him a soul and the faculties of it; and he could not in reason think they must be only active in his own service, and the service of the creature, and idle and unprofitable in the service of his creator. With the same powers of our soul whereby we contemplate God, we must also worship God: we cannot think of him but with our minds, nor love him but with our will; and we cannot worship him without the acts of thinking and loving, and therefore cannot worship him without the exercise of our inward faculties: how is it possible then for any man that knows his own nature, to think that extended hands, bended knees, and lifted up eyes, were sufficient acts of worship, without a quickened and active spirit?

From the knowledge of God. As there was a knowledge of God by nature, so the same nature did dictate to man that God was to be glorified as God: the apostle implies the inference in the charge he brings against them for neglecting it. “We should speak of God as he is,” said one; and the same reason would inform them that they were to act towards God as he is. The excellency of the object required a worship according to the dignity of his nature; which could not be answered but by the most serious inward affection, as well as outward decency; and a want of this, cannot but be judged to be unbecoming the majesty of the creator of the world, and the excellency of religion. No nation, no person did ever assert, that the vilest part of man was enough for the most excellent being, as God is: that a bodily service could be a sufficient acknowledgement of the greatness of God, or a sufficient return for the bounty of God. Man could not but know that he was to act in religion, conformably to the object of religion, and to the excellency of his own soul: the notion of a God was sufficient to fill the mind of a man with admiration and reverence,

rence, and the first conclusion from it would be to honour God, and that he have all the affection placed on him, that so infinite and spiritual a being did deserve: the progress then would be, that this excellent being was to be honoured with the motions of the understanding and will; with the purest and most spiritual powers in the nature of man; because he was a spiritual being, and had nothing of matter mingled with him. Such a brutish imagination, to suppose that blood and fumes, beasts and incense, could please a deity, without a spiritual frame, cannot be supposed to befall any but those that had lost their reason in the rubbish of sense. Mere rational nature could never conclude, that so excellent a spirit would be put off with a mere animal service; an attendance of matter and body without spirit, when they themselves of an inferior nature, would be loth to sit down contented with an outside service from those that belong to them: so that this instruction of our Saviour, that God is to be worshipped in spirit and truth, is conformable to the sentiments of nature, and drawn from the most undeniable principles of it. The excellency of God's nature, and the excellent constitution of human faculties, concur naturally to support this persuasion: this was as natural to be known by men, as the necessity of justice and temperance for the support of human societies and bodies. It is to be feared that if there be not among us such brutish apprehensions, there are such brutish dealings with God in our services against the light of nature; when we place all our worship of God in outward attendances and drooping countenances, with unbelieving frames and formal devotions; when prayer is muttered over in private slightly, as a parrot learns lessons by rote, not understanding what it speaks, or to what end it speaks it; not glorifying God in thought and spirit, with understanding and will.

Spiritual worship therefore was always required

by God, and always offered to him by one or other. Man had a perpetual obligation upon him to such a worship from the nature of God, and what is founded upon the nature of God is unvariable. This and that particular mode of worship may wax old as a garment, and as a vesture may be folded up and changed, as the expression is of the heavens: but God endures for ever; his spirituality fails not; therefore a worship of him in spirit must run through all ways and rites of worship. God must cease to be spirit, before any service but that which is spiritual, can be accepted by him. The light of nature is the light of God; the light of nature being unchangeable, what was dictated by that, was always and will always be required by God. The worship of God being perpetually due from the creature, the worshipping him as God is as perpetually his right. Though the outward expressions of this honour were different—one way in Paradise, (for a worship was then due, since a solemn time for that worship was appointed) another under the law; another under the gospel: the angels also worship God in heaven, and fall down before his throne; yet, though they differ in rites, they agree in this necessary ingredient: all rites, though of a different shape, must be offered to him, not as carcases, but animated with the affections of the soul. Abel's sacrifice had not been so excellent in God's esteem, without those gracious habits and affections working in his soul. Faith works by love; his heart was on fire as well as his sacrifice. Cain rested upon his present, perhaps thought he had obliged God; he depended upon the outward ceremony, but sought not for the inward purity: it was an offering brought to the Lord; he had the right object but not the right manner, Gen. iv. 7. *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?* and in the command afterwards to Abraham, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect*, was the direction in all our religious acts and wal-

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kings with God. A sincere act of the mind and will, looking above and beyond all symbols; extending the soul to a pitch far above the body, and seeing the day of Christ through the veil of the ceremonies, was required by God and though Moses by God's order had instituted a multitude of carnal ordinances, sacrifices, washings, oblations of sensible things, and recommended to the people the diligent observation of those statutes, by the allurements of promises, and denouncing of threatenings; as if there were nothing else to be regarded, and the true workings of grace were to be buried under a heap of ceremonies; yet sometimes he doth point them to the inward worship, and by the command of God, requires of them the circumcision of the heart, Deut. x. 16. the turning to God with all their heart, and all their soul, Deut. xxx. 10. whereby they might recollect, that it was the engagement of the heart, and the worship of the spirit, that was most agreeable to God; and that he took not any pleasure in their observance of ceremonies, without true piety within, and the true purity of their thoughts.

It is therefore as much every man's duty to worship God in spirit, as it is their duty to worship him. Worship is so due to him as God, that he who denies it, disowns his deity: and spiritual worship is so due, that he who waves it, denies his spirituality. It is a debt of justice we owe to God to worship him, and it is as much a debt of justice to worship him according to his nature. Worship is nothing else but a rendering to God the honour that is due to him; and therefore the right posture of our spirits in it, is as much or more due, than the material worship in the modes of his own prescribing; that is grounded both upon his nature and upon his command; this only upon his command; this is perpetually due, whereas the channel wherein outward worship runs may be dried up, and the

river diverted another way: such a worship wherein the mind thinks of God, feels a sense of God, has the spirit consecrated to God, the heart glowing with affections to God: it is else a mocking God with a feather. A rational nature must worship God with that wherein the glory of God doth most sparkle in him. God is most visible in the frame of the soul, it is there his image glitters: he hath given us a jewel as well as a case, and the jewel as well as the case we must return to him: the spirit is God's gift, and must return to him: it must return to him in every service morally, as well as it must return to him at last physically. It is not fit we should serve our maker only with that which is the brute in us, and withhold from him that which doth constitute us reasonable creatures; we must give him our bodies, but a living sacrifice. If the spirit be absent from God when the body is before him, we present a dead sacrifice; it is morally dead in the duty, though it be naturally alive in the posture and action. It is not an indifferent thing whether we shall worship God or no, nor is it an indifferent thing whether we shall worship him with our spirits or no: as the excellency of man's knowledge consists in knowing things as they are in truth; so the excellency of the will in willing things as they are in goodness. As it is the excellency of man to know God as God; so it is no less his excellency, as well as his duty, to honour God as God. As the obligation we have to the power of God for our being, binds us to a worship of him; so the obligation we have to his bounty for fashioning us according to his own image, binds us to an exercise of that part wherein his image doth consist. *God hath made all things for himself*, Prov. xvi. 4. that is, for the evidence of his own goodness and wisdom: we are therefore to render him a glory according to the excellency of his nature, discovered in the frame of our own: it

it is as much our sin not to glorify and worship God as God, as to omit the testifying any respect at all to him. As the divine nature is the object of worship, so the divine perfections are to be honoured in worship: we do not honour God if we honour him not as he is; we honour him not as a spirit, if we think him not worthy of the ardors and ravishing admirations of our spirits. If we think the devotions of the body are sufficient for him, we contract him into the condition of our own being; and not only deny him to be a spiritual nature, but dash out all those perfections which he could not be possessed of, were he not a spirit.

The second thing I am to shew, is, what spiritual worship is. In general the whole spirit is to be employed: the name of God is not sanctified but by the engagement of our souls.

Worship is an act of the understanding, applying itself to the knowledge of the excellency of God, and actual thoughts of his majesty; recognizing him as the supreme lord and governor of the world, which is natural knowledge; beholding the glory of his attributes in the Redeemer, which is evangelical knowledge: this is the sole act of the spirit of man. The same reason is for all our worship as for our thanksgiving: this must be done with understanding, *Psa. xl. 7. Sing ye praise with understanding*; with a knowledge and sense of his greatness, goodness and wisdom. It is also an act of the will, whereby the soul adores and reverenceth his majesty, is ravished with his amiableness, embraceth his goodness, enters itself into an intimate communion with this most lovely object, and pitcheth all his affections upon him.

We must worship God understandingly, it is not else a reasonable service: the nature of God and the law of God abhor a blind offering; we must worship him heartily, else we offer him a dead sacrifice: a reasonable service is that wherein the mind doth truly

truly act something with God. All spiritual acts must be acts of reason, otherwise they are not human acts, because they want that principle which is constitutive of man, and doth difference him from other creatures: acts done only by sense are the acts of a brute; acts done by reason are the acts of a man; that which is only an act of sense, cannot be an act of religion: the sense, without the conduct of reason, is not the subject of religious acts, for then beasts were capable of religion as well as men: there cannot be religion where there is not reason; and there cannot be the exercise of religion, where there is not an exercise of the rational faculties. Nothing can be a christian act, that is not a human act: besides, all worship must be for some end: the worship of God must be for God; it is by the exercise of our rational faculties, that we only can intend an end: an ignorant and carnal worship is a brutish worship.

Spiritual worship is a worship from a spiritual nature. Not only physically spiritual, so our souls are in their frame; but morally spiritual, by a renewing principle. The heart must be first cast into the mould of the gospel, before it can perform a worship required by the gospel. Adam living in Paradise, might perform a spiritual worship; but Adam fallen from his rectitude, could not: we being heirs of his nature, are heirs of his impotence: restoration to a spiritual life, must precede any act of spiritual worship. As no work can be good, so no worship can be spiritual, till we are created in Christ. Christ is our life. As no natural action can be performed without life in the root or heart, so no spiritual act without Christ in the soul: our being in Christ, is as necessary to every spiritual act, as the union of our soul with our body, is necessary to natural action. Nothing can exceed the limits of its nature; for then it should exceed itself in acting, and do that which it hath no principle to do.

do. A beast cannot act like a man, without partaking of the nature of a man; nor a man act like an angel, without partaking of the angelical nature: how can we perform spiritual acts, without a spiritual principle? Whatsoever worship proceeds from the corrupted nature, cannot deserve the title of spiritual worship, because it springs not from a spiritual habit. If those that are evil cannot speak good things, those that are carnal cannot offer a spiritual service. Poison is the fruit of a viper's nature. Mat. xii. 34. *O, generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.* As the root is, so is the fruit. If the soul be habitually carnal, the worship cannot be actually spiritual: there may be an intention of spirit, but there is no spiritual principle as a root of that intention. A heart may be sensibly united with a duty, when it is not spiritually united with Christ in it. Carnal motives and carnal ends, may fix the mind in act of worship, as the sense of some pressing affliction may enlarge a man's mind in prayer. Whatsoever is agreeable to the nature of God, must have a stamp of Christ upon it; a stamp of his grace in performance, as well as of his meditation in the acceptance. The apostle lived not, but Christ lived in him; the soul worships not, but Christ in him: not that Christ performs the act of worship; but enables us spiritually to worship after he enables us spiritually to live. As God counts not any soul living but in Christ, so he counts not any a spiritual worshipper but in Christ. The goodness and fatness of the fruit comes from the fatness of the olive wherein we are engrafted: we must find healing in Christ's wings, before God can find spirituality in our services. All worship, issuing from a dead nature, is but a dead service: a living action cannot be performed, without being knit to a living root.

Spiritual

Spiritual worship is done by the influence, and with the assistance of the Spirit of God. A heart may be spiritual, when a particular act of worship may not be spiritual. The Spirit may dwell in the heart, when he may suspend his influence on the act. Our worship is then spiritual, when the fire that kindles our affections comes from heaven, as that fire upon the altar wherewith the sacrifices were consumed. God tastes a sweetness in no service, but as it is dressed up by the hand of the Mediator, and hath the air of his own Spirit in it: they are but natural acts, without a supernatural assistance: without an actual influence, we cannot act from spiritual motives, nor for spiritual ends, nor in a spiritual manner. We cannot mortify a lust without the Spirit, nor quicken a service without the Spirit. Whatsoever corruption is killed, is slain by his power; whatsoever duty is spiritualized, is refined by his breath. He quickens our dead bodies in our resurrection; he renews our dead souls in our regeneration; he quickens our carnal services in our adorations: the choicest acts of worship are but infirmities, without his auxiliary help. We are logs, unable to move ourselves, till he raises our faculties to a pitch agreeable to God; puts his hand to the duty, and lifts that up and us with it. Never any great act was performed by the apostles to God, or for God, but they are said to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Christ could not have been conceived immaculate as that holy thing, without the Spirit's overshadowing the virgin; nor any spiritual act conceived in our heart, without the Spirit's moving upon us, to bring forth a living religion from us. The acts of worship are said to be in the spirit, supplication in the spirit; not only with the strength and affection of our own spirits, but with the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost, if Jude may be the interpreter. The Holy Ghost exciting us; impelling us, and firing our souls
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by his divine flame; raising up the affections, and making the soul cry with a holy importunity, Abba Father. To render our worship spiritual, we should, before every engagement in it, implore the actual presence of the Spirit, without which, we are not able to send forth one spiritual breath or groan; but be wind-bound, like a ship without a gale, and our worship be no better than carnal. How doth the spouse solicit the Spirit with an *awake, O north wind, and come thou south wind, &c.*

Spiritual worship is done with sincerity. When the heart stands right to God, and the soul performs what it pretends to perform: when we serve God with our spirits, as the Apostle, Rom. i. 9. *God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son*: this is not meant of the Holy Ghost; for the Apostle would never have called the Spirit of God, his own spirit; but with my spirit, that is, a sincere frame of heart. A carnal worship, whether under the law or gospel, is when we are busied about external rites, without an inward compliance of soul. God demands the heart; *My son, give me thy heart*; not give me thy tongue, or thy lips, or thy hands; these may be given without the heart, but the heart can never be bestowed without these as its attendants. A heap of services can be no more welcome to God, without our spirits, than all Jacob's sons could be to Joseph, without the Benjamin he desired to see. God is not taken with the cabinet, but with the jewel. He first respected Abel's faith and sincerity, and then his sacrifice; he disrespected Cain's infidelity and hypocrisy, and then his offering. For this cause he rejected the offerings of the Jews, the prayers of the Pharisees, and the alms of Annanias and Sapphira, because their hearts and their duties were at a distance from one another. In all spiritual sacrifices, our spirits are God's portion. Under the law, the reins were to be consumed by the fire on the altar,

altar, because the secret intentions of the heart were signified by them, Psa. vii 9. *The Lord trieth the heart and the reins.* It was an ill omen among the heathen, if the victim wanted a heart. The widow's mites with her heart in them, were more esteemed than the richer offerings without it. Not the quantity of service, but the will in it, is of an account with this infinite Spirit. All that was to be brought for the framing of the tabernacle, was to be offered *willingly with the heart.* The more of will, the more of spirituality and acceptableness to God, Psa. cxix. 108. *Accept the free will offering of my lips.* The heart is most like to the object of worship: the heart in the body is the spring of all vital actions; and a spiritual soul is the spring of all spiritual actions. How can we imagine God can delight in the mere service of the body, any more than we can delight to converse with a carcase?

Without the heart it is no worship: It is a stage play; an acting a part, without being that person really which is acted by us: a hypocrite, in the notion of the word, is a stage player. We may as well say a man may believe with his body, as worship God only with it. Faith, is a great ingredient in worship, and it is *with the heart man believes unto righteousness.* We may be truly said to worship God, though we want perfection; but we cannot be said to worship him, if we want sincerity: a statue upon a tomb, with eyes and hands lifted up, offers as good and true a service; it wants only a voice, the gestures and postures are the same; nay, the service is better; it is not a mockery, it represents all that it can be framed to: but to worship without our spirits, is a presenting God with a picture, an echo, voice, and nothing else; a compliment; a mere lie; *a compassing him about with lies.* Without the heart, the tongue is a liar, and the greatest zeal, dissembling within him. To
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present the spirit, is to present with that which can never naturally die; to present him only the body, is to present him, that which is every day crumbling to dust, and will at last lie rotten in the grave: to offer him a few rags, easily torn; a skin for a sacrifice, a thing unworthy the majesty of God: a fixed eye and elevated hands, with a sleepy heart and earthly soul, are pitiful things for an ever blessed and glorious Spirit: nay, it is so far from being spiritual, that it is blasphemy. To pretend to be a Jew outwardly, without being so inwardly, is, in the judgment of Christ, to blaspheme: and is not the same title to be given with as much reason to those that pretend a worship, and perform none? such a one is not a spiritual worshipper, but a blaspheming devil in Samuel's mantle.

Spiritual worship is performed with a spiritual activity and sensibleness of God; with an active understanding to meditate on his excellency, and an active will to embrace him when he drops upon the soul. If we understand the amiableness of God, our affections will be ravished; if we understand the immensity of his goodness, our spirits will be enlarged. We are to act with the highest intention, suitable to the greatness of that God with whom we have to do, Psa. cl. 2. *Praise him according to his excellent greatness*: not that we can worship him equally, but in some proportion; the frame of the heart is to be suited to the excellency of the object: our spiritual strength is to be put out to the utmost, as creatures that act naturally do: the sun shines and the fire burns to the utmost of their natural power. This is so necessary, that David, a spiritual worshipper, prays for it before he sets upon acts of adoration, Psa. lxxx. 18. *Quicken us, that we may daily call upon thy name*. As he was loth to have a drowsy faculty, he was loth to have a drowsy instrument, and would willingly have them
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as lively as himself, Psa. lvii. 8. *Awake up my glory; awake psaltrey and harp; I myself will awake early:* How would this divine soul screw himself up to God, and be turned into nothing but a holy flame? Our souls must be boiling hot when we serve the Lord. The heart doth no less burn when it spiritually comes to God, than when God doth spiritually approach to it. A Nabal's heart, one as cold as a stone, cannot offer up a spiritual service.

Whatsoever is enjoined us as our duty, ought to be performed with the greatest intenseness of our spirit. As it is our duty to pray, so it is our duty to pray with the most fervent importunity. It is our duty to love God, but with the purest and most sublime affections: every command of God requires the whole strength of the creature to be employed in it. That love to God, wherein all our duty to God is summed up, is to be with all our strength, with all our might, &c. though in the covenant of grace, he hath mitigated the severity of the law, and requires not from us such an elevation of our affections, as was possible in the state of innocence, yet God requires of us the utmost moral industry, to raise our affections to a pitch, at least equal to what they are in other things: what strength of affection we naturally have, ought to be as much and more excited in acts of worship than upon other occasions and our ordinary works. As there was an inactivity of soul in worship and a quickness to sin, when sin had the dominion; so when the soul is spiritualized, the temper is changed, there is an inactivity to sin, and an ardor in duty: the more the soul is dead to sin, the more it is alive to God, and the more lively too in all that concerns God and his honour. For grace being a new strength added to our natural, determines the affections to new objects, and excites them to a greater vigor. And as the hatred of sin is more sharp, the love to every thing that destroys the dominion
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of it, is more strong. And acts of worship may be reckoned as the chiefest batteries against the power of this inbred enemy. When the Spirit is in the soul, like the rivers of waters flowing out of the belly, the soul hath the activity of a river, and makes haste to be swallowed up in God, as the streams of the river in the sea. Christ makes his people kings and priests to God; first kings, then priests: gives first a royal temper of heart, that they may offer spiritual sacrifices as priests: kings and priests to God, acting with a magnificent spirit in all their motions to him: we cannot be spiritual priests, till we be spiritual kings. The Spirit appeared in the likeness of fire, and where he resides, communicates, like fire, purity and activity.

The third general head is, why a spiritual worship is due to God, and to be offered to him. We must consider the object of worship, and the subject of worship, the worshipper and the worshipped. God is a spiritual being; man is a reasonable creature. The nature of God informs us, what is fit to be presented to him; our own nature informs us, what is fit to be presented by us.

The best we have is to be presented to God in worship; for since God is the most excellent being, he is to be served by us with the most excellent thing we have, and with the choicest veneration. God is so incomprehensibly excellent, that we cannot render him what he deserves; we must render him what we are able to offer; the best of our affections; the flower of our strength; the cream and top of our spirits. By the same reason that we are bound to give to God the best worship, we must offer it to him in the best manner. We cannot give to God any thing too good for so blessed a being: God being a great king, slight services become not his majesty: it is unbecoming the majesty of God, and the reason of a creature,

to give him a trivial thing: it is unworthy of us to bestow the best of our strength on our lust, and the worst and weakest in the service of God. An infinite spirit, should have affections as near to infinite as we can: as he is a spirit without bounds, so he should have a service without limits: when we have given him all, we cannot serve him according to the excellency of his nature; and shall we give him less than all? his infinite excellency and our dependance on him as creatures, demands the choicest adoration: our spirits being the noblest part of our nature, are as due to him, as the service of our bodies, which are the vilest: to serve him with the worst only, is to diminish this honour.

Under the law, God commanded the best to be offered him: he would have the males, the best of the kind; the fat, the best of the creature: he commanded them to offer him the firstlings of the flock; not the firstlings of the womb, but the firstlings of the year: the Jewish cattle having two breeding times; in the beginning of the spring, and the beginning of September; the latter breed was the weaker, which Jacob knew, when he laid the rods before the cattle, when they were strong in the spring, and withheld them when they were feeble in the autumn. One reason, as the Jews say, why God accepted not the offering of Cain was, because he brought the meanest, not the best of the fruit; and therefore it is said, only that he brought of the fruit of the ground, Gen. iv. 3. not the first of the fruit, or the best of the fruit; as Abel, who brought the firstling of his flock, and the fat thereof, ver. 4.

God hath given us the choicest things he had. A Redeemer, that was the power of God, and the wisdom of God: the best he had in heaven, his own son, and in himself, a sacrifice for us, that we might be enabled to present ourselves a sacrifice

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fice to him. And Christ offered himself for us, the best he had, and that with the strength of the deity through the eternal Spirit; and shall we grudge God the best part of ourselves? as God would have a worship from his creature, so it must be with the best part of his creature. If we have given ourselves to the Lord, we can worship with no less than ourselves. What is the man without his spirit? If we are to worship God with all that we have received from him, we must worship him with the best part we have received from him: it is but a small glory we can give him with the best, and shall we deprive him of his right, by giving him the worst? as what we are, is from God; so what we are, ought to be for God. Creation is the foundation of worship, *Psa c. 2, 3. Serve the Lord with gladness: know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us:* He hath ennobled us with spiritual affections; where is it fittest for us to employ them, but upon him? and at what time, but when we come solemnly to converse with him? Is it justice to deny him the honour of his best gift to us? Our souls are more his gift to us, than any thing in the world: other things are so given that they are often taken from us, but our spirits are the most durable gift. Rational faculties cannot be removed without a dissolution of nature.

Well then, as he is God, he is to be honoured with all the propensions and ardor, that the infiniteness and excellency of such a being requires, and the incomparable obligations he hath laid upon us in this state, deserve at our hands: in all our worship therefore, our minds ought to be filled with the highest admiration, love and reverence. Since our end was to glorify God, we answer not our end, and honour him not, unless we give him the choicest we have.

To make use of this.—First, it serves for information. If spiritual worship be required by God,

how sad is it for them that are so far from giving God a spiritual worship, that they render him no worship at all? I speak not of the neglect of public, but of private; when men present not a devotion to God from one year's end to the other. The speech of our Saviour, that we must worship God in spirit and truth, implies that a worship is due to him from every one: that is the common impression upon the consciences of all men in the world, if they have not by some constant course in gross sin, hardened their souls, and stifled those natural sentiments.

Let us examine ourselves at the end of every act of worship, and chide ourselves for any carnality we perceive in them. Let us take a review of them, and examine the reason; why art thou so low and carnal, O my soul? As David did of his disquietedness, *Psa. xlii. 5* *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?* If any unworthy frames have surprised us in worship, let us seek them out after worship; call them to the bar; make an exact scrutiny into the causes of them, that we may prevent their incursions another time; let our pulses beat quick, by way of anger and indignation against them: this would be a repairing what hath been amiss; otherwise they may grow, and clog an after worship more than they did a former. Daily examination is an antidote against the temptations of the following day, and constant examination of our selves after duty, is a preservative against vain encroachments in following duties; and upon the finding them out, let us apply the blood of Christ by faith for our cure, and draw strength from the death of Christ for the conquest of them, and let us also be humbled for them. God lifts up the humble: when we are humbled for our carnal frames in one duty, we shall find ourselves by the grace of God more elevated in the next.

The Eternity of God.

Pfalm xc. 2.

BEFORE THE MOUNTAINS WERE BROUGHT FORTH, OR EVER
THOU HADST FORMED THE EARTH AND THE WORLD; EVEN
FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING, THOU ART GOD.

THE title of this psalm is a prayer—the author, Moses. Some think not only this, but the ten following psalms were composed by him. The title wherewith he is dignified, is the man of God, as also in Deut. xxxiii. 1. One inspired by him, to be his interpreter, and deliver his oracles; one particularly directed by him: one, who as a servant, did diligently employ himself in his master's business, and acted for the glory of God; he was the minister of the old testament, and the prophet of the new.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or before they were begotten or born; the word being used in those senses in scripture; before they stood up higher than the rest of the earthly mass God had created. It seems that mountains were not casually cast up by the force of the deluge, tossing the ground, and driving several parcels of it together, to grow up into a massy body, as the sea doth the sand in several places; but they were at first formed by God.

The eternity of God is here described,

1. In his priority, *before the world*.

2. In the extention of his duration, *from everlasting to everlasting thou art God*.

He was before the world, yet he neither began nor ends: he is not a temporary, but an eternal God: It takes in both parts of eternity, what was before the creation of the world, and what is after: though the eternity of God be one permanent state without succession, yet the Spirit of God, suiting himself to the weakness of our conception, divides it into two parts one; past, before the foundation of the world; another to come, after the destruction of the world; as he did exist before all ages, and as he will exist after all ages.

In this doctrine I shall shew, 1. How God is eternal, or in what respects eternity is his property. 2. That he is eternal, and must needs be so. 3. That eternity is only proper to God, and not common to him with any creature. 4. The use.

First, How God is eternal, or in what respects he is so. Eternity is a negative attribute, and is a denying of God any measures of time, as immensity is a denying of him any bounds of place: as immensity is the diffusion of his essence, so eternity is the duration of his essence; and, when we say God is eternal, we exclude from him all possibility of beginning and ending—all flux and change. As the essence of God cannot be bounded by any place, so it is not to be limited by any time; as it is his immensity to be every where, so it is his eternity to be always. As created things are said to be somewhere in regard of place, and to be present, past, or future, in regard of time; so the Creator, in regard of place, is every where; in regard of time, is *semper*. His duration is as endless, as his essence is boundless; he always was, and always will be, and will no more have an end, than he had a beginning; and this is an excellency belonging to the
supreme

supreme being. As his essence comprehends all beings and exceeds them, and his immensity surmounts all places; so his eternity comprehends all times, all durations, and infinitely excels them

1. God is without beginning. In the beginning God created the world: God was then before the beginning of it; and what point can be set wherein God began, if he were before the beginning of created things? God was without beginning, though all other things had time and beginning from him. As unity is before all numbers, so is God before all his creatures. Abraham called upon the name of the everlasting God—the eternal God: it is opposed to the heathen gods, which were but of yesterday, new coined, and so new; but the eternal God was before the world was made: in that sense it is to be understood, *The mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest; and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the command of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.* The gospel is not preached by the command of a new and temporary God, but of that God, that was before all ages; though the manifestation of it be in time, yet the purpose and resolve of it was from eternity.

If there were decrees before the foundation of the world, there was a decreer before the foundation of the world: before the foundation of the world he loved Christ as a mediator: a fore-ordination of him was before the foundation of the world; a choice of men, and therefore a chooser before the foundation of the world; a grace given in Christ before the world began, and therefore a donor of that grace. From those places, saith Crellius, it appears that God was before the foundation of the world, but they do not assert an absolute eternity; but to be before all creatures, is equivalent to his being from eternity. Time began with the foundation of the world, but God being before

time, could have no beginning in time: before the beginning of the creation, and the beginning of time, there could be nothing but eternity; nothing but what was uncreated, that is, nothing but what was without beginning. To be in time, is, to have a beginning; to be before all time, is never to have a beginning, but always to be: for as between the creator and creatures there is no medium, so between time and eternity, there is no medium. It is as easily deduced, that he that was before all creatures is eternal, as he that made all creatures is God: if he had a beginning, he must have it from another, or from himself; if from another, that from whom he received his being would be better than he, so more a God than he. He cannot be God, that is not supreme; he cannot be supreme that owes his being to the power of another: he would not be said only to have immortality as he is, if he had it dependent upon another; nor could he have a beginning from himself; if he had given beginning to himself, then he was once nothing, there was a time when he was not; if he was not, how could he be the cause of himself? It is impossible for any, to give a beginning and being to itself: if it acts, it must exist; and so exist, before it existed: a thing would exist as a cause, before it existed as an effect. He that is not, cannot be the cause that he is; if therefore God doth exist, and hath not his being from another, he must exist from eternity: therefore, when we say God is of and from himself, we mean not that God gave being to himself; but it is negatively to be understood, that he hath no cause of existence without himself.

Whatsoever number of millions of millions of years we can imagine before the creation of the world, yet God was infinitely before those; he is therefore called the Ancient of Days, as being before all days and time, and eminently containing in himself

himself all times and ages: though indeed God cannot properly be called ancient, that will testify that he is decaying, and shortly will not be; no more than he can be called young, which would signify that he was not long before. All created things are new and fresh; but no creature can find out any beginning of God: it is impossible there should be any beginning of him.

2. God is without end. He always was, always is, and always will be what he is; he remains always the same in being; so far from any change, that no shadow of it can touch him: he will continue in being, as long as he hath already enjoyed it; and if we could add never so many millions of years together, we are still as far from an end, as from a beginning; for *the Lord shall endure for ever*: as it is impossible he should not be, being from all eternity; so it is impossible that he should not be to all eternity. The scripture is most plentiful in testimonies of this eternity of God, *à parte post*: or after the creation of the world: he is said to live for ever. The earth shall perish, but God shall endure for ever, and his years shall have no end. Plants and animals grow up from small beginnings; arrive to their full growth and decline again, and have always remarkable alterations in their nature; but there is no declination in God by all the revolutions of time: hence some think the incorruptibility of the deity was signified by the shittim, or cedar wood, whereof the ark was made, it being of an incorruptible nature.

That which had no beginning of duration can never have an end, or any interruptions in it. Since God never depended upon any, what should make him cease to be what eternally he hath been, or put a stop to the continuance of his perfections? He cannot will his own destruction, that is against universal nature in all things to cease from being, if they can preserve themselves. He cannot desert
his

his own being, because he cannot but love himself as the best and chiefest good. The reason that any thing decays, is either its own native weakneſs, or a ſuperior power of ſomething contrary to it: there is no weakneſs in the nature of God that can introduce any corruption, becauſe he is infinitely ſimple without any mixture; nor can he be overpowered by any thing elſe; a weaker cannot hurt him, and a ſtronger than he there cannot be; nor can he be outwitted or circumvented, becauſe of his infinite wiſdom: as he hath received his being from none, ſo he cannot be deprived of it by any; as he doth neceſſarily exiſt, ſo he doth neceſſarily always exiſt: this indeed is the property of God; nothing ſo proper to him, as always to be. Whatſoever perfections any being hath, if it be not eternal, it is not divine. God only is immortal; he only is ſo by a neceſſity of nature: angels, ſouls and bodies to, after the reſurrection, ſhall be immortal; not by nature, but grant; they are ſubject to return to nothing, if that word that raiſed them from nothing ſhould ſpeak them into nothing again: it is as eaſy with God to ſtrip them of it, as to inveſt them with it; nay, it is impoſſible but that they ſhould periſh, if God ſhould withdraw his power from preſerving them, which he exerted in creating them: but God is immovably fixed in his own being; that as none gave him his life, ſo none can deprive him of his life, or the leaſt particle of it; not a jot of the happineſs and life, which God infinitely poſſeſſes, can be loſt: it will be as durable to everlaſting, as it hath been poſſeſſed from everlaſting.

3. There is no ſucceſſion in God. God is without ſucceſſion or change; it is a part of eternity; *from everlaſting to everlaſting, he is God*, i. e. the ſame. God doth not always remain in being, but he remains the ſame in that being, *thou art the ſame*. The being of creatures is ſucceſſive; the being of
God

God is permanent, and remains intire, with all its perfections unchanged in an infinite duration. Indeed, the first notion of eternity is to be without beginning and end, which notes to us the duration of a being in regard of its existence; but to have no succession, nothing first or last, notes rather the perfection of a being in regard of its essence.

The creatures are in a perpetual flux; something is acquired, or something lost every day. A man is the same in regard of existence when he is a man, as he was when he was a child; but there is a new succession of quantities and qualities in him; every day he acquires something till he comes to his maturity; every day he loseth something till he comes to his period. A man is not the same at night that he was in the morning; something is expired, and something is added; every day there is a change in his age, a change in his substance, a change in his accidents: but God hath his whole being in one and the same point, or moment of eternity; he receives nothing as an addition to what he was before; he looseth nothing of what he was before; he is always the same excellency and perfection in the same infiniteness as ever; his years do not fail, his years do not come and go as others do; there is not this day, to-morrow or yesterday with him. As nothing is past or future with him in regard of knowledge, but all things are present, so nothing is past or future in regard of his essence; he is not in his essence this day what he was not before, or will be the next day and year what he is not now: all his perfections are most perfect in him every moment, before all ages, after all ages; as he hath his whole essence undivided in every place, as well as in an immense space; so he hath all his being in one moment of time, as well as in infinite intervals of time. Some illustrate the difference between eternity and time, by the similitude of a tree, or a rock standing upon the side of a river, or shore of the sea

sea; the tree stands always the same and unmoved, while the waters of the river glide along at the foot; the flux is in the river, but the tree acquires nothing but a diverse respect, and relation of presence to the various parts of the river as they flow; the waters of the river press on, and push forward one another, and what the river had this minute, it hath not the same the next; so are all sublunary things in a continual flux. And though the angels have no substantial change, yet they have an accidental, for the actions of the angels this day, are not the same individual actions which they performed yesterday—But in God there is no change, he always remains the same.

Of a creature it may be said, he was, or he is, or shall be; of God it cannot be said, but only he is; he is what he always was, and he is what he always will be: whereas a creature is what he was not, and will be what he is not now; as it may be said of the flame of a candle, it is flame; but it is not the same individual flame as it was before, nor is it the same that will be presently after; there is a continual dissolution of it into air, and a continual supply for the generation of more; while it continues, it may be said there is a flame, yet not entirely one, but in a succession of parts: so, of a man it may be said, he is in a succession of parts; but he is not the same that he was, and will not be the same that he is; but God is the same without any succession of parts and of time; of him it may be said, he is; he is no more now than he was, and he shall be no more hereafter than he is. God possesses a firm and absolute being, always constant to himself; he sees all things sliding under him in a continual variation; he beholds the revolutions in the world without any change of his most glorious and immoveable nature: all other things pass from one state to another; from their original, to their eclipse and destruction: but God possesses his being in one
indivisible

indivisible point, having neither, beginning, end, nor middle.

4. There is no succession in the knowledge of God. The variety of successions and changes in the world, make not succession or new objects in the divine mind; for all things are present to him from eternity, in regard of his knowledge, though they are not actually present in the world in regard of their existence: he doth not know one thing now, and another anon; he sees all things at once; *known unto God are all things from the beginning of the world.* but in their true order of succession, as they lie in the eternal council of God, to be brought forth in time. Though there be a succession and order of things as they are wrought, there is yet no succession in God, in regard of his knowledge of them. God knows the things that shall be wrought, and the order of them in their being brought upon the stage of the world; yet, both the things and the order he knows by one act. Though all things be present with God, yet they are present in him in the order of their appearance in the world, and not so present with him as it they should be wrought at once. The death of Christ was to precede his resurrection in order of time; there is a succession in this; both at once are known by God, yet the act of his knowledge is not exercised about Christ as dying, and rising at the same time; so that there is succession in things, when there is no succession in God's knowledge of them. Since God knows time, he knows all things as they are in time; he doth not know all things to be at once, though he knows at once what is, has been, and will be. All things are past, present, and to come, in regard of their existence; but they are not so in regard of God's knowledge of them; because he sees and knows not by any other, but by himself; he is his own light by which he sees, his own glass wherein he sees; beholding himself, he beholds all things.

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There is no succession in the decrees of God. He doth not decree this now, which he decreed not before; for as his works were known from the beginning of the world, so his works were decreed from the beginning of the world; as they are known at once, so they are decreed at once; there is a succession in the execution of them, first grace, then glory; but the purpose of God for the bestowing of both, was in one and the same moment of eternity. *He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy.* The choice of Christ, and the choice of some in him to be holy, and happy, were before the foundation of the world. It is, by the eternal counsel of God, all things appear in time; they appear in their order according to the counsel and will of God from eternity. The redemption of the world is after the creation of the world; but the decree whereby the world was created, and whereby it was redeemed, was from eternity.

5. God is his own eternity. He is not eternal by grant, and the disposal of any other, but by nature and essence. The eternity of God, is nothing else but his existence enduring. If eternity were any thing distinct from God, and not of the essence of God, then there would be something which was not God, necessary to perfect God. As immortality is the great perfection of a rational creature, so eternity is the choice perfection of God, yea, the gloss and lustre of all others. Every perfection would be imperfect, if it were not always a perfection.

God is essentially whatsoever he is; and there is nothing in God but his essence: duration or continuance in being in creatures, differs from their being; for they might exist but for an instant; in which case, they may be said to have being, but not duration, because all duration includes *prius, et posterius*. All creatures may cease from being, if it be the pleasure of God; they are not therefore durable by their own essence, and therefore are not their own duration,

ration, no more than they are their own existence. And though some creatures, as angels, and souls, may be called everlasting, as a perpetual life is communicated to them by God, yet they can never be called their own eternity; because such a duration is not simply necessary, nor essential to them, but accidental, depending upon the pleasure of another; there is nothing in their nature that can hinder them from losing it, if God, from whom they received it, should design to take it away: but as God is his own necessity of existing, so he is his own duration in existing—as he doth necessarily exist by himself, so he will always necessarily exist by himself.

6. Hence all the perfections of God are eternal. In regard of the divine eternity, all things in God are eternal; his power, mercy, wisdom, justice, and knowledge. God himself was not eternal, if any of his perfections, which are essential to him, were not eternal also; he had not been else a perfect God from all eternity, and so his whole self had not been eternal. If any thing belonging to the nature of a thing, be wanting, it cannot be said to be that thing which it ought to be. If any thing requisite to the nature of God, had been wanting one moment, he could not have been said to be an eternal God.

The second thing, God is eternal. The Spirit of God in scripture, condescends to our capacities, in signifying the eternity of God by days and years, which are terms belonging to time, whereby we measure it: but we must no more conceive that God is bounded, or measured by time, and hath succession of days, because of those expressions, than we can conclude him to have a body, because members are ascribed to him in scripture, to help our conceptions of his glorious nature and operations.

Though years are ascribed to him; yet they are such as cannot be numbered, cannot be finished, since there is no proportion between the duration
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of God, and the years of men. *The number of his years cannot be searched out; for he makes small the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapor thereof.* The numbers of the drops of rain which have fallen in all parts of the earth since the creation of the world, if subtracted from the number of the years of God, would be found a small quantity, a mere nothing to the years of God. As all the nations in the world compared with God, are but as the drop of a bucket, worse than nothing, and vanity; so all the ages of the world, if compared with God, amount not so much as the one hundred thousandth part of a minute: the minutes from the creation may be numbered, but the years of the duration of God, being infinite, are without measure.

As one day is to the life of man, so are a thousand years to the life of God: the Holy Ghost expresseth himself to the capacity of man, to give us some notion of an infinite duration, by a resemblance suited to the capacity of man. If a thousand years be but as a day to the life of God; then as a year is to the life of man, so are three hundred sixty five thousand years to the life of God: and as seventy years are to the life of man, so are twenty five millions four hundred and fifty thousand years to the life of God: yet still, since there is no proportion between time and eternity, we must dart our thoughts beyond all those; for years and days measure only the duration of created things, and of those only that are material and corporeal, subject to the motion of the heavens, which makes days and years.

Sometimes this eternity is expressed by parts, as looking backward and forward; by the differences of time, past, present and to come, *which was, and is, and is to come.* Though this might be spoken of any thing in being, though but for an hour; it was the last minute, it is now, and it will be the
next

next minute; yet the Holy Ghost would declare something proper to God, as including all parts of time; he always was, is now, and always shall be; it might always be said of him he was, and it may always be said of him he will be: there is no time when he began, no time when he shall cease. It cannot be said of a creature he always was, he always is what he was, and he always will be what he is: but God always is what he was, and always will be what he is; so that it is a very significant expression of the eternity of God, as can be suited to our capacities.

1. His eternity is evident, by the name God gives himself.—*And God said unto Moses, I Am That I Am; thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you.* This is the name whereby he is distinguished from all creatures; I AM, is his proper name; the description being in the present tense, shews that his essence knows no past, nor future: if it were he was, it would intimate he were not now what he once was; if it were he will be, it would intimate he were not yet what he will be. But I Am; I Am the only being, the root of all beings; he is therefore at the greatest distance from not being, and that is eternal. So that *is* signifies his eternity, as well as his perfection and immutability: as I am speaks the want of no blessedness, so it speaks the want of no duration; and therefore the French wherever they find this word Jehovah in the scripture, which we translate Lord, and Lord Eternal, render it The Eternal. I am always and immutably the same. The Eternity of God is opposed to the volubility of time, which is extended into past, present and to come. Our time is but a small drop, as a sand to all the atoms and small particles of which the world is made; but God is an unbounded sea of being; *I am that I am, i. e.* an infinite life. I have not that now, which I had not formerly;

I shall not afterwards have that which I have not now; I am that in every moment which I was, and will be in all moments of time; nothing can be added to me, nothing can be detracted from me: there is nothing superior to him, which can detract from him; nothing desirable that can be added to him. Now if there were any beginning and end of God, any succession in him, he could not be I Am; for in regard of what was past he would not be, in regard of what was to come he is not yet: and upon this account a heathen argues well, of all creatures it may be said they were, or they will be; but of God it cannot be said any thing else but *est*, God is, because he fills an eternal duration: a creature cannot be said to be, if it be not yet, nor if it be not now, but hath been.

God only can be called I am; all creatures have more of not being than being; for every creature was nothing from eternity, before it was made something in time; and if it be corruptible in its whole nature, it will be nothing to eternity after it hath been something in time; and if it be not corruptible in its nature, as the angels; or in every part of its nature, as man in regard of his soul; yet it hath not properly a being, because it is dependant upon the pleasure of God, to continue it, or deprive it of it; and while it is, it is mutable, and all mutability is a mixture of not being: if God therefore be properly I am, *i. e.* being, it follows that he always was; for if he were not always, he must, as was argued before, be produced by some other, or by himself; by another he could not, then he had not been God but a creature; nor by himself, for then as producing, he must be before himself, as produced; he had been before he was: and he always will be, for being I Am, having all being in himself, and the fountain of all being to every thing else, how can he ever have his name changed to I am not?

2. *God hath life in himself*, John v. 26. *The Father hath life in himself*; he is the living God, therefore steadfast for ever: he hath life by his essence, not by participation; he is a sun to give light and life to all creatures, but receives neither from any thing; and therefore he hath an unlimited life, not a drop of life but a fountain, not a spark of a limited life but a life transcending all bounds: he hath life in himself: all creatures have their life in him and from him. He that hath life in himself doth necessarily exist, and could never be made to exist; for then he had not life in himself, but in that which made him to exist, and gave him life; what doth necessarily exist therefore, exists from eternity; what hath being of itself, could never be produced in time, could not want being one moment, because it hath being from its essence without influence of any efficient cause.

When God pronounced his name, *I am that I am*, angels and men were in being; the world had been created above two thousand four hundred years; Moses, to whom he then speaks, was in being; yet, God only is, because he only hath the fountain of being in himself, but all that they were, was a rivulet from him; he hath from nothing else, that he doth subsist; every thing else hath its subsistence from him as their root, as the beam from the sun, as the rivers and fountains from the sea. All life is seated in God, as in its proper throne; in its most perfect purity. God is life; it is in him originally, radically, therefore eternally: he is a pure act, nothing but vigor and act; he hath by his nature that life, which others have by his grant; whence the apostle saith, not only that he is immortal, but he hath immortality in a full possession; free-simple, not depending upon the will of another, but containing all things within himself. He that hath life in himself, and is from himself, cannot but be: he always was,

because he received his being from no other, and none can take away that being which was not given by another. If there were any space before he did exist, then there was something which made him to exist; life would not then be in him, but in that which produced him into being; he could not then be God, but that other which gave him being, would be God. And to say, God sprung into being by chance, when we see nothing in the world that is brought forth by chance, but hath some cause of its existence, would be vain; for since God is a being, chance, which is nothing, could not bring forth something; and by the same reason that he sprung up by chance, he might totally vanish by chance. What a strange notion of a God would this be, such a God that had no life in himself, but from chance?

Since he hath life in himself, and that there was no cause of his existence; he can have no cause of his limitation, and can no more be determined to a time, than he can to a place. What hath life in itself, hath life without bounds, and can never desert it, nor be deprived of it: so that he lives necessarily, and it is absolutely impossible that he should not live; whereas all things live, and move, and have their being in him; and as they live by his will, so they can return to nothing at his word.

3. If God were not eternal, he were not immutable in his nature. It is contrary to the nature of immutability to be without eternity; for whatsoever begins, is changed in its passing from not being to being: it began to be what it was not, and if it ends, it ceaseth to be what it was; it cannot therefore be said to be God, if there were either beginning or ending, or succession in it. Mal. iii. 6. *I am the Lord, I change not.* Job xxxvii. 23. *Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out.* God argues here, saith Calvin, from his
unchangeable

unchangeable nature as Jehovah, to his immutability in his purpose: had he not been eternal, there had been the greatest change from nothing to something: a change of essence, is greater than a change of purpose. God is a sun glittering always in the same glory; no growing up in youth; no passing on to age: if he were not without succession, standing in one point of eternity, there would be a change from past to present, from present to future. The eternity of God is a shield against all kind of mutability. If any thing sprang up in the essence of God that was not there before, he could not be said to be either an eternal, or an unchanged substance.

4. God could not be an infinitely perfect being, if he were not eternal. A finite duration is inconsistent with infinite perfection. Whatsoever is contracted within the limits of time, cannot swallow up all perfections in itself. God hath an unsearchable perfection. *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?* He cannot be found out, he is infinite, because he is incomprehensible: incomprehensibility ariseth from an infinite perfection, which cannot be fathomed by the short line of man's understanding: his essence, in regard of its diffusion, and in regard of its duration, is incomprehensible, as well as his action: if God therefore had beginning, he could not be infinite; if not infinite, he did not possess the highest perfection, because a perfection might be conceived beyond it; if his being could fail, he were not perfect: can that deserve the name of the highest perfection, which is capable of corruption and dissolution? To be finite and limited, is the greatest imperfection, for it consists in a denial of being. He could not be the most blessed being, if he were not always so, and should not for ever remain to be so; and whatsoever perfections he had, would be soured by the thoughts, that in time they

would cease, and so could not be pure perfections, because not permanent; but he is blessed from everlasting to everlasting. Had he a beginning, he could not have all perfections without limitation; he would have been limited by that which gave him beginning; that which gave him being would be God, and not himself, and so more perfect than he: but since God is the most sovereign perfection, than which nothing can be imagined perfecter, by the most capacious understanding, he is certainly eternal; being infinite, nothing can be added to him, nothing detracted from him.

5. God could not be omnipotent, almighty, if he were not eternal. The title almighty, agrees not with a nature that had a beginning; whatsoever hath a beginning, was once nothing, and when it was nothing, could act nothing. Where there is no being, there is no power. Neither doth the title of almighty agree with a perishing nature: he can do nothing to purpose, that cannot preserve himself against the outward force and violence of enemies, or against the inward causes of corruption and dissolution. No account is to be made of man, because *his breath is in his nostrils*; could a better account be made of God, if he were of the like condition? he could not properly be almighty, that were not always mighty: if he be omnipotent, nothing can impair him; he that hath all power, can have no hurt: if he doth whatsoever he pleaseth, nothing can make him miserable, since misery consists in those things which happen against our will. The almightiness and eternity of God are linked together: *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending, saith the Lord, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty: Almighty because eternal, and eternal because almighty.*

6. God would not be the first cause of all if he were not eternal; but he is the first, and the last; the first cause of all things, the last end of all things: that

that which is the first cannot begin to be, it were not then the first ; it cannot cease to be : whatsoever is dissolved, is dissolved into that whereof it doth consist, which was before it, and then it was not the first. The world might not have been, it was once nothing ; it must have some cause to call it out of nothing ; nothing hath no power to make itself something ; there is a superior cause, by whose will and power it comes into being, and so gives all the creatures their distinct forms.

This power cannot but be eternal ; it must be before the world ; the founder must be before the foundation ; and his existence must be from eternity, or we must say nothing did exist from eternity : and if there were no being from eternity, there could not now be any being in time : what we see, and what we are, must arise from itself or some other ; it cannot from itself : if any thing made itself, it had a power to make itself ; it then had an active power before it had a being ; it was something in regard of power, and was nothing in regard of existence at the same time : suppose it had a power to produce itself, this power must be conferred upon it by another ; and so the power of producing itself, was not from itself, but from another ; but if the power of being was from itself, why did it not produce itself before ? why was it one moment out of being ? If there be any existence of things, it is necessary that that which was the first cause, should exist from eternity, whatsoever was the immediate cause of the world, yet the first and chief cause wherein we must rest, must have nothing before it ; if it had any thing before it, it were not the first ; he therefore that is the first cause must be without beginning, nothing must be before him ; if he had a beginning from some other, he could not be the first principle and author of all things ; if he be the first cause of all things, he must give himself a beginning or be from eternity ;

nity: he could not give himself a beginning; whatsoever begins in time was nothing before, and when it was nothing it could do nothing; it could not give itself any thing, for then it gave what it had not, and did what it could not: if he made himself in time, why did he not make himself before? What hindered him? it was either because he could not, or because he would not; if he could not, he always wanted power, and always would, unless it were bestowed upon him, and then he could not be said to be from himself? If he would not make himself before, then he might have made himself when he would: how had he the power of willing and nilling without a being? nothing cannot will or nill; nothing hath no faculties: so that it is necessary to grant some eternal being, or run into inextricable labyrinths and mazes. If we deny some eternal being, we must deny all being; our own being, the being of every thing about us; inconceivable absurdities will arise.

So then if God were the cause of all things, he did exist before all things, and that from eternity.

The third thing is, eternity is only proper to God, and not communicable.—It is as great a madness to ascribe eternity to the creature, as to deprive the Lord of the creature of eternity. It is so proper to God, that when the apostle would prove the deity of Christ, he proves it by his immutability and eternity, as well as his creating power: *Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.* The argument had not strength, if eternity belonged essentially to any but God; and therefore he is said only to have immortality: all other things receive their being from him, and can be deprived of their being by him: all things depend on him, he of none: all other things are like clothes, which would consume if God preserved them not. Immortality is appropriated to God, *i. e.* an independent immortality. Angels and souls have an immortality,

mortality, but by donation from God, not by their own essence; dependant upon their creator, not necessary in their own nature: God might have annihilated them after he had created them; so that their duration cannot properly be called an eternity, it being extrinſical to them, and depending upon the will of their creator, by whom they may be extinguished: it is not an absolute and necessary, but a precarious immortality. Whatsoever is not God, is temporary: whatsoever is eternal, is God.

It is a contradiction to say a creature can be eternal; as nothing eternal is created, so nothing created is eternal. What is distinct from the nature of God cannot be eternal, eternity being the essence of God. Every creature in the notion of a creature speaks a dependance on some cause, and therefore cannot be eternal. As it is repugnant to the nature of God not to be eternal, so it is repugnant to the nature of a creature to be eternal; for then a creature would be equal to the creator, or the cause would not be before the creature or effect.

It would be all one to admit many gods, as many eternals; and all one to say God can be created, as to say a creature can be uncreated, which is to be eternal.

1. Creation is a producing something from nothing. What was once nothing, cannot therefore be eternal; not being was eternal; therefore its being could not be eternal, for it should be then before it was, and would be something when it was nothing. It is the nature of a creature to be nothing, before it was created; what was nothing before it was, cannot be equal with God in an eternity of duration.

2. There is no creature but is mutable, therefore not eternal. As it had a change from something to nothing, so it may be changed from being to
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to not being. If the creature were not mutable, it would be most perfect, and so would not be a creature, but God; for God only is most perfect. It is as much the essence of a creature to be mutable, as it is the essence of God to be immutable: mutability and eternity are utterly inconsistent.

3. No creature is infinite, therefore not eternal. To be infinite in duration is all one, as to be infinite in essence: it is as reasonable to conceive a creature immense, filling all places at once, as eternal, extending to all ages; because neither can be without infiniteness, which is the property of the deity. A creature may as well be without bounds of place, as limitations of time.

4. No effects of an intellectual free agent, can be equal in duration to its cause. The productions of natural agents are as ancient often as themselves; the sun produceth a beam as old in time as itself; but who ever heard of a piece of wise workmanship as old as the wise artificer? God produces a creature, not necessarily and naturally, as the sun doth a beam, but freely, as an intelligent agent. The sun was not necessary, it might be or not be, according to the pleasure of God. A free act of the will is necessary, to precede in order of time as the cause of such effects as are purely voluntary. Those causes that act as soon as they exist, act naturally, necessarily, not freely, and cannot cease from acting.

But suppose a creature might have existed by the will of God from eternity; yet, as some think, it could not be said absolutely, and in its own nature to be eternal; because eternity was not of the essence of it: the creature could not be its own duration, for though it were from eternity, it might not have been from eternity, because its existence depended upon the free will of God, who might have chose whether he would have created it or no.

God only is eternal, the first and the last, the
beginning

beginning and the end; who, as he subsisted before any creature had a being, so he will eternally subsist if all creatures were reduced to nothing.

Fourth. Use.

1. Information. If God be of an eternal duration, then Christ is God: eternity is the property of God, but it is ascribed to Christ; *he is before all things, i. e.* all created things: he is therefore no creature; and if no creature, eternal. *All things were created by him*, both in heaven and in earth, angels as well as men, whether they be thrones or dominions: if all things were his creatures, then he is no creature; if he were, all things were not created by him, or he must create himself.

He hath no difference of time; *for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*; the same with the name of God, *I am*, which signifies his eternity; he is no more to-day than he was yesterday, nor will be any other to-morrow than he is to-day; and therefore Melchisedeck, whose descent, birth and death, father and mother, beginning and end of days, are not upon record, was a type of the existence of Christ without difference of time: *Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like the Son of God*. The suppression of his birth and death, was intended by the Holy Ghost as a type of the excellency of Christ's person in regard of his eternity; and the duration of his charge in regard of his priesthood. As there was an appearance of an eternity in the suppression of the race of Melchisedeck, so there is a true eternity in the Son of God. How could the eternity of the Son of God be expressed by any resemblance so well, as by such a suppression of the beginning and end of this great person, different from the custom of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament, who often records the generations and ends of holy men; and why might not this, which was a kind of a shadow of eternity, be a representation of the true eternity of Christ, as well

well as the restoration of Isaac to his father without death, is said to be a figure of the resurrection of Christ after a real death? Melchisedeck is only mentioned once (without any record of his extraction) in his appearance to Abraham after his victory, as if he came from heaven only for that action, and instantly disappeared again, as if he had been an eternal person.

Christ himself hints his own eternity—*I came forth from the Father and am come into the world, again I leave the world and go to the Father*: he goes to the Father as he came from the Father; he goes to the Father for everlasting, so he came from the Father from everlasting; there is the same duration in coming forth from the Father, as in returning to the Father; but more plainly, he speaks of a glory that he *had with the Father before the world was*, when there was no creature in being; this is an actual glory, and not only in decree: for a decreed glory believers had, and why may not every one of them say the same words, *Father, glorify me with that glory which I had with thee before the world was*, if it were only a glory in decree? Nay, it may be said of every man, he was before the world was, because he was so in decree. Christ speaks of something peculiar to him, a glory in actual possession before the world was; glorify me, embrace, honour me as thy Son, whereas I have now been in the eyes of the world handled disgracefully as a servant: if it were only in decree, why is not the like expression used of others in scripture as well as of Christ? Why did he not use the same words for his disciples that were then with him, who had a glory in decree? His eternity is also mentioned in the Old Testament, *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old*. If he were the work of God, he existed before himself, if he existed before all the works of God; it is not so properly meant of the essential wisdom of God, since
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the discourse runs in the name of a person ; and several passages there are which belong not so much to the essential wisdom of God, as ver. 13, *The evil way, and the froward mouth do I hate* ; which belongs rather to the holiness of God than to the essential wisdom of God ; besides it is distinguished from Jehovah, as possessed by him, *and rejoicing before him*. Yet plainer, *Out of thee, i. e. Bethlehem shall he come forth to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, from the ways of eternity*. There are two goings forth of Christ described, one from Bethlehem in the days of his incarnation, and another from eternity. The Holy Ghost adds after his prediction of his incarnation, his going out from everlasting, that none should doubt of his deity: If this going out from everlasting, were only in the purpose of God, it might be said of David, and of every creature: and in Isa. ix. 6. he is particularly called the everlasting, or eternal Father ; not the father in the trinity, but a father to us ; yet eternal, the father of eternity. As he is the mighty God, so he is the everlasting father: can such a title be ascribed to any, whose being depends upon the will of another, and may be dashed out at the pleasure of a superior?

As the eternity of God is the ground of all religion, so the eternity of Christ is the ground of the christian religion: could our sins be perfectly expiated, had he not an eternal divinity to answer for the offences committed against an eternal God? temporary sufferings had been of little validity, without an infiniteness and eternity in his person to add weight to his passion.

2. If God be eternal, he knows all things as present. All things are present to him in his eternity ; for this is the notion of eternity, to be without succession. If eternity be one indivisible point, and is not diffused into preceding and succeeding parts, then that which is known in it or by it, is perceived
without

without any succession; for knowledge is as the substance of the person knowing; if that hath various actions and distinct from itself, then it understands things in differences of time as time presents them to view: but since God's being depends not upon the revolutions of time, so neither doth his knowledge; it exceeds all motions of years and days, comprehends infinite spaces of past and future. God considers all things in his eternity in one simple knowledge, as if they were now acted before him: *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world--à seculo*; from eternity. God's knowledge is co-eternal with him: if he knows that in time which he did not know from eternity, he would not be eternally perfect, since knowledge is the perfection of an intelligent nature.

3. How bold and foolish is it for a mortal creature to censure the counsels and actions of an eternal God, or be too curious in his inquiries? It is by the consideration of the unsearchable number of the years of God, that Elihu checks too bold enquiries: *Who hath enjoined him his way, or who can say, thou hast wrought iniquity? Behold God is great and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out.* Eternity sets God above our enquiries and censures. Infants of a day old are not able to understand the acts of wise and grey heads; shall we, that are of so short a being and understanding as yesterday, presume to measure the motions of eternity by our scanty intellects? We that cannot foresee an unexpected accident which falls in to blast a well-laid design, and run a ship many leagues back from the intended harbour; we cannot understand the reason of things we see done in time, the motions of the sea, the generation of rain, the nature of light, the sympathies and antipathies of the creatures; and shall we dare to censure the actions of an eternal God so infinitely beyond our reach? The counsels
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of a boundless being are not to be scanned by the brain of a silly worm, that hath breathed but a few minutes in the world: since eternity cannot be comprehended in time, it is not to be judged by a creature of time, let us remember to magnify his works which we behold, because he is eternal, which is the exhortation of Elihu, backed by this doctrine of God's eternity; and not accuse any work of him who is the Ancient of Days, or presume to direct him, of whose eternity we come infinitely short: whenever therefore, an unworthy notion of the counsels and works of God is suggested to us by satan, or our own corrupt hearts; let us look backward to God's eternal and our own short duration, and silence ourselves with the same question whereby God put a stop to the reasoning of Job: *Where wast thou, when I laid the foundations of the earth?* and reprove ourselves for our curiosity; since we are of so short a standing, and were nothing when the eternal God laid the first stone of the world.

4. What a folly and boldness is there in sin, since an eternal God is offended thereby? All sin is aggravated by God's eternity: the blackness of the heathen idolatry was, in changing the glory of the incorruptible God, erecting resemblances of him contrary to his immortal nature; as if the eternal God, whose life is as unlimited as eternity, were like those creatures whose beings are measured by the short ell of time, which are of a corruptible nature, and daily passing on to corruption: they could not really deprive God of his glory and immortality, but they did in estimation. There is in the nature of every sin a tendency to reduce God to a not being. He that thinks unworthily of God, or acts unworthily towards him, doth (as much as in him lies) fully and destroy these two perfections of his, immutability and eternity: it is a carriage, as if he were as contemptible as
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a creature that were but of yesterday, and shall not remain in being to-morrow. He that would put an end to God's glory by darkening it, would put an end to God's life by destroying it. He that should love a beast with as great an affection as he loves a man, contemns a rational nature; and he that loves a perishing thing with the same affection he should love an everlasting God, contemns his eternity; he debaseth the duration of God below that of the world: the low valuation of God speaks him, in his esteem, no better than withering grass, or a gourd, which lasts for a night; and the creature which possesses his affection, to be a good that lasts for ever. How foolish then is every sin, that tends to destroy a being that cannot destroy or desert himself; a being, without whose eternity the sinner himself could not have had the capacity of a being to affront him? how base is that which would not let the works of God remain in their established posture? how much more base in not enduring the fountain and glory of all beings, that would not only put an end to the beauty of the world, but the eternity of God?

5. How dreadful is it to lie under the stroke of an eternal God? his eternity is as great a terror to him that hates him, as it is a comfort to him that loves him; because he is the *living God, an everlasting King, the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation*. Though God be least in their thoughts, and is made light of in the world; yet the thoughts of God's eternity, when he comes to judge the world, shall make the slights of him tremble: that the judge and punisher lives for ever, is the greatest grievance to a soul in misery, and adds an inconceivable weight to it, above what the infiniteness of God's executive power could do without that duration: his eternity makes the punishment more dreadful than his power; his power makes it sharp, but his eternity renders it perpetual;

perpetual; ever to endure, is the sting at the end of every lash.

And how sad is it, to think that God lays his eternity to pawn for the punishment of obstinate sinners, and engageth it by a oath, that he will *wet his glittering sword*, that his *hand shall take hold of judgment*, that he will *render vengeance to his enemies*, and a reward to them that hate him; a reward proportioned to the greatness of their offences, and the glory of an eternal God? *I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever, i. e.* as surely as I live for ever, I will wet my glittering sword. As none can convey good with a perpetuity, so none can convey evil with such a lastingness as God. It is a great loss to lose a ship richly fraught in the bottom of the sea, never to be cast upon the shore; but how much greater is it, to lose eternally a sovereign God; which we were capable of eternally enjoying, and undergo an evil as durable as that God we slighted, and were in a possibility of avoiding? The miseries of men after this life are not eased, but sharpened by the life and eternity of God.

The second use is of comfort. What foundation of comfort can we have in any of God's attributes, were it not for his infiniteness and eternity; though he be merciful, good, wise, faithful? What support could there be, if they were perfections belonging to a corruptible God? What hopes of a resurrection to happiness can we have, or of the duration of it; if that God who promised it were not immortal to continue it, as well as powerful to effect it? his power were not almighty, if his duration were not eternal.

1. If God be eternal, his covenant will be so. It is founded upon the eternity of God; the oath whereby he confirms it, is by his life: since there is none greater than himself, he swears by himself, or by his own life, which he engageth together

with his eternity for the full performance; so that if he lives for ever, the covenant shall not be disannulled, it is an immutable counsel: the immutability of his counsel follows the immutability of his nature. Immutability and eternity go hand in hand together. The promise of eternal life is as ancient as God himself in regard of the purpose of the promise, or in regard of the promise made to Christ for us. *Eternal life which God promised before the world began.* As it hath an anti-eternity, so it hath a post-eternity; therefore the gospel, which is the new covenant published, is termed the *everlasting gospel*; which can no more be altered and perish, than God can change and vanish into nothing: he can as little morally deny his truth, as he can naturally desert his life. The covenant is there represented in a green colour, to note its perpetual verdure: the rainbow, the emblem of the covenant, about the throne, was like to an emerald, a stone of a green colour; whereas the natural rainbow hath many colours; this but one, to signify its eternity.

2. If God be eternal, he being our God in covenant, is an eternal good and possession. This God is God for ever and ever; *He is a dwelling place in all generations.* We shall traverse the world a while, and then arrive at the blessings Jacob wished for Joseph; *The blessings of the everlasting hills.* If an estate of a thousand pounds per annum render a man's life comfortable for a short term, how much more may the soul be swallowed up with joy in the enjoyment of the creator, whose years never fail, who lives for ever to be enjoyed, and can keep us in life for ever to enjoy him? Death indeed will seize upon us by God's irreversible order, but the immortal creator will make him disgorge his morsel, and land us in a glorious immortality; our souls at their dissolution, and our bodies at the resurrection, after which they shall remain for ever,
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and employ the extent of that boundless eternity in the fruition of the sovereign and eternal God: for it is impossible that the believer, who is united to the immortal God that is from everlasting to everlasting, can ever perish; for being in conjunction with him who is an ever-flowing fountain of life, he cannot suffer him to remain in the jaws of death. While God is eternal, and always the same; it is not possible that those that partake of his spiritual life, should not also partake of his eternal. It is from the consideration of the endlessness of the years of God that the church comforts herself, that *her children shall continue, and their seed be established for ever*. And from the eternity of God, Habakkuk, chap. i. 12. concludes the eternity of believers, *Art not thou from everlasting, O Lord my God, my holy one? We shall not die, O Lord*. After they are retired from this world, they shall live for ever with God without any change by the multitude of those imaginable years and ages that shall run for ever. It is that God who hath neither beginning nor end, that is our God; who hath not only immortality in himself, but immortality to give out to others. As he hath abundance of spirit to quicken them, so he hath abundance of immortality to continue them. It is only in the consideration of this a man can with wisdom say, soul take thy ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years; to say it of any other possession, is the greatest folly in the judgment of our Saviour. Mortality shall be swallowed up of immortality: rivers of pleasure shall be for evermore. Death is a word never spoken there by any, never heard by any in that possession of eternity; it is for ever put out as one of Christ's conquered enemies.

The happiness depends upon the presence of God, with whom believers shall be for ever present. Happiness cannot perish as long as God lives: he is the first and the last; the first of all delights,

nothing before him ; the last of all pleasures, nothing beyond them : a paradise of delights in every point without a flaming sword.

2. The enjoyment of God will be as fresh and glorious after many ages, as it was at first. God is eternal, and eternity knows no change ; there will then be the fullest possession without any decay in the object enjoyed. There can be nothing past, nothing future ; time neither adds to it nor detracts from it ; that infinite fulness of perfection which flourisheth in him now, will flourish eternally, without any discolouring of it in the least by those innumerable ages that shall run to eternity, much less any despoiling him of them. He is the same in his endless duration. As God is, so will the eternity of him be, without succession, without division : the fulness of joy will be always present ; without past to be thought of with regret for being gone ; without future to be expected with tormenting desires. When we enjoy God, we enjoy him in his eternity without any flux ; an entire possession of all together, without the passing away of pleasures that may be wished to return, or expectation of future joys which might be desired to hasten. Time is fluid, but eternity is stable, and after many ages the joys will be as savory and satisfying as if they had been but that moment first tasted by our hungry appetites. When the glory of the Lord shall rise upon you, it shall be so far from ever setting, that after millions of years are expired, as numerous as the sands on the sea shore, the Sun, in the light of whose countenance you shall live, shall be as bright as at the first appearance : he will be so far from ceasing to flow, that he will flow as strong and as full as at the first communication of himself in glory to the creature. God therefore as sitting upon his throne of grace, and acting according to his covenant, is like a jasper-stone, which is of a green colour, a colour always delightful ; because
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God is always vigorous, and flourishing; a pure act of life, sparkling new and fresh rays of life and light to the creature, flourishing with a perpetual spring, and contenting the most capacious desire; forming your interest, pleasure and satisfaction, with an infinite variety, without any change or succession: he will have variety to increase delights, and eternity to perpetuate them; this will be the fruit of the enjoyment of an infinite, an eternal God: he is not a cistern but a fountain, wherein water is always living and never putrifies.

4. If God be eternal, here is a strong ground of comfort against all the distresses of the church, and the threats of the church's enemies. God's abiding for ever, is the plea Jeremy makes for his return to his forsaken church. *Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever, thy throne from generation to generation.* The church is weak; created things are easily cut off; what prop is there, but that God that lives for ever? what though Jerusalem lost its bulwarks, the temple were defaced, the land wasted; yet the God of Jerusalem sits upon an eternal throne, and from everlasting to everlasting there is no diminution of his power. The prophet intimates in this complaint, that it is not agreeable to God's eternity to forget his people, to whom he hath from eternity bore good will. In the greatest confusions, the church's eyes are to be fixed upon the eternity of God's throne, where he sits as governor of the world: no creature can take any comfort in this perfection, but the church; other creatures depend upon God, but the church is united to him.

The first discovery of the name, I Am, which signifies the divine eternity as well as immutability, was for the comfort of the oppressed Israelites in Egypt; it was then published from the secret place of the Almighty, as the only strong cordial to refresh them: it hath not yet, it shall not ever lose

its virtue in any of the miseries that have, or shall successively befall the church. It is a comfort as durable as the God whose name it is: he is still, I Am, and the same to the church, as he was then to his Israel. His spiritual Israel have a greater right to the glories of it, than the carnal Israel could have: no oppression can be greater than theirs; what was a comfort suited to that distress, hath the same suitableness to every other oppression. It was not a temporary name but a name for ever; his memorial to all generations, and reacheth to the church of the Gentiles, with whom he treats as the God of Abraham, ratifying that covenant by the Messiah, which he made with Abraham the father of the faithful.

The church's enemies are not to be feared; they may spring as the grass, but soon after do wither by their own inward principles of decay, or are cut down by the hand of God. They may be instruments of the anger of God, but *they shall be scattered as the workers of iniquity by the hand of the Lord, that is high for evermore*, and is engaged by his promise, to preserve a church in the world. They may threaten, but their breath may vanish, as soon as their threatnings are pronounced: for they carry their breath in no surer a place than their own nostrils, upon which the eternal God can put his hand, and sink them with all their rage. Do the prophets and instructors of the church, live for ever?—No. Shall then the adversaries and disturbers of the church live for ever?—they shall vanish as a shadow, their being depends upon the eternal God of the faithful, and the everlasting judge of the wicked. He that inhabits eternity, is above them that inhabit mortality, and must, whether they will or no, *say to corruption thou art my father, and to the worm thou art my mother and my sister*. When they will act with a confidence, as if they were living gods,
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he will not be mated, but evidence himself to be a living God above them. Why then should mortal men be feared in their frowns, when an immortal God hath promised protection in his word, and lives for ever to perform it?

5. Hence follows another comfort; since God is eternal, he hath as much power as will, to be as good as his word; his promises are established upon his eternity, and this perfection, is a main ground of trust; *Trust in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength*—his name is doubled, that name, *Iah*, and *Jehovah*, which was always the strength of his people; and not a single one, but the strength or rock of eternities; not a failing but an eternal truth and power; that as his strength is eternal, so our trust in him should intimate his eternity in its perpetuity; and therefore in the despondency of his people, as if God had forgot his promises, and made no account of them, or his word, and were weary of doing good, he calls them to reflect on what they had heard of his eternity, which is attended with immutability, who hath an infiniteness of power to perform his will, and an infiniteness of understanding to judge of the right seasons of it. His wisdom, will, truth, have always been, and will to eternity be the same. He wants not life, any more than love, for ever to help us; since his word is past, he will never fail us; since his life continues, he can never be out of a capacity to relieve us: and therefore when ever we foolishly charge him by our distrustful thoughts, we forget his love, which made the promise, and his eternal life, which can accomplish it. As his word is the bottom of our trust, and his truth is the assurance of his sincerity, so his eternity is the assurance of his ability to perform. His word stands for ever. A man may be my friend this day, and be in another world to-morrow; and though he be never so sincere in his word, yet death snaps his life asunder, and forbids the

execution. But as God cannot die, so he cannot lie, because he is the eternity of Israel. *The strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent.* Eternity implies immutability; we could have no ground for our hopes, if we knew him not to be longer lived than ourselves. The psalmist beats off our hands from trust in men, because their breath goes forth, they return to their earth, and in that day their thoughts perish. And if the God of Jacob were like them, what happiness could we have in making him our help? As his sovereignty in giving precepts had not been a strong ground of obedience, without considering him as an eternal law-giver, who could maintain his rights; so his kindness in making the promises, had not been a strong ground of confidence, without considering him as an eternal promiser, whose thoughts, and whose life can never perish: and this may be one reason, why the Holy Ghost mentions so often the post-eternity of God, and so little his anti-eternity: because that is the strongest foundation of our faith, and hope, which respects chiefly, that which is future, and not that which is past; yet indeed no assurance of his after eternity can be had, if his anti-eternity be not certain. If he had a beginning, he may have an end; and if he had a change in his nature, he might have in his counsels; but since all the resolves of God are as himself is, eternal, and all the promises of God are the fruits of his counsel, therefore they cannot be changed: if he should change them for the better, he would not have been eternally wise, to know what was best; if for the worse, he had not been eternally good or just. Men may break their promises, because they are made without foresight; but God that inhabits eternity, foreknows all things, that shall be done under the sun, as if they had been then acting before him; and nothing can intervene, or work a change in his resolves; because the least circumstances were eternally foreseen by him.

The Immutability of God.

Pſalm cii. 26, 27.

THEY SHALL PERISH, BUT THOU SHALT ENDURE; YEA, ALL OF THEM SHALL WAX OLD AS A GARMENT; AS A VESTURE SHALT THOU CHANGE THEM, AND THEY SHALL BE CHANGED: BUT THOU ART THE SAME, AND THY YEARS SHALL HAVE NO END.

THIS psalm contains a complaint of a people pressed with a great calamity; some think of the Jewish church in Babylon; others think the psalmist doth here personate mankind lying under a state of corruption: because he wishes for the coming of the Messiah to accomplish that redemption promised by God and needed by them. Indeed the title of the psalm is “A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the Lord:” Whether afflicted with the sense of corruption, or with the sense of oppression. And the redemption by the Messiah, which the ancient church looked upon as the fountain of their deliverance from a sinful or a servile bondage, is in this psalm spoken of: a set time appointed for the discovery of his mercy to Sion, ver. 13. An appearance in glory to build up Sion, ver. 16. The loosing of the prisoner by redemption, and them that are appointed to death, ver. 20. The calling of the Gentiles, ver. 22. And the latter part of the Psalm, wherein are the verses I have read, are applied to Christ, Heb. i. Whatsoever the design of the

the psalm might be, many things are intermingled that concern the kingdom of the Messiah, and redemption by Christ.

Thou art the same. The essence of God, with all the perfections of his nature, are pronounced the same, without any variation from eternity to eternity: so that the text doth not only assert the eternal duration of God, but his immutability in that duration: his eternity is signified in that expression, *thou shalt endure*; his immutability in this, *thou art the same*. To endure, argues indeed his immutability as well as eternity; for what endures, is not changed, and what is changed, doth not endure: but *thou art the same* doth more fully signify it: he could not be the same if he could be changed into any other thing than what he is; the psalmist therefore puts, not *thou hast been or shalt be*, but *thou art the same* without any alteration; *thou art the same*, that is, the same God, the same in essence and nature, the same in will and purpose: *thou dost change all other things as thou plearest*; but *thou art immutable in every respect, and receivest no shadow of change, though never so light and small*. The psalmist here alludes to the name Jehovah, I Am; and doth not only ascribe immutability to God, but exclude every thing else from partaking in that perfection: all things else are tottering; God sees all other things in continual motion under his feet, like water passing away and no more seen, while he remains fixed and immovable: his wisdom and power, his knowledge and will, are always the same. His essence can receive no alteration, neither by itself nor by any external cause; whereas other things either naturally decline to destruction, pass from one term to another till they come to their period; or shall at the last day be wrapped up, after God has compleated his will in them and by them; as a man doth a garment he intends to repair and transform to another use.

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Let us see then,

1. In what regards God is immutable.
2. Prove that God is immutable.
3. That this is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature.
4. Some propositions to clear the unchangeableness of God from any thing that seems contrary to it.
5. The use.

First, in what respects God is unchangeable.—God is unchangeable in his essence. He is unalterably fixed in his being, that not a particle of it can be lost from it, not a mite added to it. If a man continue in being as long as Methuselah, nine hundred and sixty nine years, yet there is not a day, nay an hour, wherein there is not some alteration in his substance ; though no substantial part is wanting, yet there is an addition to him by his food, a diminution of something by his labour ; he is always making some acquisition, or suffering some loss : but in God there can be no alteration, by the accession of any thing to make his substance greater or better, or by diminution to make it less or worse. He who hath no being from another cannot but be always what he is : God is the first being, an independent being ; he was not produced of himself, or of any other, but by nature always hath been ; and therefore cannot by himself, or by any other be changed from what he is in his own nature. That which is not, may as well assume to itself a being, as he who hath and is all being, have the least change from what he is. Again, because he is a spirit, he is not subject to those mutations which are found incorporeal and bodily natures ; because he is an absolute simple spirit, not having the least particle of composition ; he is not capable of those changes which may be in created spirits.

If his essence were mutable. God would not truly be ; it could not be truly said by himself, *I*

am that I am, if he were such a thing or being at this time, and a different being at another time. Whatsoever is changed, properly is not, because it doth not remain to be what it was: that which is changed was something, is something, and will be something; a being remains to that thing which is changed; yet though it may be said such a thing is, it may be also said such a thing is not, because it is not what it was in its first being; it is not now what it was, it is now what it was not; it is another thing than it was, it was another thing than it is; it will be another thing than what it is or was: it is indeed a being, but a different being from what it was before. But if God were changed, it could not be said of him that he is, but it might also be said of him that he is not; or if he were changeable or could be changed, it might be said of him he is, but he will not be what he is; or he may not be what he is, but there will be or may be some difference in his being, and so God would not be *I am that I am*; for though he would not cease utterly to be, yet he would cease to be what he was before.

Again, if his essence were mutable, he could not be perfectly blessed, and fully rejoice in himself. If he changed for the better, he could not have an infinite pleasure in what he was before the change, because he was not infinitely blessed; and the pleasure of that state could not be of a higher kind than the state itself, or at least the apprehension of a happiness in it: if he changed for the worse, he could not have a pleasure in it after the change; for according to the diminution of his state, would be the decrease of his pleasure: his pleasure could not be infinite before the change, if he changed for the better; it could not be infinite after the change, if he changed for the worse: if he changed for the better, he would not have had an infinite goodness of being before, and not having an infinite goodness of

of being, he would have a finite goodness of being; for there is no medium between finite and infinite; then though the change were for the better, yet being finite before, something would be still wanting to make him infinitely blessed; because being finite, he could not change to that which is infinite; for finite and infinite are extremes so distant, that they can never pass into one another; that is, that which is finite should become infinite, or that which is infinite should become finite: so that supposing him mutable, his essence in no state of change, could furnish him with an infinite peace and blessedness.

Again, if God's essence be changed, he either increaseth or diminisheth: whatsoever is changed, doth either gain by receiving some thing larger and greater than it had in itself before, or gains nothing by being changed. If the former, then it receives more than itself, more than it had in itself before. The divine nature cannot be increased; for whatsoever receives any thing than what it had in itself before, must necessarily receive it from another, because nothing can give to itself that which it hath not: but God cannot receive from another what he hath not already, because whatsoever other things possess, is derived from him, and therefore contained in him, as the fountain contains the virtue in itself which it conveys to the streams; so that God cannot gain any thing: if a thing that is changed gain nothing by that change, it loseth something of what it had before in itself; and this loss must be by itself or some other. God cannot receive any loss from any thing in himself; he cannot will his own diminution; that is repugnant to every nature: he may as well will his own destruction as his own decrease; every decrease is a partial destruction: but it is impossible for God to die any kind of death, to have any resemblance of death, for he is immortal, and only hath immortality, therefore
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impossible to be diminished in any particle of his essence; nor can he be diminished by any thing in his own nature, because his infinite simplicity admits of nothing distinct from himself, or contrary to himself. All decreases come from something contrary to the nature of that thing which doth decrease: whatsoever is made less than itself, was not truly *unum*, one and simple, because that which divides itself in separation was not the same in conjunction. Nor can he be diminished by any other without himself; because nothing is superior to God, nothing stronger than God which can oppress him: but whatsoever is changed, is weaker than that which changeth it, and sinks under a power it cannot successfully resist; weakness belongs not to the deity. Nor lastly, can God change from a state wherein he is, to another state equal to the former, as men in some cases may do; for in passing from one state to another equal to it, something must be parted with which he had before, that some other thing may accrue to him as a recompense for that loss, to make him equal to what he was: this recompence then he had not before, though he had something equal to it: and in this case, it could not be said by God, *I am that I am*, but I am equal to what I was; for in this case, there would be a diminution and increase, which (as was shewed) cannot be in God.

Again, God is of himself, from no other. Natures, which are made by God, may increase, because they began to be; they may decrease, because they were made of nothing, and so tend to nothing; the condition of their original leads them to defect, and the power of their Creator brings them to increase. But God hath no original, he hath no defect, because he was not made of nothing; he hath no increase, because he hath no beginning: he was before all things, and therefore depends upon no other thing which by its own change can bring
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any change upon him. That which is from itself cannot be changed, because it hath nothing before it, nothing more excellent than itself: but that which is from another, as its first cause and chief good, may be changed by that which was its efficient cause and last end.

God is immutable in regard of knowledge. God hath known from all eternity all that which he can know, so that nothing is hid from him; he knows not at present any more than he hath known from eternity, and that which he knows now, he always knows: *All things are open and naked before him*, Heb. iv. 13. A man is said to be changed in regard of knowledge, when he knows that now which he did not know before, or knows that to be false now which he thought true before, or hath something for the object of his understanding now, which he had not before.

But this would be repugnant to the wisdom and omniscience which belongs to the notion of a deity. That cannot be God that is not infinitely wise; that cannot be infinitely wise, that is either ignorant of, or mistaken in his apprehension of any one thing. If God be changed in knowledge, it must be for want of wisdom; all change of this nature in creatures, implies this defect preceding or accompanying it: such a thought of God, would have been unworthy of him that is only wise; that hath no mate for wisdom; none wise besides himself. If he knew that thing this day which he knew not before, he would not be an only wise being; for a being that did know every thing at once, might be conceived, and so a wiser being be apprehended by the mind of man. If God understood a thing at one time, which he did not at another, he would be changed from ignorance to knowledge; as if he could not do that this day which he could do to-morrow, he would be changed from impotence to power: he could not be always omniscient, because
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there might be yet something still to come which he yet knows not, though he may know all things that are past. What way soever you suppose a change, you must suppose a present or a past ignorance; if he be changed in his knowledge for the perfection of his understanding, he was ignorant before; if his understanding be impaired by the change, he is ignorant after it.

If God was changeable in his knowledge, it would make him unfit to be an object of trust to any rational creature. His revelations would want the due ground for entertainment, if his understanding were changeable; for that might be revealed as truth now, which might prove false hereafter, and that as false now, which hereafter might prove true; and so God would be an unfit object of obedience in regard of his precepts, and an unfit object of confidence in regard of his promises: for if he be changeable in knowledge, he is defective in knowledge, and might promise that now, which he would know afterwards was unfit to be promised, and therefore unfit to be performed: it would make him an incompetent object of dread, in regard of his threatenings; for he might threaten that now, which he might know hereafter was not fit or just to be inflicted. A changeable mind and understanding cannot make a due and right judgment of things to be done, and things to be avoided. No wise man would judge it reasonable to trust a weak and flitting person.

God must needs be unchangeable in his knowledge: but, as the schoolmen say, that as the sun always shines, so God always knows; as the sun never ceaseth to shine, so God never ceaseth to know: nothing can be hid from the vast compass of his understanding, no more than any thing can shelter itself without the verge of his power.

This farther appears in that God knows by his own essence. He doth not know as we do, by habits,

habits, qualities, species, whereby we may be mistaken at one time and rectified at another: he hath not an understanding distinct from his essence, as we have; but being the most simple being, his understanding is his essence; and as from the infiniteness of his essence we conclude the infiniteness of his understanding, so from the unchangeableness of his essence, we may justly conclude the unchangeableness of his knowledge: since God is without all composition, and his understanding is not distinct from his essence, what he knows, he knows by his essence; and there can be no more mutability in his knowledge, than in his essence; if there were any in that, he could not be God, because he would have the property of a creature: if his understanding then be his essence, his knowledge is as necessary, as unchangeable, as his essence: as his essence eminently contains all perfections in itself, so his understanding comprehends all things past, present, and future, in itself: if his understanding and his essence were not one and the same, he were not simple but compounded; if compounded, he would consist of parts; if he consisted of parts, he would not be an independent being, and so would not be God.

God knows all things by one intuitive act. As there is no succession in his being, so that he is one thing now and another thing hereafter; so there is no succession in his knowledge: he knows things that are successive, before their existence and succession, by one single act of intuition: by one cast of his eye all things future are present to him in regard of his eternity and omnipresence: so that though there is a change and variation in the things known, yet his knowledge of them, and their several changes in nature, is invariable and unalterable. As imagine a creature that could see with his eye at one glance the whole compass of the heavens, by sending out beams from his eye without receiving any species from them, he would see the whole heavens uniformly; this part now in the
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east, then in the west, without any change in his eye: for he sees every part and every motion together; and though that great body varies and whirls about, and is in continual agitation, his eye remains steadfast, suffers no change, beholds all their motions at once and by one glance. God knows all things from eternity, and therefore perpetually knows them; the reason is because the divine knowledge is infinite, and therefore comprehends all knowable truths at once. An eternal knowledge comprehends in itself all time, and beholds past and present in the same manner, and therefore his knowledge is immutable: by one simple knowledge he considers the infinite spaces of past and future.

God's knowledge and will is the cause of all things and their successions. There can be no pretence of any changeableness of knowledge in God, but in this case, before things come to pass, he knows that they will come to pass; after they are come to pass, he knows that they are past and slide away. This would be something if the succession of things were the cause of the divine knowledge, as it is of our knowledge; but on the contrary, the divine knowledge and will is the cause of the succession of them: God doth not know creatures because they are, but they are because he knows them. *All his works were known to him from the beginning of the world.* All his works were not known to him, if the events of all those works were not also known to him; if they were not known to him how should he make them? he could not do any thing ignorantly: he made them then after he knew them, and did not know them after he made them: his knowledge of them made a change in them; their existence made no change in his knowledge: he knew them when they were to be created, in the same manner that he knew them after they were created; before they were brought
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into act, as well as after they were brought into act; before they were made, they were, and were not; they were in the knowledge of God, when they were not in their own nature: God did not receive his knowledge from their existence, but his knowledge and will acted upon them to bring them into being.

Therefore the distinction of past and future makes no change in the knowledge of God. When a thing is past, God hath no more distinct knowledge of it after it is past, than he had when it was to come; all things were all in their circumstances of past, present and to come, seen by his understanding, as they were determined by his will. Besides, to know a day to be past or future, is only to know the state of that day in itself, and to know its relation, to that which follows and that which went before: this day wherein we are, if we consider it in the state wherein it was yesterday, it was to come, it was future; but if we consider it in that state wherein it will be to-morrow, we understand it as past. This in man cannot be said to be a different knowledge of the thing itself, but only of the circumstance attending a thing, and the different relation of it. As I see the sun this day, I know it was up yesterday, I know it will be up to-morrow; my knowledge of the sun is the same; if there be any change it is in the sun not in my knowledge, only I apply my knowledge to such particular circumstances. How much more must the knowledge of those things in God be unchangeable, who knows all those states, conditions and circumstances most perfectly from eternity, wherein there is no succession, no past or future, and therefore will know them for ever? he always beholds the same thing; he sees indeed succession in things, and he sees a thing to be past which before was future: as from eternity he saw Adam as existing in such a time; in the first time he saw that he would be,

in the following time he saw that he had been: but this he knew from eternity, this he knew in the same manner; though there was a variation in Adam, yet there was no variation in God's knowledge of him in all states; though Adam was not present to himself, yet in all his states he was present to God's eternity.

Consider, that the knowledge of God, in regard of the manner of it as well as the objects, is incomprehensible to a finite creature. So that though we cannot arrive to a full understanding of the manner of God's knowledge, yet we must conceive so of it, as to remove all imperfection from him in it: and since it is an imperfection to be changeable, we must remove that from God; the knowledge of God about things past, present and future, must be inconceivably above ours: *His understanding is infinite*, Psa. cxlvii. 5. There is no number of it; it can no more be calculated or drawn into an account by us, than infinite spaces which have no bounds and limits can be measured by us. We can no more arrive, even in heaven, to a comprehensive understanding of the manner of his knowledge, than of the infinite glory of his essence; we may as well comprehend one as the other. This we must conclude, that God being not a body, doth not see one thing with eyes and another thing with mind, as we do; but being a spirit, he sees and knows only with mind, and his mind is himself, and is as unchangeable as himself; and therefore as he is not now another thing than what he was, so he knows not any thing now in another manner than as he knew it from eternity: he sees all things in the glass of his own essence; as therefore the glass doth not vary, so neither doth his vision.

God is unchangeable in regard of his will and purpose. A change in purpose is, when a man determines to do that now which before he determined

mined not to do, or to do the contrary; when a man hates that thing which he loved, or begins to love that which he before hated: when the will is changed, a man begins to will that which he willed not before, and ceaseth to will that which he willed before: but whatsoever God hath decreed, is immutable; whatsoever God hath promised, shall be accomplished; *The word that goes forth out of his mouth shall not return to him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleaseth*; whatsoever he purposeth, he will do; his decrees are therefore called *mountains of brass*; brass, as having substance and solidity; mountains, as being immoveable, not only by any creature but by himself, because they stand upon the basis of infallible wisdom, and are supported by uncontrollable power. From this immutability of his will published to man, there could be no release from the severity of the law, without satisfaction made by the death of a mediator, since it was the unalterable will of God that death should be the wages of sin; and from this immutable will it was, that the length of time from the first promise of the Redeemer to his mission, and the daily provocations of men altered not his purpose for the accomplishment of it in the fulness of that time he had resolved upon; nor did the wickedness of former ages hinder the addition of several promises as buttresses to the first.

To make this out, consider, the will of God is the same with his essence. If God had a will distinct from his essence, he would not be the most simple being. God hath not a faculty of will distinct from himself: as his understanding is nothing else but *Deus intelligens*, God understanding; so his will is nothing else but *Deus volens*, God willing; being therefore the essence of God, though it is considered according to our weakness as a faculty, it is as his understanding and wisdom, eternal and immutable, and can no more be changed than his essence;

the immutability of the divine counsel depends upon that of his essence: he is the Lord Jehovah, therefore he is true to his word, Mal. iii. 6. Isa. xliii. 13. *Yea, before the day I am he, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.* He is the same, immutable in his essence, therefore irresistible in his power.

There is a concurrence of God's will and understanding in every thing. As his knowledge is eternal, so is his purpose. Things created had not been known to be, had not God resolved them to be the act of his will; the existence of any thing supposeth an act of his will. Again, as God knows all things by one simple vision of his understanding, so he wills all things by one act of volition; therefore the purpose of God in the scripture is not express'd by counsels in the plural number, but counsel, shewing that all the purposes of God are not various, but as one will, branching itself out into many acts towards the creature; but all knit in one root, all links of one chain. Whatsoever is eternal, is immutable: as his knowledge is eternal, and therefore immutable, so is his will; he wills or nills nothing to be in time, but what he willed and nilled from eternity; if he willed in time that to be, that he willed not from eternity, then he would know that in time which he knew not from eternity: for God knows nothing future, but as his will orders it to be future and in time to be brought into being.

There can be no reason for any change in the will of God. When men change in their minds, it must be for want of foresight, because they could not foresee all the rubs and bars which might suddenly offer themselves; which if they had foreseen, they would not have taken such measures; hence men often will that which they afterwards wish they had not willed, when they come to understand it clearer, and see that to be injurious to them
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which they thought to be good for them; or else the change proceeds from a natural instability without any just cause, and an easiness to be drawn into that which is unrighteous; or else it proceeds from a want of power, when men take new counsels because they are invincibly hindered from executing the old. But none of those can be in God.

It cannot be for want of foresight. What can be wanting to an infinite understanding? How can any unknown event defeat his purpose; since nothing happens in the world but what he wills to effect, or wills to permit; and therefore all future events are present with him? Besides, it doth not consist with God's wisdom to resolve any thing, but upon the highest reason; and what is the highest and infinite reason, cannot but be unalterable in itself; for there can be no reason and wisdom higher than the highest. All God's purposes are not bare acts of will, but acts of counsel, Eph. i. 11. *He works all things according to the counsel of his own will*; and he doth not say so much that his will, as that *his counsel shall stand*, Isa. xlv. 10. It stands because it is counsel: and the immutability of a promise is called the *immutability of his counsel*, Heb. vi. 17, as being introduced and settled by the most perfect wisdom, and therefore to be carried on to a full and complete execution: his purpose then cannot be changed for want of foresight; for this would be a charge of weakness.

Nor can it proceed from a natural instability of his will, or an easiness to be drawn to that which is unrighteous. If his will should not adhere to his counsel, it is because it is not fit to be followed, or because it will not follow it; if not fit to be followed, it is a reflection upon his wisdom; if it be established, and he will not follow it, there is a contrariety in God, as there is in a fallen creature, will against wisdom. That cannot be in God,

which he hates in a creature, *viz.* the disorder of faculties, and being out of their due place. *The righteousness of God is like a great mountain*, Psa. xxxvi. 6. The rectitude of his nature is as immovable in itself, as all the great mountains in the world are by the strength of man. *He is not as a man, that he should repent or lye*, Num. xxiii. 19. who often changes, out of a perversity of will, as well as want of wisdom to foresee, or want of ability to perform. His eternal purpose must either be righteous or unrighteous; if righteous and holy, he would become unholy by the change; if not righteous nor holy, then he was unrighteous before the change; which way soever it falls, it would reflect upon the righteousness of God, which is a blasphemous imagination. If God did change his purpose, it must be either for the better, then the counsel of God was bad before; or the worse, then he was not wise and good before.

Nor can it be for want of strength. Who hath power to control him? not all the combined devices and endeavours of men, can make the counsel of God totter, Prov. xix. 21. *There are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand*; that, and that only shall stand: man hath a power to devise and imagine, but no power to effect and execute of himself. God wants no more power to effect what he will, than he wants understanding to know what is fit.

Well then, since God wanted not wisdom to frame his decrees, nor holiness to regulate them, nor power to effect them; what should make him change them? since there can be no reason superior to his; no event unforeseen by him; no holiness comparable to his; no unrighteousness found in him; no power equal to his to put a rub in his way.

Though the will of God be immutable, yet it is not to be understood so, as that the things themselves so willed, are immutable; nor will the im-

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mutability of the things willed by him, follow upon the unchangeableness of his will in willing them; though God be firm in willing them, yet he doth not will that they should always be. God did not perpetually will the doing those things which he once decreed to be done: he decreed that Christ should suffer, but he did not decree that Christ should always suffer; so he willed the Mosaical rites for a time, but he did not will that they should always continue; he willed that they should endure for a time, and when the time came for their ceasing, God had been mutable if he had not put an end to them, because his will had fixed such a period: so that the changing of those things which he had once appointed to be practised, is so far from charging God with changeableness, that God would be mutable if he did not take them away, since he decreed, as well their abolition at such a time, as their continuance till such a time; so that the removal of them was pursuant to his unchangeable will and decree. If God had decreed that such laws should always continue, and afterwards changed that decree, and resolved the abrogation of them; then indeed God had been mutable; he had rescinded one decree by another; he had then seen an error in his first resolve, and there must be some weakness in the reason and wisdom whereon it was grounded: but it was not so here; for the change of those laws is so far from flurring God with any mutability, that the very change of them is no other than the issue of his eternal decree; for from eternity he purposed in himself to change this or that dispensation, though he did decree to bring such a dispensation into the world: the decree itself was eternal and immutable, but the thing decreed was temporary and mutable. As a decree from eternity doth not make the thing decreed to be eternal; so neither doth the immutability of the decree, render the thing so decreed to be immutable:

table: as for example, God decreed from all eternity to create the world; the eternity of this decree did not make the world to be in being, and actually created from eternity; so God decreed immutably that the world so created should continue for such a time; the decree is immutable if the world perish at that time, and would not be immutable if the world did endure beyond that time that God hath fixed for the duration of it. As when a prince orders a man's remaining in prison for so many days, if he be prevailed with to give him a delivery before those days, or to continue him in custody for the same crime after those days, his order is changed; but if he orders the delivery of him just at that time, till which he had before decreed that he should continue in prison, the purpose and order of the prince remains firm, and the change in the state of the prisoner, is the fruit of that firm and fixed resolution: so that we must distinguish between the person decreeing, the decree itself, and the thing decreed. The person decreeing, *viz.* God, is in himself immutable, and the decree is immutable; but the thing decreed may be mutable; and if it were not changed according to the first purpose, it would argue the decree in itself to be changed; for while a man wills that this may be done now, and another thing done afterwards, the same will remains, and though there be a change in the effects, there is no change in the will.

The immutability of God's will doth not infringe the liberty of it. The liberty of God's will consists with the necessity of continuing his purpose. God is necessarily good, immutably good; yet he is freely so, and would not be otherwise than what he is. God was free in his first purpose; and purposing this or that by an infallible and unerring wisdom, it would be a weakness to change the purpose; but indeed the liberty of God's will doth not seem so much to consist in an indifferency to this or that,

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as is an independency on any thing without himself: his will was free, because it did not depend upon the objects about which his will was conversant. To be immutably good, is no point of imperfection, but the height of perfection.

As God is unchangeable in regard of essence, knowledge, purpose; so he is unchangeable in regard of place. He cannot be changed in time, because he is eternity; so he cannot be changed in place, because he hath ubiquity: he is eternal, therefore cannot be changed in time; he is omnipresent, therefore cannot be changed in place: he doth not begin to be in one place wherein he was not before, or cease to be in a place wherein he was before. He that fills every place in heaven and earth, cannot change place; he cannot leave one to possess another, that is equally in regard of his essence in all: *He fills heaven and earth*, Jer. xxiii. 24. The heavens that are not subject to those changes to which sublunary bodies are subject, that are not diminished in quantity or quality; yet they are always changing place in regard of their motion; no part of them doth always continue in the same point: but God hath no change of his nature, because he is most inward in every thing; he is substantially in all spaces, real and imaginary; there is no part of the world which he doth not fill; no place can be imagined wherein he doth not exist. Suppose a million of worlds above and about this, incircling one another; his essence would be in every part and point of those worlds; because it is indivisible, it cannot be divided; nor can it be contained within those created limits of millions of worlds, when the most soaring and best coining fancy hath run through all creatures, to the highest sphere of the heavens, and imagined one world after another, till it can fancy no more: none of these, nor all of them, can contain God; for the *heaven of heavens cannot contain him*, 1 Kings viii. 27.

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He is higher than heaven, deeper than hell, Job xi. 8. and possesses infinite imaginary spaces beyond created limits. He who hath no cause of being, can have no limits of being; and though by creation he began to be in the world, yet he did not begin to be where the world is, but was in the same imaginary space from eternity; for he was always in himself by his own eternal *ubi*.

Therefore observe, that when God is said to draw near to us, when we draw near to him; it is not by local motion or change of place, but by special and spiritual influences, by exciting and supporting grace. As we ordinarily say, the sun is come into the house when yet it remains in its place and order in the heavens, because the beams pierce through the windows and enlighten the room: so when God is said to come down or descend; it is not by a change of place, but a change of outward acts, when he puts forth himself in ways of fresh mercy or new judgments, in the effluxes of his love or the flames of his wrath. When good men feel the warm beams of his grace refreshing them, or wicked men feel the hot coals of his anger scorching them. God's drawing near to us, is not so much his coming to us, but his drawing us to him: as when water-men pull a rope that is in one end fastened to the shore, and the other end to the vessel; the shore is immovable, yet it seems to the eye to come to them, but they really move to the shore. God is an immovable rock; we are floating and uncertain creatures; while he seems to approach to us, he doth really make us to approach to him: he comes not to us by any change of place himself, but draws us to him by a change of mind, will, and affections in us.

The second thing propounded is, the reasons to prove God immutable—heathens acknowledged him to be so.—The name Jehovah signifies this attribute, Ex. iii. 14. *I am that I am, I am bath sent me to you.* It

It signifies his immutability as well as eternity. I Am signifies his eternity; that or the same That I Am, his immutability: as it respects the essence of God, it signifies his unchangeable being from eternity to eternity; as it respects the creature, it signifies his constancy in his counsels and promises, which spring from no other cause but the unchangeableness of his nature. The reason why men stand not to their covenant, is because they are not always the same: I Am, that is, I am the same, before the creation of the world, and since the creation of the world; before the entrance of sin, and since the entrance of sin; before their going into Egypt, and while they remain in Egypt. The very name Jehovah, bears according to the grammatical order, a mark of God's unchangeableness; it never hath any thing added to it, nor any thing taken from it; it hath no plural number, no affixes, a custom peculiar to the eastern languages; it never changes its letters as other words do. All things that are changed, cease to be what they were, and begin to be what they were not, and therefore cannot have the title truly applied to them, they are; they are indeed, but like a river, in a continual flux, that no man ever sees the same; let his eye be fixed upon one place of it, the water he sees, slides away, and that which he saw not, succeeds in its place; let him take his eye off but for the least moment, and fix it there again, and he sees not the same that he saw before. All sensible things are in a perpetual stream; that which is sometimes this, and sometimes that, is not, because it is not always the same; whatsoever is changed, is something now which it was not always: but of God it is said I Am, which could not be if he were changeable; for it may be said of him he is not, as well he is, because he is not what he was; if we say not of him, he was, nor he

he will be, but only he is; whence should any change arrive? he must invincibly remain the same, of whose nature, perfections, knowledge, and will, it cannot be said it was, as if it were not now in him; or it shall be, as if it were not yet in him; but he is, because he doth not only exist, but doth always exist the same. I Am, that is, I receive from no other what I am in myself: he depends upon no other in his essence, knowledge, purposes, and therefore hath no changing power over him.

If God were changeable, he could not be the most perfect being. God is the most perfect being, and possesses in himself infinite and essential goodness, Mat. v. 48. *Your heavenly Father is perfect*: if he could change from that perfection, he were not the highest exemplar and copy for us to write after. If God doth change, it must be either to a greater perfection than he had before, or to a less, *mutatio perfectiva vel amissiva*; if he changes to acquire a perfection he had not, then he was not before the most excellent being necessarily; he was not what he might be; there was a defect in him, and a privation of that which was better than what he had and was; and then he was not always the best, and so was not always God; and being not always God, could never be God; for to begin to be God is against the notion of God: not to a less perfection than he had; that were to change to imperfection, and to lose a perfection which he possessed before, and cease to be the best being; for he would lose some good which he had, and acquire some evil which he was free from before: so that the sovereign perfection of God, is an invincible bar to any change in him; for which way soever you cast it for a change, his supreme excellency is impaired and nulled by it. For in all change, there is something from which a thing is changed, and something to which it is changed; so that on the one part, there is a loss of what it had, and on the other

other part, there is an acquisition of what it had not: if to the better, he was not perfect, and so was not God; if to the worse, he will not be perfect, and so be no longer God after that change.

The third thing to speak to is, that immutability is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature. Mutability is natural to every creature as a creature, and immutability is the sole perfection of God: he only is infinite wisdom, able to fore-know future events; he only is infinitely powerful, able to call forth all means to effect; so that wanting neither wisdom to contrive, nor strength to execute, he cannot alter his counsel: none being above him, nothing in him contrary to him, and being defective in no blessedness and perfection, he cannot vary in his essence and nature. Had not immutability as well as eternity been a property solely pertaining to the divine nature, as well as creative power and eternal duration, the Apostles argument to prove Christ to be God from this perpetual sameness, had come short of any convincing strength. These words of the text he applies to Christ, Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. *They shall be changed, but thou art the same.* There had been no strength in the reason, if immutability by nature did belong to any creature.

The changeableness of all creatures is evident;

1. Of corporeal creatures, it is evident to sense. All plants and animals, as they have their duration bounded in certain limits; so while they do exist they proceed from their rise to their fall; they pass through many sensible alterations, from one degree of growth to another, from buds to blossoms, from blossoms to flowers and fruits; they come to their pitch that nature hath set them, and return back to the state from whence they sprung; there is not a day but they make some acquisition, or suffer some loss; they die and spring up every day; nothing in them more certain than their inconstancy: *The creature is subject to vanity.* The heavenly
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bodies are changing their place; the sun every day is running his race, and stays not in the same point; and though they are not changed in their essence, yet they are in their place: some indeed say there is a continual generation of light in the sun, as there is a loss of light by the casting out its beams, as in a fountain there is a flowing out of the streams, and a continual generation of supply: and though these heavenly bodies have kept their standing and motion from the time of their creation; yet both the sun's standing still in Joshua's time, and its going back in Hezekiah's time, shew that they are changeable at the pleasure of God.

But in man, the change is perpetually visible; every day there is a change from ignorance to knowledge, from one will to another, from passion to passion, sometimes sad and sometimes cheerful, sometimes craving this and presently nauseating it; his body changes from health to sickness, or from weakness to strength; some alteration there is either in body or mind. Man who is the noblest creature, the subordinate end of the creation of other things, cannot assure himself of a consistency and fixedness in any thing the short space of a day, no not of a minute; all his months are months of vanity; whence the psalmist calls man at the best estate, altogether vanity, a mere heap of vanity: as he contains in his nature the nature of all creatures, so he inherits in his nature the vanity of all creatures: a little world, the center of the world and of the vanity of the world; yea lighter than vanity; more moveable than a feather; tost between passion and passion, daily changing his end, and changing the means; an image of nothing.

Spiritual natures, as angels, they change not in their being, but that is from the indulgence of God: they change not in their goodness, but that
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is not from their nature, but divine grace in their confirmation; but they change in their knowledge, they know more by Christ than they did by creation; they have an addition of knowledge every day, by the providential dispensations of God to his church; and the increase of their astonishment and love, is according to the increase of their knowledge and insight: they cannot have a new discovery, without new admirations of what is discovered to them; there is a change in their joy, when there is a change in a sinner: they were changed in their essence, when they were made such glorious spirits of nothing; some of them were changed in their will, when of holy they became impure: the good angels were changed in their understandings, when the glories of God in Christ were presented to their view; and all can be changed in their essence again; and as they were made of nothing, so by the power of God may be reduced to nothing again. So glorified souls shall have an unchanged operation about God, for they shall behold his face without any grief or fear of loss, without vagrant thoughts; but they can never be unchangeable in their nature, because they can never pass from finite to infinite. No creature can be unchangeable in its nature.

The fourth thing propounded is, some propositions to clear this unchangeableness of God, from any thing that seems contrary to it.

The first proposition, there was no change in God when he began to create the world in time. The creation was a real change, but the change was not subjectively in God, but in the creature; the creature began to be what it was not before. Creation is considered as active or passive; active creation is the will and power of God to create; this is from eternity, because God willed from eternity to create in time; this never had beginning, for God never began in time to understand any thing, to will any thing, or be able to do any thing; but he always

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understood, and always willed those things which he determined from eternity to produce in time. The decree of God may be taken for the act decreeing, that is eternal and the same; or for the object decreed, that is in time: so that there may be a change in the object, but not in the will whereby the object doth exist.

There was no change in God by the act of creation, because there was no new will in him: there was no new act of his will which was not before. The creation began in time, but the will of creating was from eternity; the work was new, but the decree whence that new work sprung, was as ancient as the Ancient of Days: when the time of creating came, God was not made *ex nolente volens*, as we are; for whatsoever God willed to be now done, he willed from eternity to be done; but he willed also that it should not be done till such an instant of time, and that it should not exist before such a time. If God had willed the creation of the world only at that time when the world was produced and not before, then indeed God had been changeable: But though God spake that word, which he had not spoke before, whereby the world was brought into act; yet he did not will that which he willed not before. God did not create by a new counsel, or new will, but that which was from eternity, Eph. i. 9. All things are wrought according to that *purpose in himself*, and according to *the counsel of his will*, ver. 11; and as the holiness of the elect is the fruit of his eternal will *before the foundation of the world*, ver. 4. so likewise is the existence of things, and of those persons whom he did elect: as when an artificer frames a house or a temple according to that model he had in his mind some years before, there is no change in the model in his mind; the artificer is the same, though the work is produced by him some time after he had framed that copy of it in his own mind; but there is a change of the thing produced
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by him according to that model. Or when a rich man intends four or five years hence, if he lives, to build an hospital, is there any change in his will, when after the expiration of that time he builds and endows it? Though it be after his will, yet it is the fruit of his precedent will; so God from all eternity did will and command that the creatures should exist in such a part of time; and by this eternal will, all things, whether past, present or to come, did, do, and shall exist at that point of time which that will did appoint for them; not as though God had a new will when things stood up in being, but only that which was prepared in his immutable counsel and will from eternity, doth then appear. There can be no instant fixed from eternity, wherein it can be said, God did not will the creation of the world; for had the will of God for the shortest moment been undetermined to the creation of the world, and afterwards resolved upon it, there had been a moral change in God from not willing to willing; but this there was not, for God executes nothing in time which he had not ordained from eternity, and appointed all the means and circumstances whereby it should be brought about. As the determination of our Saviour to suffer was not a new will, but an eternal counsel, and wrought no change in God.

The second proposition. There was no change in the divine nature of the Son, when he assumed human nature. There was an union of the two natures, but no change of the deity into the humanity, or of the humanity into the deity; both preserved their peculiar properties: the humanity was changed by a communication of excellent gifts from the divine nature; not by being brought into an equality with it, for that was impossible that a creature should become equal to the creator; he took the form of a servant, but he lost not the form of God, he despoiled not himself of the per-

fections of the deity ; he was indeed emptied, *and became of no reputation*, but he did not cease to be God, though he was reputed to be only a man, and a very mean one too : the glory of his divinity was not extinguished nor diminished, though it was obscured and darkened under the vail of our infirmities ; but there was no more change in the hiding of it, than there is in the body of the sun when it is shadowed by the interposition of a cloud ; his blood while it was pouring out from his veins was the *blood of God* ; and therefore when he was bowing the head of his humanity upon the cross, he had the nature and perfections of God ; for had he ceased to be God, he had been a mere creature, and his sufferings would have been of as little value and satisfaction as the sufferings of a creature. He could not have been a sufficient mediator, had he ceased to be God ; and he had ceased to be God, had he lost any one perfection proper to the divine nature ; and losing none, he lost not this of unchangeableness, which is none of the meanest belonging to the deity : why by his union with the human nature should he lose this, any more than he lost his omniscience, which he discovered by his knowledge of the thoughts of men ; or his mercy, which he manifested to the height in the time of his suffering ? That is truly a change, when a thing ceaseth to be what it was before ; that was not in Christ : he assumed our nature without laying aside his own. When the soul is united to the body, doth it lose any of those perfections that are proper to its nature ? Is there any change either in the substance or qualities of it ? No, but it makes a change in the body, and of a dull lump it makes it a living mass, conveys vigor and strength to it ; and by its power, quickens it to sense and motion ; so did the divine nature and human remain entire ; there was no change of the one into the other, as Christ by a miracle changed water into wine, or men by art

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change sand or ashes into glass: and when *he prays for the glory he had with God before the world was*, he prays that a glory he had in his deity, might shine forth in his person as mediator, and be evidenced in that height and splendor suitable to his dignity which had been so lately darkened by his abasement; that as he had appeared to be the son of man in the infirmity of the flesh, he might appear to be the Son of God in the glory of his person; that he might appear to be the Son of God and the son of man in one person.

Again, there could be no change in this union; for in a real change, something is acquired which was not possessed before, neither formally nor eminently; but the divinity had from eternity before the incarnation, all the perfections of the human nature eminently in a nobler manner than they are in themselves, and therefore could not be changed by a real union.

The third proposition. Repentance and other affections ascribed to God in scripture, argue no change in God. We often read of God's repenting, repenting of the good he promised, and of the evil he threatened, or of the work he hath wrought. We must observe therefore that repentance is not properly in God. He is a pure spirit, and is not capable of those passions, which are signs of weakness and impotence, or subject to those regrets, we are subject to: where there is a proper repentance, there is a want of foresight, an ignorance of what would succeed, or a defect in the examination of the occurrences, which might fall within consideration: all repentance of a fact, is grounded upon a mistake in the event which was not foreseen; or upon an after knowledge of the evil of the thing which was acted by the person repenting: but God is so wise that he cannot err, so holy he cannot do evil; and his certain prescience or foreknowledge, secures him against any unex-

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pected events. God doth not act but upon clear and infallible reason; and a change upon passion, is accounted by all, so great a weakness in man, that none can entertain so unworthy a conceit of God. Where he is said to repent, he is also said to grieve; now no proper grief can be imagined to be in God: as repentance is inconsistent with infallible foresight, so is grief no less inconsistent with undefiled blessedness: *God is blessed for ever*, and therefore nothing can befall him that can stain that blessedness; his blessedness would be impaired, and interrupted, while he is repenting, though he did soon rectify that which is the cause of his repentance: *God is of one mind, and who can turn him? what his soul desires that he doth.*

But God accommodates himself in the scripture to our weak capacity. God hath no more of a proper repentance, than he hath of a real body, though he in accommodation to our weakness, ascribes to himself the members of our bodies to set out to our understanding the greatness of his perfections; we must not conclude him a body like us; so because he is said to have anger and repentance, we must not conclude him to have passions like us: when we cannot fully comprehend him as he is, he clothes himself with our nature in his expression; that we may apprehend him as we are able, and by an inspection into ourselves, learn something of the nature of God; yet those human ways of speaking ought to be understood in a manner agreeable to the infinite excellency and majesty of God; and are only designed to mark out something in God which hath a resemblance with something in us: as we cannot speak to God as gods, but as men; so we cannot understand him speaking to us as a God, unless he condescend to speak to us like a man. God therefore frames his language to our dulness, not to his own state; and informs us by our own phrases, what he would have us learn of his nature; as
nurses

nurses talk broken language to young children. In all such expressions therefore, we must ascribe the perfection we conceive in them to God, and lay the imperfection at the door of the creature.

Therefore repentance in God is only a change of his outward conduct, according to his infallible foresight and immutable will.—He changes the way of his providential proceeding according to the carriage of the creature, without changing his will, which is the rule of his providence; when God speaks of his *repenting that he had made man*; it is only his changing his conduct from a way of kindness to a way of severity, and is a word suited to our capacities to signify his detestation of sin and his resolution to punish it, after man had made himself quite another thing, than God had made him; it repents me, that is, I am purposed to destroy the world; as he that repents of his work throws it away: as if a potter cast away a vessel he had framed, it were a testimony, that he repented that ever he took pains about it: so the destruction of them seems to be a repentance in God that ever he made them; it is a change of events, not of counsels. Repentance in us is a grief for a former fact, and a changing of our course in it: grief is not in God, but his repentance is a willing a thing should not be as it was, which will was fixed from eternity; for God foreseeing man would fall, and decreeing to permit it, he could not be said to repent in time of what he did not repent from eternity; and therefore if there were no repentance in God from eternity, there could be none in time. But God is said to repent, when he changes the disposition of affairs without himself; as men when they repent, alter the course of their actions, so God alters things *extra se*, or without himself, but changes nothing of his own purpose within himself. It rather notes the action he is about to do, than any thing in his own nature, or any change in his eternal purpose.

God repenting of his kindness is nothing but an inflicting of punishment, which the creature by the change of his carriage hath merited: as his repenting of the evil threatened is the withholding the punishment denounced, when the creature hath humbly submitted to his authority and acknowledged his crime.

Or else we may understand those expressions of joy, grief and repentance, to signify thus much, that the things declared to be the objects of joy, grief and repentance are of that nature, that if God were capable of our passions, he would discover himself in such cases as we do: as when the prophets mention the joys and applaudings of heaven, earth and sea, they only signify that the things they speak of are so good, that if the heavens and the sea, had natures capable of joy, they would express it upon that occasion in such a manner as we do: so would God have joy at the obedience of men, and grief at the unworthy carriage of men, and repent of his kindness, when men abuse it, and repent of his punishment, when men reform under his rod, were the majesty of his nature capable of such affections.

Fourth proposition. The not fulfilling of some predictions in scripture, which seem to imply a changeableness of the divine will, do not argue any change in it. As when he reprieved Hezekiah from death, after a message sent by the prophet Isaiah, that he should die, and when he made an arrest of that judgment he had threatened by Jonah against Nineveh.

There is not indeed the same reason of promises and threatenings altogether, for in promising the obligation lies upon God, and the right to demand is in the party that performs the condition of the promise: but in threatenings, the obligation lies upon the sinner, and God's right to punish is declared hereby: so that though God doth not punish,
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his will is not changed; because his will was to declare the demerit of sin, and his right to punish upon the commission of it; though he may not punish according to the strict letter of the threatening the person sinning, but relax his own law for the honour of his attributes, and transfer the punishment from the offender to a person substituted in his room; this was the case in the first threatening against man, and the substituting a surety in the place of the malefactor.

But the answer to these cases is this, that where we find predictions in scripture declared, and yet not executed, we must consider them, not as absolute but conditional, or as the civil law calls it, an interlocutory sentence. God declared what would follow by natural causes, or by the demerit of man, not what he would absolutely himself do: And in many of those predictions, though the condition be not expressed, yet it is to be understood; so the promises of God are to be understood with the condition of perseverance in well doing; and threatenings with a clause of revocation annexed to them, provided that men repent: and this God lays down as a general case, always to be remembered as a rule for the interpreting his threatenings against a nation, and the same reason will hold in threatenings against a particular person. Jer. xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10. *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and pull down and destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them; and so when he speaks of planting a nation, if they do evil, he will repent of the good, &c.* It is an universal rule by which all particular cases of this nature are to be tried; so that when man's repentance arrives, God remains firm in his first will, always equal to himself, and it is not he that changes, but man. For since the interposition of the mediator,

mediator, with an eye to whom God governed the world after the fall, the right of punishing was taken off if men repented, and mercy was to flow out, if by a conversion men returned to their duty, Ezck. xviii 20, 21. This I say is grounded upon God's entertaining the Mediator; for the covenant of works discovered no such thing as repentance or pardon. Now these general rules are to be the interpreters of particular cases: so that predictions of good are not to be counted absolute, if men return to evil; nor predictions of evil, if men be thereby reduced to a repentance of their crimes.

So Nineveh shall be destroyed, that is, according to the general rule; unless the inhabitants repent, which they did; they manifested a belief of the threatening, and gave glory to God by giving credit to the prophet: and they had a notion of this rule God lays down in the other prophets; for they had an apprehension that upon their humbling themselves, they might escape the threatened vengeance, and stop the shooting those arrows that were ready in the bow. Though Jonah proclaimed destruction, without declaring any hopes of an arrest of judgment; yet their natural notion of God, afforded some natural hopes of relief, if they did their duty, and spurned not against the prophet's message; and therefore saith one, God did not always express this condition, because it was needless; his own rule revealed in scripture was sufficient for some; and the natural notion all men had of God's goodness, upon their repentance, made it not absolutely necessary to declare it: and besides, saith he, it is bootless; the expressing it can do but little good; secure ones will repent never the sooner, but rather presume upon their hopes of God's forbearance, and linger out their repentance till it be too late. And to work men to repentance, whom he hath purposed to spare, he threatens them
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with terrible judgments; which, by how much the more terrible and peremptory they are, are likely to be more effectual for that end God in his purpose designs them, *viz.* to humble them under a sense of their demerit, and an acknowledgement of his righteous justice; and therefore though they be absolutely denounced, yet they are to be conditionally interpreted with a reservation of repentance. As for that answer which one gives, that by forty days was not meant forty natural days, but prophetic days, that is, years, a day for a year; and that the city was destroyed forty years after by the Medes. The expression of God's repenting upon their humiliation, puts a bar to that interpretation: God repented, that is, he did not bring the punishment upon them according to those days the prophet had expressed; and therefore forty natural days are to be understood; and if it were meant of forty years, and they were destroyed at the end of that term, how could God be said to repent, since according to that, the punishment threatened was according to the time fixed brought upon them? and the destruction of it forty years after, will not be easily evinced, if Jonah lived in the time of Jeroboam, the second king of Israel, as he did; and Nineveh was destroyed in the time of Josiah, king of Judah. But the other answer is plain. God did not fulfil what he had threatened, because they reformed what they had committed: when the threatening was made, they were a fit object for justice; but when they repented, they were a fit object for a merciful respite. To threaten when sins are high, is a part of God's justice; not to execute when sins are revoked by repentance, is a part of God's goodness. And in the case of Hezekiah, Isaiah comes with a message from God, that he should *set his house in order*, for he shall die; that is, the disease was mortal, and no outward applications could in their own nature resist the distemper.

distemper. *Behold, I will add to thy days fifteen years; I will heal thee:* it seems to be one entire message, because the latter part of it was so suddenly after the other committed to Isaiah to be delivered to Hezekiah; for he was not gone out of the king's house, before he was ordered to return with the news of his health, by an extraordinary indulgence of God against the power of nature and force of the disease: *behold I will add to thy life;* noting it as an extraordinary thing: he was in the second court of the king's house when this word came to him; the king's house having three courts, so that he was not gone above half way out of the palace. God might send this message of death, to prevent the pride Hezekiah might swell with for his deliverance from Senacherib: as Paul had a messenger of Satan to buffet him to prevent his lifting up; and this good man was subject to this sin, as we find afterwards in the case of the Babylonish ambassadors: and God delayed this other part of the message to humble him, and draw out his prayer; and as soon as ever he found Hezekiah in this temper, he sent Isaiah with a comfortable message of recovery: so that the will of God was to signify to him the mortality of his distemper, and afterwards to relieve him by a message of an extraordinary recovery.

The fifth proposition. God is not changed, when of loving to any creatures he becomes angry with them, or of angry he becomes appeased. The change in these cases is in the creature; according to the alteration in the creature, it stands in a various relation to God: an innocent creature is the object of his kindness, an offending creature is the object of his anger; there is a change in the dispensations of God, as there is a change in the creature making himself capable of such dispensations. God always acts according to the immutable nature of his holiness, and can no more change

change in his affections to good and evil, than he can in his essence. When the devils now fallen, stood as glorious angels, they were the objects of God's love, because holy; when they fell, they were the objects of God's hatred, because impure; the same reason which made him love them while they were pure, made him hate them, when they were criminal: the reason of his various dispensations to them was the same in both, as considered in God, his immutable holiness; but, as respecting the creature, different; the nature of the creature was changed, but the divine holy nature of God remained the same: *With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward*: he is a refreshing light to those that obey him, and a consuming fire to those that resist him. Though the same angels were not always loved; yet the same reason that moved him to love them, moved him to hate them. It had argued a change in God, if he had loved them always, in whatsoever posture they were towards him: it could not be counted love, but a weakness and impotent fondness; the change is in the object, not in the affection of God: for the object loved before, is not beloved now, because that which was the motive of love, is not now in it: so that the creature having a different state from what it had, falls under a different affection or dispensation.

It had been a mutable affection in God, to love that which was not worthy of love, with the same love wherewith he loved that which had the greatest resemblance to himself: had God loved the fallen angels in that state, and for that state, he had hated himself, because he had loved that which was contrary to himself, and the image of his own holiness, which made them appear before, good in his sight: The will of God is unchangeably set to love righteousness, and hate iniquity, and from
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this hatred to punish it: and if a righteous creature contracts the wrath of God, or a sinful creature hath the communications of God's love; it must be by a change in themselves. Is the sun changed, when it hardens one thing and softens another, according to the disposition of the several subjects? or where the sun makes a flower more fragrant, and a dead carcase more noisome: there are divers defects, but the reason of that diversity is not in the sun, but in the subject; the sun is the same, and produceth those different effects, by the same quality of heat: so if an unholy soul approach to God, God looks angrily upon him; If a holy soul come before him, the same immutable perfection in God draws out his kindness towards him. As some think, the sun would rather refresh than scorch us, if our bodies were of the same nature and substance with that luminary.

As the will of God for creating the world, was no new, but an eternal will, though it manifested itself in time; so the will of God for the punishment of sin, or the reconciliation of the sinner, was no new will: though his wrath in time break out in the effects of it upon sinners, and his love flows out in effects of it upon penitents. Christ by his death reconciling God to man, did not alter the will of God, but did what was consonant to his eternal will: he came not to change his will, but to execute it. *Lo I come to do thy will, O God.* And the grace of God in Christ, was not a new grace, but an old grace in a new appearance; *the grace of God hath appeared.*

The sixth proposition, A change of laws by God argues no change in God; when God abrogates some laws which he had settled in the church and enacts others.—I spake something of this the last day. I shall only add this. God commanded one thing to the Jews, when the church was in an infant state: and removed those laws, when the church came to some growth. The elements of the world
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were suited to the state of children. A mother feeds not the infant with the same diet as she doth when it is grown up. Our Saviour acquainted not his disciples with some things at one time which he did at another, because they were not able to bear them; where was the change, in Christ's will, or in their growth from a state of weakness to that of strength? a physician prescribes not the same things to a person in health, as he doth to one conflicting with a distemper; nor the same thing in the beginning, as he doth in the state or declination of the disease. The physicians will and skill are the same, but the capacity and necessity of the patient for this or that medicine or method of proceeding, are not the same.

When God changed the ceremonial law, there was no change in the divine will, but an execution of his will; for when God commanded the observance of the law, he intended not the perpetuity of it; nay, in the prophets he declares the cessation of it; he decreed to command it, but only for such a time; so that the abrogation of it was no less an execution of his decree, than the establishment of it for a season was; the commanding of it was pursuant to his decree for the appointing of it, and the nulling of it was pursuant to his decree of continuing it only for such a season: so that in all this there was no change in the will of God.

The counsel of God stands sure; what change soever there are in the world, are not in God or his will, but in the events of things, and the different relations of things to God: it is in the creature, not in the creator. The sun always remains of the same hue, and is not discoloured in itself, because it shines green through a green glass, and blue through a blue glass; the different colours come from the glass, not from the sun: the change is always in the disposition of the creature, not in the nature of God or his will.

Fifth, Use.

Fifth, Use.

1. For information. If God be unchangeable in his nature, and immutability be a property of God, then Christ hath a divine nature. This in the Psalm is applied to Christ in the Hebrews, chap. i. 11. where he joins the citation out of this Psalm, with that out of Psalm xlv. 6. 7. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows; and thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, &c.* As the first must necessarily be meant of Christ the Mediator, and therein he is distinguished from God, as one anointed by him; so the other must be meant of Christ, whereby he is made one with God in regard of the creation and dissolution of the world, in regard of eternity and immutability. Both the testimonies are linked together by the copulative AND, *and thou Lord*, declaring thereby that they are both to be understood of the same person, the Son of God: the design of the chapter is to prove Christ to be God; and such things are spoken of him as could not belong to any creature, no, not to the most excellent of the angels: the same person that is said to be anointed above his fellows, and is said to lay the foundation of the earth and heavens, is said to be the same, that is, the same in himself: the prerogative of sameness belongs to that person as well as creation of heaven and earth.

Use 2. Of comfort.

The immutability of God is a strong ground of consolation.—Subjects with a good prince to live for ever, as being loath to change him; but care not how soon they are rid of an oppressor. This unchangeableness of God's will, shews him as ready to accept any that come to him as ever he was; so that we may with confidence make
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our addressee to him, since he cannot change his affections to goodness. The fear of change in a friend hinders a full reliance upon him; an assurance of stability encourages hope and confidence. This attribute is the strongest prop for faith in all our addressees: it is not a single perfection, but the glory of all those, that belong to his nature; for he is *unchangeable in his love*, Jer. xxxi. 3. *in his truth*, Psal. cxvii. 2. The more solemn revelation of himself in this name Jehovah, which signifies chiefly his eternity and immutability, was to support the Israelites faith, in expectation of a deliverance from Egypt, that he had not retracted his purpose, and his promise made to Abraham for giving Canaan to his posterity.

The covenant stands unchangeable. Mutable creatures break their leagues and covenants, and snap them asunder, like Samson's cords, when they are not accommodated to their interests. But an unchangeable God keeps his; *the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor shall the covenant of my peace be removed.* The heaven and earth shall sooner fall asunder, and the strongest and firmest parts of the creation crumble to dust sooner than one *Iota* of my covenant shall fail. It depends upon the unchangeableness of his will and the unchangeableness of his word, and therefore is called *the immutability of his counsel.* Heb. vi. 17. It is the fruit of the everlasting purpose of God; whence the Apostle links purpose and grace together. A covenant with a nation may be changeable, because it may not be built upon the eternal purpose of God to put his fear in the heart; but with respect to the creatures obedience. Thus God chose Jerusalem, as the place wherein he would dwell for ever, yet he threatens to depart from them, when they had broken covenant with him, *and the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of*

the city to the mountain on the east side. The covenant of grace doth not run I will be your God, if you will be my people: but I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Hos. ii. 19. &c. *I will betroth thee to me for ever, I will say thou art my people, and they shall say, thou art my God.* His everlasting purpose, is to write his laws in the hearts of the elect. He puts a condition to his covenant of grace, the condition of faith, and he resolves to work that condition in the hearts of the elect; and therefore believers have two immutable pillars for their support, stronger than those erected by Solomon at the porch of the temple, 1 Kings vii. 21. called Jakin and Boaz, to note the firmness of that building dedicated to God; these are election or the standing counsel of God, and the covenant of grace: he will not revoke the covenant and blot the names of his elect out of the book of life.

Perseverance is ascertained.—It consists not with the majesty of God to call a person effectually to himself to day, to make him fit for his eternal love, to give him faith, and take away that faith to-morrow; his effectual call is the fruit of his eternal election, and that counsel hath no other foundation, but his constant and unchangeable will; a foundation that stands sure, and therefore called the foundation of God, and not of the creature; *the foundation of God stands sure, the Lord knows who are his.* It is not founded upon our own natural strength, it may be then subject to change, as all the products of nature are: the fallen angels had created grace in their innocency, but lost it by their fall. Were this the foundation of the creature, it might soon be shaken; since man after his revolt can ascribe nothing constant to himself, but his own inconstancy: but the foundation is not in the infirmity of nature, but the strength of grace, and of the grace of God who is immutable, who wants not virtue to be able, nor kindness to be willing,

willing, to preserve his own foundation. To what purpose doth our Saviour tell his disciples, their names were written in heaven, but to mark the infallible certainty of salvation, by an opposition to those things which perish and have their names written in the earth ; or upon the sand, where they may be defaced? And why should Christ order his disciples to rejoice, that their names were written in heaven, if God were changeable to blot them out again? or why should the apostle assure us, that though God had rejected the greatest part of the Jews, he had not therefore rejected his people elected according to his purpose and immutable counsel; because there are none of the elect of God but will come to salvation? For saith he, the election hath obtained it; that is, all those that are of the election have obtained it, and the others are hardened: where the seal of sanctification is stamped, it is a testimony of God's election, and that foundation shall stand sure. The foundation of the Lord stands sure having this seal, the Lord knows who are his; that is the foundation, the naming the name of Christ, or believing in Christ, and departing from iniquity, is the seal. As it is impossible when God calls those things that are not, but that they should spring up into being and appear before him: so it is impossible, but that the seed of God by his eternal purpose, should be brought to a spiritual life; and that calling cannot be retracted; for that gift and calling is without repentance. And when repentance is removed from God in regard of some works, the immutability of those works is declared: and the reason of that immutability is their pure dependance on the eternal favor and unchangeable grace of God, *purposed in himself*, and not upon the mutability of the creature. Hence their happiness is not as patents among men, *quam diu bene se gesserint*, so long as they behave themselves well, but they have a

promise, that they shall behave themselves so as never wholly to depart from God, Jer. xxxiii. 40. *I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* God will not turn from them, to do them good, and promiseth that they shall not turn from him for ever or forsake him: and the bottom of it is the everlasting covenant, and therefore believing and sealing, for security, are linked together. Eph. i. 13. And when God doth inwardly teach us his law, he puts in a will not to depart from it, Psa. cxix. 102. *I have not departed from thy judgments; what is the reason? For thou hast taught me.*

By this, eternal happiness is ensured. This is the inference made from the eternity and unchangeableness of God in the verse following the text, ver. 28. *The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee;* this is the sole conclusion drawn from those perfections of God solemnly asserted before. The children which the prophets and apostles have begotten to thee, shall be totally delivered from the reliques of their apostacy and the punishment due to them, and rendred partakers of immortality with thee, as sons to dwell in their father's house for ever. The spirit begins a spiritual life here, to fit an immutable life in glory hereafter; where believers shall be placed upon a throne that cannot be shaken, and possess a crown that shall not be taken off their heads for ever.

God's Omnipresence.

Jeremiah xxiii. 24.

CAN ANY HIDE HIMSELF IN SECRET PLACES, THAT I SHALL NOT SEE HIM, SAITH THE LORD? DO NOT I FILL HEAVEN AND EARTH, SAITH THE LORD?

BY filling heaven and earth is meant a filling it with his essence. No place can be imagined, that is deprived of the presence of God; and therefore when the scripture any where speaks of the presence of God, it joins heaven and earth together: he so fills them, that there is no place without him. We do not say a vessel is full, so long as there is any space to contain more. Not a part of heaven, nor a part of earth, but the whole heaven, the whole earth at one and the same time. If he were only in one part of heaven, or one part of earth; nay, if there were any part of heaven, or any part of earth void of him, he could not be said to fill them. I fill heaven and earth; not a part of me fills one place, and another part of me fills another; but I, God, fill heaven and earth; I am whole God, filling the heaven; and whole God, filling the earth. I fill heaven, and yet fill earth; I fill earth, and yet fill heaven, and fill heaven and earth at one and the same time. God fills his own works, a heathen philosopher saith.

Here then is a description of God's presence.

1. By power; *am I not a God afar off?* a God in the extension of his arm.

2. By knowledge; *shall I not see them?*

3. By essence; as an undeniable ground for inferring the two former; *I fill heaven and earth.*

God is essentially every where present in heaven and earth.—If God be, he must be somewhere; that which is no where, is nothing. Since God is, he is in the world; not in one part of it, for then he were circumscribed by it; if in the world, and only there, though it be a great space, he were also limited. Some therefore said, God was every where, and no where: no where, *i. e.* not bounded by any place, nor receiving from any place any thing for his preservation or sustainment. He is every where, because no creature, either body or spirit, can exclude the presence of his essence; for he is not only near, but in every thing; *in him we live, move, and have our being.* Not absent from any thing, but so present with them, that they live and move in him, and move more in God, than in the air or earth wherein they are; nearer to us than our flesh to our bones, than the air to our breath; he cannot be far from them that live, and have every motion in him. The apostle doth not say, by him, but in him, to shew the inwardness of his presence.

As eternity is the perfection whereby he hath neither beginning nor end, immutability is the perfection whereby he hath neither increase, nor diminution; so immensity or omnipresence is that whereby he hath neither bounds, nor limitation. As he is in all time, yet so as to be above time; so is he in all places, yet so as to be above limitation by any place. It was a good expression of a heathen to illustrate this, that God is a sphere or circle, whose center is every where, and circumference

ference no where. His meaning was, that the essence of God was indivisible, *i. e.* could not be divided. It cannot be said, here and there the lines of it terminate; it is like a line drawn out in infinite spaces, that no point can be conceived where its length and breadth ends. The sea is a vast mass of water; yet to that it is said, *hitherto shalt thou go, and no further.* But it cannot be said of God's essence, hitherto it reaches, and no further; here it is, and there it is not. It is plain, that God is thus immense, because he is infinite; we have reason and scripture to assent to it, though we cannot conceive it. We know that God is eternal, though eternity is too great to be measured by the short line of a created understanding. We cannot conceive the vastness and glory of the heavens, much less that which is so great, as to fill heaven and earth; yea, *not to be contained in the heaven of heavens.*

Things are said to be present, or in a place.

1. Circumscriptive, as circumscribed.—This belongs to things that have quantity, as bodies that are encompassed by that place wherein they are; and a body fills but one particular space wherein it is, and the space is commensurate to every part of it, and every member hath a distinct place. The hand is not in the same particular space that the foot or head is.

2. Definitive, which belongs to angels and spirits, which are said to be in a point, yet so as that they cannot be said to be in another at the same time.

3. Repletive, filling all places; this belongs only to God: as he is not measured by time, so he is not limited by place. A body or spirit, because finite, fills but one space; God, because infinite, fills all, yet so as not to be contained in them, as wine and water is in a vessel. He is from the height of the heavens to the bottom of the deeps,

in every point of the world, and in the whole circle of it, yet not limited by it, but beyond it. Now this hath been acknowledged by the wisest in the world.

Some indeed had other notions of God. The more ignorant sort of the Jews confined him to the temple: and God intimates, that they had such a thought when he asserts his presence in heaven and earth, in opposition to the temple they built as his house, and the place of his rest. And the idolaters among them, thought their gods might be at a distance from them, which Elias intimates in the scoff he puts upon them, *cry aloud, for he is a God*, meaning Baal, *either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey*; and they follow his advice, and cry louder; whereby it is evident, they looked not on it as a mock, but as a truth. And the Syrians called the God of Israel, the God of the hills, as though his presence were fixed there, and not in the vallies; and their own gods in the vallies, and not in the mountains: they fancied every God to have a particular dominion, and presence in one place, and not in another; and bounded the territories of their gods, as they did those of their princes. And some thought him tied to, and shut up in their temples and groves wherein they worshipped him. Some of them thought God to be confined to heaven, and therefore sacrificed upon the highest mountains, that the steam might ascend nearer heaven, and their praises be heard better in those places which were nearest to the habitation of God. But the wiser Jews acknowledged it; and therefore called God PLACE, whereby they denote his immensity; he was not contained in any place, every part of the world subsists by him: he was a place to himself, greater than any thing made by him. And the wiser heathens acknowledged it also.

One calls God a mind passing through the universal nature of things; another, that he was an infinite

nile and immense air; another, that it is as natural to think God is every where, as to think that God is: hence they called God the soul of the world; that as the soul is in every part of the body, to quicken it, so is God in every part of the world, to support it.

And there are some resemblances of this in the world, though no creature can fully resemble God in any one perfection; for then it would not be a creature, but God. But air and light are some weak resemblances of it: air is in all the spaces of the world, in the pores of all bodies, in the bowels of the earth, and extends itself from the lowest earth, to the highest regions; and the heavens themselves are probably nothing else but a refined kind of air; and light diffuseth itself through the whole air, and every part of it is truly light, as every part of the air is truly air; and though they seem to be mingled together, yet they are distinct things, and not of the same essence; so is the essence of God in the whole world, not by diffusion, as air or light; not mixed with any creature, but remaining distinct from the essence of any created being. Now when this hath been owned by men instructed only in the school of nature, it is a greater shame to any acquainted with the scripture to deny it. For the understanding of this, there shall be some propositions premised in general.

1. This is negatively to be understood.—Our knowledge of God is most by withdrawing from him, or denying to him in our conceptions, any weaknesses or imperfections in the creature. As the infiniteness of God, is a denial of limitation of being, so immensity or omnipresence is a denial of limitation of place: and when we say, God is *totus* in every place, we must understand it thus, that he is not every where by parts, as bodies are, as air and light are; he is every where, *i. e.* his nature

nature hath no bounds ; he is not tied to any place, as the creature is, who when he is present in one place, is absent from another. As no place can be without God, so no place can compass and contain him.

2. There is an influential omnipresence of God universal with all creatures. He is present with all things by his authority, because all things are subject to him : by his power, because all things are sustained by him : by his knowledge, because all things are naked before him. He is present in the world, as a king in all parts of his kingdom regally present : providentially present with all, since his care extends to the meanest of his creatures. His power reacheth all, and his knowledge pierceth all.

As every thing in the world was created by God, so every thing in the world is preserved by God ; and since preservation is not wholly distinct from creation, it is necessary God should be present with every thing while he preserves it, as well as present with it when he created it. *Thou preservest man and beast. He upholds all things by the word of his power.* There is a virtue sustaining every creature, that it may not fall back into that nothing from whence it was elevated by the power of God. All those natural virtues we call the principles of operation, are fountains springing from his goodness and power ; all things are acted and managed by him, as well as preserved by him ; and in this sense, God is present with all creatures ; for whatsoever acts another, is present with that which it acts, by sending forth some virtue and influence, whereby it acts. If free agents do not only live, but *move in him, and by him*, much more are the motions of other natural agents, by a virtue communicated to them, and upheld in them in the time of their acting : this virtual presence of God, is evident to our sense, a presence we feel ; his essential presence
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is evident in our reason: this influential presence may be compared to that of the sun, which though at so great a distance from the earth, is present in the air and earth by its light, and within the earth by its influence, in concocting those metals which are in the bowels of it, without being substantially either of them. God is thus so intimate with every creature, that there is not the least particle of any creature, but the marks of his power and goodness are seen in it, and his goodness doth attend them and is more swift in his effluxes, than the breakings out of light from the sun, which yet are more swift than can be declared; but to say he is in the world only by his virtue, is to acknowledge only the effects of his power and wisdom in the world, that his eye sees all, his arm supports all, his goodness nourisheth all, but himself and his essence at a distance from them: and so the soul of man, according to its measure, would have in some kind a more excellent manner of presence in the body, than God according to the infiniteness of his being with his creatures; for that doth not only communicate life to the body, but is actually present with it, and spreads its whole essence through the body and every member of it: all grant, that God is efficaciously in every creek of the world; but some say, he is only substantially in heaven.

Limited to such subjects that are capacitated for this or that kind of presence.—Yet it is an omnipresence, because it is a presence in all the subjects capacitated for it; thus there is a special providential presence of God with some, in assisting them when he sets them on work as his instruments for some special service in the world: as with Cyrus, *I will go before thee*, and with Nebuchadnezzar, and Alexander, whom he protected and directed to execute his counsels in the world; such a presence Judas, and others that shall not enjoy his glorious presence, had in the working of miracles in the world:

world: besides as there is an effective presence of God with all creatures, because he produced them, and preserves them; so there is an objective presence of God with rational creatures, because he offers himself to them, to be known and loved by them: he is near to wicked men in the offers of his grace, *call ye upon him while he is near*; besides, there is a gracious presence of God with his people in whom he dwells, and makes his abode, as in a temple consecrated to him by the graces of the Spirit. *We will come, i. e.* the Father and the Son, and make our abode with him. He is present with all by the presence of his divinity, but only in his saints by a presence of a gracious efficacy; he walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and hath dignified the congregation of his people with the title of Jehovah Shammah, *The Lord is there*: In Salem *is his tabernacle and his dwelling place in Sion*. As he filled the tabernacle, so he doth the church with the signs of his presence; this is not the presence wherewith he fills heaven and earth. His Spirit is not bestowed upon all, to reside in their hearts, enlighten their minds, and bedew them with refreshing comforts: when the apostle speaks of God's being *above all*, and *through all*; above all in his majesty, through all in his providence; he doth not appropriate that, as he doth what follows, and *in you all*; in you all by a special grace; as God was specially present with Christ by the grace of union, so he is specially present with his people by the grace of regeneration. So there are several manifestations of his presence: he hath a presence of glory in heaven, whereby he comforts the saints; a presence of wrath in hell, whereby he torments the damned; in heaven, he is a God spreading his beams of light; in hell, a God distributing his strokes of justice; by the one he fills
heaven

heaven, by the other he fills hell; by his providence and essence he fills both heaven and earth.

There is an essential presence of God in the world.—He is not only every where, by his power upholding the creatures, by his wisdom understanding them, but by his essence containing them. That any thing is essentially present any where, it hath from God; God is therefore much more present every where, for he cannot give that which he hath not.

He is essentially present in all places.—It is as reasonable to think the essence of God to be every where, as to be always; immensity is as rational as eternity; that indivisible essence which reaches through all times, may as well reach through all places: it is more excellent to be always, than to be every where; for to be always in duration is intrinsic; to be every where is extrinsic; if the greater belongs to God, why not the less? as all times are a moment to his eternity, so all places are as a point to his essence; as he is larger than all time, so he is vaster than all place: the nations of the world are to him *as the dust of the ballance, or drop of a bucket. The nations are accounted as the small dust*; the essence of God may well be thought to be present every where with that which is no more than a grain of dust to him, and in all those isles, which if put together, are a very little thing in his hand: therefore saith a learned Jew, if a man were set in the highest heavens, he would not be nearer to the essence of God than if he were in the center of the earth. Why may not the presence of God in the world be as noble as that of the soul in the body, which is generally granted to be essentially in every part of the body of man, which is but a little world, and animates every member by its actual presence, though it exerts not the same operation in every part? the world is less to the creator, than the
body

body to the soul; and needs more the presence of God, than the body needs the presence of the soul. That glorious body of the sun visits every part of the habitable earth in twenty-four hours by its beams; which reach the troughs of the lowest valleys, as well as the pinacles of the highest mountains; must we not acknowledge in the creator of this an infinite greater proportion of presence? is it not as easy with the essence of God to overspread the whole body of heaven and earth, as it is for the sun to pierce and diffuse itself through the whole air between it and the earth, and send up its light also as far to the regions above? do we not see something like in sounds and voices? Is not the same sound of a trumpet, or any other musical instrument, at the first breaking out of a blast, in several places within such a compass, at the same time? Doth not every ear that hears it, receive alike the whole sound of it? And fragrant odors scented in several places at the same time, in the same manner; and the organ proper for smelling takes in the same in every person within the compass of it: how far is the noise of thunder heard alike to every ear, in places something distant from one another? and do we daily find such a manner of presence in those things of so low a concern, and not imagine a kind of presence of God greater than all those? Is the sound of thunder, the voice of God, as it is called, every where in such a compass, and shall not the essence of an infinite God be much more every where? those that would confine the essence of God only to heaven, and exclude it from the earth, run into great inconveniencies. It may be demanded, whether he be in one part of the heavens, or in the whole vast body of them? if in one part of them, his essence is bounded; if he moves from that part, he is mutable, for he changes a place wherein he was, for another wherein he was not. If he
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be always fixed in one part of the heavens such a notion would render him little better than a living statue: if he be in the whole heaven, why cannot his essence possess a greater space than the whole heavens which are so vast? how comes he to be confined within the compass of that, since the whole heaven compasseth the earth? If he be in the whole heaven, he is in places farther distant one from another, than any part of the earth can be from the heavens; since the earth is like a center in the midst of a circle, it must be nearer to every part of the circle, than some parts of the circle can be to one another: if therefore his essence possesses the whole heavens, no reason can be rendered why he doth not also possess the earth, since also the earth is but a little point in comparison of the vastness of the heavens; if therefore he be in every part of the heavens, why not in every part of the earth?

The scripture is plain, *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up to heaven, thou art there; If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall uphold me.* If he be in heaven, earth, hell, and sea, he fills all places with his presence; his presence is here asserted in places the most distant from one another; all the places then between heaven and earth are possessed by his presence: It is not meant of his knowledge, for that the psalmist had spoken of before, *Thou understandest my thoughts afar off, thou art acquainted with all my ways.* Besides thou art there, not thy wisdom or knowledge; but thou, in thy essence, not only thy virtue. For having before spoken of his omniscience, he proves that such knowledge could not be in God, unless he were present in his essence in all places, so as to be

be excluded from none: he fills the depths of hell, the extension of the earth, and the heights of the heavens. When the scripture mentions the power of God only, it expresseth it by hand or arm; but when it mentions the Spirit of God, and doth not intend the third person in the trinity, it signifies the nature and essence of God: and so here, when he saith, *whither shall I go from thy spirit?* he adds exegetically, *Whither shall I flee from thy presence, or face?* and the face of God in scripture signifies the essence of God; *Thou canst not see my face, and my face shall not be seen*; the effects of his power, wisdom, providence, are seen, which are his back parts, but not his face; the effects of his power and wisdom are seen in the world, but his essence is invisible; and this the psalmist elegantly expresseth. Had I wings endued with as much quickness as the first dawnings of the morning light, or the first darts of any sun beam that spreads itself through the hemisphere, and passes many miles in as short a space as I can think a thought, I should find thy presence in all places before me, and could not fly out of the infinite compass of thy essence.

He is essentially present with all creatures.—If he be in all places, it follows that he is with all creatures in those places; as he is in heaven, so he is with all angels; as he is in hell, so is he with all devils; as he is in earth and sea, he is with all creatures inhabiting those elements: as his essential presence was the ground of the first being of things by creation, so it is the ground of the continued being of things by conservation. As his essential presence was the original, so it is the support of the existence of all the creatures. What are all those magnificent expressions of his creative virtue, but testimonies of his essential presence at the laying the foundation of the world? *when he measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, meted out*

out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. He sets forth the power and majesty of God in the creation and preservation of things, and every expression testifies his presence with them: the waters that were upon the face of the earth at first, were no more than a drop in the palm of a man's hand, which in every part is touched by his hand. And thus he is equally present with the blackest devils, as well as the brightest angels; with the lowest dust, as well as with the most sparkling sun. He is equally present with the damned and the blessed, as he is an infinite being, but not in regard of his goodness and grace. He is equally present with the good and the bad, with the scoffing Athenians, as well as the believing apostles, in regard of his essence, but not in regard of the breathing of his divine virtues upon them to make them like himself: *He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being*: The apostle includes all; he tells them they should seek the Lord; the Lord that they were to seek, is God essentially considered: we are indeed to seek the perfections of God, that glitter in his works, but to the end that they should direct us to the seeking of God himself in his own nature and essence: and therefore what follows, in him we live, is to be understood not of his power and goodness, perfections of his nature, distinguished according to our manner of conception, from his essence; but of the essential presence of God with his creatures. If he had meant it of his efficacy in preserving us, it had not been any proof of his nearness to us. Who would go about to prove the body or substance of the sun to be near us because it doth warm and enlighten us, when our sense evidenceth the distance of it? we live in the beams of the sun, but we cannot be said to live in the sun,

which is so far distant from us. The expression seems to be more emphatical than to intend any less than his essential presence: but we live in him not only as the efficient cause of our life, but as the foundation sustaining our lives and motions, as if he were like air, diffused round about us. And we move in him, as Austin saith, as a sponge in the sea, not containing him, but being contained by him: he compasseth all, is encompassed by none; he fills all, is comprehended by none. The creator contains the world, the world contains not the creator: as the hollow of the hand contains the water, the water in the hollow of the hand contains not the hand; and therefore some have chose to say rather, that the world is in God, it lives and moves in him, than that God is in the world: if all things thus live and move in him, then he is present with every thing that hath life, and motion: and as long as the devils and damned have life, and motion, and being, so long is he with them; for whatsoever lives and moves, lives and moves in him.

But now this essential presence is without any mixture.—I fill heaven and earth; not, I am mixed with heaven and earth; his essence is not mixed with the creatures; it remains entire in itself. The sponge retains the nature of a sponge, though encompassed by the sea, and moving in it; and the sea still retains its own nature. God is most simple; his essence therefore is not mixed with any thing. The light of the sun is present with the air, but not mixed with it, it remains light, and the air remains air; the light of the sun is diffused through all the hemisphere, it pierceth all transparent bodies, it seems to mix itself with all things yet remains unmixed and undivided: the light remains light, and the air remains air; the air is not light though it be enlightened. Or take this similitude; when many candles are lighted up in a room, the light is altogether, yet not mixed with one another; every candle

candle hath a particular light belonging to it, which may be separated in a moment, by removing one candle from another; but if they were mixed, they could not be separated, at least, so easily. God is not formally one with the world, or with any creature in the world by his presence in it: nor can any creature in the world, no, not the soul of man, or an angel, come to be essentially one with God, though God be essentially present with it.

The essential presence is without any division of himself.—*I fill heaven and earth*, not part in heaven and part in earth; I fill one as well as the other: one part of his essence is not in one place, and another part of his essence in another place, he would then be changeable; for that part of his essence which were now in this place, he might alter it to another, and place that part of his essence which were in another place to this; but he is undivided every where. As his eternity is one indivisible point, though in our conception we divide it into past, present, and to come. So the whole world is as a point to him, in regard of place as before was said; it is as a small dust, and grain of dust: it is impossible that one part of his essence can be separated from another, for he is not a body, to have one part separable from another. The light of the sun cannot be cut into parts, it cannot be shut into any place and kept there, it is entire in every place; shall not God who gives the light that power, be much more present himself? whatsoever hath parts is finite, but God is infinite, therefore hath no parts of his essence. Besides, if there were such a division of his being, he would not be the most simple and uncompounded being, but would be made up of various parts; he would not be a spirit, for parts are evidences of composition; and it could not be said that God is here or there, but only a part of God here, and a part of God there.

But he fills heaven and earth, he is as much a God in the earth beneath as in heaven above; entirely in all places, not by scraps and fragments of his essence.

This essential presence is not by multiplication.—For that which is infinite cannot multiply itself, or make itself more or greater than it was.

This essential presence is not by extension or diffusion.—As a piece of gold may be beaten out to cover a large compass of ground; no, if God should create millions of worlds he would be in them all, not by stretching out his being, but by the infiniteness of his being; not by a new growth of his being, but by the same essence he had from eternity: upon the same reasons mentioned before, his simplicity and indivisibility.

But totally.—There is no space, not the least, wherein God is not wholly according to his essence, and wherein his whole substance doth not exist; not a part of heaven can be designed wherein the creator is not wholly; as he is in one part of heaven, he is in every part of heaven. Some kind of resemblance we may have from the water of the sea, which fills the great space of the world, and is diffused through all; yet the essence of water is in every drop of water in the sea, as much as the whole; and the same quality of water, though it comes short in quantity; and why shall we not allow God a nobler way of presence without diffusion, as is in that? or take this resemblance, since God likens himself to light in the scripture, *he covereth himself with light*; a chrystal globe hung up in the air hath light all about it, all within it, every part is pierced by it; wherever you see the chrystal you see the light; the light in one part of the chrystal cannot be distinguished from the light in the other part; and the whole essence of light is in every part; and shall not God be as much present with his creatures, as one creature can be with another?

another? God is totally every where by his own simple substance.

God is present beyond the world.—He is within and above all places, though places should be infinite in number; as he was before and beyond all time, so he is above and beyond all place; being from eternity before any real time, he must also be without as well as within any real space; if God were only confined to the world, he would be no more infinite in his essence than the world is in quantity: as a moment cannot be conceived from eternity, wherein God was not in being, so a space cannot be conceived in the mind of man, wherein God is not present; he is not contained in the world nor in the heavens. *But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee.* Solomon wonders that God should appoint a temple to be erected to him upon the earth, when he is not contained in the vast circuit of the heavens; his essence is not straitened in the limits of any created work, he is not contained in the heavens, *i. e.* in the manner that he is there; but he is there in his essence, and therefore cannot be contained there in his essence. If it should be meant only of his power and providence, it would conclude also for his essence; if his power and providence were infinite, his essence must be so too; for the infiniteness of his essence is the ground of the infiniteness of his power: it can never enter into any thought, that a finite essence can have an infinite power, and an infinite power can be without an infinite essence: it cannot be meant of his providence, as if Solomon should say, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thy providence; for naming the heaven of heavens, that which encircles and bounds the other parts of the world, he could not suppose a providence to be exercised where there was no object to exercise it about; as no creature is mentioned to be beyond the uttermost

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heaven, which he calls here the heaven of heavens. Besides, to understand it of his providence, doth not consist with Solomon's admiration; he wonders that God, who hath so immense an essence, should dwell in a temple made with hands; he could not so much wonder at his providence in those things that immediately concern his worship. Solomon plainly asserts this of God, that he was so far from being bounded within the rich wall of the temple, which with so much cost he had framed for the glory of his name, that the richer palace of the heaven of heavens could not contain him; it is true, it could not contain his power and wisdom, because his wisdom could contrive other kind of worlds, and his power erect them: but doth the meaning of this wise king reach no farther than this? will the power and wisdom of God reside on the earth? He was too wise to ask such a question, since every object that his eyes met in the world resolved him, that the wisdom and power of God dwelt upon the earth, and glittered in every thing he had created; and reason would assure him, that the power that had framed the world, was able to frame many more: but Solomon considering the immensity of God's essence, wonders that God should order a house to be built for him, as if he wanted roofs and coverings, and habitation, as bodily creatures do. Will God indeed dwell in a temple, who hath an essence so immense as cannot be contained in the heaven of heavens? it is not the heaven of heavens that can contain him, his substance. Here he asserts the immensity of his essence, and his presence not only in the heaven, but beyond the heavens; he that is not contained in the heavens, as a man is in a chamber, is without, and above, and beyond the heavens; it is not said they do not contain him, but it is impossible they should contain him; they cannot contain him. It is impossible then but that he should be above them; he that is without the compass

compass of the world, is not bounded by the limits of the world; as his power is not limited by the things he hath made, but can create innumerable worlds, so can his essence be in innumerable spaces; for as he hath power enough to make more worlds, so he hath essence enough to fill them, and therefore cannot be confined to what he hath already created; innumerable worlds cannot be a sufficient place to contain God, he can only be a sufficient place to himself; he that was before the world and place, and all things, was to himself a world, a place, and every thing: he is really out of the world in himself, as he was in himself before the creation of the world: as because God was before the foundation of the world, we conclude his eternity; so because he is without the bounds of the world, we conclude his immensity, and from thence his omnipresence. The world cannot be said to contain him, since it was created by him; it cannot contain him now, who was contained by nothing before the world was: as there was no place to contain him before the world was, there can be no place to contain him since the world was.

God might create more worlds circular and round as this, and those could not be so contiguous, but some spaces would be left between; as take three round balls, lay them as close as you can to one another, there will be some spaces between; none would say but God would be in those spaces, as well as in the world he had created, though there were nothing real and positive in those spaces; why should we then exclude God from those imaginary spaces without the world? God might also create many worlds, and separate them by distances, that they might not touch one another, but be at a great distance from one another; and would not God fill them as well as he doth this? if so, he must also fill the spaces between them: for if he were in all those worlds, and not in the spaces between those worlds,

his essence would be divided: there would be gaps in it, his essence would be cut into parts, and the distance between every part of his essence would be as great as the space between each world: the essence of God may be conceived then well enough to be in all those infinite spaces where he can erect new worlds.

I shall give one place more to prove both these propositions, viz. that God is essentially in every part of the world, and essentially above our's without the world.

The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. He is essentially in every part of the world; he is in heaven and earth at the same time; at the same time, as a man is upon his throne and his footstool. God describes himself in a human shape, accommodated to our capacity; as if he had his head in heaven and his feet on earth; doth not his essence then fill all intermediate spaces between heaven and earth? as when the head of a man is in the upper part of a room, and his feet upon the floor, his body fills up the space between the head and his feet; this is meant of the essence of God; it is a similitude drawn from kings sitting upon the throne, and not their power and authority, but the feet of their persons are supported by the footstool; so here it is not meant only of the perfections of God, but the essence of God. Besides, God seems to tax them with an erroneous conceit they had, as though his essence were in the temple, and not in any part of the world; therefore God makes an opposition between heaven and earth, and the temple; *where is the house that you built unto me? and where is the place of my rest?* Had he understood it only of his providence, it had not been any thing against their mistake; for they granted his providence to be not only in the temple, but in all parts of the world: *Where is the house that you built*
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built to me? to me, not to my power or providence, but think to include me within those walls.

Again, it shews God to be above the heavens, if the heavens be his throne; he sits upon them, and is above them as kings are above the thrones on which they sit; so it cannot be meant of his providence, because no creature being without the sphere of the heavens, there is nothing of the power and the providence of God visible there; for there is nothing for him to employ his providence about. For providence supposeth a creature in actual being; it must be therefore meant of his essence, which is above the world, and in the world.

And the like proof you may see, Job xi. 7. 8. *It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.* Where he intends the unsearchableness of God's wisdom, but proves it by the infiniteness of his essence, *he is the height of the heavens*, he is the top of all the heavens; so that when you have begun at the lowest part, and traced him through all the creatures, you will find his essence filling all the creatures to be at the top of the world, and infinitely beyond it.

This is the property of God, incommunicable to any creature.—As no creature can be eternal and immutable, so no creature can be immense, because it cannot be infinite; nothing can be of an infinite nature, and therefore nothing of an immense presence but God: it cannot be communicated to the human nature of Christ, though in union with the divine; some indeed argue, that Christ, in regard of his human nature, is every where, because he sits at the right hand of God, and the right hand of God is every where: his sitting at the right hand of God signifies his exaltation, and cannot with any reason be extended to such a kind of arguing;

arguing; the hearts of kings are in the hand of God; are the heart of kings every where, because God's hand is every where? The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, is the soul therefore of every righteous man every where in the world? The right hand of God is from eternity, is the humanity of Christ therefore from eternity, because it sits at the right hand of God? The right hand of God made the world, did the humanity of Christ therefore make heaven and earth? the humanity of Christ must then be confounded with his divinity; be the same with it, not united to it. All creatures are distinct from their creator, and cannot inherit the properties essential to his nature; as eternity, immensity, immutability, omnipresence, omniscience; no angel, no soul, no creature can be in all places at once; before they can be so, they must be immense, and so must cease to be creatures and commence God; this is impossible.

Second, To prove God's essential presence.

1. Because he is infinite.—As he is infinite, he is every where; as he is simple, his whole essence is every where; for, in regard of his infiniteness, he hath no bounds; in regard of his simplicity, he hath no parts: and therefore those that deny God's omnipresence, though they pretend to own him infinite, must really conceive him finite.

God is infinite in his perfections.—None can set bounds to terminate the greatness and excellency of God. *His greatness is unsearchable*, there is no end, no limitation; what hath no end is infinite; his power is infinite, *which doth great things and unsearchable*, no end of those things he is able to do; his wisdom infinite. He understands all things past, present, and to come; what is already made, what is possible to be made; his duration infinite. *The number of his years cannot be searched out*. To make a finite thing of nothing, is an argument of an infinite virtue; infinite power can only extract something

something out of the barren womb of nothing, but all things were drawn forth by the word of God, the heavens and all the host of them; the sun, moon, stars, the rich embellishments of the world appeared in being, *at the breath of his mouth*, the Author therefore must be infinite: and since nothing is the cause of God, or of his perfections in him; since he derives not his being, or the least spark of his glorious nature from any thing without him; he cannot be limited in any part of his nature, by any thing without him; and indeed the infiniteness of his power, and his other perfections, is asserted by the prophet, when he tells us that *the nations are as a drop of a bucket, or the dust of the balance, and less than nothing and vanity*, they are all so in regard of his power, wisdom, &c. Conceive what a little thing a grain of dust or sand is to all the dust that may be made by the rubbish of a house; what a little thing the heap of the rubbish of a house is to the vast heap of the rubbish of a whole city, such a one as London; how little that also would be to the dust of a whole empire; how inconsiderable that also to the dust of one quarter of the world, Europe or Asia; how much less that still to the dust of the whole world; the whole world is composed of an inconceivable number of atoms, and the sea of an inconceivable number of drops; now what a little grain of dust is in comparison of the dust of the whole world; a drop of water from the sea, to all the drops remaining in the sea, that is, the whole world to God. Conceive it still less, a mere nothing, yet is it all less than this, in comparison of God; there can be nothing more magnificently expressive of the infiniteness of God to a human conception, than this expression of God himself in the prophet.

In the perfection of a creature, something still may be thought greater to be added to it; but God containing all perfections in himself formally, if they be mere perfections; and eminently, if they be

be but perfections in the creature, mixed with imperfection; nothing can be thought greater, and therefore every one of them is infinite.

If his perfections be infinite, his essence must be so.—How God can have infinite perfections, and a finite essence, is inconceivable by a human or angelical understanding; an infinite power, an infinite wisdom, an infinite duration, must needs speak an infinite essence; since the infiniteness of his attributes is grounded upon the infiniteness of his essence: to own infinite perfections in a finite subject, is contradictory. The manner of acting by his power, and knowing by his wisdom, cannot exceed the manner of being by his essence. His perfections flow from his essence, and the principle must be of the same rank with what flows from it; and if we conceive his essence to be the cause of his perfections, it is utterly impossible that an infinite effect should arise from a finite cause; but indeed his perfections are his essence, for though we conceive the essence of God as the subject, and the attributes of God as faculties and qualities in that subject, according to our weak model, who cannot conceive of an infinite God without some manner of likeness to ourselves; who find understanding and will, and power in us distinct from our substance; yet truly and really there is no distinction between his essence and attributes; one is inseparable from the other; his power and wisdom are his essence; and therefore to maintain God infinite in the one, and finite in the other, is to make a monstrous God, and have an unreasonable notion of the deity; for there would be the greatest disproportion in his nature, since there is no greater disproportion can possibly be between one thing and another, than there is between finite and infinite: God must not only then be compounded, but have parts of the greatest distance from one another in nature; but God being the most simple being,
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without the least composition, both must be equally infinite: if then his essence be not infinite, his power and wisdom cannot be infinite, which is both against scripture and reason.

Again, how should his essence be finite, and his perfections be infinite; since nothing out of himself gave them either the one or the other?

Again, either the essence can be infinite, or it cannot; if it cannot, there must be some cause of that impossibility; that can be nothing without him; because nothing without him can be as powerful as himself, much less too powerful for him; nothing within him can be an enemy to his highest perfection; since he is necessarily what he is, he must necessarily be the most perfect being, and therefore necessarily infinite; since to be something infinitely, is a greater perfection than to be something finitely; if he can be infinite, he is infinite; otherwise he could be greater than he is, and so more blessed and more perfect than he is, which is impossible; for being the most perfect being, to whom nothing can be added, he must needs be infinite.

If therefore God have an infinite essence, he hath an infinite presence.—An infinite essence cannot be contained in a finite place; as those things which are finite have a bounded space, wherein they are, so that which is infinite hath an unbounded space; for as finiteness speaks limitedness; so infiniteness speaks unboundedness; and if we grant to God an infinite duration, there is no difficulty in acknowledging an infinite presence: indeed the infiniteness of God is a property belonging to him in regard of time and place; he is bounded by no place, and limited to no time.

Again, infinite essence may as well be every where, as infinite power reach every thing; it may as well be present with every being, as infinite power in its working may be present with nothing to bring it into being. Where God works by his
power

power he is present in his essence; because his power and his essence cannot be separated; and therefore his power, wisdom, goodness, cannot be any where, where is essence is not: his essence cannot be severed from his power, nor his power from his essence; for the power of God is nothing but God acting, and the wisdom of God nothing, but God knowing. As the power of God is always, so is his essence; as the power of God is every where, so is his essence; whatsoever God is, he is always, and every where: to confine him to a place, is to measure his essence; as to confine his actions, is to limit his power; his essence being no less infinite than his power and his wisdom, can be no more bounded than his power and wisdom; but they are not separable from his essence, yea they are his essence; if God did not fill the whole world, he would be determined to some place, and excluded from others; and so his substance would have bounds and limits, and then something might be conceived greater than God; for we may conceive that a creature may be made by God of so vast a greatness as to fill the whole world; for the power of God is able to make a body that should take up the whole space between heaven and earth, and reach to every corner of it; but nothing can be conceived by any creature greater than God; he exceeds all things, and is exceeded by none; God cannot therefore be included in heaven, nor included in the earth; cannot be contained in either of them; for if we should imagine them vaster than they are, yet still they would be finite; and if his essence were contained in them, it could be no more infinite than the world which contains it; as water is not of a larger compass than the vessel which contains it. If the essence of God were limited either in the heavens or earth, it must needs be finite, as the heaven and earth are; but there is no proportion between finite and infinite; God therefore cannot

not be contained in them: if there were an infinite body, that must be every where; certainly then an infinite spirit must be every where; unless we will account him finite, we can render no reason why he should not be in one creature as well as in another; if he be in heaven, which is his creature, why can he not be in the earth, which is as well his creature as the heaven.

2. Because of the continual operation of God in the world.—This was one reason made the heathen believe that there was an infinite spirit in the vast body of the world, acting in every thing, and producing those admirable motions which we see every where in nature: that cause which acts in the most perfect manner, is also in the most perfect manner present with its effects.

God preserves all, and therefore is in all; the apostle thought it a good induction; *He is not far from us: for in him we live.* For being as much as because, shews that from his operation he concluded his real presence with all: it is not his virtue is not far from every one of us; but He, his substance, himself; for none that acknowledge a God, will deny the absence of the virtue of God from any part of the world. He works in every thing, every thing lives and works in him; therefore he is present with all: or rather if things live, they are in God, who gives them life. If things live, God is in them, and gives them life: if things move, God is in them, and gives them motion: if things have any being, God is in them, and gives them being; if God withdraws himself, they presently lose their being; and therefore some have compared the creature to the impression of a seal upon the water, that cannot be preserved but by the presence of the seal. As his presence was actual with what he created, so his presence is actual with what he preserves, since creation and preservation do so little differ; if God creates things
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by his essential presence, by the same he supports them; if his substance cannot be disjoined from his preserving power, his power and wisdom cannot be separated from his essence; where there are the marks of the one, there is the presence of the other; for it is by his essence that he is powerful and wise; no man can distinguish the one from the other in a simple being: God doth not preserve and act things by a virtue diffused from him. It may be demanded whether that virtue be distinct from God? if it be not, it is then the essence of God; if it be distinct, it is a creature, and then it may be asked how that virtue which preserves other things, is preserved itself? it must be ultimately resolved into the essence of God, or else there must be a running *in infinitum*: or else, is that virtue of God a substance or not? is it endued with understanding or not? If it hath understanding, how doth it differ from God? If it wants understanding, can any imagine that the support of the world, the guidance of all creatures, the wonders of nature can be wrought, preserved, managed by a virtue that hath nothing of understanding in it? if it be not a substance, it can much less be able to produce such excellent operations, as the preserving all the kinds of things in the world, and ordering them to perform such excellent ends; this virtue is therefore God himself, the infinite power and wisdom of God; and therefore wheresoever the effects of these are seen in the world, God is essentially present; some creatures indeed act at a distance by a virtue diffused; but such a manner of acting comes from a limitedness of nature, that such a nature cannot be every where present, and extend its substance to all parts; to act by a virtue, speaks the subject finite, and it is a part of indigence: kings act in their kingdoms by ministers and messengers, because they cannot act otherwise; but God being infinitely perfect, *works all things in all* immediately; illumination, sanctification,

sanctification, grace, &c. are the immediate works of God in the heart, and immediate agents are present with what they do; it is an argument of the greater perfection of a being, to know things immediately, which are done in several places, than to know them at the second hand by instruments: it is no less a perfection to be every where, rather than to be tied to one place of action; and to act in other places by instruments, for want of a power to act immediately itself: God indeed acts by means and second causes in his providential dispensations in the world, but this is not out of any defect of power to work all immediately himself; but he thereby accommodates his way of acting to the nature of the creature, and the order of things which he hath settled in the world; and when he works by means, he acts with those means, in those means, sustains their faculties and virtues in them, concurs with them by his power; so that God's acting by means, doth rather strengthen his essential presence than weaken it; since there is a necessary dependance of the creatures upon the creator in their being and acting; and what they are, they are by the power of God; what they act, they act in the power of God, concurring with them; they have their motion in him as well as their being; and where the power of God is, his essence is, because they are inseparable; and so this omnipresence ariseth from the simplicity of the nature of God; the more vast any thing is, the less confined. All that will acknowledge God so great, as to be able to work all things by his will, without an essential presence, cannot imagine him upon the same reason, so little as to be contained in, and bounded by any place.

Thirdly, Because of his supreme perfection.

No perfection is wanting to God; but an unbounded essence is a perfection; a limited one is an imperfection. Though it be a perfection in a man

to be wise, yet it is an imperfection that his wisdom cannot rule all the things that concern him; though it be a perfection to be present in a place where his affairs lie, yet it is his imperfection that he cannot be present every where, in the midst of all his concerns; if any man could be so, it would be universally owned as a prime perfection in him above others; is that which would be a perfection in man, to be denied to God? as that which hath life, is more perfect than that which hath not life; and that which hath sense is more perfect than that which hath only life, as the plants have; and what hath reason, is more perfect than that which hath only life and sense, as the beasts have; so what is every where is more perfect than that which is bounded in some narrow confines; if a power of motion be more excellent than to be bedrid; and swiftness in a creature, be a more excellent endowment than to be slow and snail like; then to be every where without motion, is inconceivably a greater excellency than to be every where successively by motion. God sets forth his readiness to help his people and punish his enemies; or his omnipresence, by swiftness, or *flying upon the wings of the wind*: the wind is in every part of the air, where it blows; it cannot be said that it is in this or that point of the air where you feel it, so as to exclude it from another part of the air where you are not; it seems to possess all at once.

If the divine essence had any bounds of place, it would be imperfect, as well as if it had bounds of time; where any thing hath limitation, it hath some defect in being; and therefore if God were confined and concluded, he would be as good as nothing in regard of infiniteness: whence should this restraint arise? there is no power above him to restrain him to a certain space; if so, then he would not be God, but that power which restrained him would be God: not from his own nature, for
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the being every where, implies no contradiction to his nature; if his own nature determined him to a certain place, then if he removed from that place, he would act against his nature; to conceive any such thing of God, is highly absurd. It cannot be thought God should voluntarily impose any such restraint or confinement upon himself; this would be to deny himself a perfection he might have; if God have not this perfection, it is either because it is inconsistent with his nature; or, because he cannot have it; or, because he will not. The former cannot be; for if he hath imprest upon air and light a resemblance of his excellency, to diffuse themselves and fill so vast a space; is such an excellency inconsistent with the creator more than the creature? whatsoever perfection the creature hath, is eminently in God. *Understand, O ye brutish among the people; and ye fools when will you be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know?* By the same reason he that hath given such a power to those creatures, air and light, shall not he be much more filling all spaces of the world? it is so clear a rule, that the psalmist fixes a folly and brutishness upon those that deny it; it is not therefore inconsistent with his nature, it were not then a perfection, but an imperfection; but whatsoever is an excellency in creatures, cannot in a way of eminency be an imperfection in God; if it be then a perfection, and God want it, it is because he cannot have it; where then is his power? how can he be then the fountain of his own being? If he will not, where is his love to his own nature and glory? since no creature would deny that to itself which it can have, and is an excellency to it; God therefore hath not only a power or fitness to be every where, but he is actually every where.

Fourthly, Because of his immutability.

If God did not fill all the spaces of heaven and earth, but only possess one, yet it must be acknowledged that God hath a power to move himself to another: it were absurd to fix God in a part of the heavens, like a star in an orb, without a power of motion to another place. If he be therefore essentially in heaven, may he not be upon the earth if he please, and transfer his substance from one place to another? to say he cannot, is to deny him a perfection which he hath bestowed upon his creatures; the angels, his messengers, are sometimes in heaven, sometimes on the earth; the eagles, meaner creatures, are sometimes in the air out of sight, sometimes upon the earth. If he doth move therefore and recede from one place, and settle in another, doth he not declare himself mutable by changing places? by being where he was not before, and in not being where he was before? He would not fill heaven and earth at once, but successively; no man can be said to fill a room, that moves from one part of a room to another; if therefore any in their imaginations, confine God to the heavens, they render him less than his creatures; if they allow him a power of motion from one place to another, they conceive him changeable; and in either of them they own him no greater than a finite and limited being; limited to heaven, if they fix him there; limited to that space to which they imagine him to move.

Fifthly, Because of his omnipotency.

The almightiness of God is a notion settled in the minds of all, that God can do whatsoever he pleases, every thing that is not against the purity of his nature, and doth not imply a contradiction in itself; he can therefore create millions of worlds greater than this; and millions of heavens greater than this heaven he hath already created; if so, he is then in inconceivable spaces beyond
this

this world, for his essence is not less and narrower than his power; and his power is not to be thought of a further extent than his essence; he cannot be excluded therefore from those vast spaces where his power may fix those worlds if he please; if so, it is no wonder that he should fill this world; and there is no reason to exclude God from the narrow space of this world, that is not contained in infinite spaces beyond the world. God is wheresoever he hath a power to act, but he hath a power to act every where in the world, every where out of the world; he is therefore every where in the world, every where out of the world. Before this world was made, he had a power to make it in the space where now it stands; was he not then unlimitedly where the world now is, before the world received a being by his powerful word? why should he not then be in every part of the world now? can it be thought that God who was immense before, should after he had created the world, contract himself to the limits of one of his creatures, and tie himself to a particular place of his own creation, and be less after his creation than he was before?

This might also be prosecuted by an argument from his eternity. What is eternal in duration, is immense in essence; the same reason which renders him eternal, renders him immense; that which proves him to be always, will prove him to be every where.

The third thing is, propositions for the further clearing this doctrine from any exceptions.

1. This truth is not weakened by the expressions in scripture, where God is said to dwell in heaven, and in the temple.

He is indeed said to sit in heaven, and to dwell on high; but he is no where said to dwell only in the heavens, as confined to them. It is the court of his majestical presence, but not the prison of his essence. For when we are told, that the *heaven*

is his throne, we are told with the same breath, that the earth is his footstool. He dwells on high in regard of the excellency of his nature; but he is in all places in regard of the diffusion of his presence. The soul is essentially in all parts of the body, but it doth not exert the same operations in all; the more noble discoveries of it are in the head and heart: in the head, where it exerciseth the chiefest senses for the enriching of the understanding: in the heart, where it vitally resides, and communicates life and motion to the rest of the body. It doth not understand with the foot or toe, though it be in all parts of the body it informs. And so God may be said to dwell in heaven, in regard of the more excellent and majestic representations of himself, both to the creatures that inhabit the place, as angels and blessed spirits; and also in those marks of his greatness which he hath planted there, those spiritual natures which have a nobler stamp of God upon them, and those excellent bodies, as sun and stars, which as so many tapers light us to behold his glory, and astonish the minds of men when they gaze upon them. It is his court, where he hath the most solemn worship from his creatures, all his courtiers attending there with a pure love, and glowing zeal. He reigns there in a special manner, without any opposition to his government; it is therefore called his *holy dwelling-place*: the earth hath not that title, since sin cast a stain and a ruining curse upon it. The earth is not his throne, because his government is opposed. But heaven is none of Satan's precinct, and the rule of God is uncontradicted by the inhabitants of it. It is from thence also he hath given the greatest discoveries of himself: thence he sends the angels his messengers, his Son upon redemption, his Spirit for sanctification. From heaven his gifts drop down upon our heads, and his grace upon our hearts. From thence the chiefest blessings of earth descend. The
motions

motions of the heavens fatten the earth; and the heavenly bodies are but stewards to the earthly comforts for man by their influence. Heaven is the richest, vastest, most steadfast and majestic part of the visible creation. It is there where he will at last manifest himself to his people in a full conjunction of grace and glory, and be for ever open to his people in uninterrupted expressions of goodness, and discoveries of his presence, as a reward of their labour and service. And in these respects it may peculiarly be called his throne. And this doth no more hinder his essential presence in all parts of the earth, than it doth his gracious presence in all the hearts of his people. God is in heaven in regard of the manifestation of his glory: in hell by the expressions of his justice: in the earth by the discoveries of his wisdom, power, patience, and compassion: in his people by the monuments of his grace; and in all in regard of his substance.

He is said also to dwell in the ark and temple. It is called, *Pla. xxvi. 8. The habitation of his house, and the place where his honour dwells*; and to dwell in Jerusalem as in his holy mountain; *the mountain of the Lord of Hosts*, in regard of publishing his oracles, answering their prayers, manifesting more of his goodness to the Israelites, than to any other nation in the world, erecting his true worship among them, which was not settled in any part of the world besides; and his worship is principally intended in that psalm. The ark is the place where his honour dwells; the worship of God is called the glory of God, *they changed the glory of God into an image made like to corruptible man, i. e. they changed the worship of God into idolatry*; and to that also doth the place in Zechariah refer.

Now because he is said to dwell in heaven, is he essentially only there? is he not as essentially in the temple and ark, as he is in heaven, since there are as high expressions of his habitation there, as of

his dwelling in heaven? If he dwell only in heaven, how came he to dwell in the temple? both are asserted in scripture, one as much as the other. If his dwelling in heaven did not hinder his dwelling in the ark, it could as little hinder the presence of his essence on the earth. To dwell in heaven, and in one part of the earth at the same time, is all one as to dwell in all parts of heaven, and all parts of earth. If he were in heaven, and in the ark and temple, it was the same essence in both, though not the same kind of manifestation of himself. If by his dwelling in heaven, be meant his whole essence, why is it not also to be meant by his dwelling in the ark? it was not sure part of his essence that was in heaven, and part of his essence that was on earth, his essence would then be divided; and can it be imagined, that he should be in heaven and the ark at the same time, and not in the spaces between? Could his essence be split into fragments, and a gap made in it, that two distant spaces should be filled by him, and all between be empty of him. So that God's being said to dwell in heaven, and in the temple, is so far from impairing the truth of this doctrine, that it more confirms and evidences it.

2. Nor do the expressions of God's coming to us, or departing from us, impair this doctrine of his omnipresence.

God is said to hide his face from his people; to be far from the wicked; and the Gentiles are said to be afar off, viz. from God; and upon the manifestation of Christ made near: these must not be understood of any distance or nearness of his essence, for that is equally near to all persons and things; but of some other special way and manifestation of his presence. Thus God is said to be in believers by love, as they are in him; *he that abides in love, abides in God, and God in him*: he that loves is in the thing beloved; and when two
love

love one another, they are in one another; God is in a righteous man by a special grace, and far from the wicked in regard of such special works; and God is said to be in a place by a special manifestation, as when he was in the bush, or manifesting his glory upon Mount Sinai; *the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai*. God is said to hide his face, when he withdraws his comforting presence, disturbs the repose of our hearts, flasheth terror into our consciences, when he puts men under the smart of the cross, as though he had ordered his mercy utterly to depart from them; or when he doth withdraw his special assisting providence from us in our affairs: so he departed from Saul, when he withdrew his direction and protection from him in the concerns of his government; *the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul*, i. e. the spirit of government. God may be far from us in one respect, and near to us in another; far from us in regard of comfort, yet near to us in regard of support, when his essential presence continues the same; this is a necessary consequent upon the infiniteness of God, the other is an act of the will of God; so he was said to forsake Christ, in regard of his obscuring his glory from his human nature, and inflicting his wrath; though he was near to him in regard of his grace, and preserved him from contracting any spot in his sufferings. We do not say the sun is departed out of the heavens when it is beclouded; it remains in the same part of the heavens, passes on its course, though its beams do not reach us by reason of the bar between us and it: the soul is in every part of the body, in regard of its substance, and constantly in it, though it doth not act so sprightly and vigorously at one time as at another in the same member, and discover itself so sensibly in its operations; so all the various effects of God to the sons of men are but divers operations of the same essence. He is far from us or near to us, as he is a judge or a benefactor; when he
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comes to punish, it notes not the approach of his essence, but the stroke of his justice; when he comes to benefit, it is not by a new access of his essence, but an efflux of his grace; he departs from us when he leaves us to the frowns of his justice; he comes to us when he encircles us in the arms of his mercy; but he was equally present with us in both dispensations, in regard of his essence. And likewise God is said to come down, *and the Lord came down to see the city*; when he doth some signal and wonderful works which attract the minds of men to the acknowledgment of a supreme power and providence in the world, who judged God absent and careless before.

3. Nor is the essential presence of God with all creatures any disparagement to him.—Since it was no disparagement to create the heaven and the earth, it is no disparagement to him to fill them; if he were essentially present with them when he created them, it is no dishonour to him to be essentially present with them, to support them; if it were his glory to create them by his essence, when they were nothing; can it be his disgrace to be present by his essence, since they are something, and something good, and very good in his eye? God saw every thing, and behold it was very good, or mighty good; all ordered to declare his goodness, wisdom, power, and to make him adorable to man, and therefore took complacency in them. There is a harmony in all things, a combination in them for those glorious ends for which God created them; and is it a disgrace for God to be present with his own harmonious composition? Is it not a musician's glory to touch with his fingers the treble, the least and tenderest string, as well as the strongest and greatest bass? Hath not every thing some stamp of God's own being upon it, since he eminently contains in himself the perfections of all his works? whatsoever hath being, hath a foot-step of God
upon

upon it ; all declare the being of God, because they had their being from God ; and will God account it any disparagement to him to be present with that which confirms his being, and the glorious perfections of his nature to his intelligent creatures ? the meanest things are not without their virtues, which may boast God's being the creator of them ; and rank them in the midst of his works of wisdom as well as power. Doth God debase himself to be present by his essence, with the things he hath made, more than he doth to know them by his essence ? Is not the least thing known by him ? how ? not by a faculty or act distinct from his essence, but by his essence itself : how is any thing disgraceful to the essential presence of God, that is not disgraceful to his knowledge by his essence ? Besides, would God make any thing that should be an invincible reason to him to part with his own infiniteness, by a contradiction of his own essence into a less compass than before ? it was immense before, it had no bounds ; and would God make a world that he would be ashamed to be present with, and continue it to the diminution and lessening of himself, rather than annihilate it to avoid the disparagement ? This were to impeach the wisdom of God, and cast a blemish upon his infinite understanding, that he knows not the consequences of his work, or is well contented to be impaired in the immensity of his own essence by it. No man thinks it a dishonour to light, a most excellent creature, to be present with a toad or serpent ; and though there be an infinite disproportion between light, a creature, and the Father of Lights, the creator : yet, God being a spirit, knows how to be with bodies as if they were not bodies. And being jealous of his own honour, would not, could not do any thing that might impair him.

4. Nor will it follow, that because God is essentially every where, that every thing is God.—God
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is not every where by any conjunction, composition, or mixture with any thing on earth; when light is in every part of a chryſtal globe, and encircles it cloſe on every ſide, do they become one? no, the chryſtal remains what it is, and the light retains its own nature: God is not in us as a part of us, but as an efficient and preſerving cauſe; it is not by his eſſential preſence, but by his efficacious preſence that he brings any perſon into a likenefs to his own nature: God is ſo in his eſſence with things, as to be diſtinct from them as a cauſe from the effect; as a creator different from the creature, preſerving their nature, not communicating his own; his eſſence touches all, is in conjunction with none; finite and infinite cannot be joined; he is not far from us, therefore near to us; ſo that we live and move in him; nothing is God becauſe it moves in him, any more than a fiſh in the ſea, is the ſea, or a part of the ſea, becauſe it moves in it: doth a man that holds a thing in the hollow of his hand, transform it by that action, and make it like his hand? The ſoul and body are more ſtraitly united, than the eſſence of God is by his preſence with any creature: the ſoul is in the body as a form in matter, and from their union doth ariſe a man; yet in this near conjunction, both body and ſoul remain diſtinct; the ſoul is not the body, nor the body the ſoul; they both have diſtinct natures and eſſences; the body can never be changed into a ſoul, nor the ſoul into a body; no more can God into the creature, or the creature into God. Fire is in heated iron in every part of it, ſo that it ſeems to be nothing but fire; yet fire and iron is not the ſame thing. But ſuch a kind of arguing againſt God's omnipreſence, that if God were eſſentially preſent, every thing would be God, would exclude him from heaven as well as from earth. By the ſame reaſon, ſince they acknowledge God eſſentially in heaven, the heaven where he is, ſhould be changed

changed into the nature of God; and by arguing against his presence in earth, upon this ground they run such an inconvenience, that they must own him to be no where, and that which is no where is nothing. Doth the earth become God, because God is essentially there, any more than the heavens, where God is acknowledged by all to be essentially present.

Again, if where God is essentially, that must be God, then if they place God in a point of the heavens, not only that point must be God, but all the world; because if that point be God, because God is there, then the point touched by that point must be God, and so consequently as far as there are any points touched by one another. We live and move in God, so we live and move in the air; we are no more God by that, than we are mere air because we breathe in it, and it enters into all the pores of our body: nay, where there was a straiter union of the divine nature to the human in our Saviour, yet the nature of both was distinct, and the humanity was not changed into the divinity, nor the divinity into the humanity.

5. Nor doth it follow, that because God is every where, therefore a creature may be worshipped without idolatry.—Some of the heathens, who acknowledged God's omnipresence, abused it to the countenancing idolatry; because God was resident in every thing, they thought every thing might be worshipped; and some have used it as an argument against this doctrine: the best doctrines may by mens corruptions be drawn out into unreasonable and pernicious conclusions. Have you not met with any, that from the doctrine of God's free mercy, and our Saviour's satisfactory death, have drawn poison to feed their lusts, and consume their souls? a poison composed by their own corruption, and not offered by those truths. The apostle intimates to us, that some did, or at least were ready to

to be more lavish in sinning, because God was abundant in grace; *shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* when he prevents an objection that he thought might be made by some: but as to this case; since though God be present in every thing, yet every thing retains its nature, distinct from the nature of God; therefore it is not to have a worship due to the excellency of God. As long as any thing remains a creature, it is only to have the respect from us, which is due to it in the rank of creatures. When a prince is present with his guard, or if he should go arm in arm with a peasant, is therefore the veneration and honour due to the prince, to be paid to the peasant, or any of his guard? would the presence of the prince excuse it, or would it not aggravate it? he acknowledged such a person equal to me, by giving him my rights, even in my sight. Though God dwelt in the temple, would not the Israelites have been accounted guilty of idolatry, had they worshipped the images of the cherubims, or the ark, or the altar, as objects of worship, which were erected only as means for his service? Is there not as much reason to think God was as essentially present in the temple, as in heaven; since the same expressions are used of the one and the other? the sanctuary is called the glorious high throne; and he is said to dwell between the cherubims, *i. e.* the two cherubims that were at the two ends of the mercy seat, appointed by God as the two sides of his throne in the sanctuary, *Exod. xxv. 18.* where he was to dwell, *ver. 8.* and meet and commune with his people, *ver. 22.* Could this excuse Manassèh's idolatry in bringing in a carved image into the house of God? Had it been a good answer to the charge, God is present here, and therefore every thing may be worshipped as God? If he be only essentially in heaven, would it not be idolatry to direct a worship to the heavens, or any part of it

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as a due object, because of the presence of God there? Though we look up to the heavens, where we pray and worship God, yet heaven is not the object of worship, the soul abstracts God from the creature.

6. Nor is God defiled by being present with those creatures which seem filthy to us.—Nothing is filthy in the eye of God as his creature; he could never else have pronounced all good; whatsoever is filthy to us, yet as it is a creature, it owes itself to the power of God: his essence is no more defiled by being present with it, than his power by producing it: no creature is foul in itself, though it may seem so to us: doth not an infant lie in a womb of filthiness and rottenness? yet is not the power of God present with it, in working it curiously in the lower parts of the earth? are his eyes defiled by seeing the substance when it is yet imperfect? or his hand defiled by writing every member in his book? Have not the vilest and most noisome things, excellent medicinal virtues? How are they endued with them? how are those qualities preserved in them? by any thing without God, or no? All creatures being the effects of his power, may be the objects of his presence; can any place be more foul than hell,^b if you take it either for the hell of the damned, or for the grave where there is rottenness? yet there he is. When Satan appeared before God, and God spake with him, could God contract any impurity by being present where that filthy spirit was, more impure than any corporeal noisome, and defiling thing can be? No, God is purity to himself in the midst of noisomeness; a heaven to himself in the midst of hell: who ever heard of a sun beam stained by shining upon a quagmire, any more than sweetened by breaking into a perfumed room? though the light shines upon pure and impure things, yet it mixes not itself with either of them; so though God be present with
devil

devils and wicked men, yet without any mixture; he is present with their essence to sustain it and support it; not in their defection, wherein lies their defilement; and which is not a physical, but a moral evil; bodily filth can never touch an incorporeal substance. Spirits are not present with us in the same manner that one body is present with another; bodies can by a touch only, defile bodies; is the glory of an angel stained by being in a coal mine? or could the angel that came into the lions den, to deliver Daniel, be any more disturbed by the stench of the place, than he could be scratched by the paws, or torn by the teeth of the beasts? their spiritual nature secures them against any infection when they are ministering spirits to persecuted believers in their nasty prisons. The soul is straitly united with the body, but it is not made white or black, by the whiteness or blackness of its habitation; is it infected by the corporeal impurities of the body, while it continually dwells in a sea of filthy pollution? If the body be cast into a common shore, is the soul defiled by it? can a diseased body derive a contagion to the spirit that animates it? is it not often the purer by grace, the more the body is infected by nature? Hezekiah's spirit was scarce ever more fervent with God, than when the sore, which some think to be a plague soar, was upon him; how can any corporeal filth impair the purity of the divine essence? it may as well be said, that God is not present in battles and fights for his people, because he would not be disturbed by the noise of cannons and clashing of swords, as that he is not present in the world because of the ill scents. Let us therefore conclude this, with the expression of a learned man of our own, "To deny the omnipresence of God, because of ill scented places, is to measure God rather by the nicety of sense, than by the sagacity of reason."

God's Knowledge.

Pfalm cxlvii. 5.

GREAT IS OUR LORD, AND OF GREAT POWER: HIS UNDER-
STANDING IS INFINITE.

IT is uncertain who was the author of this psalm, and when it was penned; some think after the return from the Babylonish captivity: it is a psalm of praise, and is made up of matter of praise from the beginning to the end; God's benefits to the church, his providence over his creatures; the essential excellency of his nature.

The psalmist doubles his exhortation to praise God, ver. 1. *Praise ye the Lord, sing praise to our God*; to praise him from his dominion as Lord, from his grace and mercy as our God; from the excellency of the duty itself, it is good, it is comely: some read it comely, some lovely or desirable, from the various derivation of the word.

In the verse, there is a description of God. In his essence, *great is our Lord*—In his power, *of great power*—In his knowledge, *his understanding is infinite*; his understanding is his eye, and his power is his arm. Of his infinite understanding, I am to discourse.

For the better understanding of this, we will enquire,

1. What kind of knowledge or understanding there is in God.

2. What God knows.

3. How God knows things.

4. The proof, that God knows all things.

5. The use of all to ourselves.

First. What kind of understanding or knowledge there is in God?—The knowledge of God in scripture, hath various names, according to the various relations or objects of it: in respect of present things, it is called knowledge or sight; in respect of things past, remembrance; in respect of things future, or to come, it is called fore knowledge or prescience, 1 Peter i. 2. In regard of the universality of the objects, it is called omniscience; in regard of the simple understanding of things, it is called knowledge; in regard of acting and modelling the ways of acting, it is called wisdom and prudence, Eph. i. 8. He must have knowledge, otherwise he could not be wise; wisdom is the flower of knowledge, and knowledge is the root of wisdom.

As to what this knowledge is; if we know what knowledge is in man, we may apprehend what it is in God, removing all imperfection from it, and ascribing to him the most eminent way of understanding; because we cannot comprehend God, but as he is pleased to condescend to us in his own ways of discovery; that is, under some way of similitude to his perfectest creatures; therefore we have a notion of God by his understanding and will; understanding, whereby he conceives and apprehends things; will, whereby he extends himself in acting according to his wisdom, and whereby he doth approve or disapprove. Yet we must not measure his understanding by our own, or think it to be of so gross a temper as a created mind; that he hath eyes of flesh, or sees or knows as man sees. We
can

can no more measure his knowledge by ours, than we can measure his essence by our essence: as he hath an incomprehensible essence, to which ours is but as a drop of a bucket, so he hath an incomprehensible knowledge, to which ours is but as a grain of dust, or mere darkness: his thoughts are above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth.

The knowledge of God is variously divided by the schools, and acknowledged by all divines.

First, A knowledge *visionis & simplicis intelligentiæ*; the one we may call a sight, the other an understanding; the one refers to sense, the other to the mind.

1. A knowledge of vision or sight; thus God knows himself and all things that really were, are, or shall be in time; all those things which he hath decreed to be, though they are not yet actually sprung up into the world, but lie couchant in their causes.

2. A knowledge of intelligence, or simple understanding; the object of this is not things that are in being, or that shall by any decree of God, ever be existent in the world; but such things as are possible to be wrought by the power of God, though they shall never in the least peep up into being, but lie for ever wrapped up in darkness and nothing. This also is a necessary knowledge to be allowed to God, because the object of this knowledge is necessary. The possibility of more creatures than ever were or shall be, is a conclusion that hath a necessary truth in it; as it is necessary that the power of God can produce more creatures, though it be not necessary that it should produce more creatures; so it is necessary that whatsoever the power of God can work, is possible to be. And as God knows this possibility, so he knows all the objects that are thus possible; and herein doth much consist

the infiniteness of his knowledge, as shall be shewn presently.

These two kinds of knowledge differ; that of vision, is of things which God had decreed to be, though they are not yet. That of intelligence, is of things which never shall be; yet they may be, or are possible to be, if God please to will and order their being; one respects things that shall be; the other, things that may be, and are not repugnant to the nature of God to be: the knowledge of vision follows the act of God's will, and supposeth an act of God's will before, decreeing things to be. (If we could suppose any first or second in God's decree, we might say, God knew them as possible before he decreed them; he knew them as future because he decreed them.) For without the will of God decreeing a thing to come to pass, God cannot know that it will infallibly come to pass. But the knowledge of intelligence stands without any act of his will, in order to the being of those things he knows; he knows possible things only in his power; he knows other things, both in his power, as able to effect them, and in his will, as determining the being of them; such knowledge we must grant to be in God, for there is such a kind of knowledge in man; for man doth not only know and see what is before his eyes in this world, but he may have a conception of many more worlds, and many more creatures, which he knows are possible to the power of God.

Secondly, There is a speculative and practical knowledge in God.

1. A speculative knowledge is, when the truth of a thing is known without a respect to any working or practical operation. The knowledge of things possible is in God only speculative, and some say God's knowledge of himself is only speculative, because there is nothing for God to work in himself: and though he knows himself, yet this knowledge of
himself

himself doth not terminate there, but flows into a love of himself, and delight in himself; yet this love of himself, and delight in himself, is not enough to make it a practical knowledge, because it is natural, and naturally and necessarily flows from the knowledge of himself and his own goodness: he cannot but love himself, and delight in himself, upon the knowledge of himself. But that which is properly practice, is where there is a dominion over the action, and it is wrought not naturally and necessarily, but in a way of freedom and counsel. As when we see a beautiful flower or other thing, there ariseth a delight in the mind; this no man will call practice, because it is a natural affection of the will, arising from the virtue of the object, without any consideration of the understanding in a practical manner by counselling, commanding, &c.

2. A practical knowledge, which tends to operation and practice, and is the principal of working about things that are known; as the knowledge an artificer hath in an art or mystery. This knowledge is in God: the knowledge he hath of the things he hath decreed, is such a kind of knowledge; for it terminates in the act of creation, which is not a natural and necessary act, as the loving himself, and delighting in himself is, but wholly free: for it was at his liberty whether he would create them or no; this is called discretion, Jer. x. 12. *He hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.* Such also is his knowledge of the things he hath created, and which are in being, for it terminates in the government of them for his own glorious ends. It is by this knowledge *the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down their dew.* This is a knowledge whereby he knows the essence, qualities, and properties of what he creates and governs in order to his own glory, and the common good of the world over which he resides; so that speculative knowledge

is God's knowledge of himself and things possible; practical knowledge is his knowledge of his creatures and things governable; yet in some sort this practical knowledge is not only of things that are made, but of things which are possible, which God might make, though he will not: for as he knows that they can be created, so he knows how they are to be created, and how to be governed, though he never will create them. This is a practical knowledge: for it is not requisite to constitute a knowledge practical, actually to act, but that the knowledge in itself be referable to action.

3. There is a knowledge of approbation, as well as apprehension.—This the scripture often mentions: words of understanding are used to signify the acts of affection. This knowledge adds to the simple act of the understanding, the complacency and pleasure of the will; and is improperly knowledge, because it belongs to the will, and not to the understanding; only it is radically in the understanding, because affection implies knowledge; men cannot approve of that which they are ignorant of. Thus knowledge is taken, Amos iii. 2. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth.* And 2 Tim. ii. 19, *The Lord knows who are his*, that is, he loves them; he doth not only know them, but acknowledge them for his own: it notes not only an exact understanding, but a special care of them; and so is that to be understood, Gen. 1. *God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good*: that is, he saw it with an eye of approbation, as well as apprehension. This is grounded upon God's knowledge of vision, his sight of his creatures; for God doth not love or delight in any thing but what is actually in being, or what he hath decreed to bring into being. On the contrary also, when God doth not approve, he is said not to know, Mat. xxv. 12. *I know you not*: and Mat. vii. 23. *I never knew you*: he doth not approve of their works:

works: it is not an ignorance of understanding, but an ignorance of will; for while he saith he never knew them, he testifies that he did know them, in rendering the reason of his disapproving them, because he knows all their works. so he knows them, and doth not know them, in a different manner: he knows them so as to understand them; but he doth not know them so as to love them.

We must then ascribe an universal knowledge to God. If we deny him a speculative knowledge, or knowledge of intelligence, we destroy his deity, we make him ignorant of his own power: if we deny him practical knowledge, we deny ourselves to be his creatures: for as his creatures, we are the fruits of this his discretion discovered in creation: if we deny his knowledge of vision, we deny his governing dominion. How can he exercise a sovereign and uncontrollable dominion, that is ignorant of the nature and qualities of the thing he is to govern? If he had not knowledge, he could make no revelation; he that knows not, cannot dictate; we could then have no scripture. To deny God knowledge, is to dash out the scripture, and demolish the deity.

God is described in Zech. iii. 9. *with seven eyes*, to shew his perfect knowledge of all things, all occurrences in the world; and the cherubims, or whatsoever is meant by the wings, are described to be full of eyes, both before and behind, round about them; much more is God all eye, all ear, all understanding. The sun is a natural image of God, if the sun had an eye, it would see; if it had an understanding, it would know all visible things; it would see what it shines upon, and understand what it influenceth in the most obscure bowels of the earth. Doth God excel his creature the sun in excellency and beauty, and not in light and understanding? certainly more than the sun excels an atom or grain of dust.

We may yet make some representation of this knowledge of God by a lower thing, a picture, which seems to look upon every one, though there be never so great a multitude in the room where it hangs; no man can cast his eye upon it, but it seems to behold him in particular, and so exactly as if there were none but him upon whom the eye of it were fixed; and every man finds the same cast of it; shall art frame a thing of that nature, and shall not the God of art and all knowledge, be much more in reality than that is in imagination? Shall not God have a far greater capacity to behold every thing in the world, which is infinitely less to him than a wide room to a picture?

Second, What God knows? how far his understanding reaches?

i. God knows himself, and only knows himself.—This is the first and original knowledge, wherein he excels all creatures: no man doth exactly know himself, much less understand the full nature of a spirit; much less still the nature and perfections of God; for what proportion can there be between a finite faculty, and an infinite object? Herein consists the infiniteness of God's knowledge, that he knows his own essence, that he knows that which is unknowable to any else. It doth not so much consist in knowing the creatures which he hath made, as in knowing himself who was never made. It is not so much infinite, because he knows all things which are in the world, or that shall be; or things that he can make, because the number of them is finite; but because he hath a perfect and comprehensive knowledge of his own infinite perfections. Though it be said that angels *see his face*, Mat. xviii. 10. that sight notes rather their immediate attendance, than their exact knowledge; they see some signs of his presence and majesty, more illustrious and express than ever appeared to man in this life; but the essence of God is invisible to them,
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hid from them in the secret place of eternity ; none knows God but himself, 1 Cor. ii. 11. *What man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man? so the things of God knows no man but the spirit of God ; the spirit of God searches the deep things of God ;* searcheth, that is, exactly knows, thoroughly understands, as those who have their eyes in every chink and crevice, to see what lies hid there: the word search, notes not an enquiry, but an exact knowledge, such as men have of things upon a diligent scrutiny ; as when God is said to search the heart and reigns, it doth not signify a precedent ignorance, but an exact knowledge of the most intimate corners of the hearts of men. As the conceptions of men are unknown to any but themselves, so the depths of the divine essence, perfections and decrees, are unknown to any but to God himself ; he only knows what he is, and what he knows, what he can do, and what he hath decreed to do.

If God did not know himself, he would not be perfect.—It is the perfection of a creature to know itself, much more a perfection belonging to God. If God did not comprehend himself, he would want an infinite perfection, and so would cease to be God, in being defective in that which intellectual creatures in some measure possess. As God is the most perfect being, so he must have the most perfect understanding: If he did not understand himself, he would be under the greatest ignorance, because he would be ignorant of the most excellent object. Ignorance is the imperfection of the understanding ; and ignorance of one self, is a greater imperfection than ignorance of things without. If God should know all things without himself, and not know himself, he would not have the most perfect knowledge, because he would not have the knowledge of the best of objects.

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Without the knowledge of himself, he could not be blessed.—Nothing can have any complacency in itself, without the knowledge of itself. Nothing can in a rational manner enjoy itself, without understanding itself. The blessedness of God consists not in the knowledge of any thing without him, but in the knowledge of himself and his own excellency, as the principle of all things; if therefore he did not perfectly know himself and his own happiness, he could not enjoy a happiness; for to be, and not to know to be, is as if a thing were not. *He is God blessed for ever*, Rom. ix. 5. and therefore for ever had a knowledge of himself.

Without the knowledge of himself he could create nothing.—For he would be ignorant of his own power, and his own ability; and he that doth not know how far his power extends, could not act: if he did not know himself, he could know nothing; and he that knows nothing, can do nothing; he could not know an effect to be possible to him, unless he knew his own power as a cause.

Without the knowledge of himself he could govern nothing.—He could not without the knowledge of his own holiness and righteousness, prescribe laws to men, nor without a knowledge of his own nature, order himself a manner of worship suitable to it.

All worship must be congruous to the dignity and nature of the object worshipped; he must therefore know his own authority whereby worship was to be enacted, his own excellency to which worship was to be suited, his own glory to which worship was to be directed. If he did not know himself, he did not know what to punish, because he would not know what was contrary to himself: not knowing himself, he would not know what was a contempt of him, and what an adoration of him; what was worthy of God, and what was unworthy of

of him. In fine, he could not know other things, unless he knew himself: unless he knew his own power, he could not know how he created things: unless he knew his own wisdom, he could not know the beauty of his works: unless he knew his own glory, he could not know the end of his works; unless he knew his own holiness, he could not know what was evil: and unless he knew his own justice, he could not know how to punish the crimes of his offending creatures. And therefore,

God knows himself, because his knowledge with his will is the cause of all other things that can fall under his cognizance; he knows himself first, before he can know any other thing; that is, first according to our conceptions; for indeed God knows himself and all other things at once; he is the first truth, and therefore is the first object of his own understanding. There is nothing more excellent than himself, and therefore nothing more known to him than himself. As he is all knowledge, so he hath in himself the most excellent object of knowledge. To understand, is properly to know oneself. No object is so intelligible to God as God is to himself; nor so intimately and immediately joined with his understanding as himself: for his understanding is his essence, himself.

2. He knows himself by his own essence.—He knows not himself and his own power, by the effect, because he knows himself from eternity, before there was a world, or any effect of his power extant. It is not a knowledge by the cause, for God hath no cause; nor a knowledge of himself by any species or any thing from without: if it were any thing from without himself, that must be created or uncreated; if uncreated, it would be God; and so we must either own many gods, or own it to be his essence, and so not distinct from himself: if created, then his knowledge of himself would depend upon a creature; he could not then know.

know himself from eternity, but in time, because nothing can be created from eternity, but in time. God knows not himself by any faculty, for there is no composition in God, he is not made up of parts, but is a simple being; some therefore have called God, not *intellectus*, understanding, because that favours of a faculty, but *intellectio*, intelection. God is all in act the knowledge of himself, and his knowledge of other things.

God therefore knows himself perfectly, comprehensively.—Nothing in his own nature is concealed from him, he reflects upon every thing that he is. There is a positive comprehension, so God doth not comprehend himself; for what is comprehended, hath bounds; and what is comprehended by itself, is finite to itself: and there is a negative comprehension, God so comprehends himself; nothing in his own nature is obscure to him, unknown by him. For there is as great a perfection in the understanding of God to know, as there is in the divine nature to be known. The understanding of God, and the nature of God, are both infinite, and so equal to one another; his understanding is equal to himself; he knows himself so well, that nothing can be known by him more perfectly, than himself is known to himself. He knows himself in the highest manner, because nothing is so proportioned to the understanding of God as himself: he knows his own essence, goodness, power, all his perfections, decrees, intentions, acts, the infinite capacity of his own understanding, so that nothing of himself is in the dark to himself. And in this respect, some use this expression, that the infiniteness of God is in a manner finite to himself, because it is comprehended by himself.

Thus God transcends all creatures; thus his understanding is truly infinite, because nothing but himself is an infinite object for it. What angels may understand of themselves perfectly, I know not; but no creature in the world understands himself;

self: man understands not fully the excellency and parts of his own nature; upon God's knowledge of himself depends the comfort of his people, and the terror of the wicked; this is also a clear argument for his knowledge of all other things, without himself: he that knows himself must needs know all other things less than himself, and which were made by himself. When the knowledge of his own immensity and infiniteness is not an object too difficult for him, the knowledge of a finite and limited creature in all its actions, thoughts, circumstances, cannot be too hard for him. Since he knows himself who is infinite: he cannot but know whatsoever is finite; this is the foundation of all his other knowledge; the knowledge of every thing present, past, and to come, is far less than the knowledge of himself. He is more incomprehensible in his own nature, than all things created, or that can be created, put together can be: if he then have a perfect comprehensive knowledge of his own nature, any knowledge of all other things is less than the knowledge of himself; this ought to be well considered by us, as the fountain whence all his other knowledge flows.

Therefore God knows all other things, whether they be possible, past, present or future.

Whether they be things that he can do, but will never do; or whether they be things that he hath done, but are not now; things that are now in being, or things that are not now existing, that lie in the womb of their proper and immediate causes; if his understanding be infinite, he then knows all things whatsoever that can be known, else his understanding would have bounds, and what hath limits is not infinite, but finite; if he be ignorant of any one thing that is knowable, that is a bound to him, it comes with an exception, *a but*, God knows all things *but* this, a bar is then set to his knowledge. If there were any thing, any particular
circumstance

circumstance in the whole creation, or non-creation, and possible to be known by him, and yet were unknown to him, he could not be said to be omniscient. As he would not be almighty, if any one thing that implied not a repugnancy to his nature, did transcend his power.

All things possible.—No question but God knows what he could create, as well as what he hath created; what he would not create, as well as what he resolved to create: he knew what he would not do, before he willed to do it; this is the next thing which declares the infiniteness of his understanding: for as his power is infinite, and can create innumerable worlds and creatures, so is his knowledge infinite, in knowing innumerable things possible to his power. Possibles are infinite; that is, there is no end of what God can do, and therefore no end of what God doth know; otherwise his power would be more infinite than his knowledge: if he knew only what is created, there would be an end of his understanding; because all creatures may be numbered, but possible things cannot be reckoned up by any creature. There is the same reason of this in eternity; when never so many numbers of years are run out, there is still more to come, there still wants an end; and when millions of worlds are created, there is no more an end of God's power than of eternity. Thus there is no end of his understanding; that is, his knowledge is not terminated by any thing.

This the scripture gives us some account of:—God knows things that are not, *for he calls things that are not, as if they were*, Rom. iv. 17. he calls things that are not, as if they were in being; what he calls is not unknown to him: if he knows things that are not, he knows things that may never be; as he knows things that shall be, because he wills them; so he knows things that might be, because he is able to effect them. He knew the inhabitants
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of Kelah would betray David to Saul, if he remained in that place, 1 Sam. xxiii. 11. he knew what they would do upon that occasion, though it was never done; as he knew what was in their power and in their wills, so he must needs know what is within the compass of his own power: as he can permit more than he doth permit, so he knows what he can permit, and what upon that permission would be done by his creatures; so God knew the possibility of the Tyrians repentance, if they had had the same means, heard the same truths, and beheld the same miracles, which were offered to the ears, and presented to the eyes, of the Jews, Mat. xi. 21.

This must needs be so, because man knows things that are possible to him, though he will never effect them — A carpenter knows a house in the model he hath of it in his head, though he never build a house according to that model: a watch-maker hath the frame of a watch in his mind, which he will never work with his instruments: man knows what he could do, though he never intends to do it. As the understanding of man hath a virtue, that where it sees one man, it may imagine thousands of men of the same shape, stature, form, parts; yea, taller, more vigorous, sprightly, intelligent, than the man he sees; because it is possible such a number may be: shall not the understanding of God much more know what he is able to effect, since the understanding of man can know what he is never able to produce, yet may be produced by God, viz. that he who produced this man which I see, can produce a thousand like him? If the divine understanding did not know infinite things, but were confined to a certain number; it may be demanded, whether God can understand any thing farther than that number, or whether he cannot? If he can, then he doth actually understand all those things which he hath a power to understand; otherwise there

there would be an increase of God's knowledge, if it were actually now, and not before, and so he would be more perfect than he was before ; if he cannot understand them, then he cannot understand what a human mind can understand ; for our understandings can multiply numbers *in infinitum* ; and there is no number so great, but a man can still add to it : we must suppose the divine understanding more excellent in knowledge. God knows all that a man can imagine, though it never was, nor shall be ; he must needs know whatsoever is in the power of man to imagine or think, because God concurs to the support of faculty in that imagination ; and though it may be replied, an atheist may imagine that there is no God ; a man may imagine that God can lie, or be destroyed ; doth God know therefore that he is not, or that he can lie, or cease to be ? No, he knows he cannot ; his knowledge extends to things possible, not to things impossible to himself ; he knows it as imaginable by man, but not as possible in itself ; because it is utterly impossible, and repugnant to the nature of God, since he eminently contains in himself all things possible, past, present, and to come ; he cannot know himself without knowing them.

God knowing his own power, knows whatsoever is in his power to effect.—If he knows not all things possible, he could not know the extent of his own power, and so would not know himself, as a cause sufficient for more things than he hath created. How can he comprehend himself, who comprehends not all effluxes of things possible that may come from him, and be wrought by him ? How can he know himself as a cause, if he know not the objects and works which he is able to produce ? Since the power of God extends to numberless things, his knowledge also extends to numberless objects ; as if an unit could see the numbers it could produce, it would see infinite numbers ; for an unit is,
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as it were, all number. God knowing the fruitfulness of his own virtue, knows a numberless multitude of things which he can do, more than have been done, or shall be done by him; he therefore knows innumerable worlds, innumerable angels, with higher perfections than any of them which he hath created have: so that if the world should last many millions of years, God knows that he can every day create another world more capacious than this; and having created an inconceivable number, he knows he could still create more: so that he beholds infinite worlds, infinite numbers of men and other creatures in himself, infinite kinds of things, infinite species and individuals under those kinds, even as many as he can create, if his will did order and determine it; for not being ignorant of his own power, he cannot be ignorant of the effects wherein it may display and discover itself. A comprehensive knowledge of his own power doth necessarily include the objects of that power; so he knows whatsoever he could effect, and whatsoever he could permit, if he pleased to do it.

If God could not understand more than he hath created, he could not create more than he hath created: for it cannot be conceived how he can create any thing that he is ignorant of; what he doth not know, he cannot do: he must know also the extent of his own goodness, and how far any thing is capable to partake of it: so much therefore any detract from the knowledge of God, they detract from his power.

It is further evident that God knows all possible things, because he knew those things which he has created, before they were created, when they were yet in a possibility. If God knew things before they were created, he knew them when they were in a possibility, and not in actual reality. It is absurd to imagine that his understanding

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did lack after the creatures, and draw knowledge from them after they were created. It is absurd to think that God did create, before he knew what he could or would create. If he knew those things he did create when they were possible, he must know all things which he can create, and therefore all things that are possible.

To conclude this, we must consider that this knowledge is of another kind than his knowledge of things that are or shall be. He sees possible things as possible, not as things that ever are or shall be. If he saw them as existing or future, and they shall never be, this knowledge would be false, there would be a deceit in it, which cannot be. He knows those things not in themselves, because they are not, nor in their causes because they shall never be: he knows them in his own power, not in his will: he understands them as able to produce them, not as willing to effect them. Things possible he knows only in his power, things future he knows both in his power and his will, as he is both able and determined in his own good pleasure to give being to them. Those that shall never come to pass, he knows only in himself, as a sufficient cause; those things that shall come into being, he knows in himself as the efficient cause, and also in their immediate second causes.

This should teach us to spend our thoughts in the admirations of the excellency of God, and the divine knowledge; his understanding is infinite.

God knows all things past.—This is an argument used by God himself to elevate his excellency above all the commonly adored idols, Isa. xli. 22. *Let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them.* He knows them as if they were now present, and not past: for indeed in his eternity there is nothing past or future to his knowledge. This is called remembrance in scripture, as when God remem-
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bered Rachel's prayer for a child, Gen. xxx. 22. and he is said to put tears into his bottle, and write them in his book of accompts, which signifies the exact and unerring knowledge in God of the minute circumstances past in the world; and this knowledge is called a book of remembrance, Mal. iii. 16. signifying the perpetual presence of things past, before him. There are two elegant expressions, signifying the certainty and perpetuity of God's knowledge of sins past, Job xiv. 17. *My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up my iniquity.* A metaphor taken from men that put up in a bag the money they would cautiously keep, tie the bag, sew up the holes, and bind it hard that nothing may fall out; or a vessel wherein they reserve liquors, and daub it with pitch and glutinous stuff, that nothing may leak out, but be safely kept till the time of use. Or else, as some think, from the bags attornys carry with them, full of writings, when they are to manage a cause against a person. Thus we find God often in scripture calling to men's minds their past actions, upbraiding them with their ingratitude, wherein he testifies his remembrance of his own past benefits, and their crimes. His knowledge in this regard hath something of infinity in it, since though the sins of all men that have been in the world are finite in regard of number, yet when the sins of one man in thoughts, words, and deeds, are numberless in his own account, and perhaps in the count of any creature, the sins of all the vast numbers of men that have been, or shall be, are much more numberless, it cannot be less than infinite knowledge that can make a collection of them, and take a survey of them all at once.

If past things had not been known by God, how could Moses have been acquainted with the original of things? How could he have declared the former transactions, wherein all histories are silent but the

scripture? How could he know the cause of man's present misery so many ages after, wherewith all philosophy was unacquainted? How could he have wrote the order of the creation, the particulars of the sin of Adam, the circumstances of Cain's murder, the private speech of Lamech to his wives, if God had not revealed them? And how could a revelation be made, if things past were forgotten by him? Do we not remember many things done among men, as well as by ourselves, and reserve the forms of divers things in our minds, which arise as occasions are presented to draw them forth? And shall not God much more, who hath no cloud of darkness upon his understanding? A man that makes a curious picture, hath the form of it in his mind before he made it; and if the fire burn it, the form of it in his mind is not destroyed by the fire, but retained in it. God's memory is no less perfect than his understanding: if he did not know things past, he could not be a righteous governor, or exercise any judicial act in a righteous manner; he could not dispense rewards and punishments according to his promises and threatenings, if things that were past could be forgotten by him; he could not require that which is past, if he did not remember that which is past.

And though God be said to forget in scripture, and not to know his people, and his people pray to him to remember them, as if he had forgotten them: this is improperly ascribed to God. As God is said to repent, when he changes things according to his counsel beyond the expectation of men; so he is said to forget, when he defers the making good his promise to the godly, or his threatenings to the wicked; this is not a defect of memory belonging to his mind, but an act of his will: when he is said to remember his covenant, it is to will grace according to his covenant; when he is said to forget his covenant, it is to intercept the

the influences of it, whereby to punish the sin of his people; and when he is said not to know his people, it is not an absolute forgetfulness of them, but withdrawing from them the testimonies of his kindness, and clouding the signs of his favour; so God in pardon is said to forget sin, not that he ceaseth to know it, but ceaseth to punish it: it is not to be meant of a simple forgetfulness, or a lapse of his memory, but of a judicial forgetfulness; so when his people in scripture pray, Lord remember thy word unto thy servant; no more is to be understood, but Lord fulfil thy word and promise to thy servant.

He knows things present.—Heb. iv. 13. *All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*; this is grounded upon the knowledge of himself; it is not so difficult to know all creatures exactly, as to know himself, because they are finite, but himself is infinite; he knows his own power, and therefore every thing through which his omnipotence is diffused, all the acts and objects of it; not the least thing that is the birth of his power, can be concealed from him; he knows his own goodness, and therefore every object upon which the warm beams of his goodness strike; he therefore knows distinctly the properties of every creature, because every property in them is a ray of his goodness; he is not only the efficient, but the exemplary cause; therefore as he knows all that his power hath wrought, as he is the efficient, so he knows them in himself as the pattern. As a carpenter can give an account of every part and passage in a house he hath built, by consulting the model in his own mind, whereby he built it. *He looked upon all things after he had made them, and pronounced them good*, Gen. i. 31. full of a natural goodness he had endowed them with; he did not ignorantly pronounce them so, and call them good, whether he knew them or not; and therefore he

knows them in particular, as he knew them all in their first presence. Is there any reason he should be ignorant of every thing now present in the world, or that any thing that derives an existence from him as a free cause, should be concealed from him? If he did not know things present in their particularities, many things would be known by man, yea by beasts, which the infinite God was ignorant of; and if he did not know all things present, but only some; it is possible for the most blessed God to be deceived and be miserable: ignorance is a calamity to the understanding: he could not prescribe laws to his creatures, unless he knew their natures, to which those laws were to be suited; no, not natural ordinances to the sun, moon, and heavenly bodies, and inanimate creatures, unless he knew the vigour and virtue in them, to execute those ordinances; for to prescribe laws above the nature of things, is inconsistent with the wisdom of government; he must know how far they were able to obey; whether the laws were suited to their ability: and for his rational creatures, whether the punishments annexed to the laws, were proper, and suited to the transgression of the creature.

He knows all creatures from the highest to the lowest, the least as well as the greatest.—He knows the ravens and their young ones; the drops of rain and dew which he hath begotten; every bird in the air, as well as any man, doth what he hath in a cage at home, Psa. l. 11. *I know all the fowls in the mountains, and the wild beasts in the field; which some read creeping things. The clouds are numbered in his wisdom,* Job xxxviii. 37. every worm in the earth, every drop of rain that falls upon the ground, the flakes of snow, and the knots of hail, the sands upon the sea shore, the hairs upon the head; it is no more absurd to imagine that God knows them, than that God made them; they are all the effects of his power, as well as the stars,
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which he calls by their names, as well as the most glorious angel and blessed spirit; he knows them as well, as if there were none but them in particular for him to know; the least things were framed by his art as well as the greatest; the least things partake of his goodness as well as the greatest; he knows his own arts and his own goodness, and therefore all the stamps and impressions of them upon all his creatures; he knows the immediate causes of the least, and therefore the effects of those causes. Since his knowledge is infinite, it must extend to those things which are the greatest distance from him, to those which approach nearest to not being; since he did not want power to create, he cannot want understanding to know every thing he hath created, the dispositions, qualities, and virtues of the minutest creature.

Nor is the understanding of God embased, and suffers a diminution by the knowledge of the vilest and most inconsiderable things: is it not an imperfection to be ignorant of the nature of any thing? and can God have such a defect in his most perfect understanding? Is the understanding of man of an impurer alloy, by knowing the nature of the rankest poisons? by understanding a fly? or a small insect? or by considering the deformity of a toad? Is it not generally counted a note of a dignified mind, to be able to discourse of the nature of them? Was Solomon, who knew all from the cedar to the hyssop, debased by so rich a present of wisdom from his creator? Is any glass defiled by presenting a deformed image? Is there any thing more vile than the imaginations, which are only evil, and continually? doth not the mind of man descend to the mud of the earth, play the adulterer or idolater with mean objects, suck in the most unclean things? yet God knows these in all their circumstances, in every appearance, inside and outside. Is there any thing viler than some thoughts of men? than

some actions of men? their unclean beds and glutinous vomiting, and luciferian pride? yet do not these fall under the eye of God, in all their nakedness? The Second Person's taking human nature, though it obfured, yet it did not disparage the deity, or bring any disgrace to it. Is gold the worse for being formed into the image of a fly? doth it not still retain the nobleness of the metal? When men are despised for descending to the knowledge of mean and vile things, it is because they neglect the knowledge of the greater, and sin in their enquiries after lesser things, with a neglect of that which concerns more the honour of God and the happiness of themselves; to be ambitious of such a knowledge, and careless of that of more concern, is criminal and contemptible. But God knows the greatest as well as the least; mean things are not known by him to exclude the knowledge of the greater; nor are vile things governed by him to exclude the order of the better. The deformity of objects known by God, doth not deform him, nor defile him; he doth not view them without himself, but within himself, wherein all things in their ideas are beautiful and comely: our knowledge of a deformed thing, is not a deforming of our understanding, but is beautiful in the knowledge, though it be not in the object; nor is there any fear that the understanding of God should become material by knowing material things, any more than our understandings lose their spirituality by knowing the nature of bodies: it is to be observed therefore that only those senses of men, as seeing, hearing, smelling, which have those qualities for their objects that come nearest the nature of spiritual things, as light, sounds, fragrant odours, are ascribed to God in scripture; not touching or tasting, which are senses that are not exercised without a more immediate commerce with gross matter; and the reason may be, because we should have no gross thoughts

thoughts of God, as if he were a body, and made of matter, like the things he knows.

As he knows all creatures, so God knows all the actions of creatures. He counts in particular all the ways of men. *Doth he not see all my ways, and count all my steps?* Job xxxi. 4. He tells their wanderings, as if one by one, Psa. lvi. 8. *His eyes are upon all the ways of man, and he sees all his goings,* Job xxxiv. 21. a metaphor taken from men, when they look earnestly, with fixed eyes upon a thing, to view it in every circumstance, whence it comes, whither it goes, to observe every little motion of it. God's eye is not a wandering, but a fixed eye; and the ways of man are not only before his eyes, but he doth exactly ponder them; as one that will not be ignorant of the least mite in them, but weigh and examine them by the standard of his law; he may as well know the motions of our members, as the hairs of our heads; the smallest actions before they be, whether civil, natural or religious, fall under his cognizance; what meaner than a man carrying a pitcher, yet our Saviour foretels it, Luke xxii. 10. God knows not only what men do, but what they would have done, had he not restrained them; what Abimelech would have done to Sarah, had not God put a bar in his way, Gen. xx. 6. What a man that is taken away in his youth, would have done, had he lived to a riper age; yea he knows the most secret words as well as actions; the words spoken by the King of Israel in his bed chamber, were revealed to Elisha, 2 Kings vi. 12. and indeed how can any action of man be concealed from God? Can we view the various actions of a heap of ants or a hive of bees in a glass, without turning our eyes; and shall not God behold the actions of all men in the world, which are less than bees or ants in his sight, and more visible to him than an ant-hill or bee-hive can be to the acutest eye of man?

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As God knows all the actions of creatures, so he knows all the thoughts of creatures. The thoughts are most closetted acts of man, hid from men and angels, unless disclosed by some outward expressions; but God descends into the depths and abysses of the soul, discerns the most inward contrivances; nothing is impenetrable to him; the sun doth not so much enlighten the earth, as God understands the heart; all thoughts are as visible to him, as flies and motes enclosed in a body of transparent chrystal; this man naturally allows to God. Men often speak to God by the motions of their minds and secret ejaculations; which they would not do, if it were not naturally implanted in them, that God knows all their inward motions; the scripture is plain and positive in this, *He tries the heart and the reins*, Psa. vii. 9. as men by the use of fire discern the drossy and purer parts of metals: the secret intentions and aims, the most lurking affections seated in the reins; he knows that which no man, no angel is able to know, which a man himself knows not, nor makes any particular reflection upon; yea *he weighs the spirit*, Prov. xvi. 2. He exactly numbers all the devices and inclinations of men, as men do every piece of coin they tell out of a heap. *He discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart*, Heb. iv. 12. all that is in the mind, all that is in the affections, every stirring and purpose; so that not one thought can be withheld from him, Job. xlii. 2. *yea hell and destruction are before him, much more then the hearts of the children of men?* Prov. xv. 11. He works all things in the bowels of the earth, and brings forth all things out of that treasure, say some: but more naturally, God knows the whole state of the dead, all the receptacles and graves of their bodies, all the bodies of men consumed by the earth, or devoured by living creatures; things that seem to be out of all being; he knows the thoughts of the devils and damned creatures,

creatures, whom he hath cast out of his care for ever, into the arms of his justice, never more to cast a delightful glance towards them; not a secret in any soul in hell, (which he hath no need to know, because he shall not judge them by any of the thoughts they now have, since they were condemned to punishment) is hid from him; much more is he acquainted with the thoughts of living men, the counsels of whose hearts are yet to be manifested, in order to their trial and censure; yea, he knows them before they spring up into actual being, Psa. cxxxix. 2. *thou understoodst my thoughts afar off*; my thoughts, that is, every thought; though innumerable thoughts pass through me in a day, and that in the source and fountain, when it is yet in the womb, before it is our thought; if he knows them before their existence, before they can be properly called ours, much more doth he know them when they actually spring up in us; he knows the tendency of them, where the bird will light when it is in flight; he knows them exactly, he is therefore called a discerner or criticiser of the heart, Heb. iv. 12. As a critic discerns every letter, point, and stop; he is more intimate with us than our souls with our bodies, and hath more the possession of us than we have of ourselves; he knows them by an inspection into the heart, not by the mediation of second causes, by the looks or gestures of men, as men may discern the thoughts of one another.

God discerns all good motions of the mind and will.—These he puts into men, and needs must God know his own act; he knew the son of *Jeroboam to have some good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel*, 1 Kings xiv. 13. and the integrity of David and Hezekiah; the freest motions of the will and affections to him. *Lord thou knowest that I love thee*, saith Peter, John xxi. 17. Love can be no more restrained, than the will itself can. A man may
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make another to grieve and desire, but none can force another to love.

God discerns all the evil notions of the mind and will.—*Every imagination of the heart*, Gen. vi. 5. the vanity of *mens thoughts*, Psa. xciv. 11. their inward darkness and deceitful disguises: no wonder that God who fashioned the heart, should understand the motions of it, Psa. xxxiii. 13, 15. *He looks from heaven and beholds all the children of men: he fashioneth their hearts alike, and considers all their works.* Doth any man make a watch, and yet be ignorant of its motion? Did God fling away the key to this secret cabinet, when he framed it, and put off the power of unlocking it when he pleased? He did not surely frame it in such a posture as that any thing in it should be hid from his eye; he did not fashion it to be privileged from his government; which would follow, if he were ignorant of what was minted and coined in it.

He could not be a judge to punish men, if the inward frames and principles of men's actions were concealed from him; an outward action may glitter to an outward eye, yet the secret spring be a desire of applause, and not the fear and love of God. If the inward frames of the heart did lye covered from him in the secret recesses of the heart; those plausible acts, which in regard of their principles, would merit a punishment, would meet with a reward; and God should bestow happiness where he had denounced misery. As without the knowledge of what is just, he could not be a wise law-giver; so without the knowledge of what is inwardly committed, he could not be a righteous judge; acts that are rotten in the spring, might be judged good by the fair colour and appearance.

This is the glory of God at the last day, *to manifest the secrets of all hearts*, 1 Cor. iv. 5. and the prophet Jeremiah links the power of judging, and the prerogative of trying the hearts, together,
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Jer. xi. 20. *but thou, O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, that tryest the reins and the heart:* and Jer. xvii. 10. *I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins;* to what end? even to give every man according to his way, and according to the fruit of his doings. And indeed his binding up the whole law with that command of not coveting, evidenceth that he will judge men by the inward affections and frames of their hearts. Again, God sustains the mind of man in every act of thinking; in him we have not only the principle of life, but every motion, the motion of our minds as well as of our members: *In him we live and move, &c.* Acts xvii. 28. Since he supports the vigor of the faculty in every act, can he be ignorant of those acts which spring from the faculty, to which he doth at that instant communicate power and ability?

Now this knowledge of the thoughts of men is an incommunicable property, belonging only to the divine understanding.—Creatures indeed may know the thoughts of others by divine revelation, but not by themselves; no creature hath a key immediately to open the minds of men, and see all that lodgeth there; no creature can fathom the heart by the line of created knowledge. Devils may have a conjectural knowledge, and may guess at them, by the acquaintance they have with the disposition and constitution of men, and the images they behold in their fancies; and by some marks which an inward imagination may stamp upon the brain, blood, animal spirits, face, &c. but the knowing the thoughts merely as thought, without any impression by it, is a royalty God appropriates to himself, as the main secret of his government, and a perfection declarative of his deity, as much as any else, Jer. xvii. 9, 10. *the heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it? yes, there is one, and but one, I the Lord search the heart I try the reins. Man looks on the outward appearance,*
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but the Lord looks upon the heart, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. where God is distinguished by this perfection from all men whatsoever; others may know by revelation, as Elisha did, what was in *Gebazi's heart*, 2 Kings v. 26. But God knows a man more than any man knows himself; what person upon earth understands the windings and turnings of his own heart, what reserves it will have, what contrivances, what inclinations? all which God knows exactly.

God knows all sin.—If he knows all the actions and thoughts of creatures, he knows also the sinfulness in those acts and thoughts. This Zophar infers from God's punishing men, Job xi. 11. *For he knows vain man, he sees his wickedness also*; he knows every man, and sees the wickedness of every man: *He looks down from heaven*, and beholds not only the filthy persons, but what is filthy in them; all nations in the world, and every man of every nation, none of their iniquity is hid from his eyes: *He searches Jerusalem with candles*, Jer. xvi. 17. God follows sinners step by step with his eye, and will not leave searching out till he hath taken them; a metaphor taken from one that searcheth all chinks with a candle, that nothing can be hid from him. He knows it distinctly in all the parts of it; how an adulterer rises out of his bed to commit uncleanness, what contrivances he had, what steps he took, every circumstance in the whole progress; not only evil in the bulk, but every one of the blacker spots upon it, which may most aggravate it. If he did not know evil, how could he permit it, order it, punish it, or pardon it? Doth he permit he knows not what? order to his own holy ends what he is ignorant of? punish or pardon that which he is uncertain whether it be a crime or no? *Cleanse me*, saith David, *from my secret faults*, Psa. xix. 12. secret in regard of others, secret in regard of himself; how could God cleanse him from that whereof
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he was ignorant? He knows sins before they are committed, much more when they are in act; he foreknew the idolatry and apostacy of the Jews; what gods they would serve, in what measure they would provoke him, and violate his covenant; he knew Judas's sin long before Judas's actual existence, foretelling it in the psalms; and Christ predicted it before he acted it. He sees sin future in his own permitting will; he sees sin present in his own supporting act. As he knows things possible to himself, because he knows his own power, so he knows things practicable by the creature, because he knows the power and principles of the creature. This sentiment of God is naturally writ in the fears of sinners, upon lightening, thunder, or some prodigious operation of God in the world; what is the language of them, but that he sees their deeds, hears their words, knows the inward sinfulness of their hearts; that he doth not only behold them as a mere spectator, but considers them as a just judge. And the poets say, that the sins of men leaped into heaven, and were writ in parchments of Jupiter: sin is acted on earth and recorded in heaven. God indeed doth not behold evil with the approving eye; he knows it not with a practical knowledge to be the author of it, but with a speculative knowledge, so as to understand the sinfulness of it; or a knowledge *simplicis intelligentiæ*, of simple intelligence, as he permits them, not positively wills them; he knows them not with a knowledge of assent to them, but dissent from them. Evil pertains to a dissenting act of the mind, and an aversive act of the will; and what though evil formally taken, hath no distinct conceptions, because it is a privation; a defect hath no being, and all knowledge is by the apprehension of some being; would not this lie as strongly against our own knowledge of sin? Sin is a privation of the rectitude due to an act; and who doubts man's knowledge of sin? by his knowing
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the act, he knows the deficiency of the act; the subject of evil hath a being, and so hath a conception in the mind; that which hath no being cannot be known by itself, or in itself; but will it follow that it cannot be known by its contrary? as we know darknefs to be a privation of light, and folly to be a privation of wisdom. God knows all good by himself, because he is the sovereign good; is it strange then, that he should know all evil, since all evil is in some natural good?

God knows all future things, all things to come. — The differences of time cannot hinder a knowledge of all things by him, who is before time, above time, that is not measured by hours, or days, or years; if God did not know them, the hinderance must be in himself, or in the things themselves, because they are things to come: not in himself, if it did, it must arise from some impotency in his own nature, and so we render him weak; or from an unwillingness to know, and so we render him lazy, and an enemy to his own perfection; for simply considered, the knowledge of more things is a greater perfection than the knowledge of a few; and if the knowledge of a thing includes something of perfection, the ignorance of a thing includes something of imperfection: the knowledge of future things is a greater perfection than not to know them, and is accounted among men a great part of wisdom, which they call foresight; it is then surely a greater perfection in God to know future things than to be ignorant of them. And would God rather have something of imperfection than be possessor of all perfection? nor doth the hinderance lie in the things themselves, because their futurity depends upon his will; for as nothing can actually be without his will, giving it existence; so nothing can be future without his will, designing the futurity of it. Certainly if God knows all things possible, which he will not do, he must know all things
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future, which he is not only able, but resolved to do, or resolved to permit. God's perfect knowledge of himself, that is, of his own infinite power and concluding will, necessarily includes a foreknowledge of what he is able to do, and what he will do.

Again, if God doth not know future things, there was a time when God was ignorant of most things in the world; for before the deluge he was more ignorant than after; the more things were done in the world, the more knowledge did accrue to God, and so the more perfection; then the understanding of God was not perfect from eternity, but in time; nay, is not perfect yet, if he be ignorant of those things which are still to come to pass; he must tarry for a perfection, he wants till those futurities come to be in act, till those things which are to come, cease to be future, and begin to be present. Either God knows them or desires to know them; if he desires to know them and doth not, there is something wanting to him; all desire speaks an absence of the object desired, and a sentiment of want in the person desiring: if he doth not desire to know them, nay, if he doth not actually know them, it destroys all providence, all his government of affairs; for his providence hath a concatenation of means with a prospect of something that is future: as in Joseph's case, who was put into the pit, and sold to the Egyptians in order to his future advancement, and the preservation both of his father and his envious brethren. If God did not know all the future inclinations and actions of men, something might have been done by the will of Potiphar, or by the free will of Pharaoh, whereby Joseph might have been cut short of his advancement, and so God have been interrupted in the track and method of his designed providences. He that hath decreed to govern man for that end he hath designed him, knows all the means before, whereby he will

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govern him; and therefore hath a distinct and certain knowledge of all things; for a confused knowledge is an imperfection in government; it is in this the infiniteness of his understanding is more seen than in knowing things past or present; his eyes are a *flame of fire*, Rev. i. 14. in regard of the penetrating virtue of them into things impenetrable by any else.

To make it further appear, that God knows all things future, consider that every thing which is the object of God's knowledge without himself, was once only future.—There was a moment when nothing was in being but himself; he knew nothing actually past, because nothing was past; nothing actually present, because nothing had any existence but himself; therefore only what was future; and why not every thing that is future now, as well as only what was future and to come to pass just at the beginning of the creation? God indeed knows every thing as present, but the things themselves know by him were not present but future; the whole creation was once future, or else it was from eternity; if it begun in time, it was once future in itself, else it could never have begun to be; did not God know what would be created by him, before it was created by him? Did he create he knew not what, and knew not before, what he should create? Was he ignorant before he acted, and in his acting, what his operation would tend to? or did he not know the nature of things, and the ends of them, till he had produced them, and saw them in being? Creatures then did not arise from his knowledge, but his knowledge from them; he did not then will that his creatures should be, for he had then willed what he knew not, and knew not what he willed; they therefore must be known before they were made, and not known because they were made; he knew them to make them, and he did not make them to know them. By the same
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reason that he knew what creatures should be before they were, he knows still what creatures shall be before they are; for all things that are, were in God, not really in their own nature, but in him as a cause; so the earth and heavens were in him, as a model is in the mind of a workman, which is in his mind and soul, before it be brought forth into outward act.

The predictions of future things evidence this.—There is not a prophecy of any thing to come, but is a spark of his fore-knowledge, and bears witness to the truth of this assertion, in the punctual accomplishment of it; this is a thing challenged by God as his own peculiar, wherein he surmounts all the idols that man's inventions have godded in the world, Isa. xli. 21. 22. *Let them bring forth (speaking of the idols) and shew us what shall happen, or declare us things to come: shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods.* Such a fore-knowledge of things to come, is here ascribed to God by God himself, as a distinction of him from all false gods; such a knowledge, that if any could prove that they were possessors of, he would acknowledge them gods as well as himself; that we may know that you are gods; he puts his deity to stand or fall upon this account, and this should be the point which should decide the controversy, whether he or the heathen idols were the true God; the dispute is managed by this medium. He that knows things to come, is God; I know things to come, *ergo*, I am God; the idols know not things to come, therefore they are not gods; God submits the being of his deity to this trial. If God know things to come no more than the heathen idols, which were either devils or men, he would be in his own account, no more a god than devils and men; no more a god than the Pagan idols he doth scoff at for this defect. If the heathen idols were to be stript of their deity for want of this foreknowledge of things to

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come, would not the true God also fall from the same excellency, if he were defective in knowledge? he would in his own judgment no more deserve the title and character of a God than they. How could he reproach them for that, if it were wanting in himself? It cannot be understood of future things in their causes, when the effects necessarily arise from such causes, as light from the sun, and heat from the fire; many of these, men know; more of them, angels and devils know; if God therefore had not a higher and further knowledge than this, he would not by this be proved to be God, any more than angels and devils, who know necessary effects in their causes. The devils indeed did predict some things in the heathen oracles; but God is differenced from them here by the infiniteness of his knowledge, in being able to predict things to come that they knew not, or things in their particularities, things that depended on the liberty of man's will, which the devils could lay no claim to a certain knowledge of. Were it only a conjectural knowledge that is here meant, the devils might answer, they can conjecture, and so their deity were as good as God's; for though God might know more things, and conjecture nearer to what would be, yet still it would be but conjectural, and therefore not a higher kind of knowledge than what the devils might challenge. How much then is God beholden to the Socinians for denying the knowledge of all future things to him, upon which here he puts the trial of his deity? God asserts his knowledge of things to come, as a manifest evidence of his godhead; those that deny therefore the argument that proves it, deny the conclusion too; for this will necessarily follow, that if he be God because he knows future things, then he that doth not know future things is not God; and if God knows not future things but only by conjecture, then there is no God; because a certain knowledge

knowledge so as infallibly to predict things to come, is an inseparable perfection of the deity: it was therefore well said of Austin, that it was as high a madness to deny God to be, as to deny him the foreknowledge of things to come.

The whole prophetic part of scripture declares this perfection of God; every prophet's candle was lighted at this torch; they could not have this foreknowledge of themselves; why might not many other men have the same insight, if it were by nature? it must be from some superior agent; and all nations owned prophecy as a beam from God, a fruit of divine illumination: prophecy must be totally expunged if this be denied; for the subjects of prophecy are things future; and no man is properly a prophet, but in prediction; now prediction is nothing but foretelling, and things foretold are not yet come; and the foretelling of them, supposeth them not to be yet, but that they shall be in time; several such predictions we have in scripture, the event whereof hath been certain. The years of famine in Egypt foretold that he would order second causes for bringing that judgment upon them; the captivity of his people in Babylon, the calling of the Gentiles, the rejection of the Jews; Daniel's revelation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; that prince refers to God as the revealer of secrets, Dan. ii. 47. By the same reason that he knows one thing future by himself, and by the infiniteness of his knowledge before any causes of them appear, he doth know all things future.

Some future things are known by men; and we must allow God a greater knowledge than any creature. Future things in their causes may be known by angels and men, (as I said before;) whosoever knows necessary causes, and the efficacy of them, may foretel the effects; and when he sees the meeting and concurrence of several causes together, he may presage what the consequent effect will be

of such a concurrence: so physicians foretel the progress of a disease, the increase or diminution of it by natural signs; and astronomers foretel eclipses by their observation of the motion of heavenly bodies, many years before they happen, can they be hid from God, with whom are the reasons of all things? an expert gardener by knowing the root in the depth of winter, can tell what flowers and what fruit it will bear, and the month when they will peep out their heads; and shall not God much more that knows the principles of all his creatures, and is exactly privy to all their natures and qualities, know what they will be, and what operations shall be from those principles? Now if God did know things only in their causes, his knowledge would not be more excellent than the knowledge of angels and men, though he might know more than they of the things that will come to pass, from every cause singly, and from the concurrence of many. Now as God is more excellent in being than his creature; so he is more excellent in the objects of his knowledge and the manner of his knowledge; well then, shall a certain knowledge of something future, and a conjectural knowledge of many things, be found among men; and shall a determinate and infallible knowledge of things to come, be found no where, in no being? If the conjecture of future things favours of ignorance, and God knows them only by conjecture, there is then no such thing in being as a perfect intelligent being, and so no God.

God knows his own decree and will, and therefore must needs know all future things. If any thing be future, or to come to pass, it must be from itself or from God; not from itself, then it would be independant and absolute; if it hath its futurity from God, then God must know what he hath decreed to come to pass; those things that are future in necessary causes, God must know, because he willed them

them to be causes of such effects; he therefore knows them, because he knows what he willed: the knowledge of God cannot arise from the things themselves, for then the knowledge of God would have a cause without him; and knowledge, which is an eminent perfection, would be conferred upon him by his creatures. But as God sees things possible in the glass of his own power, so he sees things future in the glass of his own will; in his effecting will, if he hath decreed to produce them; in his permitting will, as he hath decreed to suffer them and dispose of them: nothing can pass out of the rank of things merely possible into the order of things future, before some act of God's will hath passed for its futurity.

It is not from the infiniteness of his own nature simply considered, that God knows things to be future; for as things are not future because God is infinite, (for then all possible things should be future) so neither is any thing known to be future only because God is infinite, but because God hath decreed it; his declaration of things to come, is founded upon his appointment of things to come. In Isa. xliv. 7. it is said, *and who, as I, shall call and declare it, since I appointed the ancient people, and the things that are coming?* Nothing is created or ordered in the world, but what God decreed to be created and ordered. God knows his own decree, and therefore all things which he hath decreed to exist in time; not the minutest part of the world could have existed without his will, not an action can be done without his will; as life, the principle, so motion, the fruit of that life, is by and from God; as he decreed life to this or that thing, so he decreed motion, as the effect of life, and decreed to exert his power in concurring with them, for producing effects natural from such causes; for without such a concurrence they could not have acted any thing, or produced any thing; and therefore as for

natural things, which we call necessary causes, God foreseeing them all particularly in his own decree, foresaw also all effects which must necessarily flow from them, because such causes cannot but act when they are furnished with all things necessary for action: he knows his own decrees, and therefore necessarily knows what he hath decreed, or else we must say things come to pass whether God will or no; or, that he wills he knows not what; but this cannot be, for *known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*, Acts xv. 18. Now this necessarily flows from that principle first laid down, that God knows himself, since nothing is future without God's will; if God did not future things, he would not know his own will; for as things possible could not be known by him, unless he knew the fulness of his own power; so things future could not be known by his understanding, unless he knew the resolves of his own will.

Thus the knowledge of God differs from the knowledge of men; God's knowledge of his works precedes his works, man's knowledge of God's works follows his works; just as an artificer's knowledge of a watch, instrument or engine, which he would make, is before his making it; he knows the motions of it, and the reason of those motions before it is made, because he knows what he hath determined to work; he knows not those motions from the consideration of them after they were made, as the spectator doth, who by viewing the instrument after it is made, gains a knowledge from the sight and consideration of it, till he understands the reason of the whole; so we know things from the consideration of them after we see them in being, and therefore we know not future things. But God's knowledge doth not arise from things because they are, but because he wills them to be, and therefore he knows every thing that shall be, because

cause it cannot be without his will, as the creator and maintainer of all things; knowing his own substance he knows all his works.

1. God knows by his own essence;—that is, he sees the nature of things in the ideas of his own mind, and the events of things in the decrees of his own will; he knows them, not by viewing the things, but by viewing himself; his own essence is the mirror and book, wherein he beholds all things that he doth ordain, dispose and execute; and so he knows all things in their first and original cause; which is no other than his own essence willing, and his own essence executing what he wills; he knows them in his power, as the physical principle; in his will, as the moral principle of things, as some speak.

Thirdly, How God knows all things? In particular

He borrows not the knowledge of creatures from the creatures, nor depends upon them for means of understanding, as we poor worms do, who are beholden to the objects abroad to assist us with images of things, and to our senses to convey them into our minds; God would then acquire a perfection from those things which are below himself, and an excellency from those things that are vile; his knowledge would not precede the being of the creatures, but the creatures would be before the act of his knowledge. If he understood by images, drawn from the creatures, as we do, there would be something in God which is not God, *viz.* the images of things drawn from outward objects: God would then depend upon creatures for that which is more noble than a bare being; for to be understanding, is more excellent than barely to be. Besides, if God's knowledge of his creatures, were derived from the creature, by the impression of any thing upon him, as there is upon us, he could not know from eternity, because from eternity there was no actual existence of any thing but himself; and therefore there could not be any images shot
out

out from any thing, because there was not any thing in being but God; as there is no principle of being to any thing but by his essence; so there is no principle of the knowledge of any thing by himself but his essence. If the knowledge of God were distinct from his essence, his knowledge were not eternal, because there is nothing eternal but his essence.

His understanding is not a faculty in him as it is in us, but the same with his essence, because of the simplicity of his nature; God is not made up of various parts, one distinct from another as we are, and therefore doth not understand by a part of himself, but by himself; so that to be, and to understand, is the same with God; his essence is not one thing, and the power whereby he understands, another; he would then be compounded, and not be the most simple being: this also is necessary for the perfection of God; for the more perfect and noble the way and manner of knowing is, the more perfect and noble is the knowledge. The perfection of knowledge depends upon the excellency of the medium whereby we know. As a knowledge by reason, is a more noble way of knowing, than knowledge by sense; so it is more excellent for God to know by his essence, than by any thing without him, any thing mixed with him; the first would render him dependant, and the other would demolish his simplicity.

Again, the natures of all things are contained in God; not formally, for then the nature of the creatures would be God: but eminently; *he that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?* Psa. xciv. 9. He hath in himself eminently the beauty, perfection, life, and vigor of all creatures; he created nothing contrary to himself, but every thing with some foot-steps of himself in them; he could not have pronounced them good, as he did, had there been any thing in them.

them contrary to his own goodness ; and therefore as his essence primarily represents itself, so it represents the creatures, and makes them known to him. As the essence of God is eminently all things, so by understanding his essence, he eminently understands all things. And therefore he hath not one knowledge of himself, and another knowledge of the creatures ; but by knowing himself, as the original and exemplary cause of all things, he cannot be ignorant of any creature which he is the cause of ; so that he knows all things, not by an understanding of them, but by an understanding of himself ; by understanding his own power as the efficient of them, his own will as the orderer of them, his own goodness as the adorer and beautifier of them, his own wisdom as the disposer of them, and his own holiness, to which many of their actions are contrary.

As he sees all things possible in his own power, because he is able to produce them ; so he sees all things future in his own will, decreeing to effect them, if they be good, or decreeing to permit them, if they be evil. In this glass he sees what he will give being to, and what he will suffer to fall into a deficiency, without looking out of himself, or borrowing knowledge from his creatures ; he knows all things in himself. And thus his knowledge is more noble, and of a higher elevation than ours, or the knowledge of any creature can be ; he knows all things by one comprehension of the causes in himself.

2. God knows all things by one act of intuition. — This the schools call an intuitive knowledge. This follows upon the other ; for if he know by his own essence, he knows all things by one act, there would be otherwise a division in his essence, a first and a last, a nearness and a distance. As what he made, he made by one word ; so what he sees, he pierceth into by one glance from eternity to eternity :

nity: as he wills all things by one act of his will, so he knows all things by one act of his understanding: he knows not some things discursively from other things, nor knows one thing successively after another. As by one act he imparts essence to things; so by one act he knows the nature of things.

He doth not know by discourse, as we do.—That is, by deducing one thing from another, and from common notions drawing out other rational conclusions and arguing one thing from another, and springing up various consequences from some principle assented to; but God stands in no need of reasonings; the making inferences and abstracting things, would be stains in the infinite perfection of God; here would be a mixture of knowledge and ignorance; while he knew the principle, he would not know the consequence and conclusion, till he had actually deduced it; one thing would be known after another, and so he would have an ignorance, then a knowledge; and there would be different conceptions in God, and knowledge would be multiplied according to the multitude of objects; as it is in human understandings. But God knows all things before they did exist, and never was ignorant of them, Acts xv. 18. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.* He therefore knows them all at once; the knowledge of one thing was not before another, nor depended upon another, as it doth in the way of human reasoning. Though indeed some make a virtual discourse in God; that is, though God hath a simple knowledge, yet it doth virtually contain a discourse by the flowing of one knowledge from another; as from the knowledge of his own power, he knows what things are possible to be made by him; and from the knowledge of himself, he passes to the knowledge of the creatures; but this is only according to our conception, and because of our weakness they are apprehended

prehended as two distinct acts in God, one of which is the reason of another: as we say that one attribute is the reason of another; as his mercy, may be said to be the reason of his patience; and his omnipresence, to be the reason of the knowledge of present things done in the world. God indeed by one simple act, knows himself and the creatures; but when that act whereby he knows himself, is conceived by us to pass to the knowledge of the creatures, we must not understand it to be a new act, distinct from the other; but the same act upon different terms or objects; such an order is in our understandings and conceptions, not in God's.

Nor doth he know successively, as we do.—That is, not by drops, one thing after another. This follows from the former; a knowledge of all things without discourse, is a knowledge without succession. The knowledge of one thing is not in God before another, one act of knowledge doth not beget another; in regard of the objects, one thing is before another, one year before another, one generation of men before another, one is the cause, the other is the effect: in the creatures there is such a succession, and God knows there will be such a succession; but there is no such order in God's knowledge; for he knows all those successions by one glance, without any succession of knowledge in himself.

Man in his view of things, must turn sometimes his body, sometimes only his eyes; he cannot see all the contents of a letter at once, and though he beholds all the lines in the page of a book at once, and a whole country in a map, yet to know what is contained in them, he must turn his eye from word to word, and line to line, and so spin out one thing after another by several acts and motions. We behold a great part of the sea at once, but not all the dimensions of it; for to know the length of the sea, we move our eyes one way; to see the breadth of it, we turn our eyes another way; to behold the
depth

depth of it, we may have another motion of them. And when we cast our eyes up to heaven, we seem to receive in at an instant the whole tent of the hemisphere; yet there is but one object the eye can attentively pitch upon, and we cannot distinctly view what we see in a lump, without various motions of our eyes, which is not done without succession of time. And certainly the understanding of angels is bounded, according to the measure of their beings; so that it cannot extend itself at one time, to a quantity of objects, to make a distinct application of them, but the objects must present themselves one by one: but God is all eye, all understanding; as there is no succession in his essence, so there is none in his knowledge; his understanding in the nature, and in the act, is infinite, as it is in the text. He therefore sees eternally and universally, all things, by one act, without any motion, much less various motions; the various changes of things, in their substance, quality, places and relations, withdraw not any thing from his eye, nor bring any new thing to his knowledge; he doth not upon consideration of present things turn his mind from past; or when he beholds future things, turn his mind from present; but he sees them not one after another, but all at once, and all together; the whole circle of his own counsels, and all the various lines drawn forth from the center of his will, to the circumference of his creatures; just as if a man was able in one moment to read a whole library; or, as if you should imagine a transparent crystal globe, hung up in the midst of a room, and so framed as to take in the images of all things in the room, the fret-work in the ceiling, the inlaid parts of the floor, and the particular parts of the tapestry about it, the eye of a man would behold all the beauty of the room at once in it. As the sun by one light and heat frames sensible things, so God by
one

one simple act knows all things : as he knows mutable things by an immutable knowledge, bodily things by a spiritual knowledge ; so he knows many things by one knowledge, Heb. iv. 13. *All things are open and naked to him*, more than any one thing can be to us ; and therefore he views all things at once, as well as we can behold and contemplate one thing alone. As he is the father of lights, a God of infinite understanding, there is no variableness in his mind, nor any shadow of turning of his eye, as there is of ours, to behold various things, James i. 17. his knowledge before eternal, includes all times ; there is nothing past or future with him, and therefore he beholds all things by one and the same manner of knowledge, and comprehends all knowable things by one act, and in one moment.

This must needs be so, because of the eminency of God.—God is above all, and therefore cannot but see the motions of all. He that sits in a theatre, or at the top of a place, sees all things, all persons, by one aspect he comprehends the whole circle of the place ; whereas he that sits below, when he looks before, he cannot see things behind ; God being above all, about all, in all, sees at once the motions of all. The whole world in the eye of God, is less than a point that divides one sentence from another in a book ; as a cypher, a *grain of dust*, Isa. xl. 15. so little a thing can be seen by man at once ; and all things being as little in the eye of God, are seen at once by him. As all time is but as a moment to his eternity, so all things are but as a point to the immensity of his knowledge, which he can behold with more ease than we can move or turn our eye.

Because all the perfections of knowing, are united in God.—As particular senses are divided in man, by one he sees, by another he hears, by another he smells, yet all those are united in one
common

common sense, and this common sense apprehends all; so the various and distinct ways of knowledge in the creatures are all eminently united in God. A man when he sees a grain of wheat, understands at once all things that can in time proceed from that seed; so God by beholding his own virtue and power, beholds all things which shall in time be unfolded by him. We have a shadow of this way of knowledge in our own understanding; the sense only perceives a thing present, and one object only proper and suitable to it; as the eye sees colour, the ear hears sounds; we see this and that man, one time this, another minute that; but the understanding abstracts a notion of the common nature of man, and frames a conception of that nature wherein all men agree; and so in a manner beholds and understands all men at once, by understanding the common nature of man, which is a degree of knowledge above the sense and fancy; we may then conceive an infinite vaster perfection in the understanding of God. As to know, is simply better than not to know at all; so to know by one act comprehensive, is a greater perfection than to know by divided acts, by succession to receive information, and to have an increase or decrease of knowledge, to be like a bucket, always descending into the well, and fetching water from thence. It is a man's weakness that he is fixed on one object only at a time; it is God's perfection that he can behold all at once, and is fixed upon one no more than upon another.

3. God knows all things independently.—This is essential to an infinite understanding. He receives not his knowledge from any thing without him, he hath no tutor to instruct him, or book to inform him; *who hath been his counsellor?* saith the prophet, Isa. xl. 13. he hath no need of the counsels of others, nor of the instructions of others. This follows upon the first and second propositions; if he

he knows thing by his essence, then as his essence is independent from the creatures, so is his knowledge; he borrows not any images from the creature, hath no species or pictures of things in his understanding, as we have; no beams from the creature strike upon him, to enlighten him, but beams from him upon the world: the earth sends not light to the sun, but the sun to the earth.

Our knowledge indeed depends upon the object, but all created objects depend upon God's knowledge and will: we could not know creatures unless they were; but creatures could not be, unless God knew them. As nothing that he wills is the cause of his will, so nothing that he knows is the cause of his knowledge; he did not make things to know them, but he knows them to make them: who will imagine that the mark of the foot in the dust, is the cause that the foot stands in this or that particular place?

If his knowledge did depend upon the things, then the existence of things did precede God's knowledge; to say that they are the cause of God's knowledge, is to say, that God was not the cause of their being; and if he did create them, it was effected by a blind and ignorant power, he created he knew not what, till he had produced it. If he be beholden for his knowledge to the creatures he hath made, he had then no knowledge of them before he made them. If his knowledge were dependant upon them, it could not be eternal, but must have a beginning when the creatures had a beginning, and be of no longer a date than since the nature of things was in actual existence; for whatsoever is a cause of knowledge, doth precede the knowledge it causes, either in order of time, or order of nature; temporal things therefore cannot be the cause of that knowledge which is eternal. His works could not be foreknown to him, if his knowledge commenced with the existence of his

works, if he knew them before he made them, he could not derive a knowledge from them after they were made. He made all things *in wisdom*, Psa. civ. 24. how can this be imagined, if the things known were the cause of his knowledge, and so before his knowledge, and therefore before his action? God would not then be the first in the order of knowing agents, because he would not act by knowledge, but act before he knew, and know after he had acted, and so the creature which he made, would be before the act of his understanding whereby he knew what he made.

Again, since knowledge is a perfection, if God's knowledge of the creatures depended upon the creatures, he would derive an excellency from them, they would derive no excellency from any idea in the divine mind; he would not be infinitely perfect in himself; if his perfection in knowledge were gained from any thing without himself and below himself, he would not be sufficient of himself, but be under an indigence, which wanted a supply from the things he had made; and could not be eternally perfect till he had created, and seen the effects of his own power, goodness and wisdom, to render him more wise and knowing in time than he was from eternity; who can fancy such a God as this, without destroying the deity he pretends to adore? for if his understanding be perfected by something without him, why may not his essence be perfected by something without him; that as he was made knowing by something without him, he might be made God by something without him?

How could his understanding be infinite, if it depended upon a finite object, as upon a cause? Is the majesty of God to be debased to a mendicant condition, to seek for a supply from things inferior to himself? Is it to be imagined that a fool, a toad, a fly should be assistant to the knowledge of God?

that

that the most noble Being should be perfected by things so vile, that the supreme cause of all things should receive any addition of knowledge, and be determined in his understanding, by the notion of things so mean? To conclude this particular, all things depend upon his knowledge, his knowledge depends upon nothing, but is as independent as himself, and his own essence.

4. God knows all things distinctly.—His understanding is infinite in regard of clearness; *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*, John i. 5. he sees not through a mist or cloud; there is no blemish in his understanding, no mote or beam in his eye, to render any thing obscure to him. Man discerns the surface and outside of things, little or nothing of the essence of things; we see the noblest things, but *as in a glass darkly*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. the too great nearness, as well as the too great distance of a thing, hinders our sight; the smallness of a mote escapes our eye, and so our knowledge; also the weakness of our understanding is troubled with the multitude of things, and cannot know many things but confusedly. But God knows the forms and essence of things, every circumstance; nothing is so deep, but he sees to the bottom; he sees the mass, and sees the moles of beings; his understanding being infinite, is not offended with a multitude of things, or distracted with the variety of them; he discerns every thing infinitely more clearly and perfectly than Adam or Solomon could any one thing in the circle of their knowledge: what knowledge they had, was from him; he hath therefore infinitely a more perfect knowledge than they were capable in their natures to receive a communication of. All things are *open to him*, Heb. iv. 13. the least fibre in its nakedness and distinct frame, is transparent to him; as by help of glasses, the mouth, feet, hands of a small insect, are visible to man, which seem to the eye, without

that assistance, one intire piece, not diversified into parts. All the causes, qualities, natures, properties of things are open to him, *he brings out the host of heaven by number, and calleth them by names*, Isa. xl. 26. he numbers the hairs of our heads; what more distinct than number? thus God beholds things in every unity, which makes up the heap: he knows, and none else can, every thing in its true and intimate causes, in its original and intermediate causes; in himself, as the cause of every particular of their being, every property in their being.

Knowledge by the causes is the most noble and perfect knowledge, and most suited to the infinite excellency of the divine being; he created all things, and ordered them to a universal and particular end; he therefore knows the essential properties of every thing, every activity of their nature, all their fitness for those distinct ends, to which he orders them, and for which he governs and disposeth them; and understands their darkest and most hidden qualities, infinitely clearer than any eye can behold the clear beams of the sun. He knows all things as he made them; he made them distinctly, and therefore knows them distinctly, and that every individual; therefore God is said, Gen. i. 31. *to see every thing that he hath made*; he took a review of every particular creature he had made, and upon his view pronounced it good: to pronounce that good, which was not exactly known in every creek, in every mite of its nature, had not consisted with his veracity; for every one that speaks truth ignorantly, that knows not that he speaks truth, is a liar in speaking that which is true. God knows every act of his own will, whether it be positive or permissive, and therefore every effect of his will. We must needs ascribe to God a perfect knowledge; but a confused knowledge cannot challenge that title. To know things only in a
heap,

heap, is unworthy of the divine perfection; for if God knows his own ends in the creation of things, he knows distinctly the means whereby he will bring them to those ends for which he hath appointed them: no wise man intends an end, without a knowledge of the means conducing to that end; an ignorance then of any thing in the world, which falls under the nature of a means to a divine end, (and there is nothing in the world but doth) would be inconsistent with the perfection of God; it would ascribe to him a blind providence in the world. As there can be nothing imperfect in his being and essence, so there can be nothing imperfect in his understanding and knowledge; and therefore not a confused knowledge, which is an imperfection. *Darkness and light are both alike to him*, Psa. cxxxix. 12. he sees distinctly into the one, as well as the other; what is darkness to us, is not so to him.

5. God knows all things infallibly.—His understanding is infinite, in regard of certainty; every tittle of what he knows, is as far from failing, as what he speaks; our Saviour affirms the one, Mat. v. 18. and there is the same reason of the certainty of one as well as the other; his essence is the measure of his knowledge; whence it is as impossible that God should be mistaken in the knowledge of the least thing in the world, as it is that he should be mistaken in his own essence; for knowing himself comprehensively, he must know all other things infallibly; since he is essentially omniscient, he is no more capable of error in his understanding, than of imperfection in his essence; his counsels are as unerring as his essence is perfect, and his knowledge as infallible as his essence is free from defect.

Again, since God knows all things with a knowledge of vision, because he wills them; his knowledge must be as infallible as his purpose; now his

purpose will certainly be effected; *what he hath thought shall come to pass, and what he hath purposed shall stand*, Isa. xiv. 24. *His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure*, Isa. xlvi. 10. There may be interruptions of nature, the foundations of it may be out of course, but there can be no bar upon the Author of nature; he hath an infinite power to carry on and perfect the resolves of his own will; he can effect what he pleases by a word. Speech is one of the least motions; yet when God said, *let there be light*, there was light, arising from darkness. No reason can be given why God knows a thing to be, but because he infallibly wills it to be.

Again, the schools make this difference between the knowledge of the good and bad angels, that the good are never deceived; for that is repugnant to their blessed state; for deceit is an evil and an imperfection, inconsistent with that perfect blessedness the good angels are possessed of; and would it not much more be a stain upon the blessedness of that God that is blessed for ever, to be subject to deceit? his knowledge therefore is not an opinion, for an opinion is uncertain; a man knows not what to think, but leans to one part of the question proposed rather than to the other. If things did not come to pass therefore as God knows them, his knowledge would be imperfect; and since he knows by his essence, his essence also would be imperfect, if God were exposed to any deceit in his knowledge; he knows by himself, who is the highest truth, and therefore it is impossible he should err in his understanding.

6. God knows immutably.—His understanding else could not be infinite; every thing and every act that is mutable, is finite, it hath its bounds; for there is a term from which it changeth, and a term to which it changes. There is a change in the understanding when we gain the knowledge of a thing,
which

which was unknown to us before ; or when we actually consider a thing which we did not know before, though we had the principles of the knowledge of it ; or, when we know that distinctly, which before we knew confusedly. None of these can be ascribed to God, without a manifest disparagement of his infiniteness : our knowledge indeed is always arriving to us or flowing from us ; we pass from one degree to another, from worse to better, or from better to worse : but God loses nothing by the ages that are run, nor will gain any thing by the ages that are to come. If there were a variation in the knowledge of God, by the daily and hourly changes in the world, he would grow wiser than he was, he was not then perfectly wise before. A change in the objects known, infers not any change in the understanding exercised about them ; the wheel moves round ; the spokes that are lowest are presently highest, and presently return to be low again ; but the eye that beholds them changes not with the motion of the wheels. God's knowledge admits no more of increase or decrease, than his essence doth ; since God knows by his essence, and the essence of God is God himself, his knowledge must be void of any change. The knowledge of possible things arising from the knowledge of his own power cannot be changed, unless his power be changed, and God become weak and impotent ; the knowledge of future things cannot be changed, because that knowledge ariseth from his will, which is irreversible, *The counsel of the Lord that shall stand*, Prov. xix. 21. So that if God can never decay into weakness, and never turn to inconstancy, there can be no variation of his knowledge. He knows what he can do, and he knows what he will do, and both these being immutable, his knowledge must consequently be so too. It was not necessary that this or that creature should be, and therefore it was not necessary that God should know this or that creature

with a knowledge of vision; but after the will of God had determined the existence of this or that creature, his knowledge being then determined to this or that object, did necessarily continue unchangeable. God therefore knows no more now than he did before; and at the end of the world he shall know no more than he doth now, and from eternity he knows no less than he doth now, and shall do to eternity. Though things pass into being and out of being, the knowledge of God doth not vary with them, for he knows them as well before they were, as when they are; and knows them as well when they are past, as when they are present.

7. God knows all things perpetually, *i. e.* in act. —Since he knows by his essence, he always knows, because his essence never ceaseth, but is a pure act; so that he doth not know only in habit, but in act. Men that have the knowledge of some art or science have it always in habit, though when they are asleep they have it not in act: a musician hath the habit of music, but doth not so much as think of it when his senses are bound up: but God is “an unsleepy eye,” he never slumbers nor sleeps; he never slumbers, in regard of his providence, and therefore never slumbers in regard of his knowledge. He knows not himself, nor any other creature more perfectly at one time than another; he is perpetually in the act of knowing, as the sun is in the act of shining; the sun never ceased to shine in one or other part of the world, since it was first fixed in the heavens; nor God to be in the act of knowledge since he was God; and therefore since he always was, and always will be God, he always was, and always will be in the act of knowledge; always knowing his own essence, he must always actually know what hath been gone and ceased from being, and what shall come and arise into being: as a watchmaker knows what watch he intends to make, and after he hath made it, though it be broken to pieces, or consumed by the fire, he still knows it, because he
knows

knows the copy of it in his own mind ; some therefore in regard of this perpetual act of the divine knowledge, have called God not *intellectus* but the Intellection of Intellections. We have no proper English word to express the act of the understanding ; as his power is co-eternal with him, so is his knowledge ; all times past, present, and to come, are embraced in the bosom of his understanding ; he fixed all things in their seasons, that nothing new comes to him, nothing old passes from him. What is done in a thousand years, is as actually present with his knowledge as what is done in one day, or in one watch in the night, is with ours ; since *a thousand years are no more to God than a day, or a watch in the night is to us*. God is in the highest degree of being, and therefore in the highest degree of understanding. Knowledge is one of the most perfect acts in any creature ; God therefore hath all actual, as well as essential and habitual knowledge—*his understanding his infinite*.

Fourthly, Reasons to prove that God knows all things.

1. God must know what any creature knows, and more than any creature knows.—There is nothing done in the world, but is known by some creature or other ; every action is at least known by the person that acts, and therefore known by the Creator, who cannot be exceeded by any of the creatures, or all of them together ; and every creature is known by him, since every creature is made by him : and as God works all things by an infinite power, so he knows all things by an infinite understanding.

The perfection of God requires this.—All perfections that include no essential defect are formally in God ; but knowledge includes no essential defect in itself, therefore it is in God. Knowledge in itself, is desirable, and an excellency ; ignorance is a defect ; it is impossible that the least grain of
defect

defect can be found in the most perfect being. Since God is wise, he must be knowing; for wisdom must have knowledge for the basis of it. A creature can no more be wise without knowledge, than he can be active without strength. Now God is *only wise*, Rom. xvi. 27. and therefore only knowing in the highest degree of knowledge, incomprehensibly beyond all degrees of knowledge, because infinite.

Again, the more spiritual any thing is, the more understanding it is. The dull body understands nothing; sense perceives, but the understanding faculty is seated in the soul, which is of a spiritual nature, which knows things that are present, remembers things that are past, foresees many things to come. What is the property of a spiritual nature, must be in a most eminent manner, in the supreme spirit of the world, that is, in the highest degree of spirituality, and most remote from any matter.

Again, nothing can enjoy other things, but by some kind of understanding them; God hath the highest enjoyment of himself, of all things he hath created, of all the glory that accrues to him by them; nothing of perfection and blessedness can be wanting to him. Felicity doth not consist with ignorance, and all imperfect knowledge is a degree of ignorance: God therefore doth perfectly know himself. The most noble manner of acting must be ascribed to God, as being the most noble and excellent being; to act by knowledge, is the most excellent manner of acting; God hath therefore, not only knowledge, but the most excellent manner of knowledge; for as it is better to know than to be ignorant, so it is better to know in the most excellent manner, than to have a mean and low kind of knowledge; his knowledge therefore must be every way as perfect as his essence, infinite as well as that. An infinite nature must have an infinite knowledge:

knowledge: a God ignorant of any thing, cannot be counted infinite, for he is not infinite to whom any degree of perfection is wanting.

2. All the knowledge in any creature is from God.—And you must allow God a greater and more perfect knowledge than any creature hath, yea, than all creatures have. All the drops of knowledge any creature hath, come from God; and all the knowledge in every creature, that ever was, is, or shall be in the whole mass, was derived from him. If all those several drops in particular creatures, were collected into one spirit, into one creature, it would be an inconceivable knowledge, yet still lower than what the author of all that knowledge hath; for God cannot give more knowledge than he hath himself; nor is the creature capable of receiving so much knowledge as God hath. As the creature is incapable of receiving so much power as God hath, for then it would be almighty; so it is incapable of receiving so much knowledge as God hath, for then it would be God. Nothing can be made by God equal to him in any thing; if any thing could be made as knowing as God, it would be eternal as God, it would be the cause of all things as God. The knowledge that we poor worms have, is an argument God uses for the asserting the greatness of his own knowledge, Psa. xciv. 10. *He that teaches man knowledge, shall he not know?* Man hath here knowledge ascribed to him; the author of this knowledge is God, he furnisheth him with it, and therefore doth in a higher manner possess it; and much more than can fall under the comprehension of any creature; as the sun enlightens all things, but hath more light in itself than it darts upon the earth or heavens; and shall not God eminently contain all that knowledge he imparts to the creatures, and infinitely more exact and comprehensive?

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3. The accusations of conscience, evidence God's knowledge of all actions of all his creatures.—Doth not conscience check for the most secret sins, to which none are privy but a man's self; the whole world beside being ignorant of his crime? do not the fears of another judge gall the heart? If a judgment above him be feared, an understanding above him discerning their secrets is confessed by those fears; whence can those horrors arise, if there be not a superior that understands and records the crime? What perfection of the divine being can this relate unto, but omniscience? What other attribute is to be feared, if God were defective in this?

The condemnation of us by our own hearts, when none in the world can condemn us, renders it legible, that there is *one greater than our hearts*, in respect of our knowledge, who *knows all things*, 1 John iii. 20. Conscience would be a vain principle, and stingless without this; it would be an easy matter to silence all its accusations, and mockingly laugh in the face of its severest frowns. What need any trouble themselves, if none knows their crimes but themselves? Concealed sins, gnawing the conscience, are arguments of God's omniscience of all present and past actions.

4. God is the first cause of every thing, every creature in his production.—Since all creatures, from the highest angel to the lowest worm, exist by the power of God; if God understands his own power and excellency, nothing can be hid from him, that was brought forth by that power, as well as nothing can be unknown to him, that his power is able to produce. If God knows nothing besides himself he may then believe there is nothing besides himself; we shall then fancy a God miserably mistaken: if he knows nothing besides himself, then things were not created by him, or not understandingly and voluntarily created, but dropped from him before he was aware. To think that the
first

first cause of all should be ignorant of those things he is the cause of, is to make him not a voluntary, but natural agent, and therefore necessary; and then the creature came from him as light from the sun, and moisture from the water; this would be an absurd opinion of the world's creation; if God be a voluntary agent, as he is, he must be an intelligent agent. The faculty of will is not in any creature, without that of understanding also: if God be an intelligent agent, his knowledge must extend as far as his operation, and every object of his operation, unless we imagine God hath lost his memory, in that long tract of time since the first creation of them. An artificer cannot be ignorant of his own work; if God knows himself, he knows himself to be a cause; how can he know himself to be a cause, unless he knows the effects he is the cause of? One relation implies another; a man cannot know himself to be a father, unless he hath a child, because it is a name of relation, and in the notion of it refers to another. The name of cause is a name of relation, and implies an effect; if God therefore knows himself in all his perfections, as the cause of things, he must know all his acts, what his wisdom contrived, what his counsel determined, and what his power effected. The knowledge of God is to be supposed in a free determination of himself; and that knowledge must be perfect, both of the object, act, and all the circumstances of it. How can his will freely produce any thing that was not first known in his understanding? From this the prophet argues the understanding of God, and the unsearchableness of it, because he is the *Creator of the ends of the earth*, Isa. xl. 28. and the same reason David gives of God's knowledge of him, and of every thing he did, and that *afar off*, because he was *formed by him*, Psa. cxxxix. 2, 15, 16. As the perfect making of things only belongs to God, so doth the perfect knowledge of things; it is absurd to think

think that God should be ignorant of what he hath given being to; that he should not know all the creatures and their qualities, the plants and their virtues; as that a man should not know the letters that are formed by him in writing. Every thing bears in itself the mark of God's perfections; and shall not God know the representation of his own virtue?

5. Without this knowledge, God could no more be the governor, than he could be the creator of the world.—Knowledge is the basis of providence; to know things, is before the government of things; a practical knowledge cannot be without a theoretical knowledge. Nothing could be directed to its proper end, without the knowledge of the nature of it, and its suitableness to answer that end for which it is intended. As every thing, even the minutest, falls under the conduct of God, so every thing falls under the knowledge of God. A blind coachman is not able to hold the reins of his horses, and direct them in right paths: since the providence of God is about particulars, his knowledge must be about particulars; he could not else govern them in particular; nor could all things be said to depend upon him in their being and operations. Providence depends upon the knowledge of God, and the exercise of it upon the goodness of God; it cannot be without understanding and will; understanding, to know what is convenient, and will to perform it. When our Saviour therefore speaks of providence, he intimates these two in a special manner, *your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of these things*, Mat. vi. 32. *and goodness*, in Luke xi. 13. The reason of providence is so joined with omniscience, that they cannot be separated: what a kind of God would he be that were ignorant of those things that were governed by him? The ascribing this perfection to him, asserts his providence; for it is as easy for one that knows all things,
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to look over the whole world, if writ with monosyllables, in every little particular of it, as it is with a man to take a view of every letter in an alphabet.

Again, if God was not omniscient, how could he reward the good, and punish the evil? the works of men are either rewardable or punishable; not only according to their outward circumstances, but inward principles and ends, and the degrees of venom lurking in the heart. The exact discerning of these, without a possibility to be deceived, is necessary to pass a right and infallible judgment upon them, and proportion the censure and punishment to the crime: without such a knowledge and discerning, men would not have their due; nay, a judgment just for the matter, would be unjust in the manner, because unjustly past, without an understanding of the merit of the cause. It is necessary therefore that the supreme Judge of the world should not be thought to be blindfold, when he distributes his rewards and punishments, and muffle his face when he passes his sentence. It is necessary to ascribe to him the knowledge of men's thoughts and intentions; the secret wills and aims; the hidden works of darkness in every man's conscience, because every man's work is to be measured by the will and inward frame. It is necessary that he should perpetually retain all those things in the indelible and plain records of his memory, that there may not be any work without a just proportion of what is due to it. This is the glory of God to discover the secrets of all hearts at last, as 1 Cor. iv. 5. *The Lord shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of all hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God.* This knowledge fits him to be a judge; the reason why the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, is because God knows their ways, which is implied in his knowing the way of the righteous

Fifthly,

Fifthly, I now proceed to the Use of all to ourselves.

1. Of information. If God hath all knowledge, then

Jesus Christ is not a mere creature.—The two titles of *wonderful Counsellor*, and *mighty God*, are given him in conjunction, Isa. ix. 6. not only the *angel of the covenant*, as he is called, Mal. iii. 1. the executor of his counsels, but a counsellor, in conjunction with him in counsel as well as power: this title is superior to any title given to the prophets in regard of their predictions; and therefore I should take it rather as the note of his perfect understanding, than of his perfect teaching and discovering; as Calvin doth: he is not only the revealer of what he knows, so were the prophets according to their measures; but the counsellor of what he revealed, having a perfect understanding of all the counsels of God, as being interested in them, as the mighty God. He calls himself by the peculiar title of God, and declares that he will manifest himself by this prerogative to all the churches, Rev. ii. 23. *And all the churches shall know that I am he, which searcheth the reins and hearts*, the most hidden operations of the minds of men that lie locked up from the view of all the world besides. And this was no new thing to him, after his ascension; for the same perfection he had in the time of his earthly flesh, Luke vi. 8. *he knew their thoughts*; his eyes are therefore compared, Cant. v. 12. to *doves eyes*, which are clear and quick; and to *a flame of fire*, Rev. i. 14. not only heat to consume his enemies, but light to discern their contrivances against the church; he pierceth, by his knowledge, into all parts, as fire pierceth into the closest particle of iron, and separates between the most united parts of metals; and some tell us, he is called a *roe*, from the perspicacity of his sight, as well as from the swiftness of his motion.

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He hath a perfect knowledge of the Father; he knows the Father, and none else knows the Father; angels know God, men know God, but Christ in a peculiar manner knows the Father; *no man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son*, Mat. xi. 27. he knows so, as that he learns not from any other; he doth perfectly comprehend him, which is beyond the reach of any creature, with the addition of all the divine virtue; not because of any incapacity in God to reveal, but the incapacity of the creature to receive; finite is incapable of being made infinite, and therefore incapable of comprehending infinite; so that Christ cannot be *Deus factus*, made of a creature a God, to comprehend God; for then of finite he would become infinite, which is a contradiction. As the Spirit is God, because *he searches the deep things of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 10. that is, comprehends them, as the spirit of a man doth the things of a man (now the spirit of a man understands what it thinks, and what it wills) so the Spirit of God understands what is in the understanding of God, and what is in the will of God. He hath an absolute knowledge ascribed to him, and such as could not be ascribed to any thing but a divinity: now if the Spirit knows the deep things of God, and takes from Christ what he shews to us of him, John xvi. 15. he cannot be ignorant of those things himself; he must know the depths of God that affords us that Spirit, that is not ignorant of any of the counsels of the Father's will; since he comprehends the Father, and the Father him, he is in himself infinite; for God whose essence is infinite, is infinitely knowable; but no created understanding can infinitely know God. The infiniteness of the object hinders it from being understood by any thing that is not infinite. Though a creature should understand all the works of God, yet it cannot be therefore said to understand God

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himself:

himself: as though I may understand all the volitions and motions of my soul, yet it doth not follow that therefore I understand the whole nature and substance of my soul; or if a man understood all the effects of the sun, that therefore he understands fully the nature of the sun. But Christ knows the Father, he lay in the bosom of the Father, was in the greatest intimacy with him, John i. 18. and from this intimacy with him, he saw him and knew him; so he knows God as much as he is knowable; and therefore knows him perfectly as the Father knows himself by a comprehensive vision; this is the knowledge of God wherein properly the infiniteness of his understanding appears: and our Saviour uses such expressions which manifest his knowledge to be above all created knowledge, and such a manner of knowledge of the Father as the Father hath of him.

2. Christ knows all creatures.——That knowledge which comprehends God, comprehends all created things as they are in God; it is a knowledge that sinks to the depths of his will, and therefore extends to all the acts of his will in creation and providence; by knowing the Father he knows all things that are contained in the virtue, power and will of God; *whatsoever the Father doth, that the Son doth*, John v. 19. As the Father therefore knows all things he is the cause of, so doth the Son know all things he is the worker of; as the perfect making of all things belongs to both, so doth the perfect knowledge of all things belong to both; where the action is the same, the knowledge is the same. Now the Father did not create one thing, and Christ another; *but all things were created by him, and for him: all things both in heaven and earth*, Col. i. 16. as he knows himself as the cause of all things, and the end of all things, he cannot be ignorant of all things that were effected by him, and are referred to him; he knows all creatures in God, as he knows

knows the essence of God, and knows all creature in themselves, as he knows his own acts and the fruits of his power; those things must be in his knowledge that were in his power, *all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God are hid in him*, Col. ii. 3. Now it is not the wisdom of God to know in part, and be in part ignorant. He cannot be ignorant of any thing, since there is *nothing but what was made by him*, John i. 3. and since it is less to know than create; for we know many things which we cannot make. If he be the creator, he cannot but be the discerners of what he made; this is a part of wisdom belonging to an artificer to know the nature and quality of what he makes. Since he cannot be ignorant of what he furnisheth with being, and with various endowments, he must know them not only universally but particularly

3. Christ knows the hearts and affections of men. —Peter scruples not to ascribe to him this knowledge, among the knowledge of all other things, John xxi. 17. *Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* From Christ's knowledge of all things, he concludes his knowledge of the inward frames and dispositions of men. To search the heart, is the sole prerogative of God, 1 Kings viii. 39. *For thou, even thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men:* shall we take *only* here with a limitation, as some that are no friends to the deity of Christ would, and say, God only knows the hearts of men from himself, and by his own infinite virtue? Why may we not take *only* in other places with a limitation, and make nonsense of it, as Psa. lxxxvi. 10. *Thou art God alone.* It is to be understood, that God is God alone from himself, but other gods may be made by him, and so there may be numberless infinites? as God is God alone, so that none can be God but himself; so he alone knows all the hearts of all the children of men, and none but he can know them; this knowledge is from his nature.

ture. The reason why God knows the hearts of men, is rendered in the scripture double, because he *created them*, and because he is *present every where*, Psa. xxxiii. 13, 15. these two are by the confession of Christians and Pagans universally received as the proper characters of divinity, whereby the deity is distinguished from all creatures. Now when Christ ascribes this to himself, and that with such an emphasis, that nothing greater than that could be urged, as he doth, Rev. ii. 23. we must conclude that he is of the same essence with God, one with him in his nature, as well as one with him in his attributes. God only knows the hearts of the children of men; there is the unity of God: Christ searches the hearts and reins; there is a distinction of persons in a oneness of essence; he knows the hearts of all men, not only of those that were with him in the time of his flesh, that have been and shall be, since his ascension; but of those that lived and died before his coming, because he is to be the judge of all that lived before his humiliation on earth, as well as after his exaltation in heaven. It pertains to him as a judge, to know distinctly the merits of the cause of which he is to judge; and this excellency of searching the hearts is mentioned by himself with relation to his judicial proceeding, *I will give to every one of you according to your works*. And though a creature may know what is in a man's heart, if it be revealed to him, yet such a knowledge is a knowledge only by report, not by inspection; yet this latter is ascribed to Christ, John ii. 24. 25. *He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man*; he looked into their hearts. The evangelist to allay the amazement of men at his relation of our Saviour's knowledge of the inward falsity of those that made a splendid profession of him, doth not say, the Father revealed it to him; but intimates it to be an inseparable property of his nature.

nature. No covering was so thick as to bound his eye ; no pretence so glittering as to impose upon his understanding. Those that made a profession of him, and could not be discerned by the eye of man from his most faithful attendants, were in their inside known to him plainer than their outside was to others ; and therefore he committed not himself to them, though they seemed to be persuaded to a real belief in his name, because of the power of his miracles ; and were touched with an admiration of him, as some great prophet, and perhaps declared him to be the Messiah, ver. 23.

4. He had a foreknowledge of the particular inclinations of men, before those distinct inclinations were in actual being in them.—This is plainly asserted, John vi. 64. *But there are some of you that believe not, for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.* When Christ assured them from the knowledge of the hearts of his followers, that some of them were void of that faith they professed, the evangelist to stop their amazement, that Christ should have such a power and virtue, adds, that he knew from the beginning, that he had not only a present knowledge, but a foreknowledge of every one's inclination ; he knew not only now and then what was in the hearts of his disciples, but from the beginning of any giving up their names to him, he knew whether it were a pretence or sincere ; he knew who should betray him, and there was no man's inward affection but was foreseen by him. From the beginning, whether we understand it from the beginning of the world, as when Christ saith concerning divorces, *from the beginning it was not so*, i. e. from the beginning of the world, from the beginning of the law of nature ; or from the beginning of their attending him ; as it is taken, Luke i. 2. he had a certain prescience of the inward dispositions of men's hearts, and their succeeding sentiments ; he

foreknew the treacherous heart of Judas in the midst of his splendid profession; and discerned his resolution in the root, and his thought in the confused chaos of his natural corruption; he knew how it would spring up, before it did spring up, before Judas had any distinct and formal conception of it himself, or before there was any actual preparation to a resolve. Peter's denial was not unknown to him, when Peter had a present resolution, and no question spoke it in the present sincerity of his soul, never to forsake him; he foreknew what would be the result of that poison which lurked in Peter's nature, before Peter himself imagined any thing of it; he discerned Peter's apostatizing heart, when Peter resolved the contrary; our Saviour's prediction was accomplished, and Peter's valiant resolution languished into cowardice.

Shall we then conclude our blessed Saviour a creature, who perfectly and only knew the Father, who knew all creatures, who had all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who knew the inward motions of men's hearts by his own virtue, and had not only a present knowledge, but a prescience of them?

God's Wisdom.

Romans xvi. 27.

TO GOD ONLY WISE BE GLORY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST
FOR EVER, AMEN.

THIS chapter being the last of the epistle, is chiefly made up of charitable and friendly salutations and commendations of particular persons, according to the earliness and strength of their several graces, and their labour of love for the interest of God and his people.

In ver. 17. he warns them not to be drawn aside from the gospel doctrine, which had been taught them, by the plausible pretences and insinuations, which the corrupters of the doctrine and rule of Christ, never want from the suggestions of their carnal wisdom. The brats of soul-destroying errors, may walk about the world in a garb and disguise of good words, and fair speeches, as it is in the 18th ver. *By good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.* And for their encouragement to a constancy in the gospel doctrine, he assures them, that all those that would dispossess them of truth, to possess them with vanity, are but satan's instruments, and will fall under the same captivity and yoke with their principal; ver. 18. *The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*

In the words there are—1. An appropriation of wisdom to God, and a remotion of it from all creatures; *only wise God*.—2. A glorifying him for it.

The point I shall insist upon, is, that wisdom is a transcendent excellency of the divine nature. We have before spoken of the knowledge of God, and the infiniteness of it: the next attribute is the wisdom of God. Most confound the knowledge and wisdom of God together; but there is a manifest distinction between them in our conception.

I shall handle it thus;

1. Shew what wisdom is.
2. Then lay down some propositions about the wisdom of God.
3. And shew that God is wise, and only wise.
4. Wherein his wisdom appears.
5. The use.

First, What wisdom is.—Wisdom among the Greeks, first signified an eminent perfection in any art or mystery; so a good statuary, engraver, or linner, was called wise, as having an excellent knowledge in his particular art. But afterwards, the title of wise was appropriated to those that devoted themselves to the contemplation of the highest things, that served for a foundation to speculative sciences. But ordinarily we count a man a wise man, when he conducts his affairs with discretion, and governs his passions with moderation, and carries himself with a due proportion and harmony in all his concerns.

But in particular, wisdom consists in acting for a right end.—The chiefest part of prudence is in fixing a right end, and in chusing fit means, and directing them to that scope: to shoot at random is a mark of folly. As he is the wisest man, that hath the noblest end and fittest means, so God is infinitely wise; as he is the most excellent being, so he hath the most excellent end. As there is none more excellent than himself, nothing can be his end but himself:

himself: as he is the cause of all, so he is the end of all; and he puts a true bias into all the means he useth to hit the mark he aims at: *Of him, and through him, and to him are all things*, Rom. xi. 36.

Wisdom consists, in observing all circumstances for action.—He is counted a wise man, that lays hold of the fittest opportunities to bring his designs about, that hath the fullest foresight of all the little intrigues which may happen in a business he is to manage, and times every part of his action in an exact harmony with the proper minutes of it. God hath all the circumstances of things in one entire image before him; he hath a prospect of every little creek in any design. He sees what second causes will act, and when they will act this or that; yea, he determines them to such and such acts; so that it is impossible he should be mistaken, or miss of the due season of bringing about his own purposes. As he hath more goodness than to deceive any, so he hath more understanding than to be mistaken in any thing. Hence the time of the incarnation of our blessed Saviour, is called the fulness of time, the proper season for his coming. Every circumstance about Christ was timed according to the predictions of God; even so little a thing as not parting his garment, and the giving him gall and vinegar to drink: and all the blessings he showers down upon his people, according to the covenant of grace, are said to come *in his season*. Ezek. xxxiv. 25, 26.

Wisdom consists in willing and acting according to the right reason, according to a right judgment of things.—We never count a wilful man a wise man, but him only that acts according to a right rule, when right counsels are taken and vigorously executed. The resolves and ways of God are not mere will, but well guided by the reason and counsel of his own infinite understanding, Eph i. 11. *Who works all things according to the counsel of his*

own will. The motions of the divine will are not rash, but follow the proposals of the divine mind: he chooses that which is fittest to be done, so that all his works are graceful, and all his ways have a comeliness and decorum in them. Hence all his ways are said to be *judgment*, Deut. xxxii. 4. not mere will.

Hence it appears, that wisdom and knowledge are two distinct perfections. Knowledge hath its seat in the speculative understanding, wisdom in the practical. Wisdom and knowledge are evidently distinguished as two several gifts of the Spirit in man, 1 Cor. xii. 8. *To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit.* Knowledge is an understanding of general rules, and wisdom is a drawing conclusions from those rules in order to particular cases. A man may have the knowledge of the whole scripture, and have all learning in the treasury of his memory, and yet be destitute of skill to make use of them upon particular occasions, and untie those knotty questions which may be proposed to him, by a ready application of those rules.

Again, knowledge and wisdom may be distinguished in our conception, as two distinct perfections in God: the knowledge of God is his understanding of all things; his wisdom is the skilful resolving and acting of all things. And the apostle, in his admiration of him, owns them as distinct, *Of the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God*, Rom. xi. 33. Knowledge is the foundation of wisdom, and antecedent to it; wisdom the superstructure upon knowledge: men may have knowledge without wisdom, but not wisdom without knowledge; according to our common proverb, “The greatest clerks are not the wisest men.” All practical knowledge is founded in speculation, either *secundum rem*, as in a man; or *secundum rationem*, as in God. They agree in this, that they are both
acts

acts of the understanding; but knowledge is the apprehension of a thing, and wisdom is the appointing and ordering of things. Wisdom is the splendor and lustre of knowledge shining forth in operations, and is an act both of understanding and will; understanding in counselling and contriving, will in resolving and executing: counsel and will are linked together, Eph. i. 11.

Secondly, Some propositions in general, concerning the wisdom of God.

1. There is an essential and a personal wisdom of God—The essential wisdom, is the essence of God; the personal wisdom, is the Son of God. Christ is called Wisdom by himself, Luke vii. 35. The Wisdom of God by the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 24. The wisdom I speak of belongs to the nature of God, and is considered as a necessary perfection. The personal wisdom is called so, because he opens to us the secrets of God. If the Son were that wisdom whereby the Father is wise, the Son would be also the essence whereby the Father is God. If the Son were the wisdom of the Father, whereby he is essentially wise; the Son would be the essence of the Father, and the Father would have his essence from the Son, since the wisdom of God is the essence of God; and so the Son would be the Father, if the wisdom and power of the Father were originally in the Son.

2. The wisdom of God is the same with the essence of God.—Wisdom in God is not a habit added to his essence, as it is in man, but it is his essence. It is like the splendor of the sun, the same with the sun itself; or like the brightness of crystal, which is not communicated to it by any thing else, as by the brightness of a mountain is by the beam of the sun, but it is one with the crystal itself. It is not a habit superadded to the divine essence; that would be repugnant to the simplicity of God, and speak him compounded of divers principles;

ciples; it would be contrary to the eternity of his perfections: if he be eternally wise, his wisdom is his essence; for there is nothing eternal, but the essence of God. As the sun melts some things, and hardens others; blackens some things, and whitens others, and produceth contrary qualities in different subjects; yet it is but one and the same quality in the sun, which is the cause of those contrary operations: so the perfections of God seem to be diverse in our conceptions, yet they are but one and the same in God. The wisdom of God, is God acting prudently; as the power of God, is God acting powerfully, and the justice of God, is God acting righteously: and therefore it is more truly said, that God is wisdom, justice, truth, and power, than that he is wise, just, true, &c. as if he were compounded of substance and qualities. All the operations of God proceed from one simple essence; as all the operations of the mind of man, though various, proceed from one faculty of understanding.

3. Wisdom is the property of God alone.—*He is only wise.* It is an honour peculiar to him. Upon the account that no man deserved the title of wise, but that it was a royalty belonging to God, Pythagoras would not be called Wise, a title given to their learned men; but A Lover of Wisdom. The name philosopher, arose out of respect to this transcendent perfection of God.

1. God is only wise necessarily.—As he is necessarily God, so he is necessarily wise; for the notion of wisdom is inseparable from the notion of a deity. When we say God is a spirit, is true, righteous, wise; we understand that he is transcendently these, by an intrinsic and absolute necessity, by virtue of his own essence, without the efficiency of any other, or any efficiency in and by himself. God doth not make himself wise, no more than he makes himself God. As he is a necessary being in regard of his life, so he is necessarily wise in regard of his understanding.

standing. He can no more be unwise than he can be untrue; for folly in the mind is much the same with falsity in speech. Wisdom among men is gained by age and experience, furthered by instructions and exercise; but the wisdom of God is his nature. As the sun cannot be without light, while it remains a sun; and as eternity cannot be without immortality, so neither can God be without wisdom. *As he only hath immortality*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. not arbitrarily, but necessarily; so he only hath wisdom: not because he will be wise, but because he cannot but be wise. He cannot but contrive counsels, and exert operations, becoming the greatness and majesty of his nature.

2. Therefore only wise originally.—Men acquire wisdom by the loss of their fairest years; but his wisdom is the perfection of the divine nature, not the birth of study or the growth of experience, but as necessary, as eternal, as his essence. He goes not out of himself to search wisdom: he needs no more the brains of creatures in the contrivance of his purposes, than he doth their arm in the execution of them. He needs no counsel, he receives no counsel from any, Rom. xi. 34. *Who hath been his counsellor?* and Isa. xl. 14. *With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, or taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the path of understanding?* He is the only fountain of wisdom to others; angels and men have what wisdom they have, by communication from him. All created wisdom is a spark of the divine light, like that of the stars borrowed from the sun. He that borrows wisdom from another, and doth not originally possess it in his own nature, cannot properly be called wise. As God is the only being, in regard that all other beings are derived from him; so he is only wise, because all other wisdom flows from him. He is the spring of wisdom to all; none the original of wisdom to him.

3. Therefore

3. Therefore only wise perfectly.—There is no cloud upon his understanding. He hath a distinct and certain knowledge of all things, that can fall under action: as he hath a perfect knowledge without ignorance, so he hath a beautiful wisdom without mole or wart. Men are wise, yet have not an understanding so vast as to grasp all things; nor a perspicacity so clear, as to penetrate into the depths of all beings. Angels have more delightful and lively sparks of wisdom, yet so imperfect, that in regard of the wisdom of God they are *charg'd with folly*, Job iv. 18. Their wisdom as well as their holiness is veiled in the presence of God. It vanisheth, as the glowing of a fire doth before the beauty of the sun; or as the light of a candle in the midst of a sunshine contracts itself, and none of its rays are seen, but in the body of the flame. The angels are not perfectly wise, because they are not perfectly knowing: the gospel, the great discovery of God's wisdom, was hid from them for ages.

4. Therefore only wise universally.—Wisdom in one man is of one sort, in another of another sort; one is a wise tradesman, another a wise statesman, and another a wise philosopher: one is wise in the business of the world, another is wise in divine concerns. One hath not so much of plenty of one sort, but he may have a scantiness in another; one may be wise for invention, and foolish in execution; an artificer may have skill to frame an engine, and not skill to use it. The ground that is fit for olives, may not be fit for vines; that will bear one sort of grain and not another. But God hath an universal wisdom, because his nature is wise; it is not limited, but hovers over every thing, shines in every being. His executions are as wise as his contrivances: he is wise in his resolves, and wise in his ways; wise in all the varieties of his works of creation, government, redemption. As his
will

will wills all things, and his power effects all things; so his wisdom is the universal director of the motions of his will, and the executions of his power; as his righteousness is the measure of the matter of his actions, so his wisdom is the rule that directs the manner of his actions. The absolute power of God is not an unruly power: his wisdom orders all things, so that nothing is done, but what is fit and convenient, and agreeable to so excellent a being: as he cannot do an unjust thing because of his righteousness, so he cannot do an unwise act, because of his infinite wisdom. Though God be not necessitated to any operation without himself, as to the creation of any thing, yet supposing he will act, his wisdom necessitates him to do that which is congruous, as his righteousness necessitates him to do that which is just: so that though the will of God be the principle, yet his wisdom is the rule of his actions. We must in our conceiving of the order, suppose wisdom antecedent to will: none that acknowledges a God, can have such an impious thought, as to affix temerity and rashness to any of his proceedings.

All his decrees are drawn out of the infinite treasury of wisdom in himself. He resolves nothing about any of his creatures without reason; but the reason of his purposes is in himself, and springs from himself, and not from the creatures: there is not one thing that he wills, but *he wills by counsel, and works by counsel*, Eph. i. 11. Counsel writ down every line, every letter, in his eternal book; and all the orders are drawn out from thence by his wisdom and will: what was illustrious in the contrivance, glitters in the execution. His understanding and will are infinite; what is therefore the act of his will, is the result of his understanding, and therefore rational: his understanding and will join hands; there is no contest in God, will against mind,

mind, and mind against will ; they are one in God, one in his resolves, and one in all his works.

5. Therefore he is only wise perpetually.—As the wisdom of man is got by ripeness of age, so it is lost by decay of years ; it is got by instruction, and lost by dotage. The perfectest minds, when in the wane, have been darkened with folly : Nebuchadnezzar that was wise for a man, became as foolish as a brute. But the Ancient of Days is an unchangeable possessor of prudence ; his wisdom is a mirror of brightness, without a defacing spot. It was possessed by him *in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old*, Prov. viii. 22. and he can never be dispossessed of it in the end of his works. It is inseparable from him : the being of his godhead may as soon cease, as the beauty of his mind ; *with him is wisdom*, Job xii. 13. it is inseparable from him, therefore as durable as his essence. It is a wisdom infinite, and therefore without increase or decrease in itself. The experience of so many ages in the government of the world, hath added nothing to the immensity of it ; as the shining of the sun since the creation of the world, hath added nothing to the light of that glorious body. As ignorance never darkens his knowledge, so folly never disgraces his prudence : God infatuates men, but neither men nor devils can infatuate God ; he is unerringly wise ; his counsel doth not vary and flatter ; it is not one day one counsel, and another day another, but it stands like an immoveable rock, or a mountain of brass. *The counsel of the Lord stands for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations*, Psalm xxxiii. 11.

6. He only is incomprehensibly wise.—His thoughts are *deep*, Psa. xcii. 5. *His judgments unsearchable, his ways past finding out*, Rom. xi. 33. Depths that cannot be fathomed. A splendor, more dazzling to our dim minds, than the light of the sun to our weak eyes. The wisdom of one man may be com-
prehended

prehended by another, and over comprehended; and often men are understood by others to be wiser in their actions, than they understand themselves to be. And the wisdom of one angel may be measured by another angel of the same perfection. But as the essence, so the wisdom of God is incomprehensible to any creature; God is only comprehended by God: the secrets of wisdom in God are double to the expressions of it in his works, Job xi. 6. 7. *Canst thou by searching find out God?* There is an unfathomable depth in all his decrees, in all his works; we cannot comprehend the reason of his works, much less that of his decrees, much less that in his nature; because his wisdom being infinite as well as his power, can no more act to the highest pitch, than his power. As his power is not terminated by what he hath wrought, but he could give further testimonies of it; so neither is his wisdom, but he could furnish us with infinite expressions and pieces of his skill. As in regard of his immensity, he is not bounded by the limits of place; in regard of his eternity, not measured by the minutes of time; in regard of his power, not terminated with this or that number of objects; so in regard of his wisdom, he is not confined to this or that particular mode of working; so that in regard of the reason of his actions, as well as the glory and majesty of his nature, he dwells in unapproachable light, 1 Tim. vi. 16. and whatsoever we understand of his wisdom in creation and providence, is infinitely less than what is in himself, and his own unbounded nature.

Many things in scripture are chiefly declared to be the acts of the divine will, yet we must not think they were acts of mere will without wisdom, but they are represented so to us, because we are not capable of understanding the infinite reason of its acts: his sovereignty is more intelligible to us than his wisdom. We can better know the commands

of a superior, and the laws of a prince, than understand the reason that gave birth to those laws. We may know the orders of the divine will, as they are published, but not the sublime reason of his will. Though election is an act of God's sovereignty, and he hath no cause from without to determine him, yet his infinite wisdom stood not silent while mere dominion acted. Whatsoever God doth, he doth wisely, as well as sovereignly; though that wisdom which lies in the secret places of the divine being, be as incomprehensible to us, as the effects of his sovereignty and power in the world are visible: God can give a reason of his proceeding, and that drawn from himself, though we understand it not.

The causes of things visible lie hid from us; doth any man know how to distinguish the seminal virtue of a small seed from the body of it, and in what nook and corner that lies, and what that is that spreads itself in so fair a plant, and so many flowers? Can we comprehend the justice of God's proceedings in the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the godly? Yet as we must conclude them the fruits of an unerring righteousness, so we must conclude all his actions the fruits of an unspotted wisdom, though the concatenation of all his counsels is not intelligible to us; for he is as essentially and necessarily wise, as he is essentially and necessarily good and righteous.

God is not only so wise that nothing more wise can be conceived, but he is more wise than can be imagined; something greater in all his perfections than can be comprehended by any creature. It is a foolish thing therefore to question that which we cannot comprehend: we should adore it instead of disputing against it; and take it for granted, that God would not order any thing, were it not agreeable to the sovereignty of his wisdom, as well as that of his will. Though the reason of man proceed
from

from the wisdom of God, yet there is more difference between the reason of man, and the wisdom of God, than between the light of the sun, and the feeble shining of the glow-worm; yet we presume to censure the ways of God, as if our purblind reason had a reach above him.

7. God is only wise infallibly.—The wisest men meet with rubs in the way, that make them fall short of what they aim at; they often design, and fail; then begin again, and yet all their counsels end in smoke, and none of them arrive at perfection. If the wisest angels lay a plot, they may be disappointed; for though they are higher and wiser than man, yet there is one higher and wiser than they, that can check their projects. God always compasseth his end, never fails of any thing he designs and aims at; all his undertakings are counsel and will; as nothing can resist the efficacy of his will, so nothing can countermine the skill of his counsel; *There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord*, Prov. xxi. 30. He compasseth his ends by those actions of men and devils, wherein they think to cross him; they shoot at their own mark, and hit his. Lucifer's plot by divine wisdom fulfilled God's purposes against Lucifer's mind. The counsel of redemption by Christ, the end of the creation of the world, rode into the world upon the back of the serpent's temptation. God never mistakes the means, nor can there be any disappointments, to make him vary his counsels, and pitch upon other means than what before he had ordained. *His word that goeth forth of his mouth shall not return to him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleases, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto he sent it*, Isa. lv. 11. What is said of his word, is true of his counsel, it shall prosper in the thing for which it is appointed; it cannot be defeated by all the legions of men and devils; for *as he thinks, so shall it come to pass; and as he hath purposed,*

posed, so shall it stand; the Lord hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? Isa. xiv. 24. 27. The wisdom of the creature is a drop from the wisdom of God, and is like a drop to the ocean, and a shadow to the sun; and therefore is not able to mate the wisdom of God, which is infinite and boundless. No wisdom is exempted from mistakes, but the divine: he is wise in all his resolves, and never *calls back his words and purposes*, Isa. xxxi. 2.

Thirdly, To prove that God is wise.

This is ascribed to God in scripture, Dan. ii. 20. *Wisdom and might are his*; wisdom to contrive, and power to effect. Where should wisdom dwell, but in the head of a deity; and where should power triumph, but in the arm of omnipotency? All that God doth, he doth artificially, skilfully; whence he is called the *Builder of the heavens*, Heb. xi. 10. an artificial and curious builder, a builder by art. And that word, Prov. viii. 30. meant of Christ, *Then I was by him as one brought up with him*; some render it, *Then was I the curious artificer*; and the same word is translated a *cunning workman*, Cant. vii. 5. For this cause counsel is ascribed to God; not properly; for counsel implies something of ignorance, or irresolution, antecedent to the consultation, and a posture of will afterwards, which was not before. Counsel is properly a laborious deliberation, and a reasoning of things: an invention of means for the attainment of the end, after a discussing and reasoning of all the doubts which arise *pro re natâ*, about the matter in counsel: but God hath no need to deliberate in himself, what are the best means to accomplish his ends: he is never ignorant, or undetermined, what course he should take, as men are before they consult. But it is an expression in condescension to our capacity, to signify that God doth nothing but with reason and understanding, with the highest prudence, and for the most glorious ends, as men do after consultation,

sultation, and the weighing of every foreseen circumstance.

Though he acts all things sovereignly by his will, yet he acts all things wisely by his understanding; and there is not a decree of his will, but he can render a satisfactory reason for in the face of men and angels. As he is the cause of all things, so he hath the highest wisdom for the ordering of all things. If wisdom among men be the knowledge of divine and human things, God must be infinitely wise, since knowledge is most radiant in him; he knows what angels and men do, and infinitely more; what is known by them obscurely, is known by him clearly: what is known by man after it is done, was known by God before it was wrought. By his wisdom as much by any thing, he infinitely differs from all his creatures, as by wisdom man differs from a brute. We cannot frame a notion of God, without conceiving him infinitely wise. We should render him very inconsiderable, to imagine him furnished with an infinite knowledge, and not have an infinite wisdom to make use of that knowledge; or to fancy him with a mighty power, destitute of prudence. Knowledge without prudence is an eye without motion; and power without discretion is an arm without a head; a hand to act, without understanding to contrive and model; a strength to act, without reason to know how to act: it would be a miserable notion of a God, to fancy him with a brutish and unguided power. The heathens therefore had, and could not but have this natural notion of God. Plato calls him *Mens*, and Cleanthes used to call God *Reason*, and Socrates thought the title of *Wise* too magnificent to be attributed to any thing else but God alone.

Arguments to prove that God is wise.

1. God could not be infinitely perfect without wisdom.—A rational nature is better than an irrational nature. A man is not a perfect man with-

out reason ; how can God without it, be an infinitely perfect God ? Wisdom is the most eminent of all virtues ; all the other perfections of God without this, would be as a body without an eye, a soul without understanding. A christian's graces want their lustre, when they are destitute of the guidance of wisdom : mercy is a feebleness, and justice a cruelty, patience a timorousness, and courage a madness, without the conduct of wisdom ; so the patience of God would be cowardice, his power an oppression, his justice a tyranny, without wisdom as the spring, and holiness as the rule. No attribute of God could shine with a due lustre and brightness without it. Power is a great perfection, but wisdom a greater. Wisdom may be without much power, as in bees and ants ; but power is a tyrannical thing without wisdom and righteousness. The pilot is more valuable on account of his skill, than the gally slave because of his strength, and the conduct of a general more estimable than the might of a private soldier. Generals are chosen more by their skill to guide, than their strength to act ; what a clod is a man without prudence ; what a nothing would God be without it ? This is the salt that gives relish to all other perfections in a creature : this is the jewel in the ring of all the excellencies of the divine nature, and holiness is the splendor of that jewel.

Now God being the first being, possesses whatsoever is most noble in any being. If therefore wisdom, which is the most noble perfection in any creature, were wanting to God, he would be deficient in that which is the highest excellency. God being the living God, as he is frequently termed in scripture, he hath therefore the most perfect manner of living, and that must be a pure and intellectual life : being essentially living, he is essentially in the highest degree of living. As he hath an infinite life above all creatures, so he hath an infinite intellectual

intellectual life, and therefore an infinite wisdom; whence some have called God not *sapientem*, but *super-sapientem*, not only wise, but above all wisdom.

2. Without infinite wisdom he could not govern the world.—Without wisdom in forming the matter, which was made by divine power, the world could have been no other than a chaos; and without wisdom in government, it could have been no other than a heap of confusion; without wisdom the world could not have been created in the posture it is. Creation supposeth a determination of the will putting power upon acting; the determination of the will supposeth the counsel of the understanding, determining the will: no work, but supposeth understanding as well as will in a rational agent. As without skill things could not be created, so without it things cannot be governed. Reason is a necessary perfection to him that presides over all things: without knowledge there could not be in God a foundation for government, and without wisdom there could not be an exercise of government, and without the most excellent wisdom, he could not be the most excellent governor. He could not be a universal governor, without a universal wisdom; nor the sole governor without an inimitable wisdom; nor an independant governor without an original and independant wisdom; nor a perpetual governor without an incorruptible wisdom. He would not be the Lord of the world in all points, without skill to order the affairs of it. Power and wisdom are foundations of all authority and government: wisdom to know how to rule, and command; power to make those commands obeyed: no regular order could issue out without the first, nor could any order be enforced without the second. A feeble wisdom and a brutish power, seldom or never produce any good effect. Magistracy without wisdom, would be a frantic power, a rash conduct; like a strong arm when the eye is out,

it strikes it knows not what, and leads it knows not whither. Wisdom without power, would be like a great body without feet, like the knowledge of a pilot that hath lost his arm, who though he knows the rule of navigation, and what course to follow in his voyage, yet cannot manage the helm: but when those two, wisdom and power are linked together, there ariseth from both a fitness for government: there is wisdom to propose an end, and both wisdom and power to employ means that conduct to that end. And therefore when God demonstrates to Job his right of government, and the unreasonableness of Job's quarrelling with his proceedings, he chiefly urgeth upon him the consideration of those two excellencies of his nature, power and wisdom, which are expressed in his works. A prince without wisdom, is but a title without a capacity to perform the office; no man without it is fit for government: nor could God without wisdom exercise a just dominion in the world. He hath therefore the highest wisdom, since he is the universal governor. That wisdom which is able to govern a family, may not be able to govern a city; and that wisdom which governs a city, may not be able to govern a nation or kingdom, much less a world. The bounds of God's government being greater than any, his wisdom for government must needs surmount the wisdom of all. And though the creatures be not in number actually infinite, yet they cannot be well governed but by one endowed with infinite discretion. Providential government can be no more without infinite wisdom, than infinite wisdom can be without providence.

3. The creatures working for an end, without their own knowledge, demonstrates the wisdom of God that guides them.—All things in the world work for some end; the ends are unknown to them, though many of their ends are visible to us. As there was some prime cause, which by his power
inspired

inspired them with their several instincts, so there must be some supreme wisdom, which moves and guides them to their end. As their being manifests his power that endowed them, so the acting according to the rules of their nature, which they themselves understand not, manifests his wisdom in directing them. Every thing that acts for an end, must know that end, or be directed by another to attain that end. The arrow doth not know who shoots it, or to what end it is shot, or what mark is aimed at; but the archer that puts it in, and darts it out of the bow, knows. A watch hath a regular motion, but neither the spring nor the wheels that move, know the end of their motion; no man will judge a wisdom to be in the watch, but in the artificer that disposed the wheels and springs, by a joint combination to produce such a motion for such an end. Doth either the sun that enlivens the earth, or the earth that travels with the plant, know what plant it produceth in such a soil, what temper it should be of, what fruit it should bear, and of what colour? What plant knows its own medicinal qualities, its own beautiful flowers, and for what use they are ordained? when it strikes up its head from the earth, doth it know what proportion of them there will be? yet it produceth all these things in a state of ignorance. The sun warms the earth, concocts the humours, excites the virtue of it, and cherishes the seeds, which are cast into her lap, yet all unknown to the sun or the earth. Since therefore that nature, that is the immediate cause of those things, doth not understand its own quality, nor operation, nor the end of its action, that which thus directs them must be conceived to have an infinite wisdom. When things act by a rule they know not, and move for an end they understand not, and yet work harmoniously together for one end, that all of them, we are sure, are ignorant of, it mounts up our minds to acknowledge the wisdom of that supreme cause,

that

that hath ranged all these inferior causes in their order, and imprinted upon them the laws of their motions, according to the ideas in his own mind, who orders the rule by which they act, and the end for which they act, and directs every motion according to their several natures, and therefore is possessed with infinite wisdom in his own nature.

4. God is the fountain of all wisdom in the creatures and therefore is infinitely wise himself.—As he hath a fulness of being in himself, because the streams of being are derived to other things from him; so he hath a fulness of wisdom, because he is the spring of wisdom to angels and men. That being must be infinitely wise, from whence all other wisdom derives its original: for nothing can be in the effect, which is not eminently in the cause; the cause is always more perfect than the effect. If therefore the creatures are wise, the creator must be much more wise. If the creator were destitute of wisdom, the creature would be much more perfect than the creator. If you consider the wisdom of the spider in her web, which is both her house and net; the artifice of the bee in her comb, which is both her chamber and granary; the provision of the pismire in her repositories for corn; the wisdom of the creator is illustrated by them; whatsoever excellency you see in any creature, is an image of some excellency in God. The skill of the artificer is visible in the fruits of his art; a workman transcribes his spirit in the work of his hands. But the wisdom of rational creatures, as men, doth more illustrate it—all arts among men are the rays of divine wisdom shining upon them, and by a common gift of the Spirit enlightening their minds to curious inventions, as Prov. viii. 12. *I, wisdom, find out the knowledge of witty inventions*; that is, I give a faculty to men to find them out; without my wisdom, all things would be buried in darkness and ignorance: whatsoever wisdom there is in the world, it is but a shadow

shadow of the wisdom of God, a small rivulet derived, from him, a spark leaping out from uncreated wisdom. Isa. liv. 16. *He created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire and maketh instruments*: the skill to use those weapons in warlike enterprises is from him, *I have created the waster to destroy*; it is not meant of creating their persons, but communicating to them their art; he speaks it there to expel fear from the church of all warlike preparations against them: he had given men the skill to form and use weapons, and could as well strip them of it, and defeat their purposes: the art of husbandry is a fruit of divine teaching, Isa. xxviii. 24. 25. If those lower kinds of knowledge, that are common to all nations, and easily learned by all, are discoveries of divine wisdom, much more the nobler sciences, intellectual and political wisdom, Dan. ii. 21. *He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding*; speaking of the more abstruse parts of knowledge; *The inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding*, Job xxxii. 8. Hence the wisdom which Solomon expelled in the *harlot's case*, 1 Kings iii. 28, was in the judgment of all Israel, the *wisdom of God*; that is, a fruit of divine wisdom, a beam communicated to him from God. Every man's soul is endowed more or less with those noble qualities: the soul of every man exceeds that of a brute; if the streams be so excellent, the fountain must be fuller and clearer. The first spirit must infinitely more possess, what other spirits derive from him by creation; were the wisdom of all the angels in heaven and men on earth collected in one spirit, it must be infinitely less than what is in the spring; for no creature can be equal to the creator. As the highest creature already made, or that we can conceive may be made by infinite power, would be infinitely below God in the notion of a creature, so it would be infinitely below God in the notion of wise.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Wherein the wisdom of God appears,
 1. In creation. 2. In government. 3. In redemption.

1. In creation.—As in a musical instrument, there is first the skill of the workman in the frame; then the skill of the musician in stringing it, proper for such musical notes as he will express upon it; and after that the tempering of the strings by various stops to a delightful harmony: so is the wisdom of God seen in framing the world, then in tuning it, and afterwards in the motion of the several creatures. The fabric of the world is called the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. i. 21. *After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God*, i. e. by the creation the world knew not God; the framing cause is there put for the effect and the work framed: because the divine wisdom stepped forth in the creatures to a public appearance, as if it had presented itself in a visible shape to man, giving instructions in and by the creatures, to know and adore him. What we translate Gen. i. 1. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*; the Targum expresses it, *In wisdom God created the heaven and the earth*. Both bear a stamp of this perfection on them: and when the apostle tells the Romans, Rom. i. 20. *The invisible things of God were clearly understood by the things that are made*; the word he uses, signifies a work of labour, of skill, or a poem. The whole creation is a poem, every species a stanza, and every individual creature a verse in it. The creation presents us with a prospect of the wisdom of God, as a poem doth the reader with the wit and fancy of the composer: *By wisdom he created the earth*, Prov. iii. 19. *and stretched out the heavens by discretion*, Jer. x. 12. There is not any thing so mean, so small, but glitters with a beam of divine skill; and the consideration of them would justly make every man subscribe to that of the psalmist, *O Lord, how manifold,*

fold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all, Psa. civ. 24. All, the least as well as the greatest, and the meanest as well as the noblest; even those creatures which seem ugly and deformed to us, as toads, &c. because they fall short of those perfections which are the dowry of other animals: in these there is a footstep of divine wisdom, since they were not produced by him at random, but determined to some particular end, and designed to some usefulness, as parts of the world in their several natures and stations. God could never have had satisfaction in the review of his works, and pronounced them good or comely, as he did, Gen. i. 31. had they not been agreeable to that eternal original copy in his own mind: it is said, he was refreshed, viz. with that review, Exod. xxxi. 17. which could not have been, if his piercing eye had found any defect in any thing which had sprung out of his hand, or an unsuitableness to that end for which he created them. He seems to do as a man that hath made a curious and polite work, with exact care to peer about every part and line, if he could perceive any imperfection in it, to rectify the mistake: but no defect was found by the infinitely wise God upon this second examination.

This wisdom of the creation appears, 1. In the variety. 2. In the beauty. 3. The fitness of every creature for its use. 4. The subordination of one creature to another, and the joint concurrence of all to one common end.

1. In the variety.—Psa. civ. 24. *O Lord how manifold are thy works!* How great a variety is there of animals and plants, with a great variety of forms, shapes, figurations, colours, various smells, virtues and qualities! and this rarity is produced from one and the same matter, as beasts and plants from the earth, Gen. i. 11, 24, *Let the earth bring forth living creatures; and the earth brought forth grass, and the herb yielding seed after his*

his kind: Such diversity of fowl and fish from the water, Gen. i. 20, *Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly*; such a beautiful and active variety from so dull a matter as the earth; so solid a variety from so fluid a matter as the water; so noble a piece as the body of man, with such a variety of members, fit to entertain a more excellent soul as a guest, from so mean a matter as *the dust of the ground*, Gen. ii. 7. This extraction of such variety of forms out of one single and dull matter, is the chemistry of divine wisdom: it is a greater skill to frame noble bodies of vile matter, as varieties of precious vessels of clay and earth, than of a nobler matter, as gold and silver.

Again, all those varieties propagate their kind in every particular and quality of their nature, and uniformly bring forth exact copies according to the first pattern God made of the *kind*, Gen. i. 11, 12, 24. Consider also how the same piece of ground is garnished with plants and flowers of several virtues, fruits, colours, scents, without our being able to perceive any variety in the earth that breeds them, and not so great a difference in the roots that bear them. Add to this, the diversities of birds of different colours, shapes, notes, consisting of various parts, wings like oars to cut the air, and tails as the rudder of a ship to guide their motion.

How various also are the endowments of the creatures? some have vegetation, and the power of growth; others have the addition of sense, and others the excellency of reason; something wherein all agree, and something wherein all differ; variety in unity, and unity in variety: the wisdom of the workman had not been so conspicuous, had there been only one degree of goodness: the greatest skill is seen in the greatest variety.

The comeliness of the body is visible in the variety of members, and their usefulness to one another;
what

what an inform thing had man been, had he been all ear, or all eye? If God had made all the stars to be suns, it would have been a demonstration of his power, but perhaps less of his wisdom; no creatures, with the natures they now have, could have continued in being under so much heat: there was no less wisdom went to the frame of the least, than to the greatest creature. It speaks more art in a limner to paint a landscape exactly, than to draw the sun, though the sun be a more glorious body.

I might instance also in the different characters and features imprinted upon the countenances of men and women, the differences of voices and statures, whereby they are distinguished from one another: these are the foundations of order and of human society and administration of justice; what confusion would have been, if a grown-up son could not be known from his father, the magistrate from the subject, the creditor from the debtor, the innocent from the criminal? the laws God hath given to mankind, could not have been put in execution: this variety speaks the wisdom of God.

2. The wisdom of the creation appears in the beauty and order and situation of the several creatures.—Eccl. iii. 11. *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.* As their being was a fruit of the divine power, so their order is a fruit of divine wisdom. All creatures are as members in the great body of the world, proportioned to one another, and contributing to the beauty of the whole; so that if the particular forms of every thing, the union of all for the composition of the world, and the laws which are established in the order of nature for its conservation, be considered, it would ravish us with an admiration of God: all the creatures are so many pictures or statues, exactly framed by line; Psa. xix. 4. *Their line is gone through all the earth;* their line, a measuring line, or a carpenter's rule, whereby he proportions several pieces to be exactly

exactly linked and coupled together. Their line, that is, their harmonious proportion, and the instruction from it, is gone forth through all the earth. Upon the account of this harmony, some of the ancient heathens framed the images of their gods with musical instruments in their hands, signifying that God wrought all things in a due proportion.

The heavens speak this wisdom in their order.

The revolutions of the sun and moon determine the seasons of the year, and make day and night in an orderly succession. The stars beautify the heavens, and influence the earth, and keep their *courses*, Judges v. 20. They keep their stations without interfering with one another; and though they have rolled about for so many ages, they observe their distinct laws, and in the variety of their motions have not disturbed one another's functions.

The sun is set as the heart in the midst of this great body, to afford warmth to all: had it been set lower, it had long since turned the earth into flame and ashes: had it been placed higher, the earth would have wanted the nourishment and refreshment necessary for it. Too much nearness had ruined the earth by parching heat, and too great a distance had destroyed the earth by starving it with cold.

The sun hath also its appointed motion; had it been fixed without motion, half of the earth had been unprofitable; there had been a perpetual darkness in a moiety of it; nothing had been produced for nourishment, and so it had been rendered uninhabitable; but now by this motion, it visits all the climates of the world, *runs its circuit*, so that *nothing is hid from the heat thereof*, Psa. xix. 6. It imparts its virtue to every corner of the world in its daily and yearly visits. Had it been fixed, the fruits of the earth under it had been parched and destroyed before their maturity; but all those inconveniences are provided against by the perpetual motion of the sun.

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This motion is orderly; it makes its daily course from east to west, its yearly motion from north to south: it goes to the north, till it comes to the point God hath set it, and then turns back to the south, and gains some point every day: it never riseth nor sets in the same place one day, where it did the day before. The world is never without its light; some see it rising the same moment we see its setting.

The earth also speaks the divine wisdom; it is the pavement of the world, as the heaven is the ceiling of fretwork. It is placed lowermost, as being the heaviest body, and fit to receive the weightiest matter, and provided as an habitation proper for those creatures, which derive the matter of their bodies from it, and partake of its earthy nature; and garnished with other creatures for the profit and pleasure of man.

The sea also speaks the same divine wisdom. *He strengthened the fountains of the deep, and gave the sea a decree, that it should not pass his command,* Prov. viii. 28, 29. He hath given it certain bounds, that it should not overflow the earth, Job xxviii. 11. It contains itself in the situation wherein God hath placed it, and doth not transgress its bounds. What if some part of a country, a little spot, hath been overflowed by it, and groaned under its waves? yet for the main, it retains the same channels wherein it was at first lodged.

All creatures are cloathed with an outward beauty, and endowed with an inward harmony; there is an agreement in all parts of this great body; every one is beautiful and orderly; but the beauty of the world results from all of them disposed and linked together.

3. This wisdom is seen in the fitness of every thing for its end, and the usefulness of it. Divine wisdom is more illustrious in the fitness and usefulness of his great variety, than in the compofure

of their distinct parts: as the artificer's skill is more eminent in fitting the wheels, and setting them in order for their due motion, than in the external fabric of the materials which compose the clock.

After the most diligent inspection, there can be found nothing in the creation unprofitable; nothing but is capable of some service, either for the support of our bodies, recreation of our senses, or moral instruction of our minds: not the least creature, but is formed and shaped and furnished with members and parts, in a due proportion for its end and service in the world; nothing is superfluous, nothing defective.

The earth is fitted in its parts; the vallies are appointed for granaries, the mountains to shadow them from the scorching heat of the sun; the rivers, like veins, carry refreshment to every member of this body; plants and trees thrive on the face of the earth, and metals are ingendered in the bowels of it, for materials for building and other uses for the service of man. *There he causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth,* Psa. civ. 14.

The sea is fitted for use; it is a fish-pond for the nourishment of man; a boundary for the dividing of lands and several dominions; it joins together nations far distant: a great vessel for commerce, Psa. civ. 26. *There go the ships.* It affords vapours to the clouds, wherewith to water the earth, which the sun draws up, separating the finer from the saltier parts, that the earth may be fruitful, without being burthened with barrenness by the salt. The sea hath also its salt, its ebbs and floods; the one as brine, the other as motion, to preserve it from putrefaction, that it may not be contagious to the rest of the world.

Showers are appointed to refresh the bodies of living creatures, to open the womb of the earth,
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and *water the ground to make it fruitful*, Psa. civ. 3. The clouds therefore are called the chariots of God; he rides in them in the manifestation of his goodness and wisdom.

Winds are fitted to purify the air, to preserve it from putrefaction; to carry the clouds to several parts, to refresh the parched earth, and assist her fruits: and also to serve for the commerce of one nation with another by navigation. God in his wisdom and goodness *walks upon the wings of the wind*, Psa. civ. 3.

Rivers are appointed to bathe the ground, and render it fresh and lively; they fortify cities, are the limits of countries, serve for commerce; they are the watering pots of the earth, and the vessels for drink for the living creatures that dwell upon the earth. God cut those channels for the wild asses, the beasts of the desert, which are his creatures as well as the rest, Psa. civ. 10, 12, 13.

Trees are appointed for the habitations of birds, shadows for the earth, nourishment for the creatures, materials for building, and fuel for the relief of man against cold.

The seasons of the year have their use; the winter makes the juice retire into the earth; fortifies plants, and fixes their roots: it moistens the earth that was dried before by the heat of summer, and cleanseeth and prepares it for a new fruitfulness. The spring calls out the sap in new leaves and fruit; the summer consumes the superfluous moisture, and produceth nourishment for the inhabitants of the world.

The day and night have also their usefulness: the day gives life to labour, and is a guide to motion and action. Psa. civ. 23. *The sun ariseth, man goeth forth to his labour until the evening*. It warms the air, and quickens nature; without day the world would be a chaos, an unseen beauty. The night indeed casts a vail upon the bravery of

the earth, but it draws the curtains from that of heaven; though it darkens below, it makes us see the beauty of the world above, and discovers to us a glorious part of the creation of God, the tapestry of heaven, and the motion of the stars, hid from us by the eminent light of the day. It procures a truce from labour, and refresheth the bodies of creatures, by recruiting the spirits which are scattered by watching. It prevents the ruin of life, by a reparation of what was wasted in the day. It takes from us the sight of flowers and plants, but it washeth their face with dew for a new appearance next morning. The length of the day and night, is not without a mark of wisdom; were they of a greater length, as the length of a week or month, the one would too much dry, and the other too much moisten; and for want of action, the members would be stupified. The perpetual succession of day and night, is an evidence of the divine wisdom, in tempering the travel and rest of creatures. Hence the psalmist tells us, Psa. lxxiv. 16. 17. *The day is thine, and the night is thine; thou hast prepared the light of the sun, and made summer and winter; i. e.* they are of God's framing, not without a wise counsel and end.

Hence let us ascend to the bodies of living creatures, and we shall find every member fitted for use. What a curiosity is there in every member? every one fitted to a particular use in their situation, form, temper, and mutual agreement for the good of the whole: the eye to direct, the ear to receive directions from others, the hands to act, the feet to move. Every creature hath members fitted for that element wherein it resides: and in the body, some parts are appointed to change the food into blood, others to refine it, and others to distribute and convey it to several parts for the maintenance of the whole: the heart to mint vital spirits for preserving life, and the brain to coin animal spirits
for

for life and motion; the lungs to serve for the cooling the heart, which else would be parched as the ground in summer. The motion of the members of the body by one act of the will, and also without the will by a natural instinct, is an admirable evidence of divine skill in the structure of the body; so that well might the psalmist cry out, Psa. cxxxix. 14. *I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

But how much more of this divine perfection is seen in the soul? A nature furnished with a faculty of understanding to judge of things. to gather in things that are distant, and to reason and draw conclusions from one thing to another, with a memory to treasure up things that are past, with a will to apply itself so readily to what the mind judges fit and comely, and fly so speedily from what it judges ill and hurtful. The whole world is a stage, every creature in it hath a part to act, and a nature suited to that part and end it is designed for; and all concur in a joint language to publish the glory of divine wisdom, they have a voice to proclaim the *glory of God*, Isa. xix. 1, 3. And it is not the least part of God's skill, in framing the creatures so, that upon man's obedience, they are the channels of his goodness; and upon man's disobedience, they can in their natures be the ministers of his justice for the punishing of offending creatures.

4. This wisdom is apparent in the linking all these useful parts together, so that one is subordinate to the other for a common end.—All parts are exactly suited to one another, and every part to the whole, though they are of different natures, as lines distant in themselves, yet they meet in one common center, the good and the preservation of the universe; they are all jointed together, as the word translated *framed* signifies; knit by fit bands and ligaments to contribute mutual beauty, strength and assistance to one another; like so many links of a chain coupled

together, that though there be a distance in place, there is an unity in regard of connection and end, there is a consent in the whole. Hof. ii. 21, 22. *The heavens bear the earth, and the earth bears the corn, and the wine and the oil.* The heavens communicate their qualities to the earth, and the earth conveys them to the fruits she bears: the air distributes light, wind and rain to the earth; the earth and the sea render to the air exhalations and vapors, and altogether charitably give to the plants and animals that which is necessary for their nourishment and refreshment. The influences of the heavens animate the earth, and the earth affords matter in part for the influences it receives from the regions above. Living creatures are maintained by nourishment which is conveyed to them by the fruits of the earth; the fruits of the earth are produced by means of rain and heat; matter for rain and dew is raised by the heat of the sun; and the sun by its motion distributes heat and quickening virtue to all parts of the earth. So colours are made for the pleasure of the eye, sounds for the delight of the ear: light is formed, whereby the eye may see the one, and air to convey the species of colours to the eye, and sound to the ear; all things are like the wheels of a watch compacted: and though many of the creatures be endowed with contrary qualities, yet they are joined in a marriage knot for the public security, and subserviency to the preservation and order of the universe: as the variety of strings upon an instrument, sending forth various and distinct sounds, are tempered together, for the framing excellent and delightful airs. In this universal conspiring of the creatures together to one end, is the wisdom of the creator apparent; in tuning so many contraries as the elements are, and preserving them in their order, which if once broken, the whole frame of nature would crack, and fall in pieces; all are so interwoven and inlaid together, by the divine workmanship,

manship, as to make up one entire beauty in the whole fabric: as every part in the body of man hath a distinct comeliness, yet there is besides, the beauty of the whole, that results from the union of divers parts exactly fashioned to one another, and linked together.

Secondly, The wisdom of God appears in his government of his creatures.—The regular motion of creatures speaks for this perfection, as well as the exact composition of them. If the exquisiteness of the frame conducts us to the skill of the contriver; the exactness of their order, according to his will and law, speaks no less the wisdom of the governor. It cannot be thought that a rash and irrational power presides over a world so well disposed: the disposition of things hath no less characters of skill, than the creation of them. No man can hear an excellent lesson upon a lute, but must presently reflect upon the art of the person that touches it. The prudence of man appears in wrapping up the concerns of a kingdom in his mind, for the well ordering of it; and shall not the wisdom of God shine forth, as he is the director of the world?*

Thirdly, The wisdom of God wonderfully appears in redemption.—His wisdom in creation ravisheth the eye and understanding; his wisdom in government, doth no less affect a curious observer of the links and concatenation of the means; but his wisdom in redemption mounts the mind to a greater astonishment. The works of creation are the footsteps of his wisdom; the work of redemption is the face of his wisdom: a man is better known by the features of his face, than by the prints of his feet. We with *open face, or a revealed face, beholding the glory of the Lord*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Face there, refers to God, not to us; the glory of God's wisdom is now open, and no longer covered and veiled by
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* See more on the subject of God's Government in the following discourse on his Power.

the shadows of the law. As we behold the light glorious, as scattered in the air before the appearance of the sun, but more gloriously in the face of the sun, when it begins its race in our horizon. All the wisdom of God in creation and government in his variety of laws, was like the light the three first days of the creation dispersed about the world, but the fourth day it was more glorious, when all gathered into the body of the *sun*, Gen. i. 4, 16. So the light of divine wisdom and glory, was scattered about the world, and so more obscure till the fourth divine day of the world about the four thousandth year, it was gathered into one body, the Sun of Righteousness, and so shone out more gloriously to men and angels. All things are weaker, the thinner they are extended, but stronger, the more they are united and compacted in one body and appearance. In Christ, in the dispensation by him, as well as in his person, were *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, Col. ii. 3. Some doles of wisdom were given out in creation, but the treasures of it opened in redemption; the highest degrees of it that ever did exert in the world. Christ is therefore called the *wisdom of God*, as well as the *power of God*, 1 Cor. i. 24. and the gospel is called the wisdom of God. Christ is the wisdom of God principally, and the gospel instrumentally, as it is the power of God instrumentally to subdue the heart to himself. This is wrapped up in the appointing Christ as Redeemer, and opened to us in the revelation of it by the gospel.

It is a hidden wisdom—In this regard God is said in the text, to be *only wise*; and it is said to be a *hidden wisdom*, 1 Tim. i. 17. and *wisdom in a mystery*, 1 Cor. ii. 7. incomprehensible to the ordinary capacity of an angel, more than the abstruse qualities of the creatures are to the understanding of man. No wisdom of men or angels is able to search all the veins of this mine, to tell all the threads of
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this web, or to understand the lustre of it: they are as far from an ability fully to comprehend it, as they were at first to contrive it. That wisdom which invented it, can only comprehend it. In the uncreated understanding only there is a clearness of light without any shadow of darkness. We come as short of full apprehension of it, as a child doth of the counsel of the wisest prince. It is so hidden from us, that without revelation, we could not have the least imagination of it; and though it be revealed to us, yet without the help of an infiniteness of understanding, we cannot fully fathom it: it is such a treatise of divine wisdom, that the angels never before had seen the edition of it, till it was published to the world, Eph. iii. 10. *To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.* Now made known to them, not before; and now made known to them in the heavenly places. They had not the knowledge of all heavenly mysteries, though they had the possession of heavenly glory: they knew the prophecies of it in the word, but attained not a clear interpretation of those prophecies, till the things that were prophesied of came upon the stage.

Manifold wisdom: so it is called. As manifold as mysterious. Variety in the mystery, and mystery in every part of the variety. It was not one single act, but a variety of counsels met in it; a conjunction of excellent ends and excellent means. The glory of God, the salvation of man, the defeat of the apostate angels, the discovery of the blessed trinity in their nature, operations, their combined and distinct acts and expressions of goodness: the means are the conjunction of two natures infinitely distant from one another; the union of eternity and time, of mortality and immortality: death is made the way to life, and shame the path to glory. The weakness of the cross is the reparation of man; and the

the creature is made wise by the foolishness of preaching; fallen man grows rich by the poverty of the Redeemer, and man is filled by the emptiness of God; the heir of hell made a son of God by God taking upon him the form of a servant; the son of man advanced to the highest degree of honour, by the Son of God becoming of no reputation.

It is called Eph. i. 8. *abundance of wisdom and prudence*. Wisdom in the eternal counsel, contriving a way; prudence in the temporary revelation, ordering all affairs and occurrences in the world for the attaining the end of his counsel. Wisdom refers to the mystery; prudence to the manifestation of it in fit ways and convenient seasons. Wisdom, to the contrivance and order; prudence to the execution and accomplishment. In all things God acted as *became him*, as a wise and just governor of the world, Heb. ii. 10. Whether the wisdom of God might not have found out some other way, or whether he were, in regard of the necessity and naturalness of his justice, limited to this, is not the question: but that it is the best and wisest way for the manifestation of his glory, is out of question.

This wisdom will appear in the different interests reconciled by it. In the subject, the second person in the trinity, wherein they were reconciled: in the two natures, wherein he accomplished it; whereby God is made known to man in his glory, sin eternally condemned, and the repenting and believing sinner eternally rescued. The honor and righteousness of the law vindicated both in the precept and penalty. The devil's empire overthrown by the same nature he had overturned, and the subtlety of hell defeated by that nature he had spoiled: the creature engaged in every act to the highest obedience and humility, that as God appears as a God upon his throne, the creature might appear in the lowest posture of a creature, in the depths of resignation and dependance; the publication of this made
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in the gospel, by ways congruous to the wisdom which appeared in the execution of his counsel, and the conditions of enjoying the fruit of it, most wise and reasonable.

The greatest different interests are reconciled, justice in punishing, and mercy in pardoning.—For man had broken the law, and plunged himself into a gulf of misery: the sword of vengeance was unsheathed by justice, for the punishment of the criminal: the bowels of compassion were stirred by mercy, for the rescue of the miserable. Justice severely beholds the sin, and mercy compassionately reflects upon the misery. Two different claims are entered by those concerned attributes: justice votes for destruction, and mercy votes for salvation: justice would draw the sword, and drench it in the blood of the offender; mercy would stop the sword, and turn it from the breast of the sinner. Justice would edge it, and mercy would blunt it. The arguments are strong on both sides.

Justice pleads.—I arraign, before the tribunal, a rebel, who was the glorious work of thy hands, the center of the rich goodness, and a counterpart of thy own image; he is indeed miserable, whereby to excite thy compassion; but he is not miserable, without being criminal, thou didst create him in a state, and with ability to do otherwise: the riches of thy bounty aggravate the blackness of his crime. He is a rebel, not by necessity, but will. What constraint was there upon him to listen to the counsels of the enemy of God? What force could there be upon him, since it is without the compass of any creature to work upon, or constrain the will? Nothing of ignorance can excuse him; the law was not ambiguously expressed, but in plain words, both as to precept and penalty; it was writ in his nature in legible characters: had he received any disgust from thee after his creation, it would not excuse his apostacy, since, as a sovereign, thou wert

were not obliged to thy creature. Thou hadst provided all things richly for him; he was crowned with glory and honour: thy infinite power had bestowed upon him an habitation richly furnished, and varieties of servants to attend him. Whatever he viewed without, and whatever he viewed within himself, were several marks of thy divine bounty, to engage him to obedience: had there been some reason of any disgust, it could not have balanced that kindness which had so much reason to oblige him: however, he had received no courtesy from the fallen angel, to oblige him to turn into his camp. Was it not enough, that one of thy creatures would have stripped thee of the glory of heaven, but this also must deprive thee of thy glory upon earth, which was due from him to thee as his creator? Can he charge the difficulty of the command? No; it was rather below, than above his strength. He might rather complain that it was too high, whereby his obedience and gratitude might have a larger scope, and a more spacious field to move in, than a precept so light, so easy as to abstain from one fruit in the garden. What excuse can he have, that would prefer the liquorishness of his sense before the dictates of his reason, and the obligations of his creation? The law thou didst set him, was righteous and reasonable, and shall righteousness and reason be rejected by the supreme and infallible reason, because the rebellious creature hath trampled upon it? What! must God abrogate his holy law, because the creature hath slighted it? what reflection will this be upon the wisdom that enacted it; and upon the equity of the command and sanction of it? Either man must suffer, or the holy law be expunged and for ever out of date. And is it not better, man should eternally smart under his crime, than any dishonourable reflections of unrighteousness be cast upon the law, and of folly, and want of fore-
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fight upon the lawgiver? Not to punish, would be to approve the devil's lie, and justify the creatures revolt. It would be a condemnation of thy own law as unrighteous, and a sentencing thy own wisdom as imprudent. Better man should for ever bear the punishment of his offence, than God bear the dishonour of his attributes: better man should be miserable, than God should be unrighteous, unwise, false, and tamely bear the denial of his sovereignty. But what advantage would it be to gratify mercy by pardoning the malefactor? Besides the irreparable dishonour to the law, the falsifying thy veracity in not executing the denounced threatening, he would receive encouragement by such a grace to spurn more at thy sovereignty, and oppose thy holiness by running on in a course of sin with hopes of impunity: if the creature be restored, it cannot be expected, that he that hath fared so well, after the breach of it, should be very careful of a future observance: his easy re-admission would abet him in the repetition of his offence, and thou shalt soon find him cast off all moral dependance on thee. Shall he be restored without any condition, or covenant; he is a creature not to be governed without a law, and a law is not to be enacted without a penalty. What future regard will he have to thy precept, or what fear will he have of thy threatening, if his crime be so lightly past over? Is it the stability of thy word? what reason will he have to give credit to that, which he hath found all ready disregarded by thyself? Thy truth in future threatenings will be of no force with him, who hath experienced thy laying it aside in the former. It is necessary therefore that the rebellious creature should be punished for the preservation of the honour of the law, and the honour of the lawgiver, with all those perfections that are united in the composure of it.

Mercy

Mercy doth not want a plea.—It is true indeed, the sin of man wants not its aggravations: he hath slighted thy goodness, and accepted thy enemy as his counsellor; but it was not a pure act of his own, as the devil's revolt was: he had a tempter, and the devil had none: he had, I acknowledge, an understanding to know thy will, and a power to obey it; yet he was mutable and had a capacity to fall. It was no difficult task that was set him, nor a hard yoke that was laid upon him; yet he had a brutish part, as well as a rational, and sense as well as soul; whereas the fallen angel was a pure intellectual spirit. Did God create the world to suffer an eternal dishonour, in letting himself be outwitted by Satan, and his work wrested out of his hands? Shall the work of eternal counsel presently sink into irreparable destruction, and the honour of an almighty and wise work be lost in the ruin of the creature? this would seem contrary to the nature of thy goodness, to make man only to render him miserable: to design him in his creation for the service of the devil, and not for the service of his creator. What else could be the issue, if the chief work of thy hand, defaced presently after the erecting, should for ever remain in this marred condition; what can be expected upon the continuance of his misery, but a perpetual hatred, and enmity of thy creature against thee? Did God in creation design his being hated, or his being loved by his creature? Shall God make a holy law, and have no obedience to that law from that creature whom it was made to govern? Shall the curious workmanship of God, and the excellent engravings of the law of nature in his heart, be so soon defaced, and remain in that blotted condition for ever? This fall thou couldst not but in the treasures of thy infinite knowledge foresee; why hadst thou goodness then to create him in an integrity, if thou wouldst not have mercy to pity him in misery? Shall

Shall thy enemy for ever trample upon the honour of thy work, and triumph over the glory of God, and applaud himself in the success of his subtilty? Shall thy creature only passively glorify thee as an avenger, and not actively as a compassionater? Am not I a perfection of thy nature as well as justice? Shall justice ingross all, and I never come into view? It is resolved already, that the fallen angels shall be no subjects for me to exercise myself upon; and I have no less reason than before to plead for them: they fell with a full consent of will, without any motion from another; and not content with their own apostacy, they envy thee, and thy glory upon earth, as well as in heaven, and have drawn into their party the best part of the creation below: shall satan plunge the whole creation in the same irreparable ruin with himself? If the creature be restored, will he contract a boldness in sin by impurity? Hast thou not a grace to render him ingenuous in obedience, as well as a compassion to recover him from misery? What will hinder, but that such a grace, which hath established the standing angels, may establish this recovered creature? If I am utterly excluded from exercising myself on men, as I have been from devils, a whole species is lost; nay, I can never expect to appear upon the stage: if thou wilt quite ruin him by justice, and create another world, and another man, if he stand, thy bounty will be eminent, yet there is no room for mercy to act, unless by the commission of sin, he exposeth himself to misery; and if sin enter into another world, I have little hopes to be heard then, if I am rejected now. Worlds will be perpetually created by goodness, wisdom, and power: sin entering into these worlds, will be perpetually punished by justice; and mercy, which is a perfection of thy nature, will for ever be commanded silence, and lye wrapt up in an eternal darkness. Take occasion now therefore to expose

pose me to the knowledge of thy creature, since without misery, mercy can never set foot into the world.

Mercy pleads, if man be ruined, the creation is in vain; justice pleads, if man be not sentenced, the law is in vain; truth backs justice, and grace abets mercy. What shall be done in this seeming contradiction? mercy is not manifested, if man be not pardoned; justice will complain, if man be not punished.

An expedient is found out by the wisdom of God to answer those demands, and adjust the differences between them.—The wisdom of God answers, I will satisfy your pleas. The pleas of justice shall be satisfied in punishing, and the pleas of mercy shall be received in pardoning; justice shall not complain for want of punishment, nor mercy for want of compassion. I will have an infinite sacrifice to content justice; and the virtue and fruit of that sacrifice shall delight mercy. Here shall justice have punishment to accept, and mercy shall have pardon to bestow. The rights of both are preserved, and the demands of both amicably accorded in punishment and pardon, by transferring the punishment of our crimes upon a surety, exacting a recompence from his blood by justice, and conferring life and salvation upon us by mercy, without the expence of one drop of our own. Thus justice is satisfied in its severities, and mercy in its indulgences. The riches of grace are twisted with the terrors of wrath. The bowels of mercy are wound about the flaming sword of justice, and the sword of justice protects and secures the bowels of mercy. Thus is God righteous without being cruel, and merciful without being unjust; his righteousness inviolable, and the world recoverable. Thus is a resplendent mercy brought forth in the midst of all the curies, confusions, and wrath threatened to the offender.

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This is the admirable temperament found out by the wisdom of God: his justice is honoured in the sufferings of man's surety; and his mercy is honoured in the application of the propitiation to the offender. Rom. iii. 24, 25, *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.* Had we in our persons been sacrifices to justice, mercy had for ever been unknown; had we been solely fostered by mercy, justice had for ever been secluded; had we, being guilty, been absolved, mercy might have rejoiced, and justice might have complained; had we been solely punished, justice would have triumphed, and mercy grieved. But by this medium of redemption, neither hath ground of complaint: justice hath nothing to charge, when the punishment is inflicted; mercy hath whereof to boast when the surety is accepted. The debt of the sinner is transferred upon the surety, that the merit of the surety may be conferred upon the sinner; so that God now deals with our sins in a way of consuming justice, and with our persons in a way of relieving mercy. It is highly better, and more glorious, than if the claim of one had been granted, with the exclusion of the demand of the other: it had then been either an unrighteous mercy, or a merciless justice; it is now a righteous mercy, and a merciful justice.

2. The wisdom of God appears in the subject or person wherein these were accorded; the second person in the blessed Trinity.—There was a congruity in the Son's undertaking and effecting it rather than any other person, according to the order of the persons, and the several functions of the persons, as represented in scripture. The Father, after creation, is the law-giver, and presents man with the image of his own holiness, and the

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way to his creature's happiness: but after the fall, man was too impotent to perform the law, and too polluted to enjoy a felicity. Redemption was then necessary; not that it was necessary for God to redeem man, but it was necessary for man's happiness, that he should be recovered. To this the second person is appointed, that by communion with him, man might derive a happiness, and be brought again to God. But since man was blind in his understanding, and an enemy in his will to God, there must be the exerting of a virtue to enlighten his mind, and bend his will to understand, and accept of this redemption: and this work is assigned to the third person, the Holy Ghost.

It was not congruous that the Father should assume human nature, and suffer in it for the redemption of man.—He was first in order, he was the law-giver, and therefore to be the judge. As law-giver, it was not convenient he should stand in the stead of the law-breaker; and as judge, it was as little convenient that he should be reputed a malefactor: that he who had made a law against sin, denounced a penalty upon the commission of sin, and whose part it was actually to punish the sinner, should become sin for the wilful transgressor of his law. He being the rector, how could he be an advocate and intercessor to himself? how could he be the judge and the sacrifice? a judge, and yet a mediator to himself? If he had been the sacrifice, there must be some person to examine the validity of it, and pronounce the sentence of acceptance. Was it agreeable that the Son should sit upon a throne of judgment, and the Father stand at the bar, and be responsible to the Son? That the Son should be in the place of a governor, and the Father in the place of the criminal? that the Father should be bruised by the Son, as the Son was by the Father; that the Son should awaken a sword against the Father, as the Father did against the Son;

Son; that the Father should be sent by the Son as the Son was by the Father: the order of the persons in the blessed Trinity had been inverted and disturbed. Had the Father been sent, he had not been first in order; the sender is before the person sent: as the Father begets, and the Son is begotten, John i. 14. so the Father sends, and the Son is sent. He whose order is to send, cannot properly send himself.

Nor was it congruous that the Spirit should be sent upon this affair.—If the Holy Ghost had been sent to redeem us, and the Son to apply that redemption to us, the order of the persons had also been inverted: the Spirit then, who was third in order, had been second in operation. The Son would then have received of the Spirit, as the Spirit doth now of Christ, and shew it unto us, John i. 15. As the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son, so the proper function and operation of it, was in order after the operations of the Father and the Son: had the Spirit been sent to redeem us, and the Son sent by the Father, and the Spirit to apply that redemption to us; the Son in his acts had proceeded from the Father and the Spirit; the Spirit, as sender, had been in order before the Son; whereas the Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ, as sent by Christ from the Father, Gal. iv. 6. John xv. 27. But as the order of the works, so the order of the persons is preserved in their several operations. Creation, and a law to govern the creature, precedes redemption. Nothing, or that which hath no being, is not capable of a redeemed being. Redemption supposeth the existence and the misery of a person redeemed. As creation precedes redemption, so redemption precedes the application of it. As redemption supposeth the being of the creature, so application of redemption supposeth the efficacy of redemption. According to the order of these works, is the order of the operations of the three persons. Creation belongs to

the Father, the first person. Redemption, the second work, is the function of the Son, the second person. Application, the third work, is the office of the Holy Ghost, the third person. The Father orders it, the Son acts it, the Holy Ghost applies it. He purifies our souls to understand, believe, and love these mysteries. He forms Christ in the womb of the soul, as he did the body of Christ in the womb of the virgin. As the Spirit of God *moved upon the waters*, to garnish and adorn the world, after the matter of it was formed, Gen. i. 2. so he moves upon the heart, to supple it to a compliance with Christ, and draws the lineaments of the new creation in the soul, after the foundation is laid.

The Son pays the price that was due from us to God, and the Spirit is the earnest of the promises of life and glory purchased by the merit of that death. It is to be observed, that the Father, under the dispensation of the law, proposed the commands with the promises and threatenings, to the understanding of men and Christ, under the dispensation of grace, when he was upon the earth, proposeth the gospel as the means of salvation, exhorts to faith as the condition of salvation; but it was neither the function of the one, or the other, to display such an efficacy in the understanding and will, to make men believe and obey, and therefore there were such few conversions in the time of Christ, by his miracles: but this work was reserved, for the fuller and brighter appearance of the Spirit, whose office it was to convince the world of the necessity of a redeemer, because of their lost condition; of the person of the redeemer, the Son of God; of the sufficiency and efficacy of redemption, because of his righteousness and acceptation by the Father. The wisdom of God is seen in preparing and presenting the objects, and then in making impression of

of them upon the subjects he intends. And thus is the order of the three persons preserved.

The second person had the greatest congruity to this work.—He by whom God created the world, was most conveniently employed in restoring the defaced world: who more fit to recover it from its lapsed state, than he that had erected it in its primitive state? Heb. i. 2. *He was the light of men* in creation, and therefore it was most reasonable he should be the light of men in redemption. Who fitter to reform the divine image, than he that first formed it? Who fitter to speak for us to God, than he who was *the word*? John i. 1. Who could better intercede with the Father, than he who was the only begotten and beloved Son? Who so fit to redeem the forfeited inheritance as the *Heir of all things*? Who fitter and better to prevail for us to have the right of children, than he that possessed it by nature? We fell from being the sons of God, and who fitter to introduce us into an adopted state, than the Son of God? herein was an expression of the richer grace, because the first sin was immediately against the wisdom of God, by an ambitious affectation of a wisdom equal to God: that that person, who was the wisdom of God, should be made a sacrifice for the expiation of the sin against wisdom.

3. The wisdom of God is seen in the two natures of Christ, whereby this redemption was accomplished.—The union of the two natures was the foundation of the union of God, and the fallen creature.

The union itself is admirable: *the word is made flesh*, John i. 14. *One equal with God in the form of a servant*, Phil. ii. 7. When the apostle speaks of *God manifested in the flesh*, he speaks *the wisdom of God in a mystery*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. That which is incomprehensible to the angels, which they never imagined before it was revealed, which perhaps they never

knew till they beheld it. I am sure, under the law the figures of the cherubims were placed in the sanctuary with their faces looking towards the propitiatory in a perpetual posture of contemplation and admiration, Exod. xxxvii. 9. to which the apostle alludes, 1 Pet. i. 12.

Myfterious is the wisdom of God to unite finite and infinite, almightinefs and weaknefs, immortality and mortality, immutability with a thing fubject to change; to have a nature from eternity, and yet a nature fubject to the revolutions of time; a nature to make a law, and a nature to be fubjected to the law; to be *God bleffed for ever*, in the bofom of his Father, and an infant expofed to calamities from the womb of his mother: terms feeming moft diftant from union, moft incapable of conjunction, to fhake hands together, to be moft intimately conjoined; glory and vilenefs, fulnefs and emptinefs, heaven and earth; the creature with the creator; he that made all things, in one perfon with a nature that is made; Immanuel, God and man, in one: that which is moft fpiritual to partake of that which is carnal flefh and blood: one with the Father in his godhead, one with us in his manhood: the godhead to be in him in the fulleft perfection, and the manhood in the greateft purity: the creature one with the creator, and the creator one with the creature. Thus is the incomprehenfible wisdom of God declared in the word being made flefh.

In the manner of this union.—An union of two natures, yet no natural union. It tranfcends all the unions vifible among creatures: it is not like the union of ftones in a building, or of two pieces of timber faftened together, which touch one another only in their fuperfices and outfide, without any intimacy with one another. By fuch a kind of union, God would not be man: the word could not fo be made flefh. Nor is it a union of parts to the whole, as the members and the body; the
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members are parts, the body is the whole; for the whole results from the parts, and depends upon the parts: but Christ being God, is independent upon any thing. The parts are in order of nature before the whole, but nothing can be in order of nature before God. Nor is it as the union of two liquors, as when wine and water are mixed together; for they are so incorporated, as not to be distinguished from one another; no man can tell which particle is wine, and which is water. But the properties of the divine nature are distinguishable from the properties of the human. Nor is it as the union of the soul and body, so as that the deity is the form of the humanity, as the soul is the form of the body: for as the soul is but a part of the man, so the divinity would be then but a part of the humanity; and as a form, or the soul is in a state of imperfection, without that which it is to inform; so the divinity of Christ would have been imperfect, till it had assumed the humanity. And so the perfection of an eternal deity would have depended on a creature of time.

This union of two natures in Christ is incomprehensible: and it is a mystery we cannot arrive to the top of, how the divine nature, which is the same with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost, should be united to the human nature; without its being said, that the Father and the Holy Ghost were united to the flesh; but the scripture doth not encourage any such notion: it speaks only of the Word, the person of the word being made flesh. And in his being made flesh, distinguisheth him from the Father, as *the only begotten of the Father*, John i. 14. The person of the Son was the term of this union.

This union doth not confound the properties of the deity, and those of the humanity. They remain distinct and entire in each other. The deity is not changed into flesh, nor the flesh transformed into God: they are distinct and yet united: they

are conjoined; and yet unmixt: the dues of either nature are preserved. It is impossible that the majesty of the divinity can receive an alteration: it is as impossible that the meaness of the humanity can receive the impressions of the deity, so as to be changed into it, and a creature be metamorphosed into the creator, and temporary flesh become eternal, and finite mount up into infinity: as the soul and body are united, and make one person, yet the soul is not changed into the perfections of the body, nor the body into the perfections of the soul. There is a change made in the humanity by being advanced to a more excellent union, but not in the deity; as a change is made in the air, when it is enlightened by the sun, not in the sun, which communicates that brightness to the air. *Athanasius* makes the *burning bush* to be a type of Christ's incarnation, Excd. iii. 2. The fire signifying the divine nature, and the bush the human. The bush is a branch springing up from the earth, and the fire descends from heaven; as the bush was united to the fire, yet was not hurt by the flame, nor converted into fire, there remained a difference between the bush and the fire, yet the properties of the fire shined in the bush, so that the whole bush seemed to be on fire. So in the incarnation of Christ, the human nature is not swallowed up by the divine, nor changed into it, nor confounded with it; but so united, that the properties of both remain firm: *two* are so become *one* that they remain *two* still: one person in two natures, containing the glorious perfections of the divine, and the weaknesses of the human. *The fulness of the deity dwells bodily in Christ*, Col. ii. 9.

The divine nature is united to every part of the humanity.—The whole divinity to the whole humanity; so that no part but may be said to be the member of God, as well as the blood is said to be the *blood of God*, Acts xx. 28. By the same reason it may be said, the hand of God, the eye of God,
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the arm of God. As God is infinitely present every where, so as to be excluded from no place; so is the deity hypostatically every where in the humanity not excluded from any part of it; as the light of the sun in every part of the air; as a sparkling splendor in every part of the diamond. Therefore it is concluded by all that acknowledge the deity of Christ, that when his soul was separated from the body, the deity remained united both to soul and body, as light doth in every part of a broken crystal.

Therefore *perpetually united*, Coloss. ii. 9. *The fulness of the godhead dwells in him bodily.* It dwells in him, not lodges in him as a traveller in an inn: it resides in him as a fixed habitation. As God describes the perpetuity of his presence in the ark by his habitation or dwelling in it, Exod. xxix. 44. so doth the apostle the inseparable duration of the deity in the humanity, and the indissoluble union of the humanity with the deity. It was united on earth, it remains united in heaven. It was not an image or an apparition, as the tongues wherein the spirit came upon the apostles, were a temporary representation, not a thing united perpetually to the person of the Holy Ghost.

It was a personal union.—It was not an union of persons, though it was a personal union: so Davenant expounds, Col. ii. 9. Christ did not take the person of man, but the nature of man into subsistence with himself. The body and soul of Christ were not united in themselves, had no subsistence in themselves, till they were united to the person of the Son of God. If the person of a man were united to him, the human nature would have been the nature of the person so united to him, and not the nature of the Son of God, Heb. ii. 14, 16. *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him, that*
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had the power of death, that is, the devil. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels: but he took on him the seed of Abraham. He took flesh and blood to be his own nature, perpetually to subsist in the person of the *Logos*, which must be by a personal union, or no way: the deity united to the humanity, and both natures to be one person. This is the mysterious and manifold wisdom of God.

The end of this union.

He was hereby fitted to be Mediator.—He hath something like to man, and something like to God. If he were in all things only like to man, he would be at a distance from God: if he were in all things only like to God, he would be at a distance from man. He is a true mediator between mortal sinners and the Immortal Righteous One. He was near to us by the infirmities of our nature, and near to God by the perfections of the divine; as near to God in his nature, as to us in ours; as near to us in our nature, as he is to God in the divine. Nothing that belongs to the deity, but he possesses; nothing that belongs to the human nature, but he is clothed with.

He had both the nature which had offended, and that nature which was offended; a nature to please God, and a nature to please us: a nature whereby he experimentally knew the excellency of God, which was injured, and understood the glory due to him, and consequently the greatness of the offence, which was to be measured by the dignity of his person: and a nature whereby, he might be sensible of the miseries contracted by, and endure the calamities due to the offender, that he might both have compassion on him, and make due satisfaction for him. He had two distinct natures, capable of the affections and sentiments of the two persons he was to accord; he was a just judge of the rights of the one, and the demerit of the other. He could not have this full and perfect understanding, if he
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did not possess the perfections of the one, and the qualities of the other: the one fitted him for things appertaining to God, Heb. v. 1. and the other furnished him with a sense of the infirmities of man, Heb. iv. 15.

He was hereby fitted for the working out the happiness of man.—A divine nature to communicate to man, and a human nature to carry up to God.

He had a nature whereby to suffer for us, and a nature whereby to be meritorious in those sufferings.—A nature to make him capable to bear the penalty, and a nature to make his sufferings sufficient for all that embraced him. A nature capable to be exposed to the flames of divine wrath, and another nature incapable to be crushed by the weight, or consumed by the heat of it: a human nature to suffer, and stand a sacrifice in the stead of man; a divine nature to sanctify these sufferings, and fill the nostrils of God with a sweet savour, and thereby atone his wrath: the one to bear the stroke due to us, and the other to add merit to his sufferings for us. Had he not been man, he could not have filled our place in suffering; and could he otherwise have suffered, his sufferings had not been applicable to us; and had he not been God, his sufferings had not been meritoriously and fruitfully applicable. Had not his blood been the blood of God, it had been of as little advantage as the blood of an ordinary man, or the blood of the legal sacrifices. Nothing less than God, could have satisfied God for the injury done by man. Nothing less than God, could have countervailed the torments due to the offending creature: nothing less than God, could have rescued us out of the hands of the jailor, too powerful for us.

He had therefore a nature to be compassionate to us, and victorious for us.—A nature sensibly to compassionate us, and another nature to render those

those compassions effectual for our relief; he had the compassions of our nature to pity us, and the patience of the divine nature to bear with us. He hath the affections of a man to us, and the power of a God for us: a nature to disarm the devil for us, and another nature to be sensible of the working of the devil in us, and against us. If he had been only God, he would not have had an experimental sense of our misery; and if he had been only man, he could not have vanquished our enemies: had he been only God, he could not have died; and had he been only man, he could not have conquered death.

A nature efficaciously to instruct us.—As man, he was to instruct us sensibly; as God, he was to instruct us infallibly. A nature whereby he might converse with us, and a nature whereby he might influence us in those converses. A human mouth to minister instruction to man, and a divine power to imprint it with efficacy.

A nature to be a pattern to us.—A pattern of grace as man, as Adam was to have been to his posterity. A divine nature shining in the human, the image of the invisible God in the glass of our flesh, that he might be a perfect copy for our imitation. Col. i. 15, *The image of the invisible God, and the first-born of every creature*, in conjunction. The virtues of the deity are sweetened and tempered by the union with the humanity, as the beams of the sun are by shining through a coloured glass, which condescends more to the weakness of our eye.

Thus the perfections of the invisible God, breaking through the first-born of every creature, glittering in Christ's created state, became more sensible for contemplation by our mind, and more imitable for conformity in our practice.

A nature to be a ground of confidence in our approach to God.—A nature wherein we may behold

hold him, and wherein we may approach to him : a nature for our comfort, and a nature for our confidence. Had he been only man, he had been too feeble to assure us ; and had he been only God, he had been too high to attract us : but now we are allured by his human nature, and assured by his divine, in our drawing near to heaven. Communion with God was desired by us, but our guilt stifled our hopes, and the infinite excellency of the divine nature, would have damp't our hopes of speeding ; but since these two natures, so far distant, are met in a marriage-knot, we have a ground of hope, nay, an earnest, that the creator and believing creature shall meet and converse together. And since our sins are expiated by the death of the human nature, in conjunction with the divine, our guilt, upon believing, shall not hinder us from this comfortable approach. Had he been only man, he could not have assured us an approach to God : had he been only God, his justice would not have admitted us to approach to him ; he had been too terrible for guilty persons, and too holy for polluted persons to come near him : but by being made man his justice is tempered, and by his being God and man, his mercy is insured. A human nature he had, one with us, that we might be related to God, as one with him.

A nature to derive all good to us.—Had he not been man, we had had no share or part in him : a satisfaction by him had not been imputed to us. If he were not God, he could not communicate to us divine graces and eternal happiness ; he could not have had power to convey so great a good to us, had he been only man ; and he could not have done it, according to the rule of inflexible righteousness, had he been only God. As man, he is the way of conveyance ; as God, he is the spring of conveyance. From this grace of union, and the grace of union, we find *rivers of water flowing, to make glad*

glad the city of God. Believers are his branches, and draw sap from him as he is their root in his human nature, and have an endless duration of it from his divine. Had he not been man, he had not been in a state to obey the law: had he not been God as well as man, his obedience could not have been valuable to be imputed to us.

How should this mystery be studied by us, which would afford us both admiration and content! Admiration, in the incomprehensibleness of it; contentment, in the fitness of the mediator. By this wisdom of God we receive the props of our faith, and the fruits of joy and peace. Wisdom consists in chusing fit means, and conducting them in such a method, as may reach with good success the variety of marks which are aimed at. Thus hath the wisdom of God set forth a Mediator, suited to our wants, fitted for our supplies, and ordered so, the whole affair by the union of these two natures in the person of the Redeemer, that there could be no disappointment, by all the bustle, hell and hellish instruments could raise against it.

4. The wisdom of God is seen in this way of redemption, in vindicating the honour and righteousness of the law, both as to precept and penalty.—The first and irreversible design of the law was obedience. The penalty of the law had only entrance upon transgression. Obedience was the design, and the penalty was added to enforce the observance of the precept. Gen. ii. 17, *Thou shalt not eat*; there is the precept: *in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die*; there is the penalty. Obedience was our debt to the law, as creatures; punishment was due from the law to us as sinners: we were bound to endure the penalty for our first transgression, but the penalty did not cancel the bond of future obedience: the penalty had not been incurred without transgressing the precept; yet the precept was not abrogated by enduring the penalty. Since man so soon revolted,
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and by his revolt fell under the threatening, the justice of the law had been honoured by man's sufferings, but the holiness and equity of the law had been honoured by man's obedience. The wisdom of God finds out a medium to satisfy both: the justice of the law is preserved in the execution of the penalty; and the holiness of the law is honoured in the observance of the precept.

The life of our Saviour is a conformity to the precept, and his death is a conformity to the penalty; the precepts are exactly performed, and the curse punctually executed, by a voluntary observing the one, and a voluntary undergoing the other. It is obeyed as if it had not been transgressed, and executed as if it had not been obeyed.

It became the wisdom, justice, and holiness of God, as the rector of the world, to exact it, Heb. ii. 10. and it *became* the holiness of the Mediator to *fulfil all the righteousness of the law*; and thus the honour of the law was vindicated in all the parts of it. The transgression of the law was condemned in the flesh of the Redeemer, and the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in his person: and both these acts of obedience, being counted as one righteousness, and imputed to the believing sinner, render him a subject to the law, both in its preceptive and minatory part. By Adam's sinful acting we were made sinners, and by Christ's righteous acting we are made righteous. Rom. v. 10. *As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.* The law was obeyed by him, that *the righteousness of it might be fulfilled in us*, Rom. viii. 4. It is not fulfilled in us, or in our actions, by inherency, but fulfilled in us by imputation of that righteousness which was exactly fulfilled by another. As he died for us, and rose again for us, so he lived for us. The commands of the law were as well observed for us, as the threatenings of the law were endured for us.

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This justification of a sinner, with the preservation of the holiness of the law in truth, in the inward parts, in sincerity of intention, as well as conformity in action, is the wisdom of God, the gospel-wisdom which David desires to know, Psa. li. 6. *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom*; or as some render it, *the hidden things of wisdom*. Not an inherent wisdom in the acknowledgments of his sin, which he had confessed before; but the wisdom of God in providing a medicine, so as to keep up the holiness of the law in the observance of it in truth, and the averting the judgment due to the sinner. In and by this way methodized by the wisdom of God, all doubts and troubles are discharged. Naturally if we take a view of the law to behold its holiness and justice and then of our hearts, to see the contrariety in them to the command, and the pollution repugnant to its holiness; and after this cast our eyes upward, and behold a flaming sword edged with curses and wrath; is there any matter, but that of terror, afforded by any of these? but when we behold, in the life of Christ, a conformity to the mandatory part of the law, and in the cross of Christ, a sustaining the minatory part of the law; this wisdom of God gives a well grounded and rational dismissal to all the horrors that can seize upon us.

5. The wisdom of God in redemption is visible in manifesting two contrary affections at the same time, and in one act: the greatest hatred of sin, and the greatest love to the sinner. In this way he punishes the sin without ruining the sinner, and repairs the ruins of the sinner, without indulging the sin. Here is eternal love, and eternal hatred; a condemning the sin to what it merited, and an advancing the sinner to what he could not expect. Herein is the choicest love, and the deepest hatred manifested. An implacableness against the sin, and

a placableness to the sinner. His hatred of sin hath been discovered in other ways; in punishing the devil without remedy; sentencing man to an expulsion from paradise, though seduced by another; in accursing the serpent, an irrational creature, though but a misguided instrument. The whole tenor of his threatenings declare his loathing of sin, and the sprinklings of his judgments in the world, and the horrible expectations of terrified consciences confirm it. But what are all these testimonies to the highest evidence that can possibly be given in the sheathing the sword of his wrath in the heart of his Son? If a father should order his son to take a mean garb below his dignity, order him to be dragged to prison, seem to throw off all affection of a father for the severity of a judge, condemn his son to a horrible death, be a spectator of his bleeding condition, withhold his hand from alluaging his misery, regard it rather with joy than sorrow, give him a bitter cup to drink, and stand by to see him drink it off to the bottom, dregs and all, and flash frowns in his face all the while; and this not for any fault of his own, but the rebellion of some subjects he undertook for, and that the offenders might have a pardon sealed by the blood of the son the sufferer: all this would evidence his detestation of the rebellion, and his affection to the rebels; his hatred to their crime, and his love to their welfare. This did God do; He *delivered Christ up for our offences*, Rom. viii. 32. *the Father gave him the cup*, John xviii. 18. *The Lord bruised him with pleasure*, Isa. liii. 10. and that for sin: he transferred upon the shoulders of his Son the pain we had merited, that the criminal might be restored to the place he had forfeited. He hates the sin so, as to condemn it for ever, and wrap it up in the curse he had threatened; and loves the sinner believing and repenting so, as to mount him to an expectation of a happiness exceeding the first state, both in glory and

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perpetuity. Instead of an earthly paradise, lays the foundation of an heavenly mansion, brings forth a weight of glory from a weight of misery, separates the comfortable light of the sun, from the scorching heat we had deserved at his hands. Thus hath God's hatred of sin been manifested. He is at an eternal defiance with sin, yet nearer in alliance with the sinner than he was before the revolt: as if man's miserable fall had endeared him to the judge. This is the wisdom and prudence of *grace wherein God hath abounded*, Eph. i. 9. A wisdom in twisting the happy restoration of the broken amity, with an everlasting curse, upon that which made the breach, both upon sin the cause, and upon Satan the seducer to it. Thus is hatred and love in their highest glory manifested together: hatred to sin, in the death of Christ, more than if the torments of hell had been undergone by the sinner; and love to the sinner, more than if he had, by an absolute and simple bounty, bestowed upon him the possession of heaven; because the gift of his Son, for such an end, is a greater token of his boundless affections, than a reinstating man in paradise. Thus is the wisdom of God seen in redemption; consuming the sin, and recovering the sinner.

6. The wisdom of God is evident in overturning the devil's empire, by the nature he had vanquished, and by ways quite contrary to what that malicious spirit could imagine.—The devil indeed read his own doom in the first promise, and found his ruin resolved upon, by the means of the seed of the woman, but by what seed, was not so easily known to him. And the methods whereby it was to be brought about, was a mystery kept secret from the malicious devils, since it was not discovered to the obedient angels. He might know from Isa. liii. that the Redeemer was assured to divide the spoil with the strong, and rescue a part of the lost creation out of his hands; and that this was to be effected,
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by making his soul an offering for sin: but could he imagine which way his soul was to be made such an offering? He shrewdly suspected Christ just after his Inauguration into his office by baptism, to be the Son of God. But did he ever dream that the Messiah, by dying as a reputed malefactor, should be a sacrifice for the expiation of the sin, the devil had introduced by his subtilty? Did he ever imagine a cross should dispossess him of his crown, and that dying groans should wrest the victory out of his hands?

He was conquered by that nature he had cast headlong into ruin: a woman, by his subtilty, was the occasion of our death; and a woman, by the conduct of the only wise God, brings forth the author of our life, and the conqueror of our enemies. The flesh of the old Adam had infected us, and the flesh of the new Adam cures us. 1 Cor. xv. 21. *By man came death; by man also came the resurrection from the dead.* We are killed by the old Adam, and raised by the new. As among the Israelites, a fiery serpent gave the wound, and a brazen serpent administers the cure. The nature that was deceived bruise the deceiver, and raise up the foundations of his kingdom. Satan is defeated by the counsels he took to secure his possession, and loses the victory by the same means whereby he thought to preserve it.

His tempting the Jews to the sin of crucifying the Son of God, had a contrary success to his tempting Adam to eat of the tree. The first death he brought upon Adam, ruined us, and the death he brought by his instruments upon the second Adam, restored us. By a tree, if one may so say, he had triumphed over the world, and by the fruit of a tree, one hanging upon a tree, he is discharged of his power over us, Heb. ii. 14. *Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death.* And thus the devil ruins his own kingdom while he thinks to

confirm and enlarge it. And is defeated by his own policy, whereby he thought to continue the world under his chains, and deprive the Creator of the world of his purposed honour. What deeper counsel could he resolve upon for his own security, than to be instrumental in the death of him, who was God, the terror of the devil himself, and to bring the Redeemer of the world to expire with disgrace in the sight of a multitude of men? Thus did the wisdom of God shine forth in restoring us by methods seemingly repugnant to the end he aimed at, and above the suspicion of a subtle devil, whom he intended to baffle.

Could he imagine that we should be healed by stripes, quickened by death, purified by blood, crowned by a cross, advanced to the highest honour by the lowest humility, comforted by sorrows, glorified by disgrace, absolved by condemnation, and made rich by poverty? That the sweetest honey should at once spring out of the belly of a dead lion, the lion of the tribe of Judah, and out of the bosom of the living God? how wonderful is this wisdom of God! that the seed of the woman, born of a mean virgin, brought forth in a stable, spending his days in affliction, misery and poverty, without any pomp and splendor, passing some time in a carpenter's shop, with carpenters tools, and afterwards exposed to a horrible and disgraceful death, should by this way pull down the gates of hell, subvert the kingdom of the devil, and be the hammer to break in pieces that power, which he had so long exercised over the world! Thus became he the author of our life, by being bound for awhile in the chains of death, and arrived to a principality over the most malicious powers by being a prisoner for us, and the anvil of their rage and fury.

7. The wisdom of God appears, in giving us this way the surest ground of comfort and the strongest incentive to obedience.—The rebel is reconciled,

ciled, and the rebellion flamed ; God is propitiated and the sinner sanctified by the same blood. What can more contribute to our comfort and confidence, than God's richest gift to us? What can more inflame our love to him, than our recovery from death by the oblation of his Son to misery and death for us? it doth as much engage our duty as secure our happiness. It presents God glorious and gracious, and therefore every way fit to be trusted in regard of the interest of his own glory in it, and in regard of the effusions of his grace by it. It renders the creature obliged in the highest manner, and so awakens his industry to the strictest and noblest obedience. Nothing so effectual as a crucified Christ to wean us from sin and stifle all motions of despair ; a means, in regard of the justice signalized in it, to make man to hate the sin which had ruined him ; and a means, in regard of the love exprest, to make him *delight in that law* he had violated, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. *The love of Christ* and therefore the love of God exprest in it, *constrains us no longer to live to ourselves.*

It is a ground of the highest comfort and confidence in God. Since he hath given such an evidence of his impartial truth to his threatening for the honour of his justice, we need not question but he will be as punctual to his promise for the honour of his mercy. It is a ground of confidence in God, since he hath redeemed us in such a way as glorifies the steadiness of his veracity, as well as the severity of his justice; we may well trust him for the performance of his promise, since we have experience of the execution of his threatening ; his merciful truth will as much engage him to accomplish the one, as his just truth did to inflict the other. The goodness which shone forth in weaker rays in the creation, breaks out with stronger beams in redemption.

Fifthly, The Use.

If wisdom be an excellency of the divine nature, then Christ's deity may hence be asserted.—Wisdom is the emphatical title of Christ in scripture, Prov. viii. 12, 13, 31. where Wisdom is brought in speaking as a distinct person; ascribing counsel, and understanding, and the knowledge of witty inventions to itself. He is called also the power of God, and the wisdom of God. And the ancients generally understood that place, Col. ii. 3. *In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, as an assertion of the godhead of Christ, in regard of the infiniteness of his knowledge; referring wisdom to his knowledge of divine things; and knowledge to his understanding of all human things. But the natural sense of the place seems to be this, that all wisdom and knowledge is displayed by Christ in the gospel; and the words, refer either to Christ, or the mystery of God spoken of, ver. 2. But the deity of Christ, in regard of infinite wisdom, may be deduced from his creation of things, and his government of things; both which are ascribed to him in scripture. The first ascribed to him, John i. 3. *All things were made by him*; and ver. 27. *Without him was not any thing made, that was made*. The second, John v. 22. *The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son*; and both put together, Col. ii. 16, 17.

God's Power.

Job xxvi. 14.

LO! THESE ARE PARTS OF HIS WAYS, BUT HOW LITTLE A PORTION IS HEARD OF HIM? BUT THE THUNDER OF HIS POWER WHO CAN UNDERSTAND?

THE text is a lofty declaration of the divine power, with a particular note of attention, *Lo!*

In the expressions of it, in the works of creation and providence, *Lo, these are his ways*; ways and works excelling any created strength, referring to the little summary of them he had made before.

In the insufficiency of these ways to measure his power, *But how little a portion is heard of him?*

In the incomprehensibleness of it, *The thunder of his power who can understand?*

Infinite and incomprehensible power pertains to the nature of God, and is expressed, in part, in his works: or, though there be a mighty expression of divine power in his works, yet an incomprehensible power pertains to his nature—*The thunder of his power who can understand?*

In particular, I shall shew

1. The nature of God's power.
2. Reasons to prove that God must needs be powerful.
3. How his power appears; in creation, in government, and in redemption.
4. The use.

First, What this power is; or the nature of it.

This power is divided ordinarily into absolute and ordinate.—Absolute, is that power whereby God is able to do that which he will not do, but is possible to be done: Ordinate, is that power whereby God doth that which he hath decreed to do, that is, which he hath ordained or appointed to be exercised. Which are not distinct powers, but one and the same power; his ordinate power is a part of his absolute; for if he had not a power to do every thing that he could will, he might not have a power to do every thing that he doth will.

The object of his absolute power is all things possible; such things that imply not a contradiction, such that are not repugnant in their own nature to be done, and such as are not contrary to the nature and perfections of God to be done: those things that are repugnant in their own nature to be done are several, as to make a thing which is past not to be past. As for example, the world is created; God could have chose whether he would create the world, and after it is created he hath power to dissolve it; but after it was created, and when it is dissolved, it will be eternally true, that the world was created, and that it was dissolved; for it is impossible, that that which was once true, should ever be false: if it be true that the world was created, it will for ever be true that it was created, and cannot be otherwise. And also, if it be once true that God hath decreed, it is impossible in its own nature to be true that God hath not decreed. Some things are repugnant to the nature and perfections of God: as it is impossible for his nature to die and perish; impossible for him in regard of truth, to lie and deceive. But of this hereafter; only at present to understand the object of God's Absolute Power to be things possible, that is, possible in nature; not by any strength in themselves, or of themselves; for nothing hath no strength, and every thing is
nothing

nothing before it comes into being: so God by his absolute power might have prevented the sin of the fallen angels, and so have preserved them in their first habitation. He might by his absolute power have restrained the devil from tempting of Eve, or restrained her and Adam from swallowing the bait, and joining hands with the temptation. By his absolute power, God might have given the reins to Peter to betray his Master, as well as to deny him; and employed Judas in the same glorious and successful service, wherein he employed Paul. By his absolute power he might have created the world millions of years before he did create it, and can reduce it into its empty nothing this moment. This the Baptist affirms, when he tells us, *That God is able of these stones* (meaning the stones in the wilderness, and not the people which came out to him out of Judea, which were children of Abraham) *to raise up children to Abraham*, Mat. iii. 9. that is, there is a possibility of such a thing, there is no contradiction in it, but that God is able to do it if he please.

But now the object of his ordinate power, is all things ordained by him to be done, all things decreed by him; and because of the divine ordination of things; this power is called ordinate; and what is thus ordained by him he cannot but do, because of his unchangeableness. Both these powers are expressed, Mat. xxvi. 53. 54. *My Father can send twelve legions of angels*, there is his absolute power; *but how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?* there is his ordinate power. As his power is free from any act of his will, it is called absolute; as it is joined with an act of his will, it is called ordinate. His absolute power is necessary, and belongs to his nature; his ordinate power is free, and belongs to his will; a power guided by his will; not, as I said before, that they are two distinct powers, both belonging to his nature, but the
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the latter is the same with the former, only it is guided by his will and wisdom.

It follows then, that the power of God is that ability and strength whereby he can bring to pass whatsoever he pleases.—Whatsoever his infinite wisdom can direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of his will can resolve. Power, in the primary notion of it, doth not signify an act, but an ability to bring a thing into act; it is a power, as able to act before it doth actually produce a thing: as God had an ability to create before he did create, he had power before he acted that power without. Power exercised and diffused, in bringing forth and nursing up its particular objects without, is inconceivably less than that strength which is infinite in himself, the same with his essence, and is indeed himself: by his power exercised he doth whatsoever he actually wills; but by the power in his nature, he is able to do whatsoever he is able to will. The will of creatures may be, and is more extensive than their power; and their power more contracted and shortened, than their will: but, as the prophet saith, *His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure*, Isa. xlv. 10. His power is as great as his will, that is, whatsoever can fall within the verge of his will, falls within the compass of his power. Though he will never actually will this or that, yet supposing he should will it, he is able to perform it: so that you must in your notion of divine power, enlarge it further than to think, God can only do what he hath resolved to do; but that he hath as infinite a capacity of power to act, as he hath an infinite capacity of will to resolve.

The power of God gives activity to all the other perfections of his nature; it contributes life and activity to all the other perfections.—How vain would be his eternal counsels, if power did not step in to execute them: his mercy would be a feeble pity, if he were destitute of power to relieve; and his

his justice a slighted scarecrow, without power to punish; his promises an empty sound, without power to accomplish them. As holiness is the beauty, so power is the life of all his attributes in their exercise; and as holiness, so power is an adjunct belonging to all, a term that may be given to all. God hath a powerful wisdom to attain his ends, without interruption: he hath a powerful mercy to remove our misery; a powerful justice to lay all misery upon offenders: he hath a powerful truth to perform his promises; an infinite power to bestow rewards and inflict penalties. It is to this purpose power is first put in the two things which the psalmist had heard, Psa. lxii. 11, 12. *Twice have I heard, or two things have I heard*; first power, then mercy and justice, included in that expression, *thou renderest to every man according to his work*: in every perfection of God he heard of power. This is the arm, the hand of the deity, which all his other attributes lay hold on, when they would appear in their glory; this hands them to the world; by this they act, in this they triumph. Power framed every stage for their appearance in creation, providence, redemption.

His power is of a larger extent in regard of its objects than some other attributes—It doth not always suppose an object, but constitutes an object. It supposeth an object in the act of preservation, but it makes an object in the act of creation; but mercy supposeth an object miserable, yet doth not make it so. Justice supposeth an object criminal, but doth not constitute it so: mercy supposeth him miserable, to relieve him; justice supposeth him criminal, to punish him: but power supposeth not a thing in real existence, but as possible; or rather, it is from power that any thing hath a possibility, if there be no repugnancy in the nature of the thing.

Again, power extends further than either mercy or justice. Mercy hath particular objects, which
justice

justice shall not at last be willing to punish; and justice hath particular objects, which mercy at last shall not be willing to refresh: but power doth, and always will extend to the objects of both mercy and justice. A creature, as a creature, is neither the object of mercy nor justice, nor of rewarding goodness: a creature, as innocent, is the object of rewarding goodness; a creature, as miserable, is the object of compassionate mercy; a creature, as criminal, is the object of revenging justice: but all of them the objects of power, in conjunction with those attributes of goodness, mercy, and justice, to which they belong. All the objects that mercy, justice, truth, and wisdom, exercise themselves about, have a possibility and an actual being from this perfection of divine power. It is power first frames a creature in a capacity of nature for mercy or justice, though it doth not give an immediate qualification for the exercise of either. Power makes man a rational creature, and so confers upon him a nature mutable, which may be miserable by its own fault, and punishable by God's justice; or pitiable by God's compassion, and relievable by God's mercy: but it doth not make him sinful, whereby he became miserable and punishable.

Secondly, Reasons to prove God to be omnipotent.

The scripture describes God by this attribute of power. Psa. cxv. 3. *He hath done whatsoever he pleased.* It sometimes sets forth his power in a way of derision of those that seem to doubt of it. When Sarah doubted of his ability to give her a child in her old age, Gen. xviii. 14. *Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* They deserve to be scoffed, that will despoil God of his strength, and measure him by their shallow models. And when Moses uttered something of unbelief of this attribute, as if God were not able to feed 600,000 Israelites, besides women and children, which he aggravates by a kind of imperious scoff; *Shall the flocks and the*
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herds be slain for them to suffice them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them? &c. Numb. xi. 23. God takes him up short, ver. 23. *Is the Lord's hand waxed short?* What, can any weakness seize upon my hand? Can I not draw out of my own treasures what is needful for a supply? The hand of God is not at one time strong, and another time feeble. Hence it is that we read of the hand and arm of God, an out-stretched arm; because the strength of a man is exerted by his hand and arm; the power of God is called the arm of his power, and the right hand of his strength. Sometimes, according to the different manifestation of it, it is express'd by finger, when a less power is evidenced; by hand, when something greater; by arm, when more mighty than the former. Since God is eternal, without limits of time, he is also almighty, without limits of strength. As he cannot be said to be more in being now than he was before, so he is neither more nor less in strength than he was before: as he cannot cease to be, so he cannot cease to be powerful, because he is eternal. His eternity and power are linked together as equally demonstrable; God is called the God of Gods, *El Elobim*, the Mighty of Mighties, whence all mighty persons have their activity and vigor: he is called the Lord of Hosts, as being the creator and conductor of the heavenly militia.

1. The power that is in creatures demonstrates a greater and an inconceivable power in God.—Nothing in the world is without a power of activity according to its nature: no creature but can act something: the sun warms and enlightens every thing: it sends its influences upon the earth, into the bowels of the earth, into the depths of the sea: all generations owe themselves to its instrumental virtue: how powerful is a small seed to rise into a mighty tree with a lofty top, and extensive branches, and sends forth other seeds, which can still multiply

multiply into numberless plants? How wonderful is the power of the Creator, who hath endowed so small a creature as a seed with so fruitful an activity? yet this is but the virtue of a limited nature: God is both the producing and preserving cause of all the virtue in any creature, in every creature: the power of every creature belongs to him as the fountain, and is truly his power in the creature. As he is the first being, he is the original of all being; as he is the first good, he is the spring of all goodness; as he is the first truth, he is the source of all truth; so as he is the first power, he is the fountain of all power.

All the power which is distinct in the creatures, must be united in God.—One creature hath a strength to do this, another to do that; every creature is as a cistern filled with a particular and limited power, according to the capacity of its nature, from this fountain; all are distinct streams from God: but the strength of every creature, though distinct in the rank of creatures, is united in God the center, whence those lines were drawn, the fountain whence those streams were derived: if the power of one creature be admirable, as the power of an angel, which the psalmist saith, *excelleth in strength*; how much greater must the power of a legion of angels be? How inconceivably superior the power of all those numbers of spiritual natures, which are the excellent works of God? Now if all this particular power which is in every angel distinct, were compacted in one angel, how would it exceed our understanding, and be above our power to form a distinct conception of it? What is thus divided in every angel, must be thought united in the Creator of angels, and far more excellent in him. Every thing is in a more noble manner in the fountain, than in the streams which distil and descend from it. He that is the original of all those distinct powers, must be the seat of all power without

out distinction: in him is the union of all without division; what is in them as a quality, is in him as his essence. Again, if all the powers of several creatures, with all their principal qualities and vigors, both of beasts, plants, and rational creatures, were united in one subject; as if one lion had the strength of all the lions that ever were; or if one elephant had the strength of all the elephants that ever were; nay, if one bee had all the power of motion and stinging that all bees ever had, it would have a vast strength; but if the strength of all those thus gathered into one of every kind should be lodged in one sole creature, one man, would it not be a strength too big for our conception? or suppose one canon had all the force of all the canons that ever were in the world, what a battery would it make, and, as it were, shake the whole frame of heaven and earth? all this strength must be much more incomprehensible in God, all is united in him. If it were in one individual created nature, it would still be but a finite power in a finite nature: but in God it is infinite and immense.

2. If there were not an incomprehensible power in God, he would not be infinitely perfect.—God is the first being; it can only be said of him, *c'est*, he is. All other things are nothing to him, *Less than nothing, and vanity*, Isa. xl. 17. and *reputed as nothing*, Dan. iv. 35. All the inhabitants of the earth, with all their wit and strength, are counted as if they were not; just in comparison with him and his being, as a little mote in the sun beams: God therefore is a pure being. Any kind of weakness whatsoever is a defect, a degree of not being; so far as any thing wants this or that power, it may be said not to be. Were there any thing of weakness in God, any want of strength which belonged to the perfection of a nature, it might be said of God, he is not this or that, he wants this or that perfection of being, and so he would not be a pure being,
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there would be something of not being in him. But God being the first being, the only original being, he is infinitely distant from not being, and therefore infinitely distant from any thing of weakness.

3. The simplicity of God manifests it.—Every substance, the more spiritual it is, the more powerful it is. All perfections are more united in a simple, than in a compounded being. Angels, being spirits, are more powerful than bodies. Where there is the greatest simplicity, there is the greatest unity; and where there is the greatest unity, there is the greatest power. Where there is a composition of a faculty and a member, the member or organ may be weakened and rendered unable to act, though the power doth still reside in the faculty. As a man, when his arm or hand is cut off or broke, he hath the faculty or motion still; but he hath lost that instrument, that part whereby he did manifest and put forth that motion: but God being a pure spiritual nature, hath no members, no organs to be defaced or impaired. All impediments of action arise either from the nature of the thing that acts, or from something without it. There can be no hindrance to God to do whatsoever he pleases; not in himself, because he is the most simple being, hath no contrariety in himself, is not composed of divers things: and it cannot be from any thing without himself, because nothing is equal to him, much less superior. He is the greatest, the supreme: all things were made by him, depend upon him, nothing can disappoint his intentions.

4. The miracles that have been in the world evidence the power of God.—Extraordinary productions have awakened men from their stupidity, to the acknowledgment of the immensity of divine power. Miracles are such effects as have been wrought without the assistance and co-operation of natural causes, yea contrary, and besides the ordinary course of nature, above the reach of any created
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ted power. Miracles have been; and faith Bradwardine, “ To deny that ever such things were, is uncivil: it is inhuman to deny all the histories of Jews and Christians;” whosoever denies miracles, must deny all possibility of miracles, and so must imagine himself fully skilled in the extent of divine power. How was the sun suspended from its motion for some hours; the dead raised from the grave; those reduced from the brink of it, that had been brought near to it by prevailing diseases; and this by a word speaking? How were the famished lions bridled from exercising their rage upon Daniel, exposed to them for a prey? The activity of the fire curbed for the preservation of the three children, which proves a deity more powerful than all creatures. No power upon earth can hinder the operation of the fire upon combustible matter, when they are united, unless by quenching the fire, or removing the matter: but no created power can restrain the fire, so long as it remains so, from acting according to its nature. This was done by God, in the case of the three children, and that of the burning bush. It was as much miraculous that the bush should not consume, as it was natural that it should burn by the efficacy of the fire upon it. No element is so obstinate and deaf, but it hears and obeys his voice, and performs his orders, though contrary to its own nature: all the violence of the creature is suspended as soon as it receives his command. He that gave the original to nature, can take away the necessity of nature: He presides over creatures, but is not confined to those laws he hath prescribed to creatures. He framed nature, and can turn the channels of nature according to his own pleasure. Men dig in the bowels of nature, search into all the treasures of it, to find medicines to cure a disease, and after all their attempts it may prove labour in vain: but God, by one act of his will, one word of his mouth, overturns the

victory of death, and rescues from the most desperate diseases. All the miracles which were wrought by the apostles, either speaking some words, or touching with the hand, were not effected by any virtue inherent in their words or in their touches. For such virtue inherent in any created finite subject would be created and finite itself, and consequently were incapable to produce effects, which required an infinite virtue, as miracles do which are above the power of nature. So when our Saviour wrought miracles, it was not by any quality resident in his human nature, but by the sole power of his divinity. The flesh could only do what was proper to the flesh; but the deity did what was proper to the deity. *God alone doth wonders.* Excluding every other cause from producing such things. He only doth those things which are above the power of nature, and cannot be wrought by any natural causes whatsoever. He doth not hereby put his omnipotence to any trials: it is as easy with him to turn nature out of its settled course, as it was to place it in that station it holds, and appoint it that course it runs. All the works of nature are indeed miracles and testimonies of the power of God producing them, and sustaining them: but works above the power of nature, being novelties and unusual, strike men with a greater admiration upon their appearance, because they are not the products of nature, but the convulsions of it.

The third general thing is, to declare how the power of God appears, in creation, in government, in redemption.

1. In creation.—With what majestic lines doth God set forth his power, in the giving being, and endowments to all the creatures in the world? All that is in *heaven* and *earth* is his, and shews the greatness of his *power, glory, victory* and *majesty*. The heaven being so magnificent a piece of work, is called emphatically, *The firmament of his power*; his power being more conspicuous and unveiled in
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that glorious arch of the world. Indeed, *God exalts by his power*, that is, exalts himself by his power in all the works of his hands; in the smallest shrub, as well as the most glorious sun. All his works of nature are truly miracles, though we consider them not, being blinded with too frequent and customary a sight of them; yet in the neglect of all the rest, the view of the heavens doth more affect us with astonishment at the might of God's arm: these declare his glory, and the firmament shews his handy-work; and the psalmist peculiarly calls them his heavens, and the work of his fingers: these were immediately created by God, whereas many other things in the world were brought into being by the power of God, yet by the means of the influence of the heavens.

By this creative power God is often distinguished from all the idols and false gods in the world.—And by this title he sets forth himself when he would act any great and wonderful work in the world. *He is great above all gods, for he hath done whatsoever he pleased in heaven and in earth.* Upon this is founded all the worship he challengeth in the world, as his peculiar glory. Rev. iv. 11, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power, for thou hast created all things.* And Rev. x. 16, *I have made the earth, and created man upon it.—I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded,* Isa. xlv. 12. What is the issue, ver. 16. *They shall be ashamed and confounded, all of them, that are makers of idols.* And the weakness of idols is exprest by this title, *The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth,* Jer. x. 11. *The portion of Jacob is not like them, for he is the former of all things,* ver. 16.

What is not that God able to do, that hath created so great a world? how doth the power of God appear in creation?

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

The world was made of nothing.—The earth which is described as the first matter, without any form or ornament, without any distinction or figures, was of God's forming in the bulk, before he did adorn it with his pencil. God in the beginning creating the heaven and the earth, includes two things: First, That those were created in the beginning of time, and before all other things. Secondly, That God begun the creation of the world from those things. Therefore before the heavens and the earth there was nothing absolutely created, and therefore no matter in being before an act of creation past upon it. It could not be eternal, because nothing can be eternal but God; it must therefore have a beginning: if it had a beginning from itself, then it was before it was. If it acted in the making itself before it was made, then it had a being before it had a being; for that which is nothing, can act nothing: the action of any thing supposeth the existence of the thing which acts. It being made, it was not before it was made; for to be made is to be brought into being. It was made then by another, and that maker is God. It is necessary that the first original of things was from nothing: when we see one thing to arise from another, we must suppose an original of the first of each kind: as when we see a tree spring up from a seed, we know that seed came out of the bowels of another

another tree; it had a parent, and it had a matter; we must come to some first, or else we run into an endless maze: we must come to some first tree, some first seed that had no cause of the same kind, no matter of it, but was mere nothing. Creation doth suppose a production from nothing; because if you suppose a thing without any real or actual existence, it is not capable of any other production then from nothing: nothing must be supposed before the world, or we must suppose it eternal, and that is to deny it to be a creature, and make it God. The creation of spiritual substances, such as angels and souls, evince this; those things that are purely spiritual, and consist not of matter, cannot pretend to any original from matter, and therefore they rose up from nothing. If spiritual things arose from nothing, much more may corporeal, because they are of a lower nature than spiritual. And he that can create a higher nature of nothing, can create an inferior nature of nothing: As bodily things are more imperfect than spiritual, so their creation may be supposed easier than that of spiritual. There was as little need of any matter to be wrought to his hands, to contrive into this visible fabric, as there was to erect such an excellent order as the glorious cherubims.

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

is between nothing and something; that which hath no being, and that which hath: and a greater power cannot be imagined, than that which brings something out of nothing. We know not how to conceive a nothing, and afterwards a being from that nothing; but we must remain swallowed up in admiration of the cause that gives it being, and acknowledge it to be without any bounds and measures of greatness and power. The further any thing is from being, the more immense must that power be which brings it into being: it is not conceivable that the power of all the angels in one, can give being to the smallest spire of grass. To imagine therefore so small a thing as a bee, a fly, a grain of corn, or an atom of dust to be made of nothing, would stupify any creature in the consideration of it: much more to behold the heavens with all the troop of stars, the earth with all its embroidery, and the sea with all her inhabitants of fish; and man, the noblest creature of all, to arise out of the womb of mere emptiness. Indeed, God had not acted as an almighty creator if he had stood in need of any materials, but of his own framing; it had been as much as his deity was worth, if he had not had, all within the compass of his own power, that was necessary to operation; if he must have been beholden to something without himself, and above himself, for matter to work upon: had there been such a necessity, we could not have imagined him to be omnipotent, and consequently not God.

2. We are to shew God's power in the government of the world.—This is evident in the natural, moral and gracious government.

There is a natural providence, which consists in the preservation of all things, propagation of them by corruptions and generations, and in a co-operation with them in their motions to attain their ends.

Moral government is of the hearts and actions of men.

Gracious

Gracious government, as respecting the church.

1. His power is evident in natural government. In preservation.—God is the great father of the world, to nourish it as well as create it. Man and beast would perish if there were not herbs for their food; and herbs would wither and perish, if the earth were not watered with fruitful showers. This some of the heathens acknowledged, in their worshipping God under the image of an ox, a useful creature, by reason of its strength, to which we owe so much of our food in corn. Hence God is stiled the *preserver of man and beast*. Hence the Jews called God *Place*; because he is the subsistence of all things. By the same word whereby he gave being to things, he gives to them continuance and duration in being to such a term of time. As they were created by his word, they are supported by his word, Heb. i. 13. The same powerful Fiat, *Let the earth bring forth grass*, when the plants peeped upon man out of nothing, is exprest every spring, when they begin to lift up their heads from their naked roots and winter graves. The resurrection of light every morning, the reviving the pleasure of all things to the eye; the watering the vallies from the mountain springs; the curbing the natural appetite of the waters from covering the earth; every draught that the beasts drink, every lodging the fowls have, every bit of food for the sustenance of man and beast, is ascribed to the *opening of his hand*, the diffusing of his power, Psa. civ. 27, &c. as much as the first creation of things, and endowing them with their particular nature: whence the plants, which are so serviceable, are called the *Trees of the Lord*, of Jehovah, that hath only being and power in himself. The whole psalm is but the description of his preserving, as the first of Genesis is of his creating power. It is by this power angels have so many thousand years remained in the power of understanding and willing. By this power things

distant in their natures have been joined together, a spiritual soul and a dusky body knit in a marriage knot. By this power the heavenly bodies have for so many ages rolled in their spheres, and the tumultuous elements have persisted in their order: by this hath the matter of the world been to this day continued, and as capable of entertaining forms as it was at the first creation. What an amazing sight would it be to see a man hold a pillar of the Exchange upon one of his fingers! What is this to the power of God, *who holds the waters in the hollow of his hand, metes out the heaven with a span, and weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?*

The preserving the earth from the violence of the sea is a plain instance of this power. How is that raging element kept pent within those lists where he first lodged it; continues its course in its channel without overflowing the earth, and dashing in pieces the lower part of the creation? The natural situation of the water is to be above the earth, because it is lighter; and to be immediately under the air, because it is heavier than that thinner element. Who restrains this natural quality of it, but that God that first formed it? The word of command at first, *hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther*, keeps those waters linked together in their den, that they may not ravage the earth, but be useful to the inhabitants of it. And when once it finds a gap to enter, what power of earth can hinder its passage? How fruitless sometimes is all the art of man to send it to its proper channel, when once it had spread its mighty waves over some countries, and trampled part of the inhabited earth under its feet? it hath triumphed in its victory, and withstood all the power of man to conquer its force. It is only the power of God that doth bridle it from spreading itself over the whole earth. And that his power might be more manifest, he hath set but a weak and small bank against it. Though he hath bounded it in some

some places by mighty rocks, which lift up their heads above it, yet in most places by feeble sand. How often is it seen in every stormy motion, when the waves boil high and roll furiously, as if they would swallow up all the neighbouring houses upon the shore; when they come to touch those sandy limits, they bow their heads, fall flat, and sink into the lap whence they were raised; and seem to foam with anger that they can march no further, but must split themselves at so weak an obstacle? Can the sand be thought to be the cause of this? the weakness of it gives no footing to such a thought. Who can apprehend, that an enraged army should retire upon the opposition of a straw in an infant's hand? Is it the nature of the water? Its retirement is against the natural quality of it; pour but a little upon the ground, and you always see it spread itself: no cause can be rendered in nature; it is a standing monument of the power of God in the preservation of the world, and ought to be more taken notice of by us in this island, surrounded with it, than by some other countries in the world.

We find nothing hath power to preserve itself.—Doth not every creature upon earth require the assistance of some other for its maintenance? *Can the rush grow up without mire; can the flag grow up without water?* Job viii. 11. Can man or beast maintain itself without grain from the bowels of the earth? Would not every man tumble into the grave, without the aid of other creatures to nourish him? Whence do these creatures receive that virtue of supplying him nourishment, but from the sun and earth; and whence do they derive that virtue, but from the Creator of all things? and should he but slack his hand, how soon would they and all their qualities perish, and the links of the world fall in pieces, and dash one another into their first chaos and confusion? All creatures indeed have an appetite to preserve themselves; they have some knowledge

knowledge of the outward means for their preservation; so have irrational animals a natural instinct, as well as men have some skill to avoid things that are hurtful, and apply things that are helpful: but what thing in the world can preserve itself by an inward influx into its own being? all things want such a power without God's Fiat, *Let it be so*: Nothing but is destitute of such a power for its own preservation, as much as it is of a power for its own creation. Were there any true power for such a work, what need of so many external helps from things of an inferior nature to that which is preserved by them?

It appears in propagation.—That powerful word, *Increase and multiply*, pronounced at the first creation, hath spread itself over every part of the world; every animal in the world, in the formation of every one of them. From two of a kind, how great a number of individuals and single creatures have been multiplied, to cover the face of the earth in their continued successions? What a world of plants spring up from the womb of a dry earth, moistened by the influence of a cloud, and hatched by the beams of the sun? How admirable an instance of his propagating power is it, that from a little seed, a massy root should strike into the bowels of the earth; a tall body and thick branches, with leaves and flowers of various colours, should break through the surface of the earth, and mount up towards heaven, when in the seed you neither smell the scent, nor see any firmness of a tree, nor behold any of those colours which you view in the flowers that the years produce? A power not to be imitated by any creature. How astonishing is it, that a small seed, whereof many will not amount to the weight of a grain, should spread itself into leaves, bark, fruit of a vast weight, and multiply itself into millions of seeds? what power is that, that from one man and woman hath multiplied families, and from families,
stocked

stocked the world with people? Consider the living creatures, as formed in the womb, of their several kinds; every one is a wonder of power. The psalmist instanceth in the forming and propagation of man. Psa. cxxxix. 14. *I am fearfully and wonderfully made, marvellous are thy works.* The forming of the parts distinctly in the womb, the bringing forth into the world every particular member, is a roll of wonders, of power. That so fine a structure as the body of man should be polished in *the lower parts of the earth*, as he calls the womb, ver. 15. in so short a time, with members of various form and usefulness, each labouring in their several functions. Can any man give an exact account of the manner, how the bones do grow in the womb: it is unknown to the father, and no less hid from the mother, and the wisest men cannot search out the depths of it. It is one of the secret works of an omnipotent power, secret in the manner, though open in the effect. So that we must ascribe it to God, as Job doth, *Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about.* Thy hands which formed heaven, have formed every part, every member, and wrought me like a mighty workman. The heavens are said to be the work of God's hands, and man is here said to be no less. The forming and propagating of man from that earthly matter, is no less a wonder of power, than the structure of the world from a rude and indisposed matter. A heathen philosopher descants elegantly upon it: "Dost thou understand (my son) the forming of man in the womb; who erected that noble fabric; who carved the eyes, the crystal windows of light, and the conductors of the body; who bored the nostrils and ears, those loop holes of scents and sounds; who stretched out and knit the sinews and ligaments for the fastening of every member; who cast the hollow veins, the channels of blood; set and strengthened the bones, the pillars and rafters of
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the body ; who digged the pores, the finks to expel the filth ; who made the heart, the repository of the soul, and formed the lungs like a pipe ? What mother, what father wrought these things ? no, none but the Almighty God, who made all things according to his pleasure ; it is he who propagates this noble piece from a pile of dust. Who is born by his own advice ; who gives stature, features, sense, wit, strength, speech, but God ? ”

It is no less a wonder, that a little infant can live so long in a dark sink, in the midst of filth, without breathing : and the eduction of it out of the womb is no less a wonder, than the forming, increase, nourishment of it in that cell. A wonder, that the life of the infant is not the death of the mother, or the life of the mother the death of the infant. This little creature, when it springs up from such small beginnings by the power of God, grows up to be one of the lords of the world, to have a dominion over the creatures, and propagates its kind in the same manner : all this is unaccountable without having recourse to the power of God in the government of the creatures.

2. This power is evident in moral government. In the restraint of the malicious nature of the devil. — Since satan hath the power of an angel, and the malice of a devil, what safety would there be for our persons from destruction, what security for our goods from rifling ; by this invisible, potent, and envious spirit, if his power were not restrained and his malice curbed, by one more mighty than himself ? How much doth he envy God, the glory of his creation ; and man, the use and benefit of it ? How desirous would he be in regard of his passion, how able in regard of his strength and subtilty, to overthrow or infect all worship, but what was directed to himself ; to manage all things according to his lusts, turn all things topsy-turvy, plague the world, burn cities, houses, plunder us of the supports of nature, waste kingdoms,

kingdoms, &c. if he were not held in a chain, as a ravenous lion, or a furious wild horse, by the Creator and Governor of the world? What remedy could be used by man against the activity of this unseen and swift spirit? The world could not subsist under his malice; he would practise the same things upon all, as he did upon Job, when he had got leave from his governor; turn the swords of men into one another's bowels; send fire from heaven upon the fruits of the earth and cattle, intended for the use of man; raise winds to shake and tear our houses upon our heads; daub our bodies with scabs and boils, and let all the humours in our blood loose upon us. He that envied Adam a paradise, doth envy us the pleasure of enjoying its out-works: if we were not destroyed by him, we should live in a continued vexation by spectrums and apparitions, affrightening sounds and noise; as some think the Egyptians did in that three days darkness: he would be always winnowing us, as he desired to winnow Peter. But God over-masters his strength, that he cannot move a hair's breadth beyond his tedder; not only he is unable to touch an upright Job, but to lay his fingers upon one of the unbelieving Gadarenes forbidden and filthy swine without special licence. When he is cast out of one place, he walks through dry places seeking rest, new objects for his malicious designs, but finding none, till God lets loose the reins upon him for a new employment. Though Satan's power be great, yet God suffers him not to tempt as much as his diabolical appetite would, but as much as divine wisdom thinks fit: and the divine power tempers the other's active malice, and gives the creature victory, where the enemy intended spoil and captivity. How much stronger is God, than all the legions of hell; as he that holds a strong man from effecting his purpose, testifies more ability than his adversary? How doth he lock him up for a thousand years in a pound,

which

which he cannot leap over? and this restraint is wrought partly by blinding the devil in his designs, partly by denying him concurrence to his motion: as he hindered the active quality of the fire upon the three children, by withdrawing his power, which was necessary to the motion of it; and his power is as necessary for the motion of the devil, as for that of any other creature. Sometimes he makes him to confess him against his own interest, as Apollo's oracle confess. And though when the devil was cast out of the possessed person, he publicly owned Christ to be the *holy one of God*, Mark i. 24. to render him suspected by the people of having commerce with the unclean spirits; yet this he could not do without the leave and permission of God, that the power of Christ in stopping his mouth and imposing silence upon him might be evidenced; and that it reaches to the gates of hell, as well as to the quieting of winds and waves. This is a part of the strength, as well as the wisdom of God, that *the deceived and deceiver are his*. Wisdom to defeat, and power to over-rule his most malicious designs to his own glory.

In the restraint of the natural corruption of men. — Since the impetus of original corruption runs in the blood, conveyed down from Adam to the veins of all his posterity, and universally diffused in all mankind; what wrack and havoc would it make in the world, if it were not suppressed by this divine power, which presides over the hearts of men? Man is so wretched by nature, that nothing but what is vile and pernicious can drop from him. Man drinks iniquity like water, being by nature abominable and filthy. He greedily swallows all matter for iniquity; every thing suitable to the mire and poison in his nature, and would sprout it out with all fierceness and insolence. God himself gives us the description of man's nature, Gen. vi. 5. that he hath not one good *imagination at any time*.
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And the apostle 'from the psalmist dilates and comments upon it: *There is none righteous, no not one; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood, &c.* This corruption is equal in all, natural to all; it is not more poisonous or more fierce in one man, than in another. The root of all men is the same; all the branches therefore do equally possess the villanous nature of the root. No child of Adam can by natural descent be better than Adam, or have less of baseness and vileness, and venom than Adam. How fruitful would this loathsome lake be in all kinds of steams? What unbridled licentiousness and head-strong fury would triumph in the world, if the power of God did not interpose itself to lock down the flood-gates of it? What rooting up of human society would there be; how would the world be drenched in blood, the number of malefactors be greater, than that of apprehenders and punishers? How would the prints of natural laws be rased out of the heart, if God should leave human nature to itself? Who can read the first chapter to the Romans, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 verses, without acknowledging this truth, where there is a catalogue of those villanies which followed upon God's pulling up the sluices, and letting the malignity of their inward corruption have its natural course? If God did not hold back the fury of man, his garden would be over-run, his vine rooted up; the inclinations of men would hurry them to the worst of wickedness. How great is that power, that curbs, bridles, or changes, as many head-strong horses, at once and every minute, as there are sons of Adam upon the earth? *The floods lift up their waves; the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea; that doth hush and pen in the turbulent passions of men.*

In the ordering and framing the hearts of men to his own ends. That must be an omnipotent hand

hand that grasps and contains the hearts of all men ; the heart of the meanest person, as well as of the most towering angel, and turns them as he pleases, and makes them sometimes ignorantly, sometimes knowingly concur to the accomplishment of his own purposes : when the hearts of men are so numerous, their thoughts so various and different from one another, yet he hath a key to those millions of hearts, and with infinite power guided by as infinite wisdom, he draws them into what channels he pleases for the gaining of his own ends. Though the Jews had imbrued their hands in the blood of our Saviour, and their rage was yet reeking-hot against his followers, God bridled their fury in the church's infancy, till it had got some strength, and cast a terror upon them by the wonders wrought by the apostles, Acts ii. 45. *And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.* Was there not the same reason in the nature of the works our Saviour wrought, to point them to the finger of God and calm their rage? Yet did not the power of God work upon their passions in those miracles, nor stop the impetuosity of the corruption resident in their hearts. Yet now those who had the boldness to attack the Son of God, and nail him to the cross, are frightened at the appearance of twelve unarmed apostles ; as the sea seems to be afraid when it approacheth the bounds of the feeble sand. How did God bend the hearts of the Egyptians to the Israelites, and turn them to that point, as to lend their most costly vessels, their precious jewels, and rich garments, to supply those whom they had just before tyrannically loaded with their chains? When a great part of an army came upon Jehoshaphat to dispatch him into another world, how doth God in a trice touch their hearts, and move them by a secret instinct at once to depart from him? As if you should see a numerous flight of birds in a moment

ment turn wing another way, by a sudden and joint consent. When he gave Saul a kingdom, he gave him a spirit fit for government, and gave him another heart; and brought the people to submit to his yoke, who a little before wandered about the land upon no nobler employment than the seeking of asses. It is no small remark of the power of God, to make a number of strong and discontented persons, and desirous enough of liberty, to bend their necks under the yoke of government, and submit to the authority of one, and that of their own nature, often weaker and unwiser than the most of them; and many times, an oppressor and invader of their rights. Upon this account, David calls God his *fortress*, *tower*, and *shield*; all terms of strength in subduing the people under him. It is the mighty hand of God, that links princes and people together in the bands of government. The same hand that assuageth the waves of the sea, suppresseth the tumults of the people.

3. It appears in his gracious and judicial government.

In his gracious government.—In the deliverance of his church: he is the strength of Israel, and hath protected his little flock in the midst of wolves; and maintained their standing, when the strongest kingdoms have sunk, and the best jointed states have been broken in pieces. When judgments have ravaged countries, and torn up the mighty, as a tempestuous wind hath often done the tallest trees, which seem to threaten heaven with their tops, and dare the storm with the depth of their roots, when yet the vine and rose bushes have stood firm, and been seen in their beauty next morning. The state of the church hath outlived the most flourishing monarchies; when there hath been a mighty knot of adversaries against her; when the bulls of Bashan have pushed her, and the whole tribe of the dragon have sharpened their weapons, and edged their
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malice;

malice; when the voice was strong, and the hopes high to raise her foundation even with the ground; when hell hath roared; when the wit of the world hath contrived, and the strength of the world hath attempted her ruin; when decrees have been past against her, and the powers of the world armed for the execution of them; when her friends have drooped and skulked in corners; when there was no eye to pity, and no hand to assist, help hath come from heaven; her enemies have been defeated, kings have brought gifts to her and reared her; tears have been wiped off her cheeks, and her very enemies, by an unseen power, have been forced to court her, whom before they would have devoured quick. The devil and his armies have sneaked into their den, and the church hath triumphed when she hath been upon the brink of the grave. Thus did God send a mighty angel to be the executioner of Senacherib's army, and the protector of Jerusalem, who run his sword into the hearts of eighty thousand when they were ready to swallow up his beloved city.

When the knife was at the throats of the Jews in Shushan, by a powerful hand it was turned into the hearts of their enemies. With what an outstretched arm were the Israelites freed from the Egyptian yoke? When Pharaoh had mustered a great army to pursue them, assisted with six hundred chariots of war, the Red Sea obstructed their passage before, and an enraged enemy trod on their rear; when the fearful Israelites despaired of deliverance, and the insolent Egyptian assured himself of his revenge; God stretches out his irresistible arm, to defeat the enemy and assist his people; he strikes down the wolves, and preserves the flock. God restrained the Egyptian enmity against the Israelites till they were at the brink of the Red Sea, and then lets them follow their humour and pursue their fugitives, that his power might more gloriously shine

shine forth in the deliverance of the one, and the destruction of the other. God might have brought Israel out of Egypt in the time of those kings, that had remembered the good service of Joseph to their country; but he leaves them till the reign of a cruel tyrant, suffers them to be slaves, that they might by his sole power be conquerors; which had had no appearance, had there been a willing dismissal of them at the first summons. *Exod. ix. 16. In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew my power, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.* I have permitted thee to rise up against my people, and keep them in captivity, that thou mightest be an occasion for the manifestation of my power in their rescue; and whilst thou art obstinate to enslave them, I will stretch out my arm to deliver them, and make my name famous among the Gentiles, in the wreck of thee and thy host in the Red Sea. The deliverance of the church hath not been in one age or in one part of the world, but God hath signalized his power in all kingdoms where she hath had a footing: as he hath guided her in all places by one rule, animated her by one spirit; so he hath protected her by the same arm of power.

When the Roman emperors bandied all their force against her for about three hundred years, they were further from effecting her ruin at the end, than when they first attempted it: the church grew under their sword, and was hatched under the wings of the Roman eagle, which were spread to destroy her. The ark was elevated by the deluge; and the waters the devil poured out to drown her, did but slime the earth for a new increase of her. She hath sometimes been beaten down, and, like Lazarus, hath seemed to lie in the grave for some days, that the power of God might be more visible in her sudden resurrection, and lifting up her head above the throne of her persecutors.

In his judicial proceedings.—The deluge was no small testimony of his power, in opening the cisterns of heaven, and pulling up the sluices of the sea. He doth but call for the *waters of the sea, and they pour themselves upon the face of the earth*, Amos ix. 6. In forty days the waters over-topt the highest mountains fifteen cubits; and by the same power he afterwards reduced the sea to its proper channel, as a roaring lion into his den. A shower of fire from heaven upon Sodom and the cities of the plain, was a signal display of his power, either in creating it on the sudden for the execution of his righteous sentence, or sending the element of fire, contrary to its nature (which affects ascent) for the punishment of rebels against the light of nature.

How often hath he ruined the most flourishing monarchies, led princes away spoiled, and overthrown the mighty? Which Job makes an argument of his strength, Job xii. 13, 14. Troops of unknown people, the Goths and Vandals, broke the Romans, a warlike people, and hurled down all before them. They could not have had the thought to succeed in such an attempt, unless God had given them strength and motion, for the executing his judicial vengeance upon the people of his wrath.

How did he evidence his power, by daubing the throne of Pharaoh, and his chamber of presence, as well as the houses of his subjects, with the slime of frogs; turning their waters into blood, and their dust into biting lice; raising his militia of locust against them; causing a three days darkness without stopping the motion of the sun: taking off their first-born, the excellency of their strength, in a night, by the stroke of the angel's sword? He takes off the chariot wheels of Pharaoh, and presents him with a destruction, where he expected a victory: brings those waves over the heads of him and his host which stood firm as marble walls for the safety of his people: the sea is made to swallow them up,
that

that durst not by the order of their governor touch the Israelites. It only sprinkled the one as a type of baptism, and drowned the other as an image of hell. Thus he made it both a deliverer and a revenger, the instrument of an offensive and defensive war. *He brings princes to nothing, and makes the judges of the earth as vanity.* Great monarchs have by his power been hurled from their thrones, and their sceptres (like Venice-glasses) broken before their faces, and they been advanced, that have had the least hopes of grandeur. He hath plucked up cedars by the roots, lopped off the branches, and set a shrub to grow up in the place; dissolved rocks, and established bubbles. Luke i. 52, *He hath shewed strength with his arm, he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts: he hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted them of low degree.*

3. The power of God appears in redemption.—As our Saviour is called the *wisdom of God*, so he is called the *power of God*. The arm of power was lifted up as high, as the designs of wisdom were laid deep: as this way of redemption could not be contrived, but by an infinite wisdom; so it could not be accomplished but by an infinite power. None but God could shape such a design, and none but God could effect it. The divine power in temporal deliverances, and freedom from the slavery of human oppressors, vails to that which glitters in redemption: whereby the devil is defeated in his designs, stript of his spoils, and yoked in his strength. The power of God in creation requires not those degrees of admiration, as in redemption. In creation the world was erected from nothing; as there was nothing to act, so there was nothing to oppose; no victorious devil was in that to be subdued, no thundering law to be silenced, no death to be conquered, no transgression to be pardoned and rooted out, no hell to be shut, no ignominious death upon the

cross to be suffered. It had been in the nature of the thing, an easier thing to divine power to have created a new world, than repaired a broken, and purified a polluted one. This is the most admirable work that ever God brought forth in the world, greater than all the marks of his power in the first creation.

And this will appear, 1. In the person redeeming. 2. In the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption. 3. In the application of redemption.

1. In the person redeeming.—In his conception.—*He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin.* Luke i. 35. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee.* Which act is exprest to be the effect of the infinite power of God; and it expresses the supernatural manner of the forming the humanity of our Saviour, and signifies not the divine nature of Christ infusing itself into the womb of the virgin; for the angel refers it to the manner of the operation of the Holy Ghost in the producing the human nature of Christ, and not to the nature assuming that humanity into union with itself. The Holy Ghost, or the third person in the trinity, overshadowed the virgin, and by a creative act framed the humanity of Christ, and united it to the divinity. It is therefore exprest by a word of the same import with that used Gen. i. 2. *The Spirit moved upon the face of the waters*, which signifies, as it were, a brooding upon the chaos, shadowing it with his wings, as hens sit upon their eggs, to form them and hatch them into animals; or else it is an allusion to the *cloud which covered the tent of the congregation, when the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.* It was not such a creative act as we call immediate, which is a production out of nothing; but a mediate creation, such as God's bringing things into form out of the first matter, which
had

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

but not feminally ; of the substance of Adam, or a daughter of Adam, but not of the seed of Adam : and so he is of the same nature that had sinned, and so what he did and suffered may be imputed to us ; which, had he been created as Adam, could not be claimed in a legal and judicial way.

It was not convenient he should be born in the common order of nature, of father and mother : for whosoever is so born is polluted : *A clean thing cannot be brought out of an unclean* : and our Saviour had been incapable of being a Redeemer, had he been tainted with the least spot of our nature, but would have stood in need of redemption himself. Besides, it had been inconsistent with the holiness of the divine nature, to have assumed a tainted and defiled body. He that was the fountain of blessedness to all nations, was not to be subject to the curse of the law for himself ; which he would have been, had he been conceived in an ordinary way. He that was to overturn the devil's empire, was not to be any way captive under the devil's power, as a creature under the curse ; nor could he be able to break the serpent's head, had he been tainted with the serpent's breath.

Again, supposing that Almighty God by his divine power had so ordered the matter, and so perfectly sanctified an earthly father and mother from all original spot, that the human nature might have been transmitted immaculate to him, as well as the Holy Ghost did purge that part of the flesh of the virgin of which the body of Christ was made ; yet it was not convenient that the person, that was *God blessed for ever* as well as man, partaking of our nature, should have a conception in the same manner as ours, but different, and in some measure conformable to the infinite dignity of his person ; which could not have been, had not a supernatural power and a divine person been concerned as an active principle. Besides, such a birth had not
been

been agreeable to the first promise, which calls him *The seed of the woman*, not of the man ; and so the veracity of God had suffered some detriment: the seed of the woman only, is set in opposition to the seed of the serpent.

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

His fitness for his office is also assured to us ; for being born of the virgin, one of our nature, but conceived by the Spirit, a divine person, the guilt of our sins may be imputed to him because of our nature, without the stain of sin inherent in him ; because of his supernatural conception he is capable, as one of kin to us, to bear our curse without being touched by our taint. By this means our sinful nature is assumed without sin in that nature which was assumed by him ; flesh he hath, but not *sinful flesh*, Rom. viii. 3. Real flesh, but not really sinful, only by way of imputation.

Nothing but the power of God is evident in this whole work: by the ordinary laws and course of nature a virgin could not bear a son ; nothing but a supernatural and almighty grace could intervene to make so holy and perfect a conjunction. The generation of others, in an ordinary way, is by
male

male and female: but the virgin is overshadowed by the Spirit and Power of the Highest. Man only is the product of natural generation; this which is born of the virgin is the holy thing the Son of God. In other generations, a rational soul is only united to a material body: but in this, the divine nature is united with the human in one person by an indissoluble union.

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

2. This power appears in the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption.

The divine power will appear, if you consider, 1. The nature of the doctrine. 2. The instruments employed in it. 3. The means they used to propagate it. 4. The success they had.

1. The nature of the doctrine.—This doctrine struck at the root of the religion of the world, and the ceremonies wherein they had been educated from their infancy, delivered to them from their ancestors, confirmed by the customary observance of many ages, rooted in their minds and established by their laws. Acts xviii. 13, *This fellow persuadeth us to worship God contrary to the law, against customs, to which they ascribed the happiness of their states, and the prosperity of the people; and would put in the place of this religion they would abolish, a new one instituted by a man whom the Jews had condemned, and put to death upon a cross, as an impostor, blasphemer, and seditious person.*

It was a doctrine that would change the customs of the Jews, who were intrusted with the oracles of God. It would bury for ever their ceremonial rites, delivered to them by Moses from that God, who had

* See more on the Person of Christ in the preceding discourse on Wisdom.

had with a mighty hand brought them out of Egypt, consecrated their law with thunders and lightnings from Mount Sinai, at the time of its publication, backed it with severe sanctions, confirmed it by many miracles, both in the wilderness and their Canaan, and had continued it for so many hundred years. They could not but remember how they had been ravaged by other nations, and judgments sent upon them when they neglected and slighted it; and with what great success they were followed when they valued and observed it; and how they had abhorred the author of this new religion, who had spoken slightly of their traditions, till they put him to death with infamy. Was it an easy matter to divorce them from that worship, upon which were entailed (as they imagined) their peace, plenty, and glory, things of the dearest regard with mankind? the Jews were no less devoted to their ceremonial traditions, than the Heathen were to their vain superstitions.

This doctrine of the gospel was of that nature, that the state of religion all over the earth must be overturned by it; the wisdom of the Greeks must vail to it, the idolatry of the people must stoop to it, and the profane customs of men must moulder under the weight of it. Was it an easy matter for the pride of nature to deny a customary wisdom, to entertain a new doctrine against the authority of their ancestors; to inscribe folly upon that which hath made them admired by the rest of the world? Nothing can be of greater esteem with men, than the credit of their law-givers and founders, the religion of their fathers, and prosperity of themselves; hence the minds of men were sharpened against it. The Greeks, the wisest nation, slighted it as foolish; the Jews, the religious nation, stumbled at it, as contrary to the received interpretations of ancient prophecies and carnal conceits of an earthly glory. The dimmest eye may behold the
difficulty

difficulty to change custom, a second nature: it is as hard as to change a wolf into a lamb, to level a mountain, stop the course of the sun, or change the inhabitants of Africa into the colour of Europe. Custom dips men in as durable a dye as nature; the difficulties of carrying it on against the divine religion of the Jew, and rooted customs of the Gentiles, were unconquerable by any but an almighty power: and in this the power of God hath appeared wonderfully.

2. Divine power appeared in the instruments employed for the publishing and propagating the gospel, who were

Mean and worthless in themselves.—Not noble and dignified with an earthly grandeur, but of a low condition, meanly bred: so far from any splendid estates, that they possessed nothing but their nets; without any credit and reputation in the world; without comeliness and strength; as unfit to subdue the world by preaching, as an army of hares were to conquer it by war. Not learned doctors, bred up at the feet of the famous rabbins at Jerusalem, whom Paul calls *the princes of the world*; nor nursed up in the school of Athens, under the philosophers and orators of the time: not the wise men of Greece, but the fishermen of Galilee; naturally skilled in no language but their own, and no more exact in that than those of the same condition in any other nation: ignorant of every thing but the language of their lakes and their fishing trade; except Paul, called some time after the rest to that employment: and after the descent of the Spirit, they were ignorant and unlearned in every thing but the doctrine they were commanded to publish; for the council before whom they were summoned, proved them to be so, which increased their wonder at them, Acts iv. 13. Had it been published by a voice from heaven, that twelve poor men, taken out of boats and creeks, without any help of learning, should
conquer

conquer the world to the cross, it might have been thought an illusion against all the reason of men; yet we know it was undertaken and accomplished by them. They published this doctrine in Jerusalem, and quickly spread it over the greatest part of the world. Folly outwitted wisdom, and weakness over-powered strength. The conquest of the east by Alexander, was not so admirable as the enterprise of these poor men. He attempted his conquest with the hands of a warlike nation, though indeed but a small number of thirty thousand against multitudes, many hundred thousands of the enemies; yet an effeminate enemy; a people inured to slaughter and victory attacked great numbers, but enfeebled by luxury and voluptuousness. Besides, he was bred up to such enterprises, had a learned education under the best philosopher, and a military education under the best commander, and a natural courage to animate him. These instruments had no such advantage from nature; the heavenly treasure was placed in those earthen vessels, as Gideon's lamps in empty pitchers, Judg. vii. 16. that *the excellency, or hyperbole, of the power might be of God*, 2 Cor. iv. 7. and the strength of his arm be displayed in the infirmity of the instruments. They were destitute of earthly wisdom, and therefore despised by the Jews, and derided by the Gentiles; the publishers were accounted madmen, and the embracers fools. Had they been men of known natural endowments, the power of God had been veiled under the gifts of the creature.

3. The divine power appears in the means whereby it was propagated.—By means different from the methods of the world: not by force of arms, as some religions have taken root in the world. Mahomet's horse hath trampled upon the heads of men, to imprint an alcoran in their brains, and robbed men of their goods to plant their religion. But the apostles bore not this doctrine through the world
upon

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

this attempt, with such weak methods in human appearance.

4. The divine power was conspicuous in the great success it had under all these difficulties—Multitudes were prophesied of to embrace it; whence the prophet Isaiah, after the prophecy of the death of Christ, Isa. v. 3. calls upon the church to enlarge her tents, and *lengthen out her cords* to receive those multitudes of children that should call her mother. Isa. liv. 2, 3, for she should *break forth on the right hand and on the left, and her seed should inherit the gentiles*: the idolaters and persecutors should list their names in the muster roll of the church.

Presently after the descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven upon the apostles, you find the hearts of three thousand melted by a plain declaration of this doctrine; who were a little before so far from having a favourable thought of it, that some of them at least, if not all, had expressed their rage against it, in voting for the condemning and crucifying the author of it: but in a moment they were so altered, that they breathe out affections instead of fury; neither the respect they had to their rulers, nor the honour they bore to their priests; not the derisions of the people, nor the threatening of punishment, could stop them from owning it in the face of multitudes of discouragements. How wonderful is it that they should so soon, and by such small means, pay a reverence to the servants, who had none for the master? that they should hear him with patience, without the same clamor against them as against Christ, crucify them, crucify them? But, that their hearts should so suddenly be enflamed with devotion to him dead, whom they so much abhorred when living. It had gained footing not in a corner of the world, but in the most famous cities; in Jerusalem, where Christ had been crucified; in Antioch, where the name of christians first began; in Corinth, a place of ingenious arts; and Ephesus,
the

the feat of a noted idol. In less than twenty years there was never a province of the Roman empire, and scarce any part of the known world but was stored with the professors of it. Rome, that was the metropolis of the idolatrous world, had multitudes of them sprinkled in every corner, whose *faith was spoken of throughout the world*. The court of Nero, that monster of mankind, and the most cruel and sordid tyrant that ever breathed, was not empty of sincere votaries to it; there were saints in Cæsar's house, while Paul was under Nero's chain: and it maintained its standing, and flourished in spite of all the force of hell 250 years before any sovereign prince espoused it.

The potentates of the earth had conquered the lands of men, and subdued their bodies; these vanquished hearts and wills, and brought the most beloved thoughts under the yoke of Christ: so much did this doctrine overmaster the consciences of its followers, that they rejoiced more at their yoke, than others at their liberty; and counted it more a glory to die for the honour of it, than to live in the profession of it. Thus did our Saviour reign and gather subjects in the midst of his enemies; in which respect, in the first discovery of the gospel, he is described as *a mighty conqueror*, Rev. vi. 2. and still conquering in the greatness of his strength.

How great a testimony of his power is it, that from so small a cloud should rise so glorious a sun, that should chase before it the darkness and power of hell; triumph over the idolatry, superstition, and prophaneness of the world? This plain doctrine vanquished the obstinacy of the Jews, baffled the understanding of the Greeks, humbled the pride of the grandees, threw the devil not only out of bodies, but hearts; tore up the foundation of his empire, and planted the cross where the devil had for many ages before established his standard. How much more than a human force is illustrious in this whole conduct?

conduct? nothing in any age of the world can parallel it; it being so much against the methods of nature, the disposition of the world, and considering the resistance against it, seems to surmount even the work of creation. Never were there in any profession such multitudes, not of bedlams, but men of sobriety, acuteness and wisdom, that exposed themselves to the fury of the flames, and challenged death in the most terrifying shapes for the honour of this doctrine.

To conclude, this should be often meditated upon to form our understandings to a full assent to the gospel, and the truth of it; the want of which consideration of power, and the customariness of an education in the outward profession of it, is the ground of all the prophaneness under it and apostacy from it; the disesteem of the truth it declares and the neglect of the duties it enjoins. The more we have a prospect and sense of the impressions of divine power in it, the more we shall have a reverence of the divine precepts.

The third thing is, the power of God appears in the application of redemption, as well as in the person redeeming, and the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption.

In the planting grace.—In the pardon of sin.—
In the preserving grace.

Fourthly, The Use.

A consideration of the infinite power of God, is of comfort.—As omnipotence is an ocean that cannot be fathomed; so the comforts from it are streams that cannot be exhausted. What joy can be wanting to him that finds himself folded in the arms of omnipotence?

This perfection is made over to believers in the covenant, as well as any other attribute; *I am the Lord your God*; therefore that power, which is as essential to the godhead as any other perfection of his nature, is in the rights and extent of it assured

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

God's Holiness.

Exodus xv. 11.

WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE, O LORD, AMONG THE GODS? WHO
IS LIKE THEE, GLORIOUS IN HOLINESS, FEARFUL IN PRAISES,
DOING WONDERS?

THIS verse is one of the loftiest descriptions of the majesty and excellency of God in the whole scripture. It is a part of Moses's triumphant song, after a great and real, and a typical victory; in the womb of which all the deliverances of the church were couched. It is the first song upon holy record, and it consists of gratulatory and prophetic matter: it casts a look backward, to what God did for them in their deliverance from Egypt; and a look forward, to what God shall do for the church in future ages. That deliverance was but a rough draught of something more excellent to be wrought towards the closing up of the world; when his plague shall be poured out upon the antichristian powers, which should revive the same song of Moses in the church, as fitted so many ages before for such a scene of affairs. It is observed, that many words in this song are put in the future tense, noting a time to come; and the very first word, ver. 1. *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song*; implying that it was composed and calculated for the celebrating some greater action of God's, which was to be wrought in the world.

Upon this account, some of the Jewish rabbins, from the consideration of this remark, asserted the doctrine of the resurrection to be meant in this place; that Moses and those Israelites should rise again to sing the same song, for some greater miracles God should work, and greater triumphs he should bring forth, exceeding those wonders at their deliverance from Egypt.

But the expression I pitch upon in the text to handle, is *glorious in holiness*. He is magnified or honourable in holiness; so the same word is translated, Isa. xlii. 21. *He will magnify the law and make it honourable*. Thy holiness hath shone forth admirably in this last exploit, against the enemies and oppressors of thy people. The holiness of God is his glory, as his grace is his riches: holiness is his crown, and his mercy is his treasure. This is the blessedness and nobleness of his nature; it renders him glorious in himself and glorious to his creatures, that understand any thing of this lovely perfection.

Holiness is a glorious perfection belonging to the nature of God.—Hence he is in scripture stiled *the Holy One, the Holy One of Jacob, the Holy One of Israel*; and oftener entitled Holy, than Almighty, and set forth by this part of his dignity more than by any other. This is more affixed as an epithet to his name than any other: you never find it expressed, his Mighty Name, or his Wise Name; but his Great Name, and most of all, his Holy Name. This is his greatest title of honour, in this doth the majesty and venerableness of his name appear. When the sinfulness of Senacherib is aggravated, the Holy Ghost takes the rise from this attribute, 2 Kings xix. 22, *Thou hast lifted up thine eyes on high, even against the Holy One of Israel*; not against the wise, mighty, &c. but against *the Holy One of Israel*, as that wherein the majesty of God was most illustrious. It is upon this account, he is called
Light,

Light, as impurity is called darkness; both in this sense are opposed to one another: he is a pure and unmixed light, free from all blemish in his essence, nature, and operations.

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

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

He singles it out to swear by.—Psa. lxxxix. 35, *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David*: and Amos iv. 2, *The Lord will swear by his holiness*: he twice swears by his holiness, once by his power, Isa. lxii. 8. once by all, when he swears by his name, Jer. xlv. 26. He lays here his holiness to pledge for the assurance of his promise, as the attributes most dear to him, most valued by

him, as though no other could give an assurance parallel to it in this concern of an everlasting redemption which is there spoken of: he that swears, swears by a greater than himself; God having no greater than himself, swears by himself: and swearing here by his holiness, seems to equal that single one to all his other attributes; as if he were more concerned in the honour of it, than of all the rest. It is as if he should have said; since I have not a more excellent perfection to swear by, than that of my holiness, I lay this to pawn for your security, and bind myself by that which I will never part with, were it possible for me to be stripped of all the rest. It is a tacit imprecation of himself, if I lie unto David, let me never be counted holy, or thought righteous enough to be trusted by angels or men. This attribute he makes most of.

It is his glory and beauty.—Holiness is the honour of the creature, *sanctification and honour* are linked together, 1 Thess. iv. 4. much more is it the honour of God; it is the image of God in the creature. When we take the picture of a man, we draw the most beautiful part, the face, which is a member of the greatest excellency. When God would be drawn to the life, as much as can be, in the spirit of his creatures, he is drawn in this attribute, as being the most beautiful perfection of God, and most valuable with him. Power, is his hand and arm; omniscience, his eye; mercy, his bowels; eternity, his duration; his holiness is his beauty; 2 Chron. xx. 21, *Should praise the beauty of holiness*. In Psa. xxvii. 4, David desires to *behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his holy temple*; that is, the holiness of God manifested in his hatred of sin in the daily sacrifices. Holiness was the beauty of the temple, Isa. xlvi. 11. Holy and beautiful house are joined together; much more the beauty of God that dwelt in the sanctuary.

This

This renders him lovely to all his innocent creatures, though formidable to the guilty ones. A heathen philosopher could call it, the beauty of the divine essence, and say, that God was not so happy by an eternity of life, as by an excellency of virtue. And the angel's song intimates it to be his glory, Isa. vi. 3, *The whole earth is full of thy glory*; that is, of his holiness in his laws, and in his judgments against sin; that being the attribute applauded by them before.

It is his very life.—So it is called Eph. iv. 18. *Alienated from the life of God*, that is, from the holiness of God; speaking of the opposite to it, the uncleanness and prophaneness of the Gentiles. We are only alienated from that which we are bound to imitate; but this is the perfection, always set out as the pattern of our actions, *Be you holy, as I am holy*; no other is proposed as our copy. Alienated from that purity of God, which is as much as his life, without which he could not live. If he were stript of this, he would be a dead God more than by the want of any other perfection. His swearing by it intimates as much; he swears often by his own life, *As I live, saith the Lord*: so he swears by his holiness, as if it were his life, and more his life than any other. Let me not live, or let me not be holy, are all one in his oath. His deity could not outlive the life of his purity.

As it seems to challenge an excellency above all his other perfections, so it is the glory of all the rest.—As it is the glory of the godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the godhead. As his power is the strength of them, so his holiness is the beauty of them. As all would be weak without almightiness to back them; so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them. Should this be sullied, all the rest would lose their honour and their comfortable efficacy. As at the same instant that the sun should lose its light, it would

lose its heat, its strength, its generative and quickening virtue. As sincerity is the lustre of every grace in a christian, so is purity the splendor of every attribute in the godhead. His justice, is a holy justice; his wisdom, a holy wisdom; his arm of power, is a holy arm, Psa. xcvi. 1.—his truth, or promise, a holy promise, Psa. cv. 42. Holy and true go hand in hand, Rev. vi. 10. His name, which signifies all his attributes in conjunction, is holy, Psa. ciii. 1. Yea, he is *righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*, Psa. cxlv. 17. It is the rule of all his acts, the source of all his punishments. If every attribute of the deity were a distinct member, purity would be the form, the soul, the spirit to animate them. Without it, his patience would be an indulgence to sin, his mercy a fondness, his wrath a madness, his power a tyranny, his wisdom an unworthy subtilty. It is this gives a decorum to all. His mercy is not exercised without it, since he pardons none but those that have an interest, by union, in the obedience of a mediator, which was so delightful to his infinite purity. His justice, which guilty man is apt to tax with cruelty and violence in the exercise of it, is not acted out of the compass of this rule. In acts of man's vindictive justice there is something of impurity, perturbation, passion, some mixture of cruelty; but none of these fall upon God in the severest acts of wrath. When God appears to Ezekiel in the resemblance of fire, to signify his anger against the house of Judah for their idolatry, *from his loins downward there was the appearance of fire; but from the loins upward, the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber*, Ezek. vii. 2. His heart is clear in his most terrible acts of vengeance; it is a pure flame wherewith he scorseth and burns his enemies: He is holy in the most fiery appearance.

This attribute therefore is never so much applauded, as when his sword hath been drawn, and he
hath

hath manifested the greatest fierceness against his enemies. The magnificent and triumphant expression of it in the text, follows just upon God's miraculous defeat and ruin of the Egyptian army, *The sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters*: then it follows, *Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness?* And when it was so celebrated by the seraphims, Isa. vi. 3, it was when the *posts moved* and the *house filled with smoke*, ver. 4. which are signs of anger, Psa. xviii. 7, 8. And when he was about to send Isaiah upon a message of spiritual and temporal judgments, that he would make the *heart of that people fat, and their ears heavy, and their eyes shut; waste their cities without inhabitant, and their houses without man, and make the land desolate*, ver. 9, 10, 11, 12. and the angels which here applaud him for his holiness, are the executioners of his justice; and here called seraphims, from burning, or fiery spirits, as being the ministers of his wrath. His justice is part of his holiness, whereby he doth reduce into order those things that are out of order. When he is consuming men by his fury, he doth not diminish, but manifest purity; Zeph. iii. 5, *The just Lord is in the midst of her, he will do no iniquity*. Every action of his is free from all tincture of evil. It is also celebrated with praise by the four beasts about his throne, when he appears in a covenant garb, with a rainbow about his throne, and yet with thunderings and lightnings shot out against his enemies, Rev. iv. 8. compared with ver. 3, 5; to shew, that all his acts of mercy, as well as justice, are clear from any stain.

This is the crown of all his attributes; the life of all his decrees, the brightness of all his actions: nothing is decreed by him, nothing is acted by him but what is worthy of the dignity, and becoming the honour of this attribute.

For

For the better understanding this attribute, observe.

1. The nature of this holiness.
2. The demonstration of it.
3. The purity of his nature in all his acts about sin.
4. The use of all to ourselves.

First, The nature of divine holiness.—In general, The holiness of God negatively, is a perfect and unpolluted freedom from all evil.—As we call gold pure that is not embased by any dross, and that garment clean that is free from any spot ; so the nature of God is estranged from all shadow of evil, all imaginable contagion.

Positively, It is the rectitude or integrity of the divine nature, or that conformity of it in affection and action to the divine will, as to his eternal law, whereby he works with a becomingness to his own excellency, and whereby he hath a delight and complacency in every thing agreeable to his will, and an abhorrence of every thing contrary thereunto.

As there is no darkness in his understanding, so there is no spot in his will: as his mind is possessed with all truth, so there is no deviation in his will from it. He loves all truth and goodness; he hates all falsity and evil. In regard of his righteousness, he loves righteousness; Psa. xi. 17, *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness*; and *hath no pleasure in wickedness*, Psa. v. 4. He values purity in his creatures, and detests all impurity, whether inward or outward. We may indeed distinguish the holiness of God from his righteousness in our conceptions: holiness is a perfection absolutely considered in the nature of God; righteousness, a perfection as referred to others in his actions towards them and upon them.

In particular, This property of the divine nature is, an essential and necessary perfection.—He is essentially and necessarily holy. It is the essential glory of his nature: his holiness is as necessary as his being;

being; as necessary as his omniscience: as he cannot but know what is right, so he cannot but do what is just. His understanding is not as created understandings, capable of ignorance as well as knowledge; so his will is not as created will, capable of unrighteousness as well as righteousness. There can be no contradiction or contrariety in the divine nature, to know what is right, and to do what is wrong: if so, there would be a diminution of his blessedness, he would not be a God always blessed, *blessed for ever*, as he is. He is as necessarily holy, as he is necessarily God; as necessarily without sin, as without change. As he was God from eternity, so he was holy from eternity. He was gracious, merciful, just in his own nature, and also holy; though no creature had been framed by him to exercise his grace, mercy, justice, or holiness upon. If God had not created a world, he had in his own nature been almighty, and able to create a world. If there never had been any thing but himself, yet he had been omniscient, knowing every thing that was within the verge and compass of his infinite power; so he was pure in his own nature, though he never had brought forth any rational creature whereby to manifest this purity. These perfections are so necessary, that the nature of God could not subsist without them. And the acts of those *ad intra*, or within himself, are necessary; for being omniscient in nature, there must be an act of knowledge of himself and his own nature. Being infinitely holy; an act of holiness in infinitely loving himself, must necessarily flow from this perfection. As the divine will cannot but be perfect; so it cannot be wanting to render the highest love to itself, to its goodness, to the divine nature, which is due to him. Indeed the acts of those *ad extra* are not necessary, but upon a condition. To love righteousness without himself, or to detest sin, or inflict punishment for the committing of it, could not have

have been, had there been no righteous creature for him to love, no sinning creature for him to lothe, and to exercise his justice upon as the object of punishment.

Some attributes require a condition to make the acts of them necessary. As it is at God's liberty whether he will create a rational creature, or no: but when he decrees to make either angel or man, it is necessary from the perfection of his nature to make them righteous. It is at God's liberty whether he will speak to him, or no; but if he doth, it is impossible for God to speak that which is false, because of his infinite perfection of veracity, It is at his liberty whether he will permit a creature to sin; but if he sees good to suffer it, it is impossible but that he should detest that creature that goes cross to his righteous nature. His holiness is not solely an act of his will, for then he might be unholy as well as holy; he might love iniquity and hate righteousness; he might then command that which is good, and afterwards command that which is bad and unworthy: for what is only an act of his will, and not belonging to his nature, is indifferent to him. As the positive law he gave to Adam, of not eating the forbidden fruit, was a pure act of his will; he might have given him liberty to eat of it, if he had pleased, as well as prohibited him: but what is moral and good in its own nature, is necessarily willed by God, and cannot be changed by him, because of the transcendent eminency of his nature, and righteousness of his will. As it is impossible for God to command his creature to hate him, or to dispense with a creature for not loving him; for this would be to command a thing intrinsically evil, the highest ingratitude, the very spirit of all wickedness, which consists in the hating God. Yet though God be thus necessarily holy, he is not so by a bare and simple necessity, as the sun shines, or the fire burns; but by a free necessity, not compelled

pelled thereto, but inclined from the fulness of the perfection of his own nature and will; so as by no means he can be unholy, because he will not be unholy; it is against his nature to be so.

God is only absolutely holy. There is none holy as the Lord.—It is the peculiar glory of his nature. As there is none good but God, so none holy but God. No creature can be essentially holy, because mutable: holiness is the substance of God; but a quality and accident in a creature. God is infinitely holy, creatures finitely holy. He is holy from himself, creatures are holy by derivation from him. He is not only holy, but holiness; holiness, in the highest, is his sole prerogative. As the highest heaven is called the heaven of heavens, because it embraceth in its circle all the heavens, and contains the magnitude of them, and hath a greater vastness above all that it incloseth; so is God the Holy of Holies, he contains the holiness of all creatures put together, and infinitely more. As all the wisdom, excellency, and power of the creatures, if compared with the wisdom, excellency, and power of God, is but folly, vileness, and weakness; so the highest created purity, if set in parallel with God, is but impurity and uncleanness. Rev. xv. 4, *Thou only art holy*: it is like the light of a glow-worm to that of the sun; *The heavens are not pure in his sight, and his angels be charged with folly*, Job iv. 18. Though God hath crowned the angels with an unspotted sanctity, and placed them in a habitation of glory; yet as illustrious as they are, they have an unworthiness in their own nature to appear before the throne of so holy a God; their holiness grows dim and pale in his presence. It is but a weak shadow of that divine purity, whose light is so glorious, that it makes them cover their faces out of weakness to behold it, and cover their feet out of shame of themselves. They are not pure in his sight, because though they love God (which is a principle

principle of holiness) as much as they can, yet not so much as he deserves: they love him with the intensest degree, according to their power; but not with the intensest degree, according to his own amiableness: for they cannot infinitely love God, unless they were as infinite as God, and had an understanding of his perfections equal with himself, and as immense as his own knowledge. God having an infinite knowledge of himself, can only have an infinite love to himself, and consequently an infinite holiness without any defect; because he loves himself according to the vastness of his own amiableness, which no finite being can. Therefore, though the angels be exempt from corruption and foil, they cannot enter into comparison with the purity of God, without acknowledgment of a dimness in themselves. Besides, he charges them with folly, and puts no trust in them; because they have the power of sinning, though not the act of sinning: they have a possible folly in their own nature to be charged with. Holiness is a quality separable from them, but it is inseparable from God. Had they not at first a mutability in their nature, none of them could have sinned; there had been no devils; but because some of them sinned, the rest might have sinned: and though the standing angels shall never be changed, yet they are still changeable in their own nature, and their standing is due to grace, not to nature; and though they shall be for ever preserved, yet they are not, nor ever can be immutable by nature, for then they should stand upon the same bottom with God himself; but they are supported by grace against that changeableness of nature which is essential to a creature: the Creator *only bath immortality*, that is, immutability.

It is as certain a truth, that no creature can be naturally immutable and impeccable, as that God cannot create any thing actually polluted and imperfect. It is as possible that the highest creature
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may sin, as it is possible that it may be annihilated: it may become not only, as it may become not a creature, but nothing. The holiness of a creature may be reduced into nothing, as well as his substance: but the holiness of the Creator cannot be diminished, dimmed, or overshadowed: James i. 17, *He is the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning.* It is as impossible his holiness should be blotted, as that his deity should be extinguished: for whatsoever creature hath essentially such or such qualities, cannot be stripped of them, without being turned out of its essence. As a man is essentially rational; and if he ceaseth to be rational, he ceaseth to be man. The sun is essentially luminous; if it should become dark in its own body, it would cease to be the sun. In regard of this absolute and only holiness of God, it is thrice repeated by the seraphims, Isa. vi. 3. The threefold repetition of a word notes the certainty or absoluteness of the thing, or the irreversibleness of the resolve; as Ezek. xxi. 27, *I will overturn, overturn, overturn*, notes the certainty of the judgment; also Rev. viii. 8. *Woe, woe, woe*, three times repeated, signifies the same. The holiness of God is so absolutely peculiar to him, that it can no more be exprest in creatures, than his omnipotence, whereby they may be able to create a world; or his omniscience, whereby they may be capable of knowing all things, and knowing God as he knows himself.

Secondly, The demonstrations of it.

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

1. In the moral law.—Which is therefore dignified with the title of holy twice in one verse, Rom. vii. 12. *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment is holy,*

holy, just, and good: it being the express image of God's will, as our Saviour was of his person, and bearing a resemblance to the purity of his nature. The tables of this law were put in the ark, that as the mercy seat was to represent the grace of God, so the law was to represent the holiness of God. The psalmist, after he had spoken of the glory of God in the heavens, wherein the power of God is exposed to our view, introduceth the law, wherein the purity of God is evidenced to our minds; *perfect, pure, clean, righteous*, are the titles given to it. It is clearer in holiness, than the sun is in brightness; and more mighty in itself to command the conscience, than the sun is to run its race. As the holiness of the scripture demonstrates the divinity of its author; so the holiness of the law doth the purity of the law-giver.

The purity of this law is seen in the matter of it. It prescribes all that becomes a creature towards God, and all that becomes one creature towards another of his own rank and kind. The image of God is compleat in the holiness of the first table, and the righteousness of the second; which is intimated by the apostle, Eph. iv. 24. the one being the rule of what we owe to God: the other being the rule of what we owe to man: there is no good but it enjoins, and no evil but it disowns. It is not sickly and lame in any part of it; not a good action, but it gives it its due praise; and not an evil action, but it sets a condemning mark upon. The commands of it are frequently in scripture called judgments, because they rightly judge of good and evil, and are a clear light to inform the judgment of man in the knowledge of both. By this was the understanding of David enlightened to know every false way, and to hate it. There is no case can happen, but may meet with a determination from it; it teaches men the noblest manner of living, a life like God himself; honourable for the lawgiver,
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and joyfully for the subject. It directs us to the highest end; sets us at a distance from all base and sordid practices; it proposeth light to the understanding, and goodness to the will. It would tune all the strings, set right all the orders of mankind: it censures the least mote, countenanceth not any stain in the life. Not a wanton glance can meet with any justification from it: not a rash anger, but it frowns upon. As the law-giver wants nothing, as an addition to his blessedness; so his law wants nothing as a supplement to its perfection, Deut. iv. 2. What our Saviour seems to add, is not an addition to mend any defects; but a restoration of it from the corrupt glosses, wherewith the scribes and pharisees had eclipsed the brightness of it: they had curtailed it, and diminished part of its authority, cutting off its empire over the least evil, and left its power only to check the grosser practices. But Christ restores it to the due extent of its sovereignty, and shews it in those dimensions in which the holy men of God considered it, as *exceeding broad*, Psa. cxix. 96, reaching to all actions, all motions, all circumstances attending them; full of inexhaustible treasures of righteousness. And though this law, since the fall, doth irritate sin, it is no disparagement, but a testimony to the righteousness of it; which the apostle manifests by his *wherefore*, Rom. vii. 8, *sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence*; and repeating the same sense, ver. 11, subjoins a *wherefore*, ver. 12, *Wherefore the law is holy*. The rising of mens sinful hearts against the law of God, when it strikes with its preceptive and minatory parts upon their consciences, evidenceth the holiness of the law and the law-giver.

In its own nature it is a directing rule, but the malignant nature of sin is exasperated by it; as an hostile quality in a creature, will awaken itself at the appearance of its enemy. The purity of this

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beam and transcript of God, bears witness to a greater clearness and beauty in the sun and original. Undeiled streams manifest an untainted fountain.

It is seen in the manner of its precepts.—As it prescribes all good, and forbids all evil; so it doth enjoin the one, and banish the other as such. The laws of men command virtuous things; not as virtuous in themselves, but as useful for human society; which the magistrate is the conservator of, and the guardian of justice. The laws of men contain not all the precepts of virtue, but only such as are accommodated to their customs, and are useful to preserve the ligaments of their government. The design of them is not so much to render the subjects good men, as good citizens: they order the practice of those virtues that may strengthen civil society, and discountenance those vices only which weaken the sinews of it: but God, being the guardian of universal righteousness, doth not only enact the observance of all righteousness, but the observance of it as righteousness. He commands that which is just in itself; he enjoins virtues as virtues, and prohibits vices as vices; as they are profitable or injurious to ourselves, as well as to others.

Men command temperance and justice; not as virtues in themselves, but as they prevent disorder and confusion in a commonwealth: and forbid adultery and theft; not as vices in themselves, but as they are intrenchments upon property: not as hurtful to the person that commits them, but as hurtful to the person against whose right they are committed. Upon this account perhaps, Paul applauds the holiness of the law of God in regard of its own nature, as considered in itself, more than he doth the justice of it in regard of man, and the goodness and conveniency of it to the world; Rom. vii 11. the law is holy twice, and just and good but once.

In the spiritual extent of it.—The most righteous powers of the world, do not so much regard in their laws what the inward affections of their subjects are: the external acts are only the objects of their decrees, either to encourage them if they be useful, or discourage them if they be hurtful to the community. And indeed they can do no other, for they have no power proportioned to inward affections, since the inward disposition falls not under their censure; and it would be foolish for any legislative power to make such laws, which it is impossible for it to put in execution. They can prohibit the outward acts of theft and murder, but they cannot command the love of God, the hatred of sin, the contempt of the world; they cannot prohibit unclean thoughts, and the atheism of the heart. But the law of God firmounts in righteousness all the laws of the best regulated commonwealths in the world: it restrains the licentious heart, as well as the violent hand; it damps the very first bubble of corrupt nature, orders a purity in the spring; commands a clean fountain, clean streams, clean vessels. It would frame the heart to an inward, as well as the life to an outward righteousness, and makes the inside purer than the outside. It forbids the first belchings of a murderous or adulterous intention: it obligeth man as a rational creature, and therefore exacts a conformity of every rational faculty, and of whatsoever is under the command of them. It commands the private closet to be free from the least cobweb, as well as the outward porch to be clean from mire and dirt. It frowns upon all stains and pollutions of the most retired thoughts: hence the apostle calls it a spiritual law, Rom. vii. 14, as not political, but extending its force further than the frontiers of the man; placing its ensigns in the metropolis of the heart and mind, and curbing with its sceptre the inward motions of

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the spirit, and commanding over the secrets of every man's breast.

In regard of the perpetuity of it.—The purity and perpetuity of it are linked together by the psalmist, Psal. xix. 9, *The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever*; the fear of the Lord, that is, that law which commands the fear and worship of God, and is the rule of it. And indeed God values it at such a rate, that rather than part with a tittle, or let the honour of it lie in the dust, he would not only let heaven and earth pass away, but expose his Son to death for the reparation of the wrong it had sustained. So holy is it, that the holiness and righteousness of God cannot dispense with it, cannot abrogate it, without despoiling himself of his own being: it is a copy of the eternal law. Can he ever abrogate the command of love to himself, without shewing some contempt of his own excellency and very being? Before he can enjoin a creature not to love him, he must make himself unworthy of love, and worthy of hatred; this would be the highest unrighteousness, to order us to hate that which is only worthy of our highest affections. So God cannot change the first command, and order us to worship many gods; this would be against the excellency and unity of God: for God cannot constitute another god, or make any thing worthy of an honour equal with himself. Those things that are good, only because they are commanded, are alterable by God: those things that are intrinsically and essentially good, and therefore commanded, are unalterable as long as the holiness and righteousness of God stand firm. The intrinsic goodness of the moral law, the concern God hath for it; the perpetuity of the precepts of the first table, and the care he hath had to imprint the precepts of the second upon the minds and consciences of men, as the author of nature for the preservation of the world; manifests the holiness of the law-maker and governor.

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2. His holiness appears in the ceremonial law.—In the variety of sacrifices for sin, wherein he writ his detestation of unrighteousness in bloody characters. His holiness was more constantly express'd in the continual sacrifices, than in those rarer sprinklings of judgments now and then upon the world; which often reached, not the worst, but the most moderate sinners, and were the occasions of the questioning of the righteousness of his providence both by Jews and Gentiles. In judgments his purity was only now and then manifest: by his long patience, he might be imagined by some reconciled to their crimes, or not much concerned in them; but by the morning and evening sacrifice he witnessed a perpetual and uninterrupted abhorrence of whatsoever was evil.

Besides those, the occasional washings and sprinklings upon ceremonial defilements, which polluted only the body, gave an evidence, that every thing that had a resemblance to evil, was loathsome to him. Add also the prohibitions of eating such and such creatures that were filthy; as the swine that wallowed in the mire, a fit emblem for the prophane and brutish sinner; which had a moral signification, both of the loathsomeness of sin to God, and the aversion of themselves ought to have to every thing that was filthy.

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

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

4. His holiness appears in the judgments inflicted for the violation of this law.—Divine holiness is the root of divine justice, and divine justice is the triumph of divine holiness. Hence both are expressed in scripture by one word of righteousness, which sometimes signifies the rectitude of the divine nature, and sometimes the vindicative stroke of his arm; Psa. ciii. 6, *The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* So Dan. ix. 7, *Righteousness* (that is, justice) *belongs to thee.* The vials of wrath are filled from his implacable aversion to iniquity. All penal evils showered down upon the heads of wicked men, spread their root in, and branch out from this perfection. All the dreadful storms and tempests in the world are blown up by it. *Why doth he rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest? because the righteous Lord loveth righteousness,* Psa. xi. 6, 7. And (as was observed before) when he was going about the dreadfulest work

work that ever was in the world; the overturning the jewish state, hardening the hearts of that unbelieving people, and cashiering a nation (once dear to him) from the honour of his protection; his holiness, as the spring of all this, is applauded by the seraphims, Isa. vi. 3, compared with ver. 9, 10, 11, &c. Impunity argues the approbation of a crime, and punishment the abhorrency of it. The greatness of the crime, and the righteousness of the judge, are the first natural sentiments that arise in the minds of men, upon the appearance of divine judgments in the world, by those that are near them. As when men see gibbets erected, scaffolds prepared, instruments of death and torture provided, and grievous punishments inflicted; the first reflection in the spectators, is the malignity of the crime, and the detestation the governors are possessed with.

How severely hath he punished his most noble creatures for it?—The once glorious angels, upon whom he had been at greater cost than upon other creatures, and drawn more lively lineaments of his own excellency, upon the transgression of his law, are thrown into the furnace of justice without any mercy to pity them, Jude 6. And though there were but one sort of creatures upon the earth that bore his image, and were only fit to publish and keep up his honour below the heavens; yet upon their apostacy (though upon a temptation from a subtle and insinuating spirit) the man, with all his posterity, is sentenced to misery in life, and death at last; and the woman, with all her sex, have standing punishments inflicted on them; which as they begun in their persons, were to reach as far as the last member of their successive generations. So holy is God, that he will not endure a spot in his choicest work. Men indeed, when there is a crack in an excellent piece of work, or a stain upon a rich garment, do not cast it away; they value it for the remaining excellency, more than hate it for the con-

tracted spot: but God saw no excellency in his creature worthy regarding, after the image of that which he most esteemed in himself, was defaced.

How detestable to him are the very instruments of sin?—For the ill use, the serpent, an irrational creature, was put to by the devil, as an instrument in the fall of man, the whole brood of those animals are curst, Gen. iii. 14, *Curst above all cattle, and above every beast of the field.* Not only the devil's head is threatened to be for ever bruised, and as some think, rendered irrecoverable upon this further testimony of his malice in the seduction of man; who perhaps without this new act, might have been admitted into the arms of mercy, notwithstanding his first sin; though the scripture gives us no account of this, only this is the only sentence we read of pronounced against the devil, which puts him into an irrecoverable state by a mortal bruising of his head. But, I say, he is not only punished, but the organ whereby he blew in his temptation, is put into a worse condition than it was before. Thus God hated the sponge, whereby the devil deformed his beautiful image: thus God, to manifest his detestation of sin, ordered the beast whereby any man was slain, to be slain as well as the malefactor, Levit. xx. 15. The gold and silver that had been abused to idolatry, and were the ornaments of images; though good in themselves, and incapable of a criminal nature, were not to be brought into their houses, but detested and abhorred by them, because they were curst, and an abomination to the Lord. See with what loathing expressions this law is enjoined to them, Deut. vii. 25, 26. So contrary is the holy nature of God to every sin, that it curseth every thing that is instrumental in it.

How detestable is every thing to him that is in the sinner's possession?—The very earth, which God had made Adam the proprietor of, was *curst for his sake*, Gen. iii. 17, 18. It lost its beauty, and
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lies languishing to this day : and notwithstanding the redemption by Christ, hath not recovered its health, nor is it like to do, till the compleating the fruits of it upon the children of God, Rom. viii. 20, 21, 22. The whole lower creation was made subject to vanity, and put into pangs upon the sin of man, by the righteousness of God detesting his offence. How often hath his implacable aversion from sin been shewn : not only in his judgments upon the offender's person, but by wrapping up in the same judgment those which stood in a near relation to them ? Achan, with his children and cattle, are overwhelmed with stones, and burned together, Josh. vii. 24, 25. In the destruction of Sodom ; not only the grown malefactors, but the young spawn, the infants, at present incapable of the same wickedness, and their cattle were burned up by the same fire from heaven ; and the place where their habitation stood, is at this day, partly a heap of ashes, and partly an infectious lake, that chokes any fish that swim into it from Jordan, and stifles, as is related, by its vapor any bird that attempts to fly over it. O, how detestable is sin to God, that causes him to turn a pleasant land, as the *garden of the Lord*, as it is stiled, Gen. xiii. 10, into a lake of sulphur ; to make it both in his word and works, as a lasting monument of his abhorrence of evil !

What design hath God in all these acts of severity and vindictive justice, but to set off the lustre of his holiness ?—He testifies himself concerned for those laws, which he hath set as hedges and limits to the lusts of men ; and therefore when he breathes forth his fiery indignation against a people, he is said to get himself honour : As when he intended the Red Sea should swallow up the Egyptian army, Exod. xiv. 17, 18, which Moses in his triumphant song echos back again, Exod. xv. 1, *Thou hast triumphed gloriously* ; gloriously in his holiness, which is the glory of his nature ; as Moses himself interprets it

it in the text. When men will not own the holiness of God in a way of duty, God will vindicate it in a way of justice and punishment. In the destruction of Aaron's sons, that were will-worshippers, and would take strange fire, sanctified and glorified, are coupled, Lev. x. 3. He glorified himself in that act, in vindicating his holiness before all the people, declaring, that he will not endure sin and disobedience. He doth therefore in this life more severely punish the sins of his people, when they presume upon any act of disobedience; for a testimony, that the nearness and dearness of any person to him, shall not make him unconcerned in his holiness, or be a plea for impurity. The end of all his judgments, is to witness to the world his abominating of sin. To punish and witness against men, are one and the same thing, Micah i. 2, *The Lord shall witness against you*; and it is the witness of God's holiness, Hos. v. 5, *And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face*: one renders it the excellency of Israel, and understands it of God; the word which is here in our translation *pride*, is rendered *excellency*, Amos viii. 7, *The Lord God hath sworn by his excellency*; which is interpreted *holiness*, Amos iv. 2, *The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness*. What is the issue or end of this swearing by holiness, and of his excellency testifying against them? In all those places you will find them to be sweeping judgments: in one, Israel and Ephraim shall *fall in their iniquity*; in another, *he will take them away with hooks, and their posterity with fish-hooks*, and in another, *he would never forget any of their works*. He that punisheth wickedness in those he before used with the greatest tenderness, furnisheth the world with an undeniable evidence of the detestableness of it to him. Were not judgments sometimes poured out upon the world, it would be believed, that God were rather an approver, than an enemy to sin.

To

To conclude, since God hath made a stricter law to guide men; annexed promises above the merit of obedience, to allure them; and threatenings, dreadful enough to affright men from disobedience. He cannot be the cause of sin, nor a lover of it. How can he be the author of that which he so severely forbids; or love that which he delights to punish; or be fondly indulgent to any evil, when he hates the ignorant instruments in the offences of his reasonable creatures?

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

Thirdly, I am to lay down some propositions in the defence of God's holiness in all his acts, about or concerning sin.

It was a prudent and pious advice of Camero, not to be too busy and rash in inquiries and conclusions about the reason of God's providence in the matter of sin. The scripture hath put a bar in the way of such curiosity, by telling us, that the ways of God's wisdom and righteousness in his judgments are unsearchable: much more the ways of God's holiness, as he stands in relation to sin, as a governor of the world; we cannot consider those things without danger of slipping: our eyes are too weak to look upon the sun without being
dazzled:

dazzled: too much curiosity met with a just check in our first parent. To be desirous to know the reason of all God's proceedings in the matter of sin, is to second the ambition of Adam, to be as wise as God, and know the reason of his actings equally with himself. It is more easy, as the same author saith, to give an account of God's providence since the revolt of man, and the poison that hath universally seized upon human nature, than to make guesses at the manner of the fall of the first man. The scripture hath given us but a short account of the manner of it, to discourage too curious inquiries into it.

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

First proposition. God's holiness is not chargeable with any blemish for his creating man in a mutable state.—It is true, angels and men were
created

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

No creature can be capable of immutability by nature.—Mutability is so essential to a creature, that a creature cannot be supposed without it: you must suppose it a creator, not a creature, if you allow it to be of an immutable nature. Immutability is the property of the supreme being. *God only hath immortality*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. Immortality, as opposed not only to a natural, but to a sinful death; the word only appropriates every sort of immortality to God, and excludes every creature, whether angel or man, from a partnership with God in this by nature. Every creature therefore is capable of a death in sin. None is good but God, and none is naturally free from change but God; which excludes every creature from the same prerogative, and certainly if one angel sinned, all might have sinned, because there was the same root of mutability in one as well as another. It is as possible for a creature to be a creator, as for a creature to have naturally an incommunicable property of the Creator. All things, whether angels or men, are made of nothing,
and

and therefore capable of defection; because a creature being made of nothing, cannot be good, *per essentiam*, or essentially good, but by participation from another. Again, every rational creature, being made of nothing, hath a superior which created and governs him, and is capable of a precept; and consequently capable of disobedience as well as obedience to the precept, to transgress it as well as obey it. God cannot sin, because he can have no superior to impose a precept on him. A rational creature, with a liberty of will and power of choice, cannot be made by nature of such a mould and temper, but he must be as well capable of chusing wrong, as of chusing right; and therefore the standing angels, and glorified saints, though they are immutable, it is not by nature that they are so, but by grace, and the good pleasure of God; for though they are in heaven, they have still in their nature a remote power of sinning, but it shall never be brought into act, because God will always incline their wills to love him, and never concur with their wills to any evil act. Since therefore mutability is essential to a creature, as a creature, this changeableness cannot properly be charged upon God as the author of it; for it was not the term of God's creating act, but did necessarily result from the nature of the creature, as unchangeableness doth result from the essence of God. The brittleness of a glass is no blame to the art of him that blew up the glass into such a fashion; that imperfection of brittleness is not from the workman, but the matter: so though changeableness be an imperfection, yet it is so necessary a one, that no creature can be naturally without it: besides, though angels and men were mutable by creation, and capable to exercise their wills, yet they were not necessitated to evil; and this mutability did not infer a necessity that they should fall; because some angels, which had the same root of changeableness in

in their natures with those that fell, did not fall, which they would have done, if capableness of changing, and necessity of changing were one and the same thing.

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

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

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

The law was not above his strength.—Had the law been impossible to be observed, no crime could have been imputed to the subject, the fault had lain wholly upon the governor; the non-observance of it had been from a want of strength, and not from a want of will. Had God commanded Adam to fly up to the sun, when he had not given him wings, Adam might have a will to obey it, but his power would be too short to perform it. But the law set him for a rule, had nothing of impossibility in it; it was easy to be observed; the command was rather below, than above his strength; and the sanction of it was more apt to restrain and scare him from the breach of it, than encourage any daring attempts against it: he had as much power, or rather more,
to

to conform to it, than to warp from it; and greater arguments and interest to be observant of it, than to violate it; his all was secured by the one, and his ruin ascertained by the other.

The commands of God are not grievous; from the first to the last command, there is nothing impossible, nothing hard to the original and created nature of man, which were all summed up in a love to God, which was the pleasure and delight of man, as well as his duty, if he had not by inconsiderateness neglected the dictates and resolves of his own understanding. The law was suited to the strength of man, and fitted for the improvement and perfection of his nature: in which respect the apostle calls it good, as it refers to man, as well as holy, as it refers to God. Now since God created man a creature capable to be governed by a law, and as a rational creature endued with understanding and will, not to be governed according to his nature without a law; was it congruous to the wisdom of God to respect only the future state of man, which from the depth of his infinite knowledge, he did infallibly foresee would be miserable, by the wilful defection of man from the rule? Had it been agreeable to the wisdom of God to respect only this future state, and not the present state of the creature; and therefore leave him lawless, because he knew he would violate the law? Should God forbear to act like a wise governor, because he foresaw that man would cease to act like an obedient subject? Shall a righteous magistrate forbear to make just and good laws, because he foresees, either from the dispositions of his subjects, their ill humour, or some circumstances which will intervene, that multitudes of them will incline to break those laws, and fall under the penalty of them? No blame can be upon that magistrate who minds the rule of righteousness, and the necessary duty of his government, since he is not the cause of those turbulent affections in

men, which he wisely foresees will rise up against his just edicts.

God's foreknowledge that his law would not be observed, lays no blame upon him.—Though the foreknowledge of God be infallible, yet it doth not necessitate the creature in acting. It was certain from eternity, that Adam would fall; that men would do such and such actions; that Judas would betray our Saviour: God foreknew all those things from eternity; but it is as certain that this foreknowledge did not necessitate the will of Adam, or any other branch of his posterity, in the doing those actions that were so foreseen by God; they voluntarily run into such courses, not by any impulsion. God's knowledge was not suspended between certainty and uncertainty: he certainly foreknew that his law would be broken by Adam; he foreknew it in his own decree of not hindering him, by giving Adam the efficacious grace which would infallibly have prevented it; yet Adam did freely break this law, and never imagined that the foreknowledge of God did necessitate him to it: he could find no cause of his own sin, but the liberty of his own will: he charges the occasion of his sin upon the woman, and consequently upon God in giving the woman to him. He could not be so ignorant of the nature of God, as to imagine him without a foresight of future things, since his knowledge of what was to be known of God by creation, was greater than any man's since, in all probability. But however, if he were not acquainted with the notion of God's knowledge, he could not be ignorant of his own act; there could not have been any necessity upon him, any kind of constraint of him in his action that could have been unknown to him; and he would not have omitted a plea of so strong a nature, when he was upon his trial for life or death; especially when he urgeth so weak an argument to impute his crime to God, as the gift of the woman;

woman; as if that which was designed him for a help, were intended for his ruin. If God's prescience takes away the liberty of the creature, there is no such thing as a free action in the world, (for there is nothing done but is foreknown by God, else we render God of a limited understanding,) nor ever was, no not by God himself, *ad extra*: for whatsoever he hath done in creation, whatsoever he hath done since the creation, was foreknown by him; he resolved to do it, and therefore foreknew that he would do it: did God do it therefore necessarily, as necessity is opposed to liberty? As he freely decrees what he will do, so he effects what he freely decreed. Foreknowledge is so far from intrenching upon the liberty of the will, that predetermination, which in the notion of it speaks something more, doth not dissolve it: God did not only foreknow, but determine the suffering of Christ. It was necessary therefore that Christ should suffer, that God might not be mistaken in his foreknowledge, or come short of his determinate decree: but did this take away the liberty of Christ in suffering? Eph. v. 2, *Who offered himself up to God*; that is, by a voluntary act, as well as designed to do it by a determinate counsel. It did infallibly secure the event, but did not annihilate the liberty of the action, either in Christ's willingness to suffer, or the crime of the Jews that made him suffer. God's prescience is God's provision of things arising from their proper causes: as a gardener foresees in his plants the leaves and the flowers that will arise from them in the spring, because he knows the strength and nature of their several roots which lie under ground, but his foresight of these things is not the cause of the rise and appearance of those flowers. If any of us see a ship moving towards such a rock or quick-sand, and know it to be governed by a negligent pilot, we shall certainly foresee that the ship will be torn in pieces by the

rock, or swallowed up by the sands; but is this foresight of ours from the causes, any cause of the effect, or can we from hence be said to be the authors of the miscarriage of the ship, and the loss of the passengers and goods? The fall of Adam was foreseen by God to come to pass by the consent of his freewill in the choice of the proposed temptation: God foreknew Adam would sin, and if Adam would not have sinned, God would have foreknown that he would not sin. Adam might easily have detected the serpent's fraud, and made a better election; God foresaw that he would not do it; God's foreknowledge did not make Adam guilty or innocent; whether God had foreknown it or no, he was guilty by a free choice, and a willing neglect of his own duty. Adam knew that God foreknew that he might eat of the fruit, and fall and die, because God had forbidden him; the foreknowledge that he would do it, was no more a cause of his action, than the foreknowledge that he might do it. Judas certainly knew that his master foreknew that he should betray him, for Christ had acquainted him with it, John xiii. 21, 26, yet he never charged this foreknowledge of Christ with any guilt of his treachery.

Third proposition. The holiness of God is not blemished by decreeing the eternal rejection of some men.—Reprobation in its first notion is an act of preterition, or passing by. A man is not made wicked by the act of God; but it supposeth him wicked; and so it is nothing else but God's leaving a man in that guilt and filth wherein he beholds him. In its second notion it is an ordination, not to a crime, but to a punishment; Jude iv, *An ordaining to condemnation*. And though it be an eternal act of God, yet in order of nature it follows upon the foresight of the transgression of man, and supposeth the crime. God considers Adam's revolt, and views the whole mass of his corrupted posterity, and chooses some to
reduce

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

that are committed by the co-operation of devils, since their first rebellion, because he leaves them to themselves, and bestows not a new grace upon them: as say God is the cause of the sins of those that he overlooks and leaves in that state of guilt wherein he found them. God did not pass by any without the consideration of sin; so that this act of God is not repugnant to his holiness, but conformable to his justice.

Fourth proposition. The holiness of God is not blemished by his secret will to suffer sin to enter into the world.—God never willed sin by his preceptive will. It was never founded upon, or produced by any word of his, as the creation was. He never said; Let there be sin under the heaven, as he said, *Let there be water under the heaven*. Nor doth he will it by infusing any habit of it, or stirring up inclinations to it; no, *God tempts no man*, Jam. i. 13. Nor doth he will it by his approving will; it is detestable to him, nor ever can be otherwise: he cannot approve it either before commission or after.

The will of God is in some sort concurrent with sin.—He doth not properly will it, but he wills not to hinder it, to which by his omnipotence he could put a bar. If he did positively will it, it might be wrought by himself, and so could not be evil. If he did in no sort will it, it would not be committed by his creature: sin entered into the world, either God willing the permission of it, or not willing the permission of it. The latter cannot be said; for then the creature is more powerful than God, and can do that which God will not permit. God can, if he pleased; banish all sin in a moment out of the world: He could have prevented the revolt of angels, and the fall of man; they did not sin whether he would or no. He might by his grace have stept in the first moment, and made a special impression upon them of the happiness they
already

already possessed, and the misery they would incur by any wicked attempt. He could as well have prevented the sin of the fallen angels, and confirmed them in grace, as of those that continued in their happy state: he might have appeared to man, informed him of the issue of his design, and made secret impressions upon his heart, since he was acquainted with every avenue to his will. God could have kept all sin out of the world, as well as all creatures from breathing in it; he was as well able to bar sin for ever out of the world, as to let creatures lie in the womb of nothing, wherein they were first wrapped. To say God doth will sin as he doth other things, is to deny his holiness; to say it entered without any thing of his will, is to deny his omnipotence. If he did necessitate Adam to fall, what shall we think of his purity? If Adam did fall without any concern of God's will in it, what shall we say of his sovereignty? the one taints his holiness, and the other clips his power. If it came without any thing of his will in it, and he did not foresee it, where is his omniscience? If it entered whether he would or no, where is his omnipotence, Rom. ix. 19, *Who hath resisted his will?* There cannot be a lustful act in Abimelech, if God will withhold his power; Gen. xx. 6, *I withheld thee*: nor a cursing word in Balaam's mouth, unless God give power to speak it; Numb. xxii. 38, *Have I now any power at all to say any thing? The word that God puts in my mouth, that shall I speak.* As no action could be sinful, if God had not forbidden it; so no sin could be committed, if God did not will to give way to it.

God wills the permission of sin.—He doth not positively will sin, but he positively wills to permit it. And though he doth not approve of sin, yet he approves of that act of his will, whereby he permits it. For since that sin could not enter into the world without some concern of God's will about it, that act of his will that gave way to it, could not be

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

The holiness of God is not tainted by this, because he was under no obligation to hinder their commission of sin.—Ceasing to act, whereby to prevent a crime or mischief, brings not a person permitting it, under guilt, unless where he is under an obligation to prevent it: but God in regard of his
absolute

absolute dominion cannot be charged with any such obligation. One man that doth not hinder the murder of another, when it is in his power, is guilty of the murder in part; but it is to be considered, that he is under a tie by nature, as being of the same kind, and being the other's brother by a communion of blood: also under an obligation of the law of charity, enacted by the common sovereign of the world: but what tie was there upon God? since the infinite transcendency of his nature, and his sovereign dominion free him from any such obligation; Job ix. 12, *If he takes away, who shall say, what dost thou?* God might have prevented the fall of men and angels, he might have confirmed them all in a state of perpetual innocence; but where is the obligation? He had made the creature a debtor to himself, but he owed nothing to the creature. Before God can be charged with any guilt in this case, it must be proved, not only that he could, but that he was bound to hinder it. No person can be justly charged with another's fault, merely for not preventing it, unless he be bound to prevent it; else not only the first sin of angels and man would be imputed to God, as the author, but all the sins of men. He could not be obliged by any law, because he had no superior to impose any law upon him; and it will be hard to prove, that he was obliged from his own nature to prevent the entrance of sin, which he would use as an occasion to declare his own holiness so transcendent a perfection of his nature, more than ever it could have been manifested by a total exclusion of it, viz. in the death of Christ. He is no more bound in his own nature, to preserve by supernatural grace his creatures from falling, after he had framed him with a sufficient strength to stand; than he was obliged in his own nature to bring his creature into being, when it was nothing. He is not bound to create a rational creature, much less bound to create him with supernatural gifts; though

though since God would make a rational creature, he could not but make him with a natural uprightness and rectitude.

God did as much for angels and men, as became a wise governor. He had published his law, backed it with severe penalties, and the creature wanted not a natural strength to observe and obey it. Had not man a power to obey all the precepts of the law, as well as one? How was God bound to give him more grace, since what he had already was enough to shield him, and keep up his resistance against all the power of hell? It had been enough to have pointed his will against the temptation, and he had kept off the force of it. Was there any promise past to Adam of any further grace, which he could plead as a tie upon God? No such voluntary limit upon God's supreme dominion appears upon record. Was any thing due to man, which he had not? Any thing promised him, which was not performed? What action of debt then can the creature bring against God. Indeed, when man began to neglect the light of his own reason, and became inconsiderate of the precept, God might have enlightened his understanding by a special flash, a supernatural beam, and imprinted upon him a particular consideration of the necessity of his obedience, the misery he was approaching to by his sin, the folly of any such apprehension of an equality in knowledge; he might have convinced him of the falsity of the serpent's arguments, and uncased to him the venom that lay under those baits. But how doth it appear that God was bound to those additional acts, when he had already lighted up in him a *spirit which was the candle of the Lord*, Prov. xx. 27. whereby he was able to discern all, if he had attended to it. It was enough that God did not necessitate man to sin, did not counsel him to it; that he had given him sufficient warning in the threatening, and sufficient strength in his faculties, to fortify him
against

against temptation. He gave him what was due to him as a creature of his own framing; he withdrew no help from him, that was due to him as a creature, and what was not due he was not bound to impart. Man did not beg preserving grace of God, and God was not bound to offer it, when he was not petitioned for it especially: yet if he had begged it, God having before furnished him sufficiently, might by the right of his sovereign dominion have denied it, without any impeachment of his holiness and righteousness. Though he would not in such a case have dealt so bountifully with his creature, as he might have done; yet he could not have been impleaded, as dealing unrighteously with his creature. The single word that God had already uttered, when he gave him his precept, was enough to oppose against all the devil's wiles, which tended to invallidate that word: the understanding of man could not imagine, that the word of God was vainly spoken; and the very suggestion of the devil, as if the Creator should envy his creature, would have appeared ridiculous, if he had attended to the voice of his own reason. God had done enough for him, and was obliged to do no more, and dealt not unrighteously in leaving him to act according to the principles of his nature.

Fourthly, **The Use of all to ourselves.**

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

1. How great and how frequent is the contempt of this eminent perfection in the deity?—Since the fall, this attribute, which renders God most amiable in himself, renders him most hateful to his apostate creature. It is impossible that he that loves iniquity, can affect that which is irreconcilably contrary to the iniquity he loves. Nothing so contrary to the sinfulness of man as the holiness of God, and nothing is thought of by the sinner with so much detestation. How do men account that which is the most glorious perfection of the divinity, unworthy

worthy to be regarded as an accomplishment of their own souls? and when they are pressed to an imitation of it, and a detestation of what is contrary to it, have the same sentiments in their heart which the devil had in his language to Christ, *Why art thou come to torment us before our time?* What an enmity the world naturally hath to this perfection, I think is visible in the practice of the heathen, who among all their heroes which they deified, elevated none to that dignity among them for this or that moral virtue that came nearest to it, but for their valour, or some usefulness in the concerns of this life. Æsculapius was deified for his skill in the cure of diseases; Bacchus for the use of the grape; Vulcan for his operations by fire; and Hercules for his destroying of tyrants and monsters: but none for their mere virtue: as if any thing of purity were unworthy their consideration in the frame of a deity, when it is the glory of all other perfections. So essential it is, that when men reject the imitation of this, God regards it as a total rejection of himself, though they own all the other attributes of his nature, Psa. lxxxi. 11, *Israel would none of me; why? because they walked not in his ways*, ver. 13. those ways wherein the purity of the divine nature was most conspicuous: they would own him in his power, when they stood in need of a deliverance; they would own him in his mercy, when they were plunged in distress; but they would not imitate him in his holiness. This being the lustre of divine nature, the contempt of it is an obscuring all his other perfections, and dashing a blot upon his whole scutcheon. To own all the rest, and deny him this, is to frame him as an unbeautiful monster, a deformed power. Indeed, all sin is against this attribute; all sin aims in general at the being of God, but in particular at the holiness of his being: all sin is a violence to this perfection: there is not an iniquity in the world, but directs its venomous sting

fting againft the divine purity: fome fins are directed againft his omnifcience, as fecret wickednefs; fome againft his providence, as diftruft; fome againft his mercy, as unbelief; fome againft his wifdom, as neglecting the means instituted by him, cenfuring his ways and aétings; fome againft his power, as trufting in means more than in God, and the immoderate fear of men more than of God; fome againft his truth, as diftrufing his promife, or not fearing his threatening; but all agree together in their enmity againft this, which is the peculiar glory of the deity. Every one of them is a receding from the divine image; and the blacknefs of every one is the deeper, by how much the diftance of it from the holinefs of God is the greater. This contrariety to the holinefs of God is the caufe of all the abfolute atheifm (if there be any fuch) in the world; what was the reason *the fool bath faid in his heart, there is no God?* but becaufe the fool is corrupt and hath done abominable works. If they believe the being of a God, their own reason will inforce them to imagine him holy: therefore rather than fancy a holy God, they would fain fancy none at all.

The holinefs of God is injured, when men will put up petitions to God to favour them in a wicked defign.—Such there are, and taxed by the apoftle, James iv. 3, *Ic ask amifs, that you may confume it upon your lufts*: who defired mercies from God, with an intent to make them inftruments of fin, and weapons of unrighteoufnefs; as it is reported of a thief, that he always prayed for the fuccefs of his robbery. It hath not been rare in the world to appoint fafts and prayers for fuccefs in wars manifefly unjust, and commenced upon breaches of faith. Many covetous men petition God to prosper them in their unjust gain; as if the blefled God fat in his pure majefty upon a throne of grace, to efpoufe unjust praétices, and make iniquity prosperous. There are fuch as *offer facrifices with an evil mind,*
to

to barter with God for a divine blessing to spirit a wicked contrivance. How great a contempt of the holiness of God is this? How inexcusable would it be for a favourite to address himself to a just prince with this language? Sir, I desire a boon of such lands that lie near me, for an addition to my estate, that I may have supports for my debauchery, and be able to play the villain more powerfully among my neighbours. Hereby he implies that his prince is a friend to such crimes and wickedness he intends his petition for. Is not this the language of many men's hearts in the immediate presence of God? The order of prayer runs thus, *Hallowed be thy name*; first to have a deep sense of the holiness of the divine nature, and an ardent desire for the glory of it: this order is inverted by asking those things which are not agreeable to the will of God; not meet for us to ask, nor meet for God to give; or asking things agreeable to the will of God, but with a wicked intention: this is, in effect, to desire God to strip himself of his holiness, and commit sacrilege upon his own nature to gratify our lusts.

The purity of God is contemned, in hating and scoffing at the holiness which is in a creature. Whoever looks upon the holiness of a creature as an unlovely thing, can have no good opinion of the amiableness of divine purity. Whosoever hates those qualities and graces that resemble God in any person, must needs condemn the original pattern, which is more eminent in God. If there be no comeliness in the creature's holiness, to render it grateful to us, we should say of God himself, were he visible among us, with those in the prophet, Isa. liii. *There is no beauty in him that we should desire him*: Holiness is beautiful in itself. If God be the most lovely being, that which is a likeness to him, so far as it doth resemble him, must needs be amiable, because it partakes of God: and therefore those that see no beauty in an inferior holiness, but

but condemn it because it is a purity above them, condemn God much more: he that hates that which is imperfect merely for that excellency which is in it, doth much more hate that which is perfect, without any mixture or stain. Holiness being the glory of God; the peculiar title of the deity, and from him derived unto the nature of a creature; he that mocks this in a person, derides God himself; and when he cannot abuse the purity in the deity, he will do it in his image. As rebels that cannot wrong the king in his person, will do it in his picture, and his subjects that are loyal to him: he that hates the picture of a man, hates the person represented by it much more; he that hates the beams, hates the sun; the holiness of a creature is but a beam from that infinite sun, a stream from that eternal fountain. Where there is a derision of the purity of any creature, there is a greater reflection upon God in that derision, as he is the author of it. If a mixed and stained holiness be more the subject of any man's scoffs than a great deal of sin, that person hath a disposition more roundly to scoff at God himself, should he appear in that unblemished and unspotted purity which infinitely shines in his nature. O! it is a dangerous thing to scoff and deride holiness in any person, though never so mean; such do deride and scoff at the most holy God.

2. The holiness of God is injured by our unprepared addresses to him, when like swine, we come into the presence of God with all our mire reeking and steaming upon us.—A holy God requires a holy worship: and if our best duties, having filth in every part, as performed by us, are unmeet for God; how much more unsuitable are dead and dirty duties to a living and immense holiness? Slight approaches and drossy frames speak us to have imaginations of God as of a slight and sottish being: this is worse than the heathens practised, who would purge their flesh before they sacrificed,

sacrificed, and make some preparations in a seeming purity, before they would enter into their temples. God is so holy, that were our services as refined as those of angels, we could not present him with a service meet for his holy nature. We condemn then this perfection when we come before him without due preparation; as if God himself were of an impure nature, and did not deserve our purest thoughts in our applications to them; as if any blemished and polluted sacrifice were good enough for him, and his nature deserved no better. When we excite not those elevated frames of spirit which are due to such a being; when we think to put him off with a lame and imperfect service, we worship him not according to the excellency of his nature, but put a slight upon his majestic sanctity: when we nourish in our duties those foolish imaginations which creep upon us; when we bring into, and continue our worldly, carnal, debauched fancies in his presence, worse than the nasty servants, or bemired dogs, a man would blush to be attended with in his visits to a neat person. To be conversing with sordid sensualities, when we are at the feet of an infinite God, sitting upon the throne of his holiness, is as much a contempt of him, as it would be of a prince, to bring a vessel full of nasty dung with us, when we come to present a petition to him clothed in his royal robes. Or as it would have been to God, if the high priest should have swept all the blood and excrements of the sacrifices from the foot of the altar into the holy of holies, and heaped it up before the mercy seat, where the presence of God dwelled between the cherubims, and afterwards shoveled it up into the ark, to be lodged with Aaron's rod and the pot of manna.

God's holiness is slighted in depending upon our imperfect services to bear us out before the tribunal of God. This is too ordinary: the Jews were often infected with it, who not well understanding the enormity

enormity of their transgressions, the interweaving of sin with their services, and the unspottedness of the divine purity, mingled an opinion of merit with their sacrifices, and thought by the cutting the throat of a beast, and offering it upon God's altar, they had made a sufficient compensation to that holiness they had offended. Not to speak of many among the Romanists, who have the same notion, thinking to make satisfaction to God, by erecting an hospital, or endowing a church, as if this injured perfection could be contented with the dregs of their purses, and the offering of an unjust mammon, more likely to mind God of the injury they have done him, than contribute to the appeasing of him. But is it not too ordinary with miserable men, whose consciences accuse them of their crimes, to rely upon the mumbling of a few formal prayers, and in the strength of them to think to stand before the tremendous tribunal of God, and meet with a discharge upon this account from any accusation this divine perfection can present against them? Nay, do not the best christians sometimes find a principle in them, that makes them stumble in their goings forth to Christ, and glorifying the holiness of God in that method which he hath appointed? Sometimes casting an eye at their grace, and sticking awhile to this or that duty, and gazing at the glory of the temple-building, while they should more admire the glorious presence that fills it. What is all this but a vilifying of the holiness of the divine nature, as though it would be well enough contented with our impurities and imperfections, because they look like a righteousness in our estimation? As though dross and dung, which are the titles the apostle gives to all the righteousness of a fallen creature, were valuable in the sight of God, and sufficient to render us comely before him. It is a blasphemy against this attribute, to pretend that any thing so imperfect, so daubed, as the best of our services are, can

answer to that which is infinitely perfect, and be a ground of demanding eternal life: it is at best to set up a gilded dagon as a fit companion for the ark of his holiness; our own righteousness as a suitable mate for the righteousness of God: as if he had repented of the claim he made by the law to an exact conformity, and thrown off the holiness of his nature for the fondling of a corrupted creature. Rude and foolish notions of the divine purity, are clearly evidenced by any confidence in any righteousness of our own, though never so splendid. It is a rendering the righteousness of God, as dull and obscure as that of men; a mere out-side, as their own: as blind as the heathens pictured their fortune, that knew as little how to discern the nature and value of the offerings made to her, as to distribute her gifts, as if it were all one to them, to have a dog or a lamb presented in sacrifice. As if God did not well understand his own nature, when he enacted so holy a law, and strengthened it with so severe a threatening; which must follow upon our conceit, that he will accept a righteousness lower than that, which bears some suitableness to the holiness of his own nature, and that of his law; and that he could easily be put off with a pretended and counterfeit service. What are the services of the generality of men, but suppositions, that they can bribe God to an indulgence of them in their sins, and by an oral sacrifice, cause him to divest himself of his hatred of their former iniquities, and countenance their following practices. As the harlot, that would return fresh to her uncleanness, upon the confidence that her peace-offerings had contented the righteousness of God: as though a small service could make him wink at our sins, and lay aside the glory of his nature; when alas, the best duties in the most gracious persons in this life, are but as the steams of a spiced dunghill, a composition of myrrh and froth, since there are swarms
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of corruptions in their nature, and secret sins that they need a cleansing from.

3. All unholiness is vile and opposite to the nature of God.—It is such a loathsome thing, that the *purity of God's eye is averse from beholding*, Hab. i. 3. It is not said there, that he *will not*, but he *cannot* look on evil; there cannot be any amicableness between God and sin, the natures of both are so directly and unchangeably contrary to one another. Holiness is the life of God, it endures as long as his life; he must be eternally averse from sin, he can live no longer than he lives in the hatred and loathing of it. If he should for one instant cease to hate it, he would cease to live. To be a holy God is as essential to him, as to be a living God; and he would not be a living, but a dead God, if he were in the least point of time an unholy God. He cannot look on sin but his heart riseth against it: it must needs be most odious to him, as that which is against the glory of his nature, and directly opposite to that which is the lustre and varnish of all his other perfections. It is the *abominable thing which his soul hates*, Jer. xlv. 4: the vilest terms imaginable are used to signify it: do you understand the loathsomeness of a miry swine, or the nauseousness of the vomit of a dog? These are emblems of sin. Can you endure the steams of putrified carcasses from an open sepulchre? Is the smell of the stinking sweat or excrements of a body delightful? or is the sight of a body, overgrown with scabs and leprosy, grateful to you? So vile, so odious is sin in the sight of God. It is no light thing then to fly in the face of God, to break his eternal law, to dash both the tables in pieces, to trample the transcript of God's own nature under our feet, to cherish that which is inconsistent with his honour, to lift up our heels against the glory of his nature, to join issue with the devil in stabbing his heart, and depriving him

of his life. Sin in every part of it is an opposition to the holiness of God, and consequently an envying him a being and life, as well as a glory. If sin be such a thing, ye that love the Lord, hate evil.

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

5. There is therefore a necessity of the satisfaction of the holiness of God by some sufficient mediator.—The divine purity could not meet with any acquiescence in all mankind after the fall: sin was hated, the sinner would be ruined, unless some way were found out to repair the wrongs done to the holiness of God; either the sinner must be condemned for ever, or some satisfaction must be made, that the holiness of the divine nature might eternally appear in its full lustre. That it is essential to the nature of God to hate all unrighteousness, as that which is absolutely repugnant to his nature, none do question. That the justice of God is so essential to him, as that sin could not be pardoned without satisfaction, some do question; though this latter seems rationally to follow upon the former. That holiness is essential to the nature of God is evident, because else God may as much be conceived without purity, as he might be conceived without the creating the
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the sun and stars. No man can in his right wits frame a right notion of a deity, without purity. It would be a less blasphemy against the excellency of God, to conceit him not knowing, than to imagine him not holy: and for the essentialness of his justice, Joshua joins both his holiness and his jealousy as going hand in hand together, Josh. xxiv. 19. *He is a holy God, he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your sin.*

But consider only the purity of God, since it is contrary to sin, and consequently hating the sinner; the guilty person cannot be reduced to God, nor can the holiness of God have any complacency in a filthy person, but as fire hath in stubble, to consume it. How the holy God should be brought to delight in man without a *salvo* for the rights of his holiness, is not to be conceived without an impeachment of the nature of God. The law could not be abolished; that would reflect indeed upon the righteousness of the law-giver; to abolish it because of sin, would imply a change of the rectitude of his nature: must he change his holiness for the sake of that which was against his holiness, in a compliance with a prophane and unrighteous creature? This should engage him rather to maintain his law, than to null it. And to abrogate his law as soon as he had enacted it, since sin stole into the world presently after it, would be no credit to his wisdom.

There must be a reparation made of the honour of God's holiness; by ourselves it could not be without condemnation: by another it could not be without a sufficiency in the person: no creature could do it. All the creatures being of a finite nature, could not make a compensation for the disparagements of infinite holiness. He must have despicable and vile thoughts of this excellent perfection, that imagines that a few tears, and the glavering fawnings at the death of a creature, can be sufficient to repair the wrongs, and restore the rights of this

attribute. It must therefore be such a compensation as might be commensurate to the holiness of the divine nature and the divine law, which could not be wrought by any, but him that was possessed of a god-head, to give efficacy and exact congruity to it. The person designed and appointed by God for so great an affair, was *one in the form of God, one equal with God*, Phil. ii. 6. who could not be termed by such a title of dignity, if he had not been equal to God in the universal rectitude of the divine nature, and therefore in his holiness. The punishment due to sin is translated to that person for the righting divine holiness, and the righteousness of that person is communicated to the sinner for the pardon of the offending creature.

If the sinner had been eternally damned, God's hatred of sin had been evidenced by the strokes of his justice; but his mercy to a sinner had lain in obscurity. If the sinner had been pardoned and saved without such a reparation, mercy had been evident; but his holiness had hid its head for ever in his own bosom. There was therefore a necessity of such a way to manifest his purity, and yet to bring forth his mercy: that mercy might not always sigh for the destruction of the creature, and that holiness might not mourn for the neglect of its honour.

6. Hence it will follow, there is no justification of a sinner by any thing in himself.—After sin had set foot in the world, man could present nothing to God acceptable to him, or bearing any proportion to the holiness of his law, till God set forth a person, upon whose account the acceptation of our persons and services is founded, Eph. i. 6, *Who hath made us accepted in the beloved*. The infinite purity of God is so glorious, that it shames the holiness of angels, as the light of the sun dims the light of the fire: much more will the righteousness of fallen man, who is vile, and drinks up iniquity like water, vanish into nothing in his presence. With what self-abasement and abhor-

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rence ought he to be possessed that comes as short of the angels in purity, as a dung-hill doth of a star? The highest obedience that ever was performed by any mere man, since lapsed nature, cannot challenge any acceptance with God, or stand before so exact an inquisition. What person hath such a clear innocence, and unspotted obedience in such a perfection, as in any degree to suit the holiness of the divine nature? Psa. cxliii. 2, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.* If God should debate the case simply with man in his own person, without respecting the mediator, he were not able to answer one of a thousand. Though we are his servants, as David was, and perform a sincere service, yet there are many little motes and dust of sin in the best works, that cannot lie undiscovered from the eye of his holiness: and if we come short in the least of what the law requires, we are guilty of all. So that *in thy sight shall no man living be justified*: in the sight of thy infinite holiness, which hates the least spot; in the sight of thy infinite justice, which punishes the least transgression.

God would descend below his own nature, and vilify both his knowledge and purity, should he accept that for a righteousness and holiness which is not so in itself; and nothing is so, which hath the least stain upon it contrary to the nature of God. The most holy saints in scripture, upon a prospect of his purity, have cast away all confidence in themselves; every flash of the divine purity has struck them into a deep sense of their own impurity and shame for it, Job xlii. 6, *Wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes.* What can the language of any man be that lies under a sense of infinite holiness and his own defilement in the least, but that of the prophet, Isa. vi. 5, *No is me, I am undone?* And what is there in the world can administer any other thought than this, unless God be considered in

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Christ,

Christ, reconciling the world to himself? As a holy God, so righted, as that he can dispense with the condemnation of a sinner, without dispensing with his hatred of sin; pardoning the sin in the criminal, because it hath been punished in the surety. That righteousness which God hath set forth for justification, is not our own, but a *righteousness which is of God*, Phil. iii. 9, 10, of God's appointing, and of God's performing; appointed by the Father, who is God, and performed by the Son, who is one with the Father. A righteousness surmounting that of all the glorious angels, since it is an immutable one which can never fail, an everlasting righteousness, Dan. ix. 24. A righteousness wherein the holiness of God can acquiesce, as considered in itself, because it is a righteousness of one equal with God. As we therefore dishonour the divine majesty, when we insist upon our own admired righteousness for our justification; (as if a *mortal man were as just as God*, and a *man as pure as his maker*, Job iv. 17.) So we highly honour the purity of his nature, when we charge ourselves with folly, acknowledge ourselves unclean, and accept of that righteousness which gives a full content to his infinite purity. There can be no justification of a sinner by any thing in himself.

7. It informs us, if holiness be a glorious perfection of the divine nature, then the deity of Christ might be argued from hence. He is indeed dignified with the title of the *Holy One*, Acts iii. 14, 16; a title often given to God in the old testament; and he is called *The Holy of Holies*, Dan. ix. 24, but because the angels seemed to be termed *holy ones*, Dan. iv. 13, 17, and the most sacred place in the temple was also called the *holy of holies*, I shall not insist upon that. But you find our Saviour particularly applauded by the angels, as *holy*; when this perfection of the divine nature, together with the incommunicable name of God, are linked together

gether, and ascribed to him. Isa. vi. 3, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, and the whole earth is full of his glory*, which the apostle interprets of Christ, John xii. 39, 41. *Isaiah again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.* He that Isaiah saw environed with the seraphims in a reverential posture before his face, and praised as most holy by them, was the true and eternal God; such acclamations belong to none, but the great Jehovah, God blessed for ever: but, saith John, it was the glory of Christ that Isaiah saw in this vision; Christ therefore is *God blessed for ever*, of whom it was said, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts.* The evangelist had been speaking of Christ, the miracles which he wrought, the obstinacy of the Jews against believing on him; his glory therefore is to be referred to the subject he had been speaking of. The evangelist was not speaking of the Father, but of the Son, and cites those words out of Isaiah; not to teach any thing of the Father, but to shew that the Jews could not believe in Christ. He speaks of him that had wrought so many miracles; but Christ wrought those miracles: he speaks of him whom the Jews refused to believe on; but Christ was the person they would not believe on, while they acknowledged God. It was the glory of this person Isaiah saw, and this person Isaiah spake of, if the words of the evangelist be of any credit. The angels are too holy to give acclamations belonging to God, to any but him that is God.

8. If holiness be an eminent perfection of the divine nature, the christian religion is of a divine extraction—it discovers the holiness of God and forms the creature to a conformity to him. It gives us a prospect of his nature, represents him in the beauty of holiness, Psa. cx. 3. more than the whole

whole glass of the creation. It is in the evangelical glass the glory of the Lord is beheld, and rendered amiable and imitable. It is a doctrine *according to godliness*, 1 Tim. vi. 3, directing us to live the life of God; a life worthy of God, and worthy of our first creation by his hand. It takes us off from ourselves, fixeth us upon a noble end, points our actions and the scope of our lives to God. It quells the monsters of sin, discountenanceth the moles of wickedness; and it is no mean argument for the divinity of it, that it sets us no lower a pattern for our imitation, than the holiness of the divine majesty. God is exalted upon the throne of his holiness in it, and the creature advanced to an image and resemblance of it, 1 Pet. i. 16, *Be ye holy, for I am holy*.

God's Goodness.

Mark x. 18.

AND JESUS SAID UNTO HIM, WHY CALLEST THOU ME GOOD?
THERE IS NONE GOOD BUT ONE, THAT IS GOD.

THE observation that 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.* Certainly it is an undoubted truth, it is written in his works of nature; and his acts of grace, *He is abundant in goodness.*

In

In the prosecution of this let us see,

1. What this goodness is.
2. Some propositions concerning the nature of it.
3. That God is good.
4. The manifestation of it in creation, providence, and redemption.
5. The use.

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

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 completeing of a most perfect and sovereign being. All good meets in his essence as all water meets in the ocean. Under this notion all the attributes of God, which are requisite to so illustrious a being, are comprehended. All things that are, have a goodness of being in them, derived to them by the power of God, as they are creatures; so the devil is good, as he is a creature of God's making: he hath a natural goodness, but not a moral goodness: when he fell from God, he retained his natural goodness as a creature; because he did not cease to be, he was not reduced to that nothing, from whence he was drawn: but he ceased to be morally good, being stripped of his righteousness by his 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 the devil hath more of this natural goodness than men have; because he hath more marks of the excellency of God upon him, in regard of the greatness of his knowledge, and
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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.

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. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet for a good man one would even dare to die. For an innocent man, one as innocent of the crime as himself would scarce venture his life; but for a good man, a liberal tender-hearted man, that had been a common good in the place where he lived, or had done another as great a benefit as life itself amounts to, a man out of gratitude might dare to die. The goodness of God is his inclination to deal well and bountifully with his creatures. It is that whereby he wills, there should be something besides himself for his own glory. God is good 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 doth not act for his own profit, but for his creatures welfare, and the manifestation of his own goodness. He

He sends out his beams, without receiving any addition to himself, or substantial advantage from his creatures. It is from this perfection that he loves whatsoever is good, and that is, whatsoever he hath made, *for every creature of God is good*; every creature hath some communications from him, which cannot be without some affection to them; every creature hath a footstep of divine goodness upon it; God therefore loves that goodness in the creature, else he would not love himself. God hates no creature, no not the devils, and damned, as creatures; he is not an enemy to them, as they are the works of his hands: he is properly an enemy, that doth simply and absolutely wish evil to another; but God doth not absolutely wish evil to the damned; that justice that he inflicts upon them, the deserved punishment of their sin, is part of his goodness, (as shall afterwards be shewn.)

This is the most pleasing 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 affecting 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.

The goodness of God comprehends all his attributes.—All the acts of God are nothing else but the effluxes of his goodness, distinguished by several names, according to the objects it is exercised about. As the sea, though it be one mass of water, yet we distinguish

distinguish it by several names, according to the shores it washeth, and beats upon, as the British and German ocean, though all be one sea. When Moses longed to see his glory, God tells him, he would give him a prospect of his goodness; *I will make all my goodness to pass before thee.* His goodness is his glory and godhead, as much as is delightfully visible to his creatures, and whereby he doth benefit man; I will cause my goodness, or comeliness, as Calvin renders it, to pass before thee; what is this, but the train of all his lovely perfections springing from his goodness? The whole catalogue of mercy, grace, long-suffering, abundance of truth, summed up in this word. All are streams from this fountain; he could be none of this, were he not first good. When he confers happiness without merit, it is grace; when he 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 he meets with a person, to whom he is not obliged, it is grace; when he meets with a person in the world, to which he hath obliged himself by promise, it is truth; when he commiserates a distressed person, it is pity; when he supplies an indigent person, it is bounty; when he succours an innocent person, it is righteousness, and when he pardons a penitent person, 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.* He is first good, and then compassionate. Righteousness is often in scripture taken, not for justice, but charitableness: this attribute, saith one, is so full of God, that it doth defy all the rest, and verify the adorableness of him. His wisdom might contrive against us, his power bear too
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hard upon us; one might be too hard for an ignorant, and the other too mighty for an impotent creature; his holiness would scare an impure and guilty creature, but his goodness conducts them all for us, and makes them all amiable to us; whatever comeliness they have in the eye of a creature, whatever comfort they afford to the heart of a creature, we are obliged for all to his goodness. This puts all the rest upon a delightful exercise, this makes his wisdom design for us, and this makes his power to act for us: this veils his holiness from affrighting us, and this spirits his mercy to relieve us: all his acts towards man, are but the workmanship of this. What moved him at first to create the world out of nothing, and erect so noble a creature as man, endowed with such excellent gifts; was it not his goodness? What made him separate his Son to be a sacrifice for us, after we had endeavoured to raze out the first marks of his favor; was it not a strong bubbling of goodness? What moves him, to reduce a fallen creature to the due sense of his duty, and at last bring him to an eternal felicity; is it not only his goodness? this is the captain attribute that leads the rest to act. This attends them, and spirits them in all his ways of acting. This is the complement and perfection of all his works; had it not been for this, which set all the rest on work, nothing of his wonders had been seen in creation, nothing of his compassions had been seen in redemption.

Secondly, Some propositions to explain the nature of this goodness.

1. He is good by his own essence.—God is not only good in his essence, but good by his essence: the essence of every created thing is good, so the unerring God pronounced every thing which he had made. 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
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God, and therefore good by himself, 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 good by him. Creatures are good by being made so by him, and cleaving to him: He is good without cleaving to any goodness without him. Goodness is not a quality in him, but a nature, not a 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. 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 doth act about. If he were not good by his essence, he could not be eternally good; he could not be the first good; he would have something before him, from whence he derived that goodness, wherewith he is possessed; nor could he be perfectly good, for he could not be equally good to that, from whom he derived his goodness: no star, no splendid body that derives light from the sun, doth equal that sun by which it is enlightened.

Hence his goodness must be infinite, and circumscribed by no limits: the exercise of his goodness may be limited by himself, but his goodness, the principle, cannot; for since his essence is infinite, and his goodness is not distinguished from his es-

fence, 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, therefore eternally good, and abundantly good.

2. God is the prime and chief goodness.—Being good, *per se*, and by his own essence, he must needs be the chief goodness, in whom there can be nothing but good, from whom there can proceed nothing but good, to whom all good whatsoever must be referred as the final cause of all good. As he is the chief being, so he is the chief good. And as we rise by steps from the existence of created things, to acknowledge one supreme being, which is God; so we mount by steps from the consideration of the goodness of created things, to acknowledge one infinite ocean of sovereign goodness, whence the streams of created goodness are derived. When we behold things that partake of goodness from another, we must acquiesce in one that hath goodness by participation from no other, but originally from himself, and therefore supremely in himself above all other things. So that as nothing greater and more majestic can be imagined, so also nothing better and more excellent can be conceived than God. Nothing can add to him, or make him better than he is, nothing can detract from him, to make him worse, nothing can be added to him, nothing can be severed from him, no created good can render him more excellent; no evil from any creature,
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can render him less excellent. Our goodness extends not to him; wickedness may hurt a man, as we are, and our righteousness may profit the son of man, but if we be righteous, what give we to him, or what receives he at our hands? As he hath no superior in place above him, so being chief of all, he cannot be made better by any inferior to him. How can he be made better by any, that hath from himself, all he hath? The goodness of a creature may be changed, but the goodness of a Creator is immutable; he is always like himself, so good that he cannot be evil, as he is so blessed, that he cannot be miserable.

Nothing is good but God, because nothing is of itself but God: as all things being from nothing, are nothing in comparison of God, so all things being from nothing, are scanty and evil in comparison of God. If any thing had been *ex Deo*, God being the matter of it, it had been as good as God is; but since the principle whence all things were drawn, was nothing, though the efficient cause by which they were extracted from nothing was God, they are as nothing in goodness, and not esteemable in comparison of God. *Whom have I in heaven but thee, &c.* God is all good, every creature hath a distinct variety of goodness. God distinctly pronounced every day's work in the creation good. Food communicates the goodness of its nourishing virtue to our bodies, flowers the goodness of their odors to our smell, every creature a goodness of comeliness to our sight; plants the goodness of healing qualities for our cure. And all derive from themselves a goodness of knowledge, objectively to our understandings. The sun by one sort of goodness warms us, metals enrich us, living creatures sustain us, and delight us by another; all these have distinct kinds of goodness, which are eminently summed up in God, and are all but parts of his immense goodness. It is he that enlightens

us by his sun, nourisheth us by bread. *It is not by bread alone, that we live, but by the word of God.* It is all but his own supreme goodness, conveyed to us through those varieties of conduit-pipes. God is all good, other things are good in their kind, as a good man, a good angel, a good tree, a good plant; but God hath a good of all kinds eminently in his nature. He is no less all good, than he is almighty, and all knowing: as the sun contains in it all the light, and more light than is in all the clearest bodies in the world; so doth God contain in himself all the good, and more good than is in the richest creatures. Nothing is good, but as it resembles him; as nothing is hot, but as it resembles fire, the prime subject of heat.

God is omnipotent, therefore no good can be wanting to him. If he were destitute of any which he could not have, he were not almighty: he is so good that there is no mixture of 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.

He is only good without capacity of increase: he is all good, and unmingledly good; none good but God. A goodness like the sun, that hath all light, and no darkness. That is the second thing, he is the supreme and chief goodness.

3. This goodness is communicative.—None so communicatively good as God. As the notion of God includes goodness, so the notion of goodness includes diffusiveness; without goodness he would cease to be a deity, and without diffusiveness he would cease to be good. The being good is necessary to the being God: for goodness is nothing else
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in the notion of it, but a strong inclination to do good; either to find, or make an object, wherein to exercise itself, according to the propension of its own nature; and it is an inclination of communicating itself, not for its own interest, but the good of the object it pitcheth upon. Thus God is good by nature, and his nature is not without activity, he acts conveniently to his own nature. *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 encreaseth 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 an idle, enclosed, pent-up goodness, as a spring shut up, or a fountain sealed, bubbling up within itself, but bubbling out of itself. A fountain of gardens to water every part of his creation; *He is an ointment poured forth:* 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:* he fills rational creatures with understanding, sensitive nature with vigor and motion, the whole world with beauty and sweetness. Every taste, every touch of a creature, is a taste and touch of divine goodness. Divine goodness offers itself in one spark in this creature, in another spark in the other creature, and altogether make up a goodness inconceivable by any creature. The whole mass and extracted spirit of it is infinitely short of the

goodness of the divine nature, imperfect shadows of that goodness which is in himself.

4. God is necessarily good.—None is necessarily good but God; he is as necessarily good, as he is necessarily God. His goodness is as inseparable from his nature as his holiness. He is good by nature, not only by will; as he is holy by nature, not only by will; he is good in his nature, and good in his actions; and as he cannot be bad in his nature, so he cannot be bad in his communications: he can no more act contrary to this goodness in any of his actions, than he can un-god himself. It is not necessary that God should create a world; he was at his own choice whether he would create or no: but when he resolves to make a world, it is necessary that he should make it good, because he is goodness itself, and cannot act against his own nature. He could not create 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 goodnesses 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
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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 acknowledgements 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 the end for which he created it; and his own nature would not suffer him to be unkind to his rational creature, while it was innocent. It had been injustice to inflict evil upon the creature, that had not offended, and had no relation to an offending creature; the nature of God could not have brought forth such an act. And therefore some say, that God after he had created man, could not presently annihilate him, and take away his life and being. As a sovereign he might do it, as almighty he was able to do it, as well as create him; but in regard of his goodness, he could not morally do it: for had he annihilated man as soon as ever he had made him, he had not made man for himself, and for his own glory; to be loved, worshipped, fought, 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. And certainly if the gifts of God be without repentance, man could not have been annihilated after his creation without repentance in God, without any cause, had not sin entered into the world. If God did not say to man, after sin 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 doth necessarily love himself, and his own excellency, so he doth necessarily love any thing, that resembles that excellency, which is the primary object of his esteem.

5. But 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 the 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 law-giver. When he makes a
promise

promise, he freely lets the word go out of his lips, but when he hath made it, he is necessarily a faithful performer; because he was necessarily true and righteous in his nature, before he was freely a promiser. God is necessarily good in his nature, but free in his communications of it: to make him necessarily to communicate his goodness in the first creation of the creature, would render him but impotent, good without liberty, and without will: if the communications of it be not free, the eternity of the world must necessarily be concluded, which some anciently asserted from the naturalness of God's goodness, making the world flow from God as light from the sun.

God indeed is necessarily good affective in regard of his nature, but freely good effective in regard of the effluxes of it to this or that particular subject he pitcheth on. He is not so necessarily communicative of his goodness as the sun of his light, or a tree of its cooling shade, that chooseth not its object, but enlightens all indifferently, without any variation or distinction: this were to make God of no more understanding than the sun, to shine not where it pleaseth, but where it must. He is an understanding agent, and hath a sovereign right to choose his own subjects. It would not be a supreme goodness, if it were not a voluntary goodness. It is agreeable to the nature of the highest good, to be absolutely free, to dispense his goodness in what methods, and measures he pleaseth, 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. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion.* And he will be good to whom he will be good: when he doth act, he cannot but act well, so it is necessary; yet he may act this good, or that good to this or that degree, so it is

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 understanding and will. What necessity could there be upon him, to resolve to communicate his goodness? it could not be to make himself better by it; for he had a goodness incapable of any addition: he confers a goodness on his creatures, but reaps not a harvest of goodness to his own essence from his creatures. What obligation could there be from the creature, to confer a goodness on him to this or that degree, for this or that duration? If he had not created a man, nor angel, he had done them no wrong. If he had given them only a simple being, he had manifested a part of his goodness, without giving them a right to challenge any more of him. If he had taken away their beings after a time, when he had answered his end, he had done them no injury: for what law obliged him, to enrich them, and leave them in that being wherein he had invested them, but his sole goodness? Whatever sparks of goodness any creature hath, are the free effusions of God's bounty, the offspring of his own inclination to do well, the simple favor of the donor; not purchased, not merited by the creature. God is as unconstrained in his liberty in all his communications, as infinite in his goodness, the fountain of them.

6. 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:
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the reason that induced him to create, must be of as great an eminency as himself: the motive could not be taken from without him; because there was nothing but himself in being: it must be 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, and the other to act: power was the principle of his action, wisdom the rule of his action, goodness the motive of his action; principle and rule are awakened by the motive, and subservient to the end. That which is the most amiable perfection in the divine nature, and that which he first took notice of as the foot steps of them in the distinct views 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.

Thirdly, That God is good.

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 dropt from them; yet after some time take no more notice of them than of a stranger that never had any birth from them. But man, that hath a higher principle of reason, cherisheth his offspring, and gives them marks of his goodness while he lives, and leaves not the world at the time of his death without some testimonies

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 doth communicate itself. The sun is more excellent than the stars, and therefore doth more sensibly, more extensively disperse its liberal beams than the stars do. And the better any man is, the more charitable he is. God being the most excellent nature, having nothing more excellent than himself, because nothing more ancient than himself, who is the Ancient of Days; there is nothing therefore better and more bountiful than himself.

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 some where 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 center, 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 to them from him; and much more goodness than all, because finite beings are not capable of receiving into them, and containing in themselves all that goodness which is in an infinite being; when we search for good in creatures, they come short of that satisfaction which is in God. As the certainty of a first principle of all things, is necessarily concluded from the being of creatures,

creatures,

creatures, and the upholding and sustaining power and virtue of God is concluded from the mutability of those things in the world; whence we infer, that there must be some stable foundation of those tottering things, some firm hinge upon which those changeable things do move, without which there would be no stability in the kinds of things, no order, no agreement, or union among them: so from the goodness of 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, motion of him whose image it is, but not in the fulness of life and spirit, as in the original; it is but a shadow at the best, and speaks something more excellent in the copy. As God hath an infiniteness of being above them, so he hath a supremacy of goodness beyond them: what they have, is but a participation from him; what he hath, must be infinitely super-eminent above them. If any thing be good by itself, it must be infinitely good, it would set itself no bounds; we must make as many gods, as particulars of goodness in the world: but being good by the bounty of another, that from whence they flow must be the chief goodness. It is God's excellency and goodness, which like a beam pierceth all things: he decks spirits with reason, endues matter with form, furnisheth every thing with useful qualities.

As one beam of the sun illustrates fire, water, and 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

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

The goodness of God is not impaired by suffering sin to enter into the world, and man to fall thereby. —It is rather a testimony of God's goodness, that he gave man an ability to be happy, than any charge against his goodness, that he settled man in a capacity to be evil. God was first a benefactor to man, before man could be a rebel against God. May it not be 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 he was endowed with, and to follow his own choice for some time? Had it been wisdom to frame a free creature, and totally to restrain that creature from following its liberty? Had it been goodness, as it were, to force the creature to be happy against its will? God's goodness furnished Adam with a power to stand; was it contrary to his goodness, to leave Adam to a free use of that power? to make a creature, and not let that creature act according to the freedom of his nature, might have been thought to have been a blot upon his wisdom, and a constraint upon the creature, not to make use of that freedom of his nature, which the divine goodness had bestowed upon him. To what purpose did God make a law, to govern his rational creature, and yet resolve that creature should not have his choice, whether he would obey it or no? Had he been really constrained to observe it, his observation of it could no more have been called obedience, than the acts of brutes that have a kind of natural constraint upon them by the instinct of their nature, can be called obedience: in vain had God endowed a creature with so great and noble a principle as liberty. Had it been goodness in God after he had made a reasonable creature, to govern him in the same manner as he did brutes by a necessary instinct? It was the goodness of God
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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 surpass 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 all.* 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 language the apostle doth, ver. 33, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.*

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
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of her children ; the number of her profelytes 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 bring 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.* 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 strangling. 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

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.

Fourthly, 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*, i. e. such as became his goodness to bring forth into being, and rested in them more, as they were stamps of his goodness, than as they were marks of his power, or beams of his wisdom; and if all creatures were able to answer to this question, what that was which created them? The answer would be, almighty power, but employed by the motion of infinite goodness. All the varieties of creatures are so many apparitions of this goodness. Though God be one, yet he cannot appear as a God but in variety. As the greatness of power is not manifest but in variety of works, and an acute understanding not discovered, but in variety of reasonings; so an infinite goodness is not so apparent, as in variety of communications.

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 incomprehensibly rich in the possession of an unstained felicity. This creation was the first efflux

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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.

There is not one creature but hath a character of his goodness.—The whole world is a map to represent, and a herald to proclaim this perfection: It is as difficult not to see something of it in every creature with the eye of our minds, as it is not to see the beams of the shining sun with those of our bodies. *He is good to all*: 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 volume of thy book it is written of me*: in the volume of the book of the scripture it is written of me, and my goodness in redemption; so it may be said of God, in the volume of the book of the creature it is written of me, and my goodness in creation. Every creature is a page in this book, whose *line is gone through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world*. Though indeed the less goodness in some is obscured by the more resplendent goodness

goodness he hath imparted unto others: what an admirable piece of goodness is it to communicate life to a fly? How should we stand gazing upon it, till we turn our eye inwards, and view our own frame, which is much more ravishing?

But let us see the goodness of God in the creation of man.

In the being and nature of man.—God hath with a liberal hand conferred upon every creature the best being it was capable of in that station and order, and conducing to that end and use in the world he intended it for: but when you have run over all the measures of goodness God hath poured forth upon other creatures, you will find a greater fulness of it in the nature of man, whom he hath placed in a more sublime condition, and indued 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. Had it not been for divine goodness, this excellent creature had lain wrapt up in the abyss of nothing: or if he had called it out of nothing, there might have been less of skill, and less of goodness displayed in the forming of it, and a lesser kind of being imparted to it, than what he hath conferred.

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

earth in his nature, God gave him a participation with heaven in his spirit. A mere bodily being he hath given to the heavens, earth, elements; a vegetative life, or a life of growth, he hath vouchsafed to the plants of the ground: he hath stretched out his liberality more to animals and beasts by giving them sense. All these hath his goodness linked in man, being, life, sense, with a richer dole than any of those creatures have received in a rational, intellectual life, whereby he approacheth to the nature of angels. This some of the Jews understood. *God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.* 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.

2. The manifestation of this goodness in redemption.—The whole gospel is nothing but one entire mirror of divine goodness: the whole of redemption is wrapt up in that one expression of the angels song, Luke ii 14, *Good will towards men.* The angels sang but one song before, which is upon record, but the matter of it seems to be the wisdom of God chiefly in creation. Job xxxviii. 7, compared with Job ix. 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.

Goodness

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 reliver 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. 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. He would take the name he never expressed himself in before. He was Jehovah in regard of the truth of his promise; so he would be known of old: he is goodness in regard of the grandeur of his affection in the mission of his Son: and therefore he would be known by the name of love now in the days of the gospel.

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 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 it, *i. e.* of our actual redemption, but not of the redeeming purpose; the end is always in intention before the means. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*; the love of God to the world was first in intention and the order of nature, before the will of giving his Son to the world. His intention of saving was before the mission of a Saviour: so that this affection rose not from the merit of Christ, but the merit of Christ was

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 council and order of redemption. In this regard he calls God *his God* in the prophet, and in the evangelist; though he was big with affection for the accomplishment, yet he came not to do his own will, but the will of divine goodness: his own will it was too, but not principally as being the first wheel in motion, but subordinate to the eternal will of divine bounty. It was by the will of God that he came, and by his will he drank the dreggy cup of bitterness. Divine justice laid upon him the iniquity of us all, but divine goodness intended it for our rescue: divine goodness singled him out, and set him apart: divine goodness invited him to it: divine goodness commanded him to effect it, and put a law into his heart, to bias him in the performing of it: divine goodness sent him, and divine goodness moved justice to bruise him; and after his sacrifice, divine goodness accepted him, and carressed him for it. So earnest was it for our redemption, as to give out special and irreversibile orders: death was commanded to be endured by him for us, and life commanded to be imparted by him to us. 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 sponſion for the miſerable criminal. As Chriſt is the head of man, ſo *God is the head of Chriſt*; 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 further in any of his excellent perfections than this. It is ſuch a dole that cannot be tranſcended with a choicer: he is as it were come to the laſt mite of his treaſure. And though he could create millions of worlds for us, he cannot give a greater ſon to us. He could abound in the expreſſions of his power in new creations of worlds, which have not yet been ſeen, and in the luſtre of his wiſdom in more ſtately ſtructures; but if he ſhould frame as many worlds, as there are mites of duſt and matter in this, and make every one of them as bright and glorious as the ſun; though his power and wiſdom would be more ſignalized, yet his goodneſs could not, ſince he hath not a choicer gift to bleſs thoſe brighter worlds withal, than he hath conferred upon this. Nor can immense goodneſs contrive a richer means to conduct thoſe worlds to happineſs, than he hath both invented for this world,
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and presented it with. It cannot be imagined, that it can extend itself further, 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: so when he would ensure our happiness, he gives 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.

It is a greater gift than worlds, or all things purchased by him.—What was the gift but *the image of his person, and the brightness of his glory*? What was this gift, but one as rich as eternal blessedness could make him? What was the gift, but one that possessed the fulness of earth, and the more immense riches of heaven? It is a more valuable present, than if he presented us with thousands of worlds of angels and inferior creatures, because his person is incomparably greater, not only than all conceivable, but inconceivable creations: we are more obliged to him for it, than if he had made us angels of the highest rank in heaven, because it is a gift of more value than the whole angelical nature, because he is an infinite person; and therefore infinitely transcends whatsoever is finite, though of the highest dignity. The wounds of an almighty God for us
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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 founded so great and so good, as *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. Est aliquid in Christo formosius Servatore.* There is something in Christ more excellent and comely than the office of a Saviour; the greatness of his person is more excellent, than the salvation procured by his death: it was a greater gift than was bestowed upon innocent Adam, or the holy angels. In the creation, his goodness gave us creatures for our use: in our redemption, his goodness gives us what was dearest to him for our service; our sovereign in office to benefit us, as well as in a royalty to govern us.

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, 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; 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. He had but one Son in heaven or earth, one Son from an unviewable eternity, and that one Son he gave for a degenerate world; this Son he consecrated for evermore a priest. The word of the oath makes the Son; the peculiarity of his sonship heightens the goodness of the donor. It was no meaner a
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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 centered in him, which in parents would have been divided among a multitude of children: so then, as it was a testimony of the highest faith and obedience in *Abraham* to offer up his only begotten Son to God; so it was the triumph of divine goodness, to give so great, so dear a person for so little a thing as man; and for such a piece of nothing and vanity, as a sinful world.

3. And this Son given to rescue us by his death. —It was a gift to us; for our sakes he descended from his throne, and dwelt on earth; for our sakes he was made flesh, and infirm flesh; for our sakes he was made a curse, and scorched in the furnace of his Father's wrath; for our sakes he went naked, armed only with his own strength into the lists of that combat with the devils, that led us captive. Had he given him to be a leader for the conquest of some earthly enemies, it had been a great goodness to display his banners, and bring us under his conduct; but he sent him to lay down his life in the bitterest and most inglorious manner, and exposed him to a cursed death for our redemption from that dreadful curse which would have broken us to pieces, and irreparably have crushed us. He gave him to us, to suffer for us as a man, and redeem
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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; and eclipsed to brighten our sullied natures, and wounded that he might be a physician for our languishments: he was ordered to taste the bitter cup of death, that we might drink of the rivers of immortal life, and pleasures: to submit to the frailties of the human nature, that we might possess the glories of the divine: he was ordered to be a sufferer, that we might be no longer captives; and to pass through the fire of divine wrath, that he might purge our nature from the dross it had contracted. Thus was the righteous given for sin, the innocent for criminals, the glory of heaven for the dregs of earth, and the immense riches of a deity expended to re-stock 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 Redeemer, but for us as redeemed: divine goodness centered in him, both in his cross and in his crown; for it was for the *purging our sins he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*: 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. 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
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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, divine goodness gives whole God to us.—Whatsoever is great and excellent in the godhead, the Father gives us, by giving us his Son: the Creator gives himself to us in his Son Christ. In giving creatures to us, he gives the riches of earth; in giving himself to us, he gives the riches of heaven, which surmount all understanding: it is in this gift he becomes our God, and passeth over the title of all that he is for our use and benefit, that every attribute in the divine nature may be claimed by us; not to be imparted to us whereby we may be deified; but employed for our welfare, whereby we may be blessed. He gave himself in creation to us in the image of his holiness; but in redemption he gave himself in the image of his person: he would not only communicate the goodness without him, but bestow upon us the infinite goodness of his own nature; that that which was his own end and happiness, might be our end and happiness, *viz.* himself.

By giving his Son, he hath given himself; and in both gifts he hath given all things to us: the Creator of all things is eminently all things: *He hath given all things into the hands of his Son*, and by consequence given all things into the hands of his redeemed creatures, by giving them him to whom
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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.

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

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 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
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all those that were virtually in his loins. *Sin entered into the world by him, and death by sin, and passed upon all men*, 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 floodgates 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.

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 allurement? Could you expect that any perfection in God, should find a motive in this ungrateful apostate, to open a mouth for him, and be an advocate to support him, and bring him off from a just tribunal? or after divine goodness had begun to pity and plead for man, is it not wonderful that it should not discontinue the plea, after it found man's excuse to be as black as his crime; 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 compleat wickedness, inexcusable enmity, infamous rebellion, to design a Redeemer for him, and such a person as the Son of God to a fleshy
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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.

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 higher 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: 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 enjoined by his goodness, against the interest of his glory. Every rational creature had made himself a slave to those creatures over whom he had appointed a Lord; subjected himself as a servant to his inferior, and strutted as a superior against his

liberal

liberal sovereign, and by every sin rendered himself more a child of Satan, and enemy of God, and more worthy of the curses of the law, and the torments of hell: was it not now a mighty goodness that would surmount those high mountains of demerit, and elevate such creatures by the depression of his Son? Had we been possessed of the highest holiness, a reward had been the natural effect of goodness: it was not possible that God should be unkind to a righteous and innocent creature: his grace would have crowned that, which had been so agreeable to him: he had been a denier of himself, had he numbered innocent creatures in the rank of the miserable. But to be kind to an enemy: to run counter to the vastness of demerit in man, was a superlative goodness; a goodness triumphing above all the provocations of men, and pleas of justice. It was an abounding goodness of grace: *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.* It swelled above the heights of sin, and triumphed more than all his other attributes.

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 sollicitations he had submitted to: we had cast the diadem from our heads, and lost all our original excellency: we were lost to our own happiness, and lost to our Creator's service, when he was so kind as to send his Son to seek us, Matt. xviii. 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?

The impotence of man enhanceth this goodness—Our own eye did scarce pity us, and it was impossible for our own hands to relieve us; we were insensible of our misery, in love with our death; we courted our chains, and the noise of our fettering lusts were our music, *serving divers lusts and pleasures*. 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 that he could do to knock them off, and deliver himself; he was too much in love with the sink of sin, to leave wallowing in it, and under too powerful a hand, to cease frying in the flames of wrath. As the law could not be obeyed by man, after a corrupt principle had entered into him, so neither could justice be satisfied by him after his transgression. The sinner was indebted, but bankrupt; as he was unable to pay a mite of that obedience he owed to the precept, because of his enmity; so he was unable to satisfy what he owed to the penalty, because of his feebleness: he was as much without love to observe the one, as without strength to bear the other: he could not because of his enmity be subject to the law, or compensate for his sin, because he was without strength. 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

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: when he found out a Redeemer for our misery, he found out a strength for our impotency.

To conclude this: behold the goodness of God, when we had thus unhandsonely dealt with him; had nothing to allure his goodness, multitudes of provocations to incense him, were reduced to a condition as low as could be, fit to be the matter of his scoffs, and the sport of divine justice, and so weak that we could not repair our own ruins; then did he open a fountain of fresh goodness in the death of his Son, and sent forth such delightful streams, as in our original creation, we could never have tasted; not only overcame the resentments of a provoked justice, but magnified itself by our lowliness, 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.

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: and because he is of the same nature with them, he *is not ashamed to call them brethren*, Heb. ii. 11.

Our nature, which was infinitely distant from, and below the deity, now makes one person with the Son of God. What man sinfully aspired to, God hath graciously granted and more: man aspired to a likeness in knowledge, and God hath granted him an affinity in union. It had been astonishing goodness to angelize our natures, but in redemption divine goodness hath acted higher, in a sort to deify our natures. In creation our nature was exalted above other creatures on earth; in our redemption our nature is exalted above all the host of heaven: we were higher than the beasts as creatures, but *lower than the angels*; 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

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 seraphims and cherubims; and the person that wears it, is the head of the good angels, and the conqueror of the bad; the one are put under his feet, and the other commanded to adore him *that purged our sins in our nature:* 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.* It may truly be said, that man is God, which is infinitely more glorious for us, than if it could be said, man is an angel. If it were goodness to advance our innocent nature above other creatures, the advancement of our degenerate nature above angels deserves a higher title than mere goodness. It is a more gracious act, than if all men had been transformed into the pure spiritual nature of the loftiest cherubims.

The third thing is the goodness of God in his government.—That goodness that despised not their creation, doth not despise their conduct. The same goodness that was the head that framed them, is the helm that guides them; his goodness hovers over the whole frame, either to prevent any wild disorders unsuitable to his creating end, or to conduct

them to those ends which might illustrate his wisdom and goodness to his creatures. His goodness doth no less incline him to provide for them, than to frame them. It is the natural inclination of man to love what is purely the birth of his own strength or skill. He is fond of preserving his own inventions, as well as laborious in inventing them. It is the glory of a man to preserve them, as well as to produce them. God loves every thing which he hath made, which love could not be without a continued diffusiveness to them, suitable to the end for which he made them. It would be a vain goodness, if it did not interest itself in managing the world, as well as erecting it: without his government every thing in the world would jostle against one another: the beauty of it would be more defaced; it would be an unruly mass, a confused chaos rather than a comely world. If divine goodness respected it when it was nothing, it would much more respect it when it was something by the sole virtue of his power and 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 doth not necessitate his mercy, yet meeting with such an affection as mercy in his nature, is a moving object to excite it: as the repentance of Nineveh drew forth the exercise of his pity and preserving goodness. Certainly since God is good, he is bountiful, and if bountiful, he is provident. He would seem to envy and malign his creatures, if he did not provide for them, while he intends to use them: but infinite goodness cannot be affected with envy: for all envy implies a want of that good in ourselves, which we regard

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, Pf. cvii. 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 stript of that excellency it hath by creation.*

Fifthly, The Use.

If God be so good, how unworthy is the contempt or abuse of his goodness?

The contempt and abuse of divine goodness is frequent and common;—it began in the first ages of the world, and commenced a few moments after the creation; it hath not to this day diminished its affronts; Adam began the dance, and his posterity have followed him; the injury was directed against this, when he entertained the seducer's notion of God's being an envious deity, in not indulging such a knowledge, as he might have afforded him: *God doth know, that you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* The charge of envy is utterly inconsistent with pure goodness. What was the language of this notion so easily entertained by Adam, but that the tempter was better than God, and the nature of God as base and fordid as the nature of a devil? satan paints God with his own colours, represents

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* See more on Government in the discourse on his Power.

sents 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 mens' hearts with the same sentiments, and by the same means he murdered our first parents, he redoubles the stabs to his posterity. Every violation of the divine law is a contempt of God's goodness, as well as his sovereignty, because his laws are the products both of the one and the other. Goodness animates them while sovereignty enjoys them: God hath commanded nothing but what doth conduce to our happiness. All disobedience implies, that his law is a snare to entrap us, and make us miserable, and not an act of kindness, to render us happy, which is a disparagement to this perfection, as if he had commanded what would promote our misery, and prohibited what would conduce to our blessedness: to go far from him, and walk after vanity, is to charge him with our iniquity, and unrighteousness, baseness and cruelty in his commands; God implies it by his speech, *What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and walked after vanity?* As if like a tyrant he had consulted cruelty in the composition of them, and designed to feast himself with the blood and misery of his creatures. Every sin is in its own nature a denial of God to be the chiefest good and happiness, and implies that it is no great matter to lose him; it is a forsaking him as the fountain of life, and a preferring a cracked and empty cistern as the chief happiness before him. 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 creation, and to stop up the way of any further streams of it to his creatures.

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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 devil's; 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 phials of wrath, and we under a plenteous liberality; they malice him, because he inflicts on them what is hurtful, and we despise him, because he commands what is profitable, holy, and honorable in its own nature, though not in our esteem. They are not under those high obligations as we, they abuse his creating, and we his redeeming goodness: he never sent his Son to shed a drop of blood for their recovery, they can expect nothing but the torment of their persons, and the destruction of their works: but we abuse that goodness, that would rescue us since we are miserable,

miserable, as well as that righteousness which created us innocent. How base is it to use him so ill, that is not once or twice, but a daily, hourly benefactor to us; whose rain drops upon the earth for our food, and whose sun shines upon the earth for our pleasure as well as profit; such a benefactor as is the true proprietor of what we have, and thinks nothing too good for them, that think 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 our ourselves, to *despise the riches of his goodness, that are designed to lead us to repentance*, 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.

God's Dominion.

Pfalm ciii. 19.

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

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 feat of it. *He hath prepared his throne in the heavens.*

2. The extent of his empire. *His kingdom rules over all.*

This text in all the parts of it is a fit basis for a discourse upon the dominion of God, and the observation will be this.

Doctrine.—God is sovereign Lord and King, and exerciseth a dominion over the whole world both heaven and earth.

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

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. Psa. xxiv. 1, *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, the world, and all that dwell therein.* The earth with the riches and treasures in the bowels of it; the habitable world with every thing that moves upon it, are his; he hath the sole right, and what right soever any others have, is derived from him. In regard also of possession, Gen. xiv. 22, *The most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.* In respect of whom, man is not the proprietary nor possessor, but usufructuary at the will of this grand Lord.

In the prosecution of this,

1. I shall lay down some general propositions for the clearing and confirming it.

2. I shall shew wherein this right of dominion is founded.

3. What the nature of it is.

4. Wherein it consists; and how it is manifested.

First, 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

brawny arm, but in a sickly and infirm body. As knowledge and wisdom are distinguished; knowledge respects the matter, being, and nature of a thing; wisdom respects the harmony, order, and actual usefulness of a thing. Knowledge searcheth the nature of a thing, and wisdom employs that thing to its proper use. A man may have much knowledge, and little wisdom, so a man may have much strength, and little or no authority. A greater strength may be settled in the servant, but a greater authority resides in the master; strength is the natural vigor of a man. God hath an infinite strength, he hath a strength to bring to pass whatsoever he decrees; he acts without fainting and weakness, Isa. xl. 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 a power to make his commands be obeyed; or to punish men for the violation of them. His power is that whereby he subdues all creatures under him, his dominion is that, whereby he hath a right to subdue all creatures under him.

This dominion is a right of making what he pleases, of possessing what he made, of disposing of what he doth possess; whereas his power is an ability to make, what he hath a right to create, to hold what he doth possess, and to execute the manner, wherein he resolves to dispose of his creatures.

2. All the other attributes of God refer to this perfection of dominion.—They all bespeak him fit for it, and are discovered in the exercise of it, (which hath been manifested in the discourses of those attributes, we have passed through hitherto.) His goodness fits him for it, because he can never use his authority but for the good of the creatures, and
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conducting them to their true end. His wisdom can never be mistaken in the exercise of it; his power can accomplish the decrees, that flow from his absolute authority. What can be more rightful, than the placing authority in such an infinite goodness, that hath bowels to pity, as well as a sceptre to sway his subjects? that hath a mind to contrive, and a will to regulate his contrivances for his own glory, and his creatures good; and an arm of power to bring to pass, what he orders. Without this dominion, some perfections, as justice, and mercy, would lie in obscurity, and much of his wisdom would be shrouded from our sight and knowledge.

3. This of dominion, as well as that of power, hath been acknowledged by all.—The high priest was to wave the offering, or shake it to and fro, *Exod. xxix. 24*, which the Jews say, was customarily from east to west, and from north to south, the four quarters of the world, to signify God's sovereignty over all the parts of the world. And some of the heathens in their adorations turned their bodies to all quarters, to signify the extensive dominion of God throughout the whole earth. That dominion did of right pertain to the deity, was confest by the heathen in the name *Baal*, given to their idols, which signifies Lord; and was not a name of one idol, adored for a god, but common to all the eastern idols. God hath interwoven the notion of his sovereignty in the nature and constitution of man, in the noblest and most inward acts of his soul, in that faculty or act which is most necessary for him, in his converse in this world either with God or man. It is stamped upon the conscience of man, and flashes in his face in every act of self-judgment conscience passes upon a man. Every reflection of conscience implies an obligation of man to some law written in his heart, *Rom. ii. 15*. This law cannot be without a legislator, nor this legislator without a sovereign dominion; these are
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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. xi. 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 a lame and imperfect God) we must suppose him to have an entire dominion, without which he could never be able to manifest his justice. And without a supreme dominion, he could not manifest the supremacy, and infiniteness of his righteousness.

Secondly, Wherein the dominion of God is founded.

1. On the excellency of his nature.—Indeed a bare excellency of nature bespeaks a fitness for government, but doth not properly convey a right of government. Excellency speaks aptitude, not title: a subject may have more wisdom than the prince, and be fitter to hold the reins of government, but he hath not a title to royalty. A man of large capacity, and strong virtue, is fit to serve his country in parliament, but the election of the people conveys a title to him. Yet a strain of intellectual and moral abilities beyond others, is a foundation for dominion. And it is commonly seen that such eminences in men, though they do not invest them with a civil authority, or an authority of jurisdiction, yet they create a veneration in the minds of men; their virtue attracts reverence, and their advice is regarded as an oracle. Old men by their age, when stored with more wisdom and knowledge by reason of their long experience, acquire a kind of power over the younger in their dictates and 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. Psa. lxxxvi. 8. *Among the gods there is none like unto thee, neither are there any works like unto thy work. All nations shall come and worship before thee.* Though his benefits are great engagements to our obedience, and affection, yet his infinite majesty and perfection require the first place in our acknowledgements and adorations. Upon this account God claims it, Isa. lxvi. 9. *I am God, and there is none like me, I will do all my pleasure:* and the prophet Jeremy upon the same

same account acknowledgeth it. Jer. x. 6, 7, *Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is great in might: who would not fear thee, O King of nations? For to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as there is none like unto thee.* And this is a more noble title of dominion, it being an uncreated title, and more eminent than that of creation or preservation. This is the natural order, God hath placed in his creatures, that the more excellent should rule the inferior. He committed not the government of lower creatures to lions and tigers, that have a delight in blood, but no knowledge of virtue; but to man, who had an eminence in his nature above other creatures, and was formed with a perfect rectitude, and a height of reason to guide the reins over them. In man, the soul being of a more sublime nature, is set of right to rule over the body; the mind, the most excellent faculty of the soul, to rule over the other powers of it; and wisdom the most excellent habit of the mind, to guide and regulate that in its determinations; and when the body and sensitive appetite 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 him 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 hath, or to enter into a contest with him for a sufficiency to govern.

2. It is founded in his act of creation.—He is the sovereign Lord, as he is the almighty Creator. The relation of an entire Creator, induceth the relation of an absolute Lord; he that gives being, life, motion, that is the sole cause of the being of a thing, which was before nothing, that hath nothing to concur with him, nor to assist him, but by his sole power commands it to stand up into being, is the unquestionable lord and proprietor of that thing, that hath no dependance 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 xxxviii. his chief arguments are drawn from creation, and Psa. xcv. 3, 5, *The Lord is a great King above all gods, the sea is his and he made it.* And so the apostle in his sermon to the Athenians. *As he made the world and all things therein, he is styled Lord of heaven and earth,* Acts xvii. 24. His dominion also of property stands upon this basis, Psa. lxxxix. 7, *The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine, as for the world and the fulness thereof thou hast founded them.* 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. xlv. 21. The sovereignty of God naturally ariseth 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 hath

a natural dominion over us as creatures, before he hath 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 pilfer his own work from him. The work hath 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 hath an unquestionable dominion of propriety in it upon the score of justice. By the law of nations, the first finder of a country, is esteemed the rightful possessor, and lord of that country, and the first inventor of an art hath a right of exercising it. If a man hath a just claim of dominion over that thing, whose materials were not of his framing, but from only the addition of a new figure from his skill; as a limner over his picture, the cloth whereof he never made, nor the 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 hath a right to a piece of brass, or gold, by his purchase, but when by his engraving he hath formed

it into an excellent statue, there results an increase of his right upon the account of his artifice. God's creation of the matter of man gave him a right over man ; but his creation of him in so eminent an excellency, with reason to guide him, a clear eye of understanding to discern light from darkness, and truth from falsehood, a freedom of will to act accordingly, and an original righteousness as the varnish and beauty of all: here is the strongest foundation for a claim of authority over man, and the strongest obligation on man for subjection to God. If all those things had been past over to God by another hand, he could not be the supreme Lord, nor could have an absolute right to dispose of them at his pleasure: that would have been the invasion of another's right. Besides, creation is the only first discovery of his dominion. Before the world was framed there was nothing but God himself, and properly nothing is said to have dominion over itself; this is a relative attribute, reflecting on the works of God. He had a right of dominion in his nature from eternity, but before creation he was actually Lord only of a nullity: where there is nothing, it can have no relation; nothing is not the subject of possession, nor of dominion. There could be no exercise of this dominion without creation; what exercise can a sovereign have without subjects? Sovereignty speaks a relation to subjects; and none is properly a sovereign without subjects. To conclude, from hence doth result God's universal dominion: for being maker of all, he is the ruler of all. And his perpetual dominion: for as long as God continues in the relation of Creator, the right of his sovereignty as creator cannot be abolished.

3. As God is the final cause, or end of all, he is Lord of all.—The end hath a greater sovereignty in actions, than the actor hath itself: the actor hath a sovereignty over others in action, but the end for which any one works hath a sovereignty over the
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agent himself. A limner hath a sovereignty over the picture he is framing, or hath framed, but the end for which he framed it, either his profit he designed from it, or the honour and credit of skill he aimed at in it, hath a dominion over the limner himself. The end moves, and excites the artist to work, it spirits him in it, conducts him in his whole business, possesses his mind, and sits triumphant in him all the progress of his work; it is the first cause for which the whole work is wrought. Now God in his actual creation of all, is the sovereign end of all; *for thy pleasure they are, and were created*, Rev. iv. 11. *The Lord hath made all things for himself*, Prov. xvi. 4. Man indeed is the subordinate and immediate end of the lower creation; and therefore had the dominion over other creatures granted to him. But God being the ultimate and principal end, hath the sovereign and principal dominion; all things as much refer to him as the last end, as they flow from him as the first cause. So that as I said before, if the world had been compacted together by a jumbling chance without a wise hand, as some have foolishly imagined, none could have been an antagonist with God for the government of the world, but God in regard of the excellency of his nature would have been the rector of it, unless those atoms that had composed the world, had had an ability to govern it. Since there could be no universal end of all things but God, God only can claim an entire right to the government of it: for though man be the end of the lower creation, yet man is not the end of himself, and his own being; he is not the end of the creation of the supreme heavens; he is not able to govern them, they are out of his ken, and out of his reach. None fit in regard of the excellency of nature, to be the chief end of the whole world but God: and therefore none can have a right to the dominion of it but God. In this regard, God's dominion differs from the dominion of all earthly

potentates. All the subjects in creation were made for God as their end, so are not people for rulers, but rulers made for people for their protection, and the preservation of order in societies.

Thirdly, The nature of this dominion.

This dominion is independent.—His throne is in the heavens; the heavens depend not upon the earth, nor God upon his creatures. Since he is independent in regard of his essence, he is so in his dominion, which flows from the excellency and fulness of his essence. As he receives his essence from none, so he derives his dominion from none. All other dominion, except paternal authority, is rooted originally in the wills of men. The first title was the consent of the people, or the conquest of others by the help of those people that first consented. And in the exercise of it, earthly dominion depends upon assistance of the subjects, and the members being joined with the head, carry on the work of government, and prevent civil dissensions; in the support of it, it depends upon the subjects contributions, and taxes. The subjects in their strength are the arms, and in their purses the sinews of government. But God depends upon none in the foundation of his government; he is not a Lord by the votes of his vassals; nor is it successively handed to him by any predecessor, nor constituted by the power of a superior: nor forced he his way by war, and conquest, nor precariously attained it by suit or flattery, or bribing promises. He holds not the right of his empire from any other; he hath no superior to hand him to his throne, and settle him by commission. He is therefore called *King of Kings*, and *Lord of Lords*, having none above him. *A great King above all Gods*, Psa. xcv. 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

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 determine the creatures in all. His actions are not regulated by any law without him, but by a law within him, the law of his own nature. It is impossible he can have any rule without himself: because there is nothing superior to himself. Nor doth he depend upon any in the exercise of his government; he needs no servants in it; when he uses creatures, it is not out of want of their help, but for the manifestation of his wisdom and power. What he doth by his subjects, he can do by himself: *The government is upon his shoulders*, Isa. ix. 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. xv. 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.

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, thought none of the best, though one of the subtlest princes, accounted the title of Lord a reproach to him : since he was not absolute.

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 mens' guilt, and thrown the invading sin out of his creatures ? But in regard of his truth, pawned in his threatening, and in regard of his justice, which demanded satisfaction, he would not. Might not God by his absolute sovereignty, admit a man into his friendship, without giving him any grace ? but in regard of the incongruity of such an act to his wisdom and holiness, he will not. May he not, by his absolute power, refuse to accept a man, that desires to please him, and reject a purely innocent creature ? but in regard of his goodness and righteousness, he will not. Though innocence be amiable in its own nature, yet it is not necessary in regard of God's sovereignty, that he should love it ; but in regard of his goodness it is necessary, and he will never do otherwise. As God never acts to the utmost of his power, so he never exerts the utmost of his sovereignty :

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 had nothing of holiness, goodness, righteousness, or wisdom. If he *made the heavens in wisdom*, Psa. cxxxvi. 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.

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. Rom. xi. 33, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* 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
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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, not 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 favor 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? Rom. xi. 32, *He hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.* Though God had such an absolute right, to have annihilated the world, as soon as ever he had made it, yet how had this consisted with his wisdom, to have erected a creature after his own image one day, and despised it so much the next, as to cashier it from being? What wisdom had it been, to make a thing, only to destroy it? To repent of his work as soon as ever it came out of his hands, without any occasion offered by the creature. If God be supposed to be creator, he must be supposed to have an end in creation; what end can that be but himself and his own glory, the manifestation of the perfections of his nature? What perfection could have been
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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?

His sovereignty is managed according to the rule of righteousness. Worldly princes often fancy tyranny and oppression to be the chief marks of sovereignty, and think their sceptres not beautiful, till died in blood, nor the throne secure, till established upon slain carcasses. But *justice and judgment are the foundation of the throne* of God, Psa. lxxxix. 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 x. 19. But God makes not so much might, as right the support of his. He sits on a *throne of holiness*, Psa. xlvii. 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 unfearchable wisdom of it, Rom. xi. 33. *In all his ways he is righteous*, Psa. cxlv. 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 an absolute sovereign, he is not an arbitrary governor; *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* Gen. xviii. 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
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the earth. The heathen poets represented their chief god, Jupiter with Themis, or right, sitting by him upon his throne in all his orders. God cannot by his absolute sovereignty command some things: because they are directly against unchangeable righteousness as to command a creature to hate, or blaspheme the Creator, not to own him, nor praise him. It would be a manifest unrighteousness, to order the creature not to own him, upon whom he depends both in its being and well being: this would be against that natural duty, which is indispensibly 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,

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and the inward dictates of their own consciences, Isa. v. 3, *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge I pray you, between me and my vineyard.* Though God be the great sovereign of the world, yet he acts not in a way of absolute sovereignty.

He rules by law, he is a Lawgiver, as well as a King, Isa. xxxiii. 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 favors 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 most, it is but a voluntary bounding his dominion by the law of his own holiness.

His sovereignty is managed according to the rule of goodness.—Some potentates there have been in the world, that have loved to suck the blood, and drink the tears of their subjects; that would rule more by fear than love, like Clearchus the tyrant of 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. iv. 16. A throne encircled with a rainbow. Rev. iv. 23, *In sight like to an emerald.* 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 transcendant over us, yet the majesty of his government is tempered with an unspeakable goodness. He acts
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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 and chearful 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 dispose of his creature, as the potter of his vessel, and might by his absolute sovereignty inflict upon an innocent an eternal torment, yet his goodness will never permit him to use this sovereign right to the hurt of a creature, that deserves it not. If God should cast an innocent creature into the furnace of his wrath, who can question him? But who can think, that his goodness will do so? since that is as infinite as his authority? As not to punish the sinner, would be a denial of his justice, so to torment an innocent, would be a denial of his goodness. A man hath an absolute power over his beast, and may take away his life, and put him to a great deal of pain; but that moral virtue of pity and tenderness would not permit him to use this right, but when it conduceth to some greater good, than that can be evil; either for the good of man which is the end of the creature, or for the good of the poor beast itself, to rid him of a greater misery: None but a savage nature, a disposition to be abhorred, would torture a poor beast merely for his pleasure. It is as much against the nature of God, to punish one eternally, that hath not deserved it, as it is to deny himself, and act any thing foolishly, and unbeseeming his other perfections, which
render

render him majestic, and adorable. To afflict an innocent creature for his own good, or for the good of the world, as in the case of the Redeemer, is so far from being against goodness, that it is the highest testimony of his tender bowels to the sons of men. God, though he be mighty, *withdraws not his eyes*, i. e. his tender respect *from the righteous*, Job xxxiv. 5, 7, 8, 9, 10. And if he bind them in fetters, it is to shew them their transgressions, and open their ear to discipline, and renewing commands in a more sensible strain, to depart from iniquity. What was said of Fabritius, “you may as soon remove the sun from its course, as Fabritius from his honesty;” may be of God, you may as soon dash in pieces his throne, as separate his goodness from his sovereignty.

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. i. 17. and the same word is so translated, Heb. i. 2, *By whom also he made the worlds*: the same word is rendered worlds, Heb. xi. 3, *The worlds were framed by the word of God*. God is King of ages or worlds, of the invisible world, and the sensible, of all from the beginning of their creation, of whatsoever is measured by a time. It extends over angels and devils, over wicked and good, over rational and irrational creatures; all things bow down under his hand, nothing can be exempted from him, because there is nothing but was extracted by him from nothing into being. All things essentially depend upon him, and therefore must be essentially subject to him: the extent of his dominion flows from the perfection of his essence; since his essence is unlimited, his royalty cannot be restrained. His authority is as void of any imperfection, as his essence is; it reaches out to all points of the heaven above, and the earth below. Other princes reign in a spot of ground. Every worldly potentate hath the confines of his
 dominion.

dominions. The Pyrean Mountains divide France from Spain, and the Alps, Italy from France. None are called kings absolutely, but kings of this or that place. But God is *the King*, the spacious firmament limits not his dominion. If we could suppose him bounded by any place in regard of his presence, yet he could never be out of his own dominion; whatsoever he looks upon, wheresoever he were, would be under his rule. Earthly kings may step out of their own country into the territory of a neighbouring 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 thrones in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.*

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. xxxii. 1, 2, when he met the angels of God, he calls them *the host of God*; and the evangelist long after calls them so, Luke ii. 13, *A multitude of the heavenly host praising God*, and all this host he commands. Isa. xlv. 12, *My hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded*. He employs them all in his service, and when he issues out his orders to them, to do this or that, he finds no resistance of his will.

And the inanimate creatures in heaven are at his beck, they are his armies in heaven, disposed in an excellent order in their several ranks, Psa. cxlvii. 4, *He calls the stars by name*; they render a due obedience to him, as servants to their master; when he singles them out, and calls them by name, to do some special service, he calls them out to their several offices, as the general of an army appoints the station of every regiment in a battalia.

Or

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. v. 20; and the sun holds in its reins, and stands stone still, to light Joshua to a complete victory, Josh. x. 12. They are all marshalled in their ranks, to receive his word of command, and fight in close order, as being desirous to have a share in the ruin of the enemies of their Sovereign. And those creatures which mount up from the earth, and take their place in the lower heavens, vapors whereof hail and snow are formed, are part of the army, and do not only receive, but fulfil his word of command, Psa. cxlviii. 8. These are his stores and magazines of judgment against a time of trouble, and *a day of battle and war*, Job xxxviii. 22, 23. The sovereignty of God is visible in all their motions, in their going and returning. If he says go, they go, if he says come, they come, if he says do this, they gird up their loins, and stand stiff to their duty.

The hell of devils belong to his authority.—They have cast themselves out of the arms of his grace into the furnace of his justice; they have by their revolt forfeited the treasure of his goodness, but cannot exempt themselves from the sceptre of his dominion; when they would not own him as a Lord Father, they are under him as 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 in-

struments of vengeance, towards the godly, as in the case of Job, as an instrument of kindness for the manifestation of his sincerity, against the intention of that malicious executioner. Though the devils are the executioners of his justice, it is not by their own authority, but God's; as those that are employed either to rack or execute a malefactor, are subjects to the prince, not only in the quality of men, but in the execution of their function. The devil by drawing men to sin, acquires no right to himself over the sinner: for man by sin offends not the devil, but God; and becomes guilty of punishment under God. When therefore the devil is used by God for the punishment of any, it is an act of his sovereignty for the manifestation of the order of his justice. And as most nations use the vilest persons in offices of execution, so doth God those vile spirits. He doth not ordinarily use the good angels in those offices of vengeance, but in the preservation of his people. When he would solely punish, he employs evil angels, Psa. lxxviii. 49; a troop of devils. His sovereignty is extended over the deceiver and the deceived, Job. xii. 16; over both the malefactor and the executioner, the devil and his prisoner. He useth the natural malice of the devils for his own just ends, and by his sovereign authority orders them to be the executioners of his judgments upon their own vassals, as well as sometimes inflictors of punishments upon his own servants.

The earth of men, and other creatures belong to his authority.—Psa. xlvii. 7. God is King of all the earth, and rules to the ends of it, Psa. lix. 13. Ancient atheists confined God's dominion to the heavenly orbs, and bounded it within the circuit of the celestial sphere, Job xxii. 14, *He walks in the circuit of heaven*, i. e. he exerciseth his dominion only there. *Pedumpositio* was the sign of the possession of a piece of land, and the dominion of the possessor

possessor of it; and land was resigned by such a ceremony, as now by the delivery of a twig or turf.

Fourthly, Wherein this dominion and sovereignty consists, and how it is manifested.

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*, Jam. ii. 8, it being the first and clearest manifestation of sovereignty; as the power of legislation is of the authority of a prince. Both are joined together in Isa. xxxiii. 22, *The Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our king*. 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 mens moral subjection to him, and dependance on him. His sovereignty doth not appear so much in his promises as his precepts: a man's power over another is not discovered by promising: for a promise doth not suppose the promiser either superior or inferior to the person, to whom the promise is made. It is not an exercising authority over another, but over a man's self. No man forceth another to the acceptance of his promise, but only proposeth, and encourageth to an embracing of it. But commanding supposeth always an authority in the person giving the precept. It obligeth the person, to whom the command is directed. A promise obligeth the person by whom the promise is made. God by his command binds the creature, by his promise he binds himself. He stoops below his sovereignty, to lay obligations upon his own majesty. By a precept he binds the creature, by a promise he encourageth the creature to an observance of his precept. What laws God makes, man is bound by virtue of his creation to observe; that

respects the sovereignty of God. What promises God makes, man is bound to believe, but that respects the faithfulness of God. God manifested his dominion more to the Jews than to any other people in the world; he was their 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 in this regard will be manifest in the supremacy of it. The sole power of making laws doth originally reside in him. Jam. iv. 12, *There is one Law-giver, who is able to save, and to destroy.* By his own law he judges of the eternal states of men, and no law of man is obligatory, but as it is agreeable to the laws of this supreme 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. viii. 15: their legislative power, which is a prime flower of their sovereignty, is derived from him also. And the apostle resolves it into this original, which he orders us, to be *subject to the higher powers not only for wrath but for conscience sake*, Rom. xiii. 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 heathen, pretended their laws to be received from some deity, or supernatural power, by special revelation; now
whether

whether they did this seriously, acknowledging themselves this part of the dominion of God: (for it is certain, that whatsoever just orders were issued out by princes in the world, was by the secret influence of God upon their spirits. Prov. viii. 15, *By me princes decree justice*, by the secret conduct of divine wisdom) or whether they pretended it as a publick 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 notion, that God was the great law-giver of the world. The first founders of their societies could never else have gained upon them by such a pretence. There was always a revelation of a law from the mouth of God in every age: the exhortation of Eliphaz to Job, Job xxii. 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.

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 xxxviii. 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. ii. 14. Every son of Adam at his coming into the world, brings with him a law in his nature, and when reason clears itself up from the clouds of sense, he can make some difference between good and evil; discern something of fit and just. Every man finds a law within him, that checks him, if he offends it.

None are without a legal indictment, and a legal executioner within them; God or none was the author of this as a sovereign Lord, in establishing a law in man at the same time, wherein as an almighty Creator he imparted a being. This law proceeds from God's general power of governing, as he is the author of nature, and binds not barely as it is the reason of man, but by the authority of God, as it is a law engraven on his conscience. And no doubt but a law was given to the angels, God did not govern those intellectual creatures as he doth brutes, and in a way inferior to his rule of man. Some sinned, all might have sinned in regard 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.

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

but as they are co-incident 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 xii. 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 rase out the law, God had stamped upon it. They cannot put a *supersedeas* to the writ of conscience, or stop its mouth with a *noli prosequi*. They can make no addition by their authority, to bind it; it is a flower in the crown of divine sovereignty only.

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*, Psa. xcvi. 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*,

Psa. ix. 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*, Psa. lviii. 9, 11. He reduceth the creature by the lash of his judgments, that would not acknowledge his authority in his precepts. Those sins which disown his government in the heart and conscience, as pride, inward blasphemy, &c. he hath reserved a time hereafter to reckon for. He doth not presently shoot his arrows into the marrow of every delinquent, but those sins which traduce his government of the world, and tear up the foundations of human converse, and a publick 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.

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 a Judge trying the delinquents, and adjudging the offenders, to be *reserved in chains of darkness* till the final execution, Jude 6; and at the same time probably he confirmed the good ones in their obedience by grace. So the first discovery of his dominion to man, was the giving him a precept; the next was the inflicting a punishment for the breach of it. He summons Adam to the bar, indicts him for his crime, finds him guilty by his own confession, and passeth sentence on him, according to the rule he had before acquainted him with.

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The means whereby he punisheth shews his dominion.—Sometimes he musters up hail and mildew; sometimes he sends regiments of wild beasts; so he threatens Israel, Levit. xxvi. 22; sometimes he sends out a party of angels, to beat up the quarters of men, and make a carnage among them, 2 Kings xix. 35. Sometimes he mounts his thundering battery, and shoots forth his ammunition from the clouds; as against the Philistines, 1 Sam. vii. 10. Sometimes he sends the slightest creatures to shame the pride, and punish the sin of man; as lice, frogs, locusts; as upon the Egyptians, Exod. viii. ix. x.

This dominion is manifested by God as a proprietor and lord of his creatures and his own goods.

And this is evident in the choice of some persons from eternity.—He hath set apart some from eternity, wherein he will display the invincible efficacy of his grace, and thereby infallibly bring them to the fruition of glory. Eph. i. 4, 5, *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* Why doth he write some names in the book of life, and leave out others? why doth he enrol some, whom he intends to make denizens of heaven, and refuse to put others in his register? the apostle tells us, it is the pleasure of his will. You may render a reason for many of God's actions, till you come to this, the top and foundation of all; and under what head of reason can man reduce this act but to that of his royal prerogative? why doth God save some, and condemn others at last? because of the faith of the one, and unbelief of the other. Why do some men believe? because God hath not only given them the means of grace, but accompanied those means with the efficacy of his Spirit. Why did God accompany those means

means with the efficacy of his Spirit in some, and not in others? because he had decreed by grace to prepare them for glory. But why did he decree, or choose some, and not others? Into what will you resolve this but into his sovereign pleasure? Salvation and condemnation at the last upshot, are acts of God as the judge conformable to his own law of giving life to believers, and inflicting death upon unbelievers; for those a reason may be rendered; but the choice of some and preterition of others, is an act of God as he is a sovereign monarch, before any law was actually transgressed, because not actually given. When a prince redeems a rebel, he acts as a judge according to law; but when he calls some out, to pardon, he acts as a sovereign by a prerogative above law; into this the apostle resolves it, Rom. ix. 13, 15, when he speaks of God's loving Jacob and hating Esau, and that before they had done either good or evil: it is *because God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion.*

God's Patience.

Nahum i. 3.

THE LORD IS SLOW TO ANGER, AND GREAT IN POWER, AND WILL NOT AT ALL ACQUIT THE WICKED: THE LORD HATH HIS WAY IN THE WHIRLWIND, AND IN THE STORM, AND THE CLOUDS ARE THE DUST OF HIS FEET.

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 in the world. He suffers no grief by mens 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*

their heart with food and gladness, Acts xvi. 17. The heathens took notice of it, and signified it, by feigning their god Saturn to be bound a whole year in a soft cord, a cord of wool, and expressed it by this proverb, “The mills of the gods grind slowly;” *i. e.* God doth not use men with that severity that they deserve: the mills being usually turned by criminals, condemned to that work. This in scripture is frequently expressed by a slowness to anger, Psa. ciii. 8. sometimes by long-suffering, which is a patience with duration, Psa. cxlv. 8. and Joel ii. 13. He is slow to anger, he takes not the first occasions of a provocation; he is long-suffering, Rom. ix. 22, and Psa. lxxxvi. 15. he forbears punishment upon many occasions offered him. It is long before he consents to give fire to his wrath, and shoot out his thunderbolts; sin hath a loud cry, but God seems to stop his ears, not to hear the clamor it raises, and the charge it presents. He keeps his sword a long time in the sheath; one calls the patience of God, the sheath of his sword, upon those words, Ezek. xxi. 3, *I will draw forth my sword out of his sheath.* This is one remarkable letter in the name of God, he himself proclaims it; Exod. xxxiv. 6, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful, gracious and long suffering.* And Moses pleads it in the behalf of the people, Num. xiv. 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 express’d by other phrases, as keeping silence; Psa. l. 21, *These things hast thou done,*

done, and I kept silence; it signifies to behave oneself as a deaf or dumb man. I did not fly in thy face, as some do with great noise, upon a light provocation, as if their life, honour, and 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 express'd by *not laying folly to men*, Job xxiv. 12. Men groan under the oppressions of others, yet God lays not folly to them, *i. e.* to the oppressors, God suffers them to go on with impunity. He doth not deliver his people, because he would try them, and takes not revenge upon the unrighteous, because in patience he doth bear with them. Patience is the life of his providence in this world. He chargeth not men with their crimes here, but reserves them upon impenitency for another trial. This attribute is so great a one, that it is signally called by the name of perfection, Matt. v. 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 in the divine nature, and worthy of imitation.

In the prosecution of this, let us consider,

1. The nature of this patience.
2. Wherein it is manifested.
3. Why God doth exercise so much patience.
4. The use.

First, The nature of this patience. 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,
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ness, the greater the mildness. Who so holy as Christ, and who so meek? God's slowness to anger is a branch, or slip from his mercy, Psa. cxlv. 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. i. 16. As slowness to anger springs from goodness, so it makes mercy the but, and mark of its operations; Isa. xxx. 18, *He waits that he may be gracious*; goodness sets God upon the exercise of patience, and patience sets many a sinner on running into the arms of mercy. That mercy which makes God ready to embrace returning sinners, makes him willing to bear with them in their sins, and wait their return.

It differs also from goodness, in regard of the object. The object of goodness is every creature, angels, men, all inferior creatures, to the lowest worm that crawls upon the ground. The object of patience is primarily man, and secondarily, those creatures that respect mens 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

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 compleat 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 of 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*, 2 Pet. ii. 4, *but delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*, i. e. he had no patience for them: for patience is properly a temporary sparing a person, with a waiting 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

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.

Since it is a part of goodness and mercy, it is not an insensible patience.—What is the fruit of pure goodness, cannot be from a weakness of resentment; he is slow to anger; the prophet doth not say, he is incapable of anger, or cannot discern what is a real object of anger; it implies, that he doth consider every provocation, but he is not hasty to discharge his arrows upon the offenders; he sees all, while he bears with them: his omniscience excludes any ignorance; he cannot but see every wrong; every aggravation in that wrong, every step and motion from the beginning to the completing it: for he knows all our thoughts; he sees the sin, and the sinner at the same time; the sin with an eye of abhorrency, and the sinner with an eye of pity. His eye is upon their iniquities, and his hatred edged against them; while he stands with arms open, waiting a penitent return. When he publisheth his patience in his keeping silence, he publisheth also his resolution, to set in order before their eyes. Psa. l. 21. *I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.* Think me not such a piece of phlegm and so dull as not to resent your insolencies; 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

to loath 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, Psa. xliv. 23, *Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?* we must conclude him an inapprehensive God, before we can conclude him an insensible God. As his delaying his promise, is not slackness to his people, 2 Pet. iii. 9, so his deferring of punishment, is not from a stupidity, under the affronts offered him.

Secondly, How this patience or slowness to anger is manifested.

1. To our first parents.—His slowness to anger was evidenced, in not directing his artillery against them, when they first attempted to rebel. He might have struck them dead, when they began to bite at the temptation, and were inclinable to a surrender; for it was a degree of sinning, and a breach of loyalty, as well, though not so much as the consummating act. God might have given way to the floods of his wrath at the first spring of man's aspiring thoughts, when the monstrous motion of being as God began to be curdled in his heart; but he took no notice of any of their embryo sins, till they came to a ripeness, and started out of the womb of their minds, into the open air; and after he had brought his sin to perfection, God did not presently send that death upon him, which he had merited, but continued his life to the space of 930 years, Gen. v. 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 rase 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 effecting an equality with him, yet God continued him with a sufficiency for his content, after he turned

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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 used the devils. He added days and years to him, after he had deserved death, and hath for this 5000 years continued the propagation of mankind, and derived from his loins an innumerable posterity, and hath crowned multitudes of them with hoary heads; he might have extinguished human race at the first, but since he hath preserved it till this day, it must be interpreted nothing else, but the effect of an admirable patience.

His slowness to anger is manifest to the Gentiles.—What they were, we need no other witness than the apostle Paul, who sums up many of their crimes, Rom. i. 29, 30, 31, 32. He doth preface the catalogue with a comprehensive expression, *being filled with all unrighteousness*; and concludes it with a dreadful aggravation; *they not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them*. They were so soaked and naturalized in wickedness, that they had no delight and found no sweetness in any thing else, but what was in itself abominable; all of them were plunged into 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 stopt the course of their generations,
nor

nor tare out all those relicks 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 xvii. 30, their ignorant idolatry: for that it refers to, ver. 29, *They thought the godhead was like to gold or silver, or stone engraved by art, and man's device*; overlooking them; he demeaned himself so, as if he did not take notice of them. He winked as if he did not see them, and would not deal so severely with them: the eye of his justice seemed to wink, in not calling them to an account for their sins.

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. xxxii. 31. From the days of Solomon, say some, which is too much a curtailing of the text, as though their provocations had taken date no higher than from the time of Solomon's rearing the temple, and beautifying the city, whereby it seemed to be a new building. They began more early, they scarce discontinued their revolting from God; they were a *grief to him forty years in the wilderness*, Psa. xcv. 10, *Yet he suffered their manners*, Acts xiii. 18, he bore with their ill behaviour and sauciness towards him; and no sooner was Joshua's head laid, and the elders that were their conductors, gathered to their fathers, but the next generation forsook God, and smutted themselves with the idolatry of the nations, Judg. ii. 7, 10, 11. And when he punished them by prospering the arms of their enemies against them, they were no sooner delivered upon their cry and humiliation, but they began a new scene of idolatry.

And though he brought upon them the power of the Babylonian empire, and laid chains upon them, to bring them to their right mind. And at seventy years end he struck off their chains, by altering the whole posture of affairs in that part of the world for their sakes; overturning one empire, and settling another for their restoration to their antient city. And though they did not after disown him for their God, and set up Baal in his throne, yet they multiplied foolish traditions, whereby they impaired the authority of the law; yet he sustained them with a wonderful patience, and preferred them before all other people in the first offers of the gospel; and after they had outraged not only his servants, the prophets, but his Son, the Redeemer, yet he did not forsake them, but employed his apostles to solicit them, and publish among them the doctrine of salvation. So that his treating this people, might well be called much long suffering, it being above 1500 years, wherein he bore with them, or mildly punished them, far less than their deserts. Their coming out of Egypt being about the year of the world 2450, and their final destruction as a commonwealth, not till about forty years after the death of Christ; and all this time 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 in his giving warnings of judgments, before he orders them to go forth.—He doth not punish in a passion, and hastily; he speaks before he strikes, and speaks that he may not strike. Wrath is published, before it is executed, and that a long time; 120 years advertisement was given to a debauched world, before the heavens were opened, to spout down a deluge

deluge upon them. He will not be accused of coming unawares upon a people; he inflicts nothing, but what he foretold either immediately to the people that provoke him, or anciently to them that have been their forerunners in the same provocation. Hos. vii. 12, *I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.* Many of the leaves of the old testament are full of those presages and warnings of approaching judgment; these make up a great part of the volume in various editions, according to the state of the several provoking times. Warnings are given to those people that are most abominable in his sight; Zeph. ii. 1, 2, *Gather yourselves together, yea gather together, O nation, not desired; it is a meiosis.* O nation abhorred, before the decree bring forth. He sends his heralds, before he sends his armies; he summons them by the voice of his prophets, before he confounds them by the voice of his thunders. When a parley is beaten, a white flag of peace is hung out, before a black flag of fury is set up. He seldom cuts down men by his judgments, before he hath *brewed them by his prophets*, Hos. vi. 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 i. 1; the storm from Chaldea by Jeremy; 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 lightening before thunder, are messengers to tell us of a succeeding clap.

He doth often give warning of judgments.—He comes not to extremity, till he hath often shaken the rod over men; he thunders often, before he crusheth them with his thunderbolt; he doth not till after the first and second admonition punish a rebel, as he would have us reject a heretic. *He speaks once, yea twice*, Job xxxiii. 14, *and man perceives it not*; he sends one message after another, and waits the success of many messages, before he strikes. Eight prophets were ordered to acquaint the old world with approaching judgment: 2 Pet. ii. 5. He saved Noah the eighth person, *a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly*; called the eighth in respect of his preaching, not in regard of his preservation; he was the eighth preacher, in order from the beginning of the world, that 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 Enos the son of Seth the first; grounding it upon Gen. iv. 26, *Then began men to call on the name of the Lord*. Heb *Then it was began to call in the name of the Lord*. 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 signifies to preach, or to call upon men by preaching, Prov. i. 21, *wisdom crieth*, or preaches; and if this be so, as it is very probable, it is easy to reckon him the eighth preacher, by numbering the successive heads of the generations, Gen. 5; beginning at Enos the first preacher of righteousness. So many there were before God choaked 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
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one of Israel, Jeroboam the son of Joash, Hof. i. 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, which 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 foretel the destruction of the ten tribes, and to call them to repentance: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Jonah; and though we have nothing of Jonah's prophecy in this concern of Israel, yet that he lived in the time of the same Jeroboam, and prophesied things, which are not upon record in the book of Jonah, is clear; 2 Kings xiv. 25. And besides those, Isaiah prophesied also in the reign of the same kings as Hosea did; Isa. i. 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, Mat. xxii. 3, 4, 7.

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.* Lament. iii. 33. Hebr. *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. vi. 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. iii. 8. and that in the cool of the day, a time when men tired in the day, are unwilling to engage in a hard employment. His exercising judgment, is a *coming out of his place*, Isa. xxvi. 21. Micah i. 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. xix. 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. ix. 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 shew God's unwillingness to punish, imagine that hell was created the second day; because that day's work is not pronounced good by God, as all the other days works are, Gen. i. 8.

When God doth punish, he doth it with some regret.—When he hurls down his thunders, he seems to do it with a backward hand; because with an unwilling heart. He created, saith Chrysostom, the world in six days, but was seven days in destroying one city, Jericho, which he had before devoted to be rased to the ground. What is the
reason

reason, saith he, that God is so quick to build up, but slow to pull down? His goodness excites his power to the one, but is not earnest to persuade him to the other. When he comes to strike, he doth it with a sigh or groan, Isa. i. 24, *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.* Ah! a note of grief. So Hos. vi. 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 doth it with a conflict in himself. Hosea xi. 8, *How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?* As if there were a pull-back in his own bowels, he solemnizeth their approaching funeral with a hearty groan; and takes his farewell of the dying malefactor with a pang in himself. How often in former times when he had signed a warrant for their execution, did he call it back? Psa. lxxvii. 38, *Many a time turned he his anger away:* many a time he recalled, or ordered his anger to return again, as the word signifies, as if he were irresolute what to do. He recalled it, as a man doth his servant several times, when he is sending him upon an unwelcome message; or as a tender hearted prince wavers and trembles, when he is to sign a writ for the death of a rebel, that hath been before his favorite, as if when he had signed the writ, he blotted out his name again, and flung away the pen. And his
method

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 intercedeth 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 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, Psa. lxxiii. 3, 4, 5. He doth not only continue their lives, but sends out fresh beams of his goodness upon them, and calls them by his blessings, that they may acknowledge their own fault, and his bounty, which he is not obliged to by any gratitude, he meets with from them, but by the riches of his own patient nature: for he finds the unthankfulness of men, as great as his benefits to them. He doth not only continue his outward mercies, while we continue our sins, but sometimes gives fresh benefits after new provocations: that if possible he might excite an ingenuity in men. When Israel at the Red Sea flung dirt in the face of God, by quarrelling with his servant Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, and mis-judging God in his
design

design of deliverance, and were ready to submit themselves to their former oppressors, *Exod. xiv. 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.

All this is more manifest, if we consider the provocations he hath.—Wherein his slowness to anger infinitely transcends the patience of any creature; nay the spirits of all the angels and glorified saints in heaven, would be too narrow to bear the sins of the world for one day; nay not so much as the sins of churches, which is a little spot in the whole world: it is because he is the Lord, one of an infinite power over himself, that not only the whole mass of the rebellious world, but of the sons of Jacob, (either considered as a church and nation, springing from the loins of Jacob, or considered as the regenerate part of the world, sometimes called the seed of Jacob,) are not consumed, *Mal. iii. 6*. A Jonah was angry with God, for recalling his anger from a sinful people: had God committed the
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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, Rev. vi. 10, *How long, Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood, on them that dwell on the earth?* 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 earth. Methinks Moses intimates this; for as soon as God had passed by proclaiming his name gracious and long-suffering; as soon as ever Moses had paid his adoration, he falls a praying that God would go with the Israelites, Exod. xxxiv. 3, 9, *For it is a stiff-necked people*; what an argument is here for God to go along with them? He might rather, since he had heard him just before say, he would *by no means clear the guilty*, desire God to stand further off from them, for fear the fire of his wrath should burst out from him, to burn them as he did the Sodomites: but he considers, that as none but God had such anger to destroy them, so none but God had such a patience to bear with them; it is as much as if he should have said, Lord! if thou shouldest send the most tender-hearted angel in heaven to have the guidance of this people, they would be a lost people; a period will quickly be set to their lives; no created strength can restrain its power from crushing such a stiff-necked people; flesh and blood cannot bear them, nor any created spirit of a greater might.

Consider

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 flight 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 doth 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. i. 16. How few duties of a perfectly right stamp are performed? What unworthy considerations mix themselves like
drofs,

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 imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man was only evil, and that continually?* Gen. vi. 5. Was not the new world as chargeable with it as the old? Certainly it was, Gen. viii. 21. And it is of as much force this very minute as it was then; how many are the sins against knowledge, as well as those of ignorance; presumptuous sins, as well as those of infirmity? How numerous those of omission and commission? It is above the reach of any man's understanding to conceive all the blasphemies, oaths, thefts, adulteries, murders, oppressions, contempt of religion, the open idolatries of Turks and Heathens, the more spiritual and refined idolatries of others. Add to those the ingratitude of them 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, and all the members of the body instruments in the acting the unrighteousness of it; every one of these faculties bestowed upon men by him, are armed against him in every act; and in every employment of them there is a distinct provocation, though centered in one sinful end and object. What are the offences all the men of the world receive from their fellow-creatures, to the injuries God receives from men, but as a small dust of the earth to the whole

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 in the world, ever since it began. The Gentiles were described by the apostle, Rom i. 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

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. lxxv. 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 partook of the riches of it.

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, filed 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 *much long-suffering*, Rom. ix. 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 which is vilified, and the nature of the offence that doth disparage him. He is solicited by his justice, directed by his omniscience, and armed with judgments to vindicate himself—but his arm is restrained by patience. To conclude, no indignity

nity is hid from him, no iniquity is beloved by him; the hatred of their sinfulness is infinite, and the knowledge of the malice is exact. The subsisting of the world under such weighty provocations, so numerous, so long time, and with his full sense of every one of them, is an evidence of such a forbearance and long-suffering, that the addition of riches which the apostle puts to it, Rom. ii. 4, labours with an insufficiency clearly to display it.

Thirdly, Why God doth exercise so much patience.

To shew 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 sometimes. 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,* Psa. xix. 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, Rom. x. 18, *Have they not heard the word of God? yes, verily their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.* Redeeming grace could not be spelled out by them in a clear notion, but yet they did declare that which is the foundation of gospel mercy. Were not God patient there were no room for a gospel mercy, so that the heavens declare the gospel, not formally but fundamentally, in declaring the long-suffering of God, without which no gospel had been framed, or could have been expected. They could not but read in those things 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,

was, that God was placable: since he behaved himself more as a tender friend, that had no mind to be at war with them, than an enraged enemy. The good things which he gave them, and the patience whereby he spared them, were no arguments of an implacable disposition: and therefore of a disposition willing to be appeased. This is clearly the design of the apostle's arguing with the Lystrians when they would have offered sacrifices to Paul, Acts xiv. 17, *When God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, he did not leave himself without witnesses, giving rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons.* What were those witnesses of? Not only of the being of a God, by their readiness to sacrifice to those that were not gods, only supposed to be so in their false imaginations; but witnesses to the tenderness of God, that he had no mind to be severe with his creatures: but would allure them by ways of goodness. Had not God's patience tended to this end, to bring the world under another dispensation, the apostle's arguing from it had not been suitable to his design, which seems to be a hindering the sacrifices they intended for them, and a drawing them to embrace the gospel, and therefore preparing the way to it, by speaking of the patience and goodness of God to them, as an unquestionable testimony of the 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 spell out the redeeming person; but witnesses that God was placable in his own nature. When man abused those noble faculties God had given him, and diverted them from the use and service God intended them for, God might have stript man of them, the first time that he misemployed them; and it would have seemed most agreeable to his wisdom and justice, not to suffer himself to be abused, and the world to go contrary to its natural end. But since he did not level the

world with its first nothing, but healed the world so 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 like, he would have treated men, as princes do those they reserve for the axe, or halter, give them only things necessary, to uphold their lives till the day of execution, and not have bestowed upon them so many good things, to make their lives delightful to them; nor have furnished them with so many excellent means to please their senses, and recreate their minds; it had been a mocking of them to treat them at that rate, if nothing but punishment had been intended towards them. If the end of it, to lead men to repentance, were easily intelligible by them, as the apostle intimates, (Rom. ii. 4, which is to be linked with the former chapter, a discourse of the Gentiles; not knowing, saith he, *that the riches of his forbearance and goodness leads thee to repentance,*) it also gives them some ground to hope for pardon. For what other argument can more induce to repentance than an expectation of mercy, upon a relenting and acknowledging the crime. Without a design of pardoning grace, his patience would have been in a great measure exercised in vain: for by mere patience God is not reconciled to a sinner, no more than a prince to a rebel by bearing with him. Nor can a sinner conclude himself in the favour of God, no more than a rebel can conclude himself in the favour of his prince; only
this

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.

He therefore exercised so much patience to wait for men's repentance.—All the notices and warnings that God gives men of either publick 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, found 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 gently repeated chastisements, had a mind to remove 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 doth not in the event, induce men to repentance, yet the natural tendency of such

a treatment, is to molify men's hearts, to overcome their obstinacy, and no man hath any reason to judge otherwise of such a proceeding. *The long suffering of God is salvation*, saith Peter, 2 Pet. iii. 15. *i. e.* hath a tendency to salvation, in its being a solicitation of men to the means of it: for the apostle cites Paul for the confirmation of it, *Even as our beloved brother Paul hath written unto you*, which must refer to Rom. ii. 4, *It leads to repentance*; it conducts, which is more than barely to invite; it doth as it were take us by the hand, and point us to the way wherein we should go; and for this end it was exercised not only towards the Jews, but towards the Gentiles; not only towards those that are within the pale of the church, and under the dews of the gospel, but to those that are in darkness, and in the shadow of death: for this discourse of the apostle was but an inference from what he had treated of in the first chapter concerning the idolatry and ingratitude of the Gentiles; since the Gentiles were to be punished for the abuse of it as well as the Jews, as he intimates, ver. 9, it is plain that his patience, which is exercised towards the idolatrous Gentiles, was to allure them to repentance, as well as others; and it was a sufficient motive in itself to persuade them to a change of their vile and gross acts, to such as were morally good. And there was enough in God's dealing with them, and in that light they had to engage them to a better course, than what they usually walked in. And though men do abuse God's long-suffering, to encourage their impenitence, and persisting in their crimes, yet that they cannot reasonably imagine that to be the end of God is evident, their own gripes of conscience would acquaint them, that it is otherwise. They know that conscience is a principle that God hath given them as well as understanding, and will, and other faculties. That God doth not approve of that, which
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the voice of their own consciences, and of the consciences of all men under natural light, are utterly against. And if there were really in this forbearance of God an approbation of men's crimes, conscience could not frequently and universally in all men check them for them. What authority could conscience have to do it? But this it doth in all men. As the apostle, Rom. i. 22, *They know the judgment of God, that those that do such things, which he had mentioned before, are worthy of death.* In this thing the consciences of all men cannot err: they could not therefore conclude from hence God's approbation of their iniquities, but his desire that their hearts should be touched with a repentance for them.

The *sin of Ephraim is hid*, Hosea xiii. 12, 13. *i. e.* God doth not presently take notice of it, to order punishment; he lays it in a secret place from the eye of his justice, that Ephraim might not be his unwise son, and *stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children, i. e.* that he should speedily reclaim himself and not continue in the way of destruction. God hath no need to abuse any, he doth not lie to the sons of men; if he would have men perish, he could easily destroy them, and have done it long ago. He did not leave the woman Jezebel in being, nor lengthened out her time, but as a space to repent, Rev. ii. 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 doth he invite men to repentance, if he intended to deceive them, and damn them after they repent?

He doth exercise patience for the propagation of mankind.—If God punished every sin presently,

there would not only be a period put to the 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. xlv. 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 creating 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 into support the honour of God, and the continuance of men, without which one had been in part impaired, and the other totally lost.

He doth exercise patience for the continuance of the church.—If he be not patient towards 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 upborn, that belong to the election of grace, which are to be the seed of the worst of men; Jeroboam, the chief incendiary of the Israelites to idolatry, had an Abijah, in whom was found *some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel*, 1 Kings xiv. 13. Had Ahaz been snapt 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 a rose-bush, till he hath gathered the roses? And men do not
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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 beholding immediately to this attribute, for all the seed he hath in the world; it is for his name sake that he doth defer his anger, and for his praise that he doth refrain from cutting us off, Isa. xlviii. 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, they are a long time spared, and not for their own. Isa. lxxv. 8, 9, *As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, 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. He had spoke of vengeance before, yet he would reserve some, from whom*

whom he would bring forth those that should be *inheritors of his mountains*: that he might make up his church of Judea, Jerusalem being a mountainous place, and the type of the church in all ages. What is the reason he doth not level his thunder at the heads of those for whose destruction he receives so many petitions from the *souls under the altar*, Rev. vi. 9, 10. Because God had others to write a testimony for him in their own blood, and perhaps out of the loins of those to 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.

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. xvi. 48; and more by half than Samaria, or the ten tribes had done, ver. 51. Yet God spared the Jews, though he destroyed the Sodomites. What was the reason, but a larger remnant of righteous persons, more clusters of good grapes were found among them, than grew in Sodom, Isa. i. 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 lock upon the torrent of his judgments, that they should not flow down upon that wicked place, to make them a desolation and a curse, as long as
tender

tender-hearted Josiah lived, *who had bumped himself* at the threatening, and wept before the Lord, 1 Kings xxii. 19, 20. Sometimes he bears with wicked men, that they might exercise the patience of the saints, Rev. xiv. 12. The whole time of the forbearance of Antichrist in all his intrusions into the temple of God, invasions of the rights of God, usurpations of the office of Christ, and besmearing himself with the blood of the saints, was to give them an opportunity of patience. God is patient towards the wicked, that by their means he might try the righteous. He burns not the wisp, till he hath scowered his vessels; nor lays by the hammer, till he hath formed some of his matter into an excellent fashion. He useth the worst of 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.

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. ii. 15. Both are fragrant to God, his mercy is glorified by the one's acceptance of it, and his justice freed from any charge against it by the other's refusal. The cause of men's ruin cannot be laid upon God, who provided means for their salvation, and solicited 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
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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 act of justice. Man hath no reason to fall foul in his charge upon God, if he were punished for his own sin, considering the dignity of the injured person, and the meanness of himself the offender; but his wrath is more justified when it is poured out upon those whom he hath endured with much long suffering. There is no plea against the shooting of his arrows into those, for whom this voice hath been loud, and his arms open for their return. As patience, while it is exercised, is the silence of his justice, so when it is abused, it silenceth men's complaints against his justice. The riches of his forbearance made way for the manifesting the treasures of his wrath. If God did but a little bear with the insolencies of men, and cut them off after two or three sins, he would not have opportunity to 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, Rom. ix. 22, *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?* The proper and immediate end of his long-suffering, is to lead men to repentance, but after they have by their obstinacy, fitted themselves for destruction, he bears longer with them, to magnify his wrath more upon them, and if it is not the *finis operantis*, it is at least the *finis operis*, where patience is abused. Men are apt to complain of God, that he deals hardly with them; the
Israelites

Israelites seem to charge God with too much severity, to cast them off, when so many promises were made to their fathers for their perpetuity and preservation, which is intimated, Hof. ii. 2, *Plead with your mother, plead*; by the double repetition of the word plead, do not accuse me of being false, or too rigorous, but accuse your mother, your church, your magistracy, your ministry, for their spiritual fornications which have provoked me: I have borne with her under many provocations, and I have not yet taken away all her ornaments; or said to her according to the rule of divorce, *res tuas tibi habeto*. God answers their impudent charge, *She is not my wife, nor am I her husband*; he doth not say first, I am not her husband, but she is not my wife; she first withdrew from her duty, by breaking the marriage covenant, and then I ceased to be her husband. No man shall be condemned, but he shall be convinced of the due desert of his sin, and the justice of God's proceeding. God will lay open men's guilt, and repeat the measures of his patience, to justify the severity of his wrath, Hof. vii. 10, *Sins will testify to their face*. What is in its own nature a preparation for glory, men by their obstinacy make a preparation for a more indisputable punishment. We see many evidences of God's forbearance here, in sparing men under those blasphemies which are audible, and those prophane 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 multitudes 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.

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Fourthly, The Use.

It is a vast comfort to any, when God is pacified towards them; but it is some comfort to all, that God is yet patient towards them, though but very little to a refractory sinner. His continued patience to all, speaks a possibility of the 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; alas! if he were all fire and sword upon sin, what would become of us? We should find nothing else but over-flowing 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. xi. 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, Numb. xiv. 9, *Their defence is departed from them*; speaking to the Israelites, that they should not be afraid of the Canaanites, for their defence is departed from them. God is no longer patient to them, since their sins be full and ripe. Patience as long as it lasts, is a temporary defence, to those that are under the wing of it; but to the believer it is a singular comfort; and God is called the God of patience and consolation in one breath, Rom. xv. 5, *The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded*—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
express

expressed in the way of petition, yet it might also be proposed as a pattern for imitation, and so suits very well to the exhortation laid down, ver. 1, which was to *bear with the infirmities of the weak*; which he presseth them to, ver. 3, *by the example of Christ*; and ver. 5, *by the patience of God to them*, and so they are very well linked together. God of patience and consolation may well be joined, since patience is the first step of comfort to the poor creature. If it did not administer some comfortable hopes to Adam, in the interval between his fall and God's coming to examine him, I am sure it was the first discovery of any comfort to the creature, after the sweeping the destroying deluge out of the world, Gen. ix. 21. After the favour 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.

FINIS.



Should these Discourses meet a favourable reception with the Public, and suitable encouragement given, it is the Editor's intention to re-publish "CHARNOCK'S TREATISE ON REGENERATION," without any material abridgment: a work, in the opinion of judicious and good men of every denomination, without its equal (in the English language, or probably in any other) upon that important and most interesting subject. It would be a proper companion for this volume.
