

S E R M O N S

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.



S E R M O N I.

GOD IS.



HEB. XI. 6.

But without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,



IN this chapter faith is represented as the principle of obedience, conveying vigour and strength to other graces, whereby they become operative unto several ends and objects; hence those acts which immediately spring from other graces as their proper stock, are attributed to faith, that being the principle of their heavenly working. In this respect, as the success of an army redounds to the general's honour, so the victory which is effected by other christian qualities, is here ascribed to faith, which animates them, and leads them forth as their chief

VOL. IV.

A

captain; this is intimated in the text, in which we may observe.

1. A proposition, "But without faith it is impossible to please God;" that grace being the medium of our communion with God, as it gives through Christ an admission and approach to him; and in this respect is opposed to drawing back. Heb. 10. 38.

2. The argument to confirm it, "for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him:" that is, our addresses to God, are grounded upon a firm assent to God's being and bounty. *

(1.) An assent to his being is absolutely necessary, otherwise acts of worship are as a ball struck into the open air, which returns not to us; without the entire assurance of a determinate object, religion will fail and vanish, this belief is general and speculative.

(2.) An assent to his bounty, that he will bless those "who diligently seek him;" this is particular and applicative, and it follows from the other; for the notion of a benefactor is included in that of a God; take away his rewards, you ungod him: now the steadfast acknowledgment of this, can only draw the soul to perform ingenuous and acceptable service: for the naked contemplation of those amiable excellencies which are in the Deity, can never conquer our natural fear, nor quench our enmity against him; the reflection upon his righteousness and our guilt, fills us with terror, and causes a dreadful flight from him; but the hope of his remunerating goodness, is a motive agreeable, and congruous to the breast of a man, and sweetly leads him to God; religion is the submission of ourselves to God, with an expectation of reward.

I shall treat of the first branch of the argument; "he that comes to God, must believe that he is." The firm belief of God's being, is the foundation of all religious worship; in the discussing of which, my design is to evince that supreme truth,

* This is the heathens creed,

της περι' της θεᾶς εὐσεβείας ἴδι ὅτι το' κυριότατον ἐκεῖνο ἐστίν.
Ὅρθας ὑποληψείς περι' αὐτῶν ἔχειν ὡς ὄντων, καὶ διοικούντων
τὰ ὀλακαλῶς καὶ δικάως. Epictetus.

“that God is.” The evidence of this will appear to the light of reason, and faith, by an appeal to nature, and scriptures; I shall produce three arguments from nature, which may convince an infidel there is a God. The first is drawn from the visible world. The second from natural conscience. The third from the consent of nations.

The first argument is drawn from the visible world. In the creation, his essence and attributes are clearly revealed, his absolute power, unerring wisdom, and infinite goodness, are discovered to every capacity; therefore the apostle urges this as the most proper argument to convince the heathens, Acts 14. 15. “That they should turn from their vanities, to the living God which made heaven and earth, and sea, and all things that are therein;” to this they must naturally assent; as shadows represent the figure of those bodies from whence they are derived; so in the world there are such traces of the divine perfections, that it is easy to infer there is a Sovereign Being which is the cause of it; all the creatures and their various excellencies, are so many beams which reflect upon this sun, or lines which direct to this centre; nay, the meanest being carries some impression of the first cause, as the image of a prince is stamped upon a penny, as well as upon greater money; the beasts will instruct, and the mute fishes teach the atheist there is a god; and though he is not discerned by the outward sight, yet the understanding will as certainly discover him, as it doth an invisible spirit in a living body; and that,

1. From the being of the world, and its parts; it is apparent to sense, and acknowledged by all, that some things are of a late beginning, but those things could not proceed from themselves, for then they should work before they were, and the same things should exist, and not exist at the same instant, and in the same respect, but this implies a contradiction; it follows then, they had their original from without; we find the experience of this in ourselves; the number of our days declares there was a time in which we had no being, and therefore we could not produce ourselves.

Now, if man which is the most perfect of visible creatures, presuppose a maker, then may we sufficiently infer a creation, where we find far less perfection; and this is true, not only of things which are visible, but of all other beings; till at last we

arrive at the Supreme cause, whose being is necessary and independent.

Besides, if we consider that from nothing he hath produced their beings, and so united those two distant extremes of being, and not being, we may infer his power to be infinite; the greatest difference imaginable between two finite beings, admits of some proportion, and measure; but between that which is, and that which is not, the distance exceeds all apprehension; so that from the mere existence of things, it is evident that there is a first cause, which is independent and infinite, and this is God.

2. We may certainly argue the being of God from the consent of parts in the world, and their perpetual confederations to support the whole. Confusion is the effect of chance, but order is the product of art and industry. When we consider in a watch, how the different wheels by their unequal motions agree in distinguishing the hours, and with that exactness, as if they were inspired by the same intelligence, we presently conclude it to be the work of an artificer; for certainly pieces of brass could never have formed and united themselves into that method; proportionably when we view the harmony of all things in the world, and how disagreeing natures conspire together for the advantage of the whole, we may collect there is a divine Spirit, which hath thus disposed all things. We will not make a curious inquiry into this; an eminent degree of knowledge in several faculties, would but imperfectly discover the proportion and measures which the eternal mind hath observed in the frame of nature; it will suffice to glance at those which are exposed to the view of all.

The sun which is the eye and soul of the world, in its situation and motion is a sign to us that there is wisdom and counsel in its Author; it is fixed in the midst of the planets, that it may dispense its light and heat for the advantage of the lower world; * if it were placed in a higher or lower orb, the jarring elements,

* *Quid potest esse tam apertum, tamque perspicuum, cum cælum suspexit, cælestiaq; contemplati sumus, quam aliquod esse numen præstantissimæ mentis quo hæc regantur? Tull. in secundo de natura deorum, &c. lib. 2. de divinatione; esse præstantem aliquam, æternamque naturam & eam suspiciendam adorandamque hominum generi, pulchritudo mundi ordoque rerum cælestium cogit confiteri.*

(which by its influence, are kept in an equal poise and proportion) would break forth into disorders; and those invisible chains and connexions which fasten the parts of nature, would presently be broken; the regularity and constancy of its motion discovers a Deity; by its course from east to west, it causes the agreeable vicissitude of day and night, and maintains the amiable war of light and darkness; this distinction of time is necessary for the pleasure and profit of the world; the sun by its rising, chases away the shades of the night, to delight us with the beauties of the creation; it is God's herald which calls us forth to the discharge of our work; Psal. 104. 22, 23. this governs our labour, and conducts our industry; this animates nature, and conveys a pleasure even to these beings which are insensible; without the day, the world would be a fatal and disconsolate grave to all creatures; a chaos without order, action, or beauty; thus by the sunbeams we may clearly see a divine providence. Besides, when it retires from us, and a curtain of darkness is drawn over the world, that proves the wisdom and goodness of God. The psalmist attributes the disposition of day and night to God, "the day is thine," and with an emphasis, "the night also is thine;" Psal. 64. 16. notwithstanding its sad appearance, yet it is very beneficial; its darkness enlightens us, its obscurity makes visible the ornaments of heaven, the stars, their aspects, their dispositions, their motions which were hid in the day; it unbends the world, and gives a short and necessary truce to its labours, it recreates the wasted spirits; it is the nurse of nature, which pours into its bosom those sweet and cooling dews which beget new life, and vigour: the divine providence is also eminent in the manner of this dispensation; for the sun finishing its course about the world in the space of 24 hours, * causes that succession of day and night, which doth most fitly temper our labour and repose; whereas if the day and night should each of them continue six entire months, this division would be very inconvenient for us. We may farther observe a wise providence in the diversity it hath used to lengthen and shorten the days and nights for the advantages of several countries; for that part of the earth which is under the line, being scorched with immoderate heat, wants a

* I speak of that part of the world which is inhabited.

continual supply of moisture ; therefore the longest and coolest nights are there ; but it is otherwise in the northern parts, for the beams of the sun being very feeble there, providence hath so disposed, that the days are extreme long, that so by the continuance of the heat, the fruits may come to maturity and perfection. And as the difference of day and night, so the diversity of seasons proceeds from the motion of the sun, which is a work of providence, no less admirable than the former ; as the motion of the sun from east to west, makes the day and night, so from north to south, causes summer and winter ; * by these the world is preserved ; summer crowns the earth with flowers and fruits, and produces an abundant variety for the support of living creatures ; the winter which seems to be the death of nature, robbing the earth of its heat and life, contributes also to the universal good ; it prepares the earth by its cold and moisture for the returning sun ; in the succession of these seasons, the divine providence is very conspicuous ; for since the world cannot pass from one extreme to another, without a dangerous alteration ; to prevent this inconvenience, the sun makes its approaches gradually to us, the spring is interposed between the winter and summer, that by its gentle and temperate heat, it may dispose our bodies for the excess of summer ; and in the same manner the sun retires by degrees from us, that so in the autumn we may be prepared for the asperities of the winter. And to close this part of the argument, the invariable succession of times and seasons is a token of the same providence ; the sun which runs ten or twelve millions of leagues every day, never fails one minute of its appointed time, nor turns an inch out of its constant course, but inviolably observes the same order ; so that there is nothing more regular, equal, and constant, than the succession of day and night ; to ascribe this to hazard, is the most absurd extravagance ; for in the effects of chance there is neither order nor constancy ; as we may see in the casting of a die, which hardly falls twice together upon the same square ; it is necessary therefore to conclude, that an intelligent principle guides the revolutions of the sun, thus uniformly for the advantage of the world. Psal. 19. 1, 2, 3. "The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament shows his handy work. Day unto

* Psal. 74. 17. Thou hast made the summer and winter;

day utters speech, and night unto night adds knowledge ; there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard ;" what is that language and voice, but an universal sermon to the world of God's being and excellency.

Let us now consider that vast extent of air, which fills the space between heaven and earth ; this is of so pure a nature, that in a moment it transmits the influences of heaven to the lower world, this serves as an arsenal for thunders and lightnings, whereby God summons the world to dread and reverence ; this is a treasury for the clouds, which dissolving in gentle showers refresh the earth, and call forth its seeds into flourishing and fruitfulness ; this fans the earth with the wings of the wind, allaying those intemperate heats which would be injurious to its inhabitants ; this is the region for the birds, wherein they pass as so many self-moving engines praising the Creator, this serves for the breath and life of man ; from hence we may conclude the wisdom of a God, who so governs the several regions of the air, as by them to convey blessings for the necessities of man, and to send judgments for the awakening the secure to seek after God.

Let us now descend to the sea, and see how that informs us there is a God ; it is a truth evident to reason, that the proper place of waters is next to the air above the earth ; for as it is of a middle nature between these two elements, being purer and lighter than the earth, but more gross and heavy than the air, so it challenges a situation between them ; that as the air on all parts encompasses the sea, in like manner the sea should overspread the earth, and cover the whole surface of it ; that its natural inclination is such, appears by its continual flowings ; who then hath arrested its course, and stopped its violence ? who hath confined it to such a place and compass, that it may not be destructive to the world ? certainly no other, but the great God who first gave it being and motion ; besides, that which renders the power of God more conspicuous, is that by so weak a bridle as the sand, its rage is bounded ; when it threatens the shore with its insulting waves, you would fear lest it should swallow up all, but it no sooner touches the sand, but its fury is turned into froth ; it retires, and by a kind of submission, respects those bounds which are fixed by the Creator. Now, that

the fiercest element should be repressed by the feeblest thing in the world, and that which breaks the rocks, be limited by the sands, is a wonder of providence ; therefore the Lord alledges this as an effect only proceeding from his power, and challenges an incommunicable glory upon this account. Job 38. 8, 9, 10, 11 verses, “ who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth as if it had issued out of the womb ? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it ; and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors ; and said, hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.”

Besides, its extent is no less worthy of admiration ; it washes the four parts of the world, and so it is the bond of the universe, by which the most distant nations are united, the medium of commerce and trade, which brings great delight and advantage to men, by it the commodities which are peculiar to several countries are made common to all ; thus may we trace the evident prints of a deity in the very waters ; if we change the scene, and view the earth, we may perceive clear signs of a divine providence. If we consider its position, it hangs in the midst of the air, that it may be a convenient habitation for us ; or its stability, the air itself is not able to bear up a feather, yet the earth remains in it fixed and unshaken, notwithstanding the storms and tempests which continually beat upon it ; from hence we must conclude an invisible, but powerful hand supports it ; it is reckoned amongst the Magnalia Dei, Job 38. 4, 6, “ Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened ? Or who hath laid the corner-stone thereof ?” Moreover the various disposition of its parts, the mountains, the valleys, the rivers which are as the veins which convey nourishment to this great body, all intimate there is a God. *

* I might instance in its productions ; in plants, their roots whereby they draw their nourishment, the firmness of their stalk by which they are defended against the violence of winds, the expansion of their leaves by which they receive the dew of heaven ; or in fruits, which are produced answerable to the difference of seasons, those which are cold and moist to allay our heat in summer, and those which are of a firmer consistency in autumn, that they may serve the delight and use of man in winter, from whence the notice of a Deity is afforded to us.

* Thus if we behold the excellent order of the parts of the world, their mutual correspondence for their several ends, the heavens give light, the air breath, the earth habitation, the sea commerce; we must break forth there is a God, and this is his work; but how few are there who read the name of God which is indelibly printed on the frame of nature? Who see the excellency of the cause in the effect? Who contemplate all things in God, and God in all things? from our first infancy we are accustomed to these objects, and the edge of our apprehensions is re-bated; the commonness of things takes away our esteem; we rather admire things new than great; the effects of art, than the marvels of nature; as the continual view of a glittering object dazzles the eye, that it cannot see; so by the daily presence of these wonders, our minds are blunted, we lose the quickness and freshness of our spirits.

I shall finish this argument by reflecting upon man, who is a short abridgment of the world; † the composure of his body, the powers of his soul, convince us of a wise providence; who but a God could unite such different substances, an immaterial spirit with an earthly body? Who could distinguish so many parts, assign to them their form, situation, temperature, with an absolute fitness for those uses to which they serve? We must join with the apostle, Acts 17. 27, 28. "He is not far from every one of us;" we may find him in the activity of our hands, in the beauty of our eyes, in the vivacity of all our senses; "in him we live, move, and have our being." And to look inward, who hath endowed the soul with such distinct and admirable faculties? The understanding which exercises an empire on all things, which compounds the most disagreeing, and divides the most intimate, which by the lowest effects ascends to the highest cause; the will which with such vigour pursues that which we

* The world is styled by St. Basil, τῶν ψυχῶν λογικῶν διδασκαλεῖον, καὶ τῆς θεολογικῆς παιδευτήριον; School of rational spirits, wherein they are instructed in the knowledge of God.

† The mere consideration of the least parts of man's body, opened the eyes of one of the most learned atheists in the world. Galen. 3. de usu partium, describing the use of our parts, saith, τὴν δημιουργήσαντι ἡμᾶς ὕμνον ἀληθινὸν συντίθετον.

esteem amiable and good, and recoils with aversion from that we judge pernicious and evil; the memory which preserves fresh and lively the pictures of those things which are committed to its charge. Certainly after this consideration, we must naturally assent there is a God who made us, and not we ourselves.

3. We may argue there is a God from the operations of natural agents for those ends which are not perceived by them. Although in men there is a rational principle which discovers the goodness of the end, and selects such means as are proper for the accomplishing of it, and so their actions are the product of their judgment; * yet it is impossible to conceive that the inferior rank of creatures, whose motions flow from mere instinct, can guide themselves by any counsel of their own: now all their operations are directed to their proper ends without any variation, and in that order as exceeds the invention of man. It is admirable to consider how brute creatures act for their preservation; they are no sooner in the world, but they presently fly from their enemies, and make use either of that force or craft which they have to defend themselves; they know that nourishment which is convenient to preserve them, and those remedies which may restore them. By what counsel doth the swallow observe the season of its passage? In the beginning of autumn it takes its flight to a warmer climate, and returns with the sun again in the spring. By what fore-sight doth the ant prepare its store in summer to prevent that ensuing want which otherwise it would suffer in winter? Doth the sun deliberate whether it shall rise, and by diffusing its beams, become the public light of the world? Or doth a fountain advise whether it shall stream forth in a fluent and liberal manner? Even the actions of men which are purely natural, are done without their direction: nay, natural bodies will part with their own property, and cross their own inclination for an universal good; the air, a light and nimble body that does naturally ascend, yet for a general good, to prevent a breach in nature, it will descend: † and

* Si quid est quod efficiat ea quæ homo licet ratione sit præditus, facere non posset, id profecto est majus & fortius, & sapientius homine. *Chrysippus*.

† ὅπερ ἐν νηὶ κυβερνήτης, ἐν κορῷ δὲ κορυφαῖος, ἐν πόλει δὲ νόμος, ἐν στρατοπέδῳ δὲ ἡγεμών, ταῦτο Θεὸς ἐν κόσμῳ. *Aristot.* 1. de mundo.

those things which have a natural opposition, yet constantly accord and join together to preserve the whole ; certainly then a divine spirit guides and directs them. If we see an army composed of several nations, (between whom there are great antipathies) yet march in rank and order, and with equal courage fight for the safety of a kingdom, we presently conclude there is a wise general who thus uniteth them : and is there not greater reason to believe that a sovereign spirit governs the host of heaven and earth, and unites them to maintain the peace of the world ? To assert that irrational creatures act for a general and unknown good, without the motion of a higher cause, is equally unreasonable, as to say a curious picture is drawn by a pencil without the hand of the painter which guides it in every line according to the idea of his mind. We must then of necessity infer that those particular causes which cannot conduct themselves, are directed by an universal cause which cannot err ; and thus we see the whole world is an entire and continual argument of God's being and attributes.

Secondly, The second argument is drawn from natural conscience, which is a subordinate God; and acts all things with respect to a higher tribunal ; as St. Paul speaking of those visible testimonies which God hath expressed to men in the creation, saith, Acts 14. 17. " That he left not himself without a witness, giving them rain, and fruitful seasons ;" by the same proportion we may say God hath not left himself without an internal witness, having planted in every man a conscience whereby he is dignified above the lower order of beings, and made sensible of the supreme judge, to whose tribunal he is subject ; now conscience in its double work, as it accuses or excuses by turns upon good or bad actions, proves there is a God.

1. Natural conscience being clear and innocent, is the life-guard which secures from fears ; virtuous persons who have not offered violence to the light of conscience, in times of danger, as in a fierce storm at sea, or fearful thunder at land, when guilty spirits are surprised with horror, they are not liable to those fears, being wrapped up in their own innocency ; the reason of their security proceeds from a belief that those terrible works of nature are ordered by an intelligent and righteous providence which is God. *

* *Parcus Deorum cultor & infrequens, insanientis dum sapientie consul-*

2. It gives courage and support to an innocent person ; when oppressed and injured by the unrighteous ; the natural conscience so long as it is true to itself by adhering to honest principles, it is victorious against all attempts whatsoever ; *si fractus illabatur orbis* ; if the weight of all the miseries in the world should come rushing upon him at once, it would bear up under them all, and stand unbroken in the midst of those ruins ; the spirit of a man is of strength enough to sustain all his infirmities ; as a ship lives in the rough seas, and floats above them, the waters being without it ; so a virtuous person rides out all storms, and is preserved from sinking, because the fury of worldly troubles cannot reach beyond his outward man ; the conscience which is the man's strength remains firm and unshaken ; yea, as those roses are usually sweetest which grow near stinking weeds ; so the peace, joy, and glory of a good conscience is then most sensible, when a man is otherwise in the most afflicted and oppressed state ; now from whence proceed this calmness and serenity, this vigour and constancy of spirit, but from the apprehension of a supreme judge, who at the last will vindicate their cause ?

2. We may clearly evidence there is a God, from the accusations of a guilty conscience ; this is that never dying worm which if a sinner treads on, it will turn again ; this is a temporal hell, a spiritual Tophet ; what torments are there in the regions of darkness, which an accusing conscience doth not inflict on a sinner in this life ! So intolerable are the stings of it, that many have took sanctuary in a grave, and run upon the first death to prevent the miseries of the second. Now the shame, horror, despair, and that black train of affections which lash an offender for his vicious acts, discovers there is a principle within which threatens vengeance from a righteous and angry God : this argument will be more pressing, if we consider that conscience attaches a sinner.

(1.) For secret crimes, which are above the cognizance of men ; conscience is God's spy in our bosoms, which mixes its self with all our thoughts and actions ; let a man therefore take what course he will to hide his offence, let him sin in the closest retirement that human policy can contrive, where there is no

tus erro, nunc retrorsum vela dare atque iterare cursus cogor relictos : Namque Diespiter igni corusco nubila dividens, fretumque per purum tonantibus egit equos volucrumque currum. *Horat. ad. 34. l. 31.*

possibility of legal conviction, yet his accuser, his judge, his hell is in his own bosom; when the sin is most secret, conscience brings in the evidence, produces the law, urges the penalty, passes the sentence, begins the punishment; so that the sinner is *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, self-condemned for those sins which are not punishable by man; yea, sometimes a discovery of concealed sins (though certainly bringing temporal death) hath been extorted by the horror and anguish of an accusing conscience; the reason of all is, because in secret sins conscience appeals to God's omniscience, who is greater than our consciences, "and knows all things." 1 John 3. 20. And upon this account it is *prejudicium judicii*, a kind of antedated day of judgment, a domestic dooms-day, and brings upon a sinner the beginning of his sorrows.

(2.) It stings with remorse for those sins which are above the power of man to revenge; those who command armies, and by their greatness are secured from the penalties of the law, yet conscience sets their sins in order before their eyes; and these as so many armed men charge them thorough, and overwhelm them; many instances there are; Belshazzar in the midst of his cups and bravery, how was he invaded by fear and horror, when "he saw the hand-writing on the wall!" The whole army of the Persians could not discourage his spirit; but when conscience revived his guilt, and the apprehension of God's justice, he sunk under the burden; the hand-writing from without was terrible, because conscience opened a hand-writing within. Tiberius the emperor who was doubly dyed in unnatural lusts and cruelties, could neither evade nor dissemble the horrors of his mind. Nero after the barbarous murdering of his mother, was always pursued by imaginary devils, his distracted fancy representing to him furies and flames ready to torment him. How many tyrants have trembled on the throne, when the condemned innocents have rejoiced in their sufferings! From hence we may infallibly conclude the conscience of the most powerful sinner is under the feeling of a Deity; for if there were no punishments to be feared but those the magistrate inflicts in his own dominions, why are sovereign magistrates themselves under terrors for their vitious actions! and those who are not subject to any human tribunal, why do they with such fury reflect upon themselves for their crimes? Certainly it proceeds from hence, that

natural conscience dreads the supreme Judge, seeing nothing is able to shelter them from his tribunal, nor restrain his power when he will take vengeance on them.

In vain doth the atheist reply that these fears are the product of a common false opinion, which is conveyed by education, to wit, that there is a God who is provoked by sin ; and that ignorance increases these terrors, as little children fear bug-bears in the dark ; for it is certain,

1. That no art or endeavour can totally free a sinner from these terrors, whereas groundless fears are presently scattered by reason ; and this argues there is an inviolable principle in nature which respects a God. We know there is nothing more disturbs the spirit than fear, and every person is an enemy to what torments him ; hence the sinner labours to conquer conscience, that he may freely indulge himself in sin ; but this is impossible ; for conscience is so essential, that a soul cannot be a soul without it, and so inseparable, that death itself cannot divorce a man from it ; *perire nec sine te nec tecum potest* ; it can neither die with the sinner, nor without him ; it is true, the workings of it are unequal ; as the pulse doth not always beat alike, but sometimes more violent, and sometimes more remiss ; so this spiritual pulse is not always in equal motion ; sometimes it beats, sometimes it intermits, but returns again : those scorers who run a course of sin without control, and seem to despise hell, as a mere notion, yet they are not free from inward gripes : conscience arrests them in the name of that God whom they deny : although they are without faith, they are not without fear : desperate sinners ruffle for a time, and drench themselves in sensual pleasures, to quench that *scintilla animæ*, that vital spark which shines and scorches at once ; but all in vain ; for it happens to them as to malefactors, who for a time drown the apprehension of their danger in a sea of drink ; but when the fumes are evaporated, and they seriously ponder their offences, they tremble in the fearful expectation of the axe or gallows. A sinner may conceal his fears from others, and appear jolly and brave, when conscience stings him with secret remorse ; as a clock seems to be calm and still to the eye ; but it is full of secret motions within ; under a merry countenance there may be a bleeding heart : to conclude, so far is a sinner from being able to quench these terrors, that many times the more they are opposed, the more powerful they grow ; thus

many who for a time breathed nothing but defiance to conscience, and committed sin with greediness, yet conscience hath with such fury returned upon them, that they have run from profaneness to superstition, as fugitive slaves are forced back to their masters, and serve in the vilest drudgery, fearing severe punishments.

2. The best men who enjoy a sweet calmness, and are not disquieted with the terrors of conscience, they abhor that doctrine which discards the fear of a Deity; so that those who are most freed from these terrors, believe them to be radicated in nature, and grounded upon truth; and those who esteem them vain, are most furiously tormented with them; in which respect the divine goodness shines forth in the greatest lustre towards those who love and fear him, and his justice against those who condemn it; thus Caligula who was the boldest atheist in the world, yet when it thundered, ran with trembling under his bed, as if God from heaven had summoned him to judgment; whereas Socrates, who was the heathens' martyr, died with the same tranquillity of spirit wherein he lived.

3. It is worthy of our serious thoughts that these terrors of conscience are most dreadful when the sinner approaches death; the sense of guilt which before was smothered, is then revived; conscience like a sleeping lion awakes and destroys at once; experience tells us many sinners who have lived in a senseless, die in a desperate manner; and from whence doth this proceed but from the presages of a future judgment! conscience anticipates the vengeance of God; then the alarms are increased, and the storm is more violent; for the soul being sensible of its immortal nature, extends its fears to eternity, and trembles at him who lives for ever, and can punish for ever.

Thirdly. The third argument is drawn from the consent of nations. The consent of nations agrees in the belief of a God; although the Gentiles did grossly mistake the life and essence of the infinite Deity, imagining him to be of some human form and weakness, and in this respect were without God in the world; yet they conspired in the acknowledgment of a divinity; the multiplicity of their false gods strengthens the argument; it being clear they would rather have any god than none; and this belief cannot be an imposture, because it is

1st. Universal; what nation so barbarous as not to worship a

God? certainly that which is common to all men, hath a foundation in nature.

2dly. It is perpetual; falsehoods are not long lived; but the character and impression of God is indelibly sealed upon the spirits of men. Thus we see the universal reason of the world to determine there is a God.

The scripture proves there is a God to faith; Psal. 19. David speaking of the double manifestation of God by his works and his word, appropriates a converting power to the word; this exceeds the discovery of God in the creation, in respect of its clearness and efficacy: Psal. 138. 2. "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." There are more apparent characters of God's attributes and perfections in the scripture, than in the book of nature; in the creation there is Vestigium, the foot-print of God; but in the word there is Imago, his image and lively representation: as the angels when they assumed visible bodies, and appeared unto men; yet by the brightness and majesty of their appearance, discovered themselves to be above an human original; so the scriptures although conveyed to us in ordinary language and words, yet by their authority and sanctity evidence their divine descent; and that there is a holy and righteous God from whom they proceed.

There is a vehement objection urged by atheists * in all ages against a divine providence, and consequently against God's being: the afflicted state of innocency and goodness, and the prosperous state of oppression and wickedness. Honest men suffer, whilst the unrighteous and profane swim in the streams of prosperity; hence they concluded *fortuna certa, aut incerta natura*, had the charge of these sublunary things; † even the holy prophet himself was liable to this temptation, Psal. 73. 9, 10,

* We may hear the Tragedian thus resenting it:

Sed cur idem,
Qui tanta regis sub quo vasti
Pondera mundi librata suos
Ducunt orbis, hominum nimium
Securus ades; non sollicitus
Prodesse bonis, nocuisse malis. *Sen. Hippol.*

† Plutarch, and Seneca, and Cicero, have rendered satisfaction concerning this method of the divine providence.

11, 12, 13, 14. he saw that as the clean creatures were sacrificed every day, the turtle and the lamb, the emblems of innocency and charity; whilst the swine, and other unclean creatures were spared; so good men were harassed with troubles, when the wicked were exempted, and this shook his faith; but by "entering into the sanctuary of God." where he understood their end, he comes off with victory. Now for the removing this objection, consider,

1. We are not competent judges of God's actions; we see but one half of Ezekiel's vision; the wheels, but not the eye in the wheels; nothing but the wheels on which the world seems disorderly to run, not the eye of providence which governs them in their most vertiginous changes: the actions of God do not want clearness, but clearing: what we cannot acquit, is not to be charged on God as unjust; the stick which is straight, being in the water seems crooked, by the refraction of the beams through a double medium; we see through flesh and spirit, and cannot distinctly judge the ways of God; but when we are not able to comprehend the particular reasons of his dispensations, yet we must conclude his judgments to be right, as will appear by observing,

2. The sufferings of the righteous do not blemish God's justice.

(1.) God always strikes an offender, every man being guilty in respect of his law. Now though love cannot hate, yet it may be angry; and upon this account, where "the judgments of God are a great deep," unfathomable by any finite understanding, "yet his righteousness standeth like the high mountains," (as it is in Psal. 36.) visible to every eye; if the most righteous person shall look inward, and weigh his own carriage and desert, he must necessarily glorify the justice and holiness of God in all his proceedings:

(2.) The afflictions of good men are so far from staining God's justice, that they manifest his mercy; for the least sin being a greater evil than the greatest affliction; God uses temporal crosses to prevent and destroy sin; he embitters their lives to wean their affections from the world, and to create in them strong desires after heaven; as long as the waters of tribulation are on the earth, so long they dwell in the ark; but when the land is dry, even the dove itself will be wandering, and defile

itself: when they are afflicted in their outward man, it is that the inward man may be revived; as birds are brought to perfection by the ruins of the shell: that is not a real evil which God uses as an instrument to save us. Who will esteem that physician unjust, who prevents the death of his patient by giving a bitter potion?

(3.) If the righteous be thus afflicted upon earth, we may conclude there is a reward in the next world; if they are thus sharply treated in the way, their country is above, where God is their portion and happiness.

3. The temporary prosperity of the wicked reflects no dishonour upon God's justice or holiness; for God measures all things by the standard of eternity; a thousand years to him are as one day. Now we do not charge a judge with unrighteousness, if he defer the execution of a malefactor for a day; the longest life of a sinner bears not that proportion to eternity; besides, their reprieve increases and secures their ruin; they are as grapes which hang in the sun till they are ripe, and fit for the wine-press. God spares them now, but will punish them for ever; he condemns them to prosperity in this world, and judges them not worth his anger, intending to pour forth the vials of his wrath on them in the next.

4. The more sober heathens have concluded from hence there is a judgment to come; because otherwise the best would be most miserable, and the ungodly prosperous; from hence they have inferred, that because all things are dispensed in a promiscuous manner to the just and unjust in this world, therefore there must be an after-reckoning.

5. There are many visible examples of the goodness and justice of God in this world; either in rewarding afflicted innocency, or punishing prosperous iniquities. He that shall read the story of Joseph, and consider that wonderful chain of causes managed by the divine providence; how God made use of the treachery of his brethren, not as a sale, but a conveyance; how by the prison he came to the principality, must conclude there is a watchful eye which orders all things: and how many instances are there of God's severe, and impartial justice? there is no state or history but presents some examples; wherein an exact proportion in the time, measure and kind between the sin and punishment, is most conspicuous; the unnatural sin of Sodom was

punished with a supernatural shower of fire and brimstone: Pharaoh had made the river guilty of the blood of the Hebrew infants; his first plague is the turning of the river into blood; Adonibezec is just so served as he did by the seventy kings; Judas who wanted bowels for his Lord, wanted bowels for himself in life and death; for he hanged himself, and his bowels gushed out; and thus the punishment as a hand, points at the sin, and convinces the world of a Deity.

Use 1. This is just matter of terror to atheists, which are

of three sorts; { 1. *Vita*; in Life.
2. *Voto*; in Desire.
3. *Judicio*; in Judgment.

First. To those who are practical atheists, *Vita*, in life, who live down this truth, denying God in their lives. Sad and certain it is, that many who pretend they know God, yet so live, as if there were no Deity to whom they must give an account: such are the secure, that sleep in sin, notwithstanding all God's thunder; and if ever sleep were the true image of death, this is the sleep. The sensual, who are so lost in carnal pleasures, they scarce remember whether they have a soul; if at any time conscience begins to murmur, they relieve their melancholy thoughts with their company and cups, like Saul, sending for the music when the evil spirit was upon him. The incorrigible, who notwithstanding the designs of God's mercy to reduce them; although providences, ordinances conspire to bring them off from their evil ways; yet they persist in their disobedience: let such consider it is not a loose and ineffective assent to the being and perfections of God which will save them; God is not glorified by an inactive faith; nay, this will put the most dreadful accent, and the most killing aggravations on their sins; that believing there is a God, they dare presumptuously offend him, and provoke the Almighty to jealousy, as if they were able either to evade, or to sustain his wrath; it is the greatest prodigy in the world to believe there is a God, and yet to disobey him; this renders them inexcusable at the last.

Secondly. To those who are atheists, *Voto*, in desire, Psal. 14. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God;" the heart is the fountain of desires, he wishes there were no God; this

atheism springs from the former ; men live as if there were no God, and then wish there were none ; guilt always begets fear, and fear hatred ; and that strikes at the being of the object that is hated ; as malefactors desire there were no law nor judge, that they might escape deserved punishment. Well, their desires are as visible to God as their actions are to men, and in the day of revelation there will be a proportion of wrath answerable to the wickedness of their hearts.

Thirdly, To those who are atheists, *Judicio*, in opinion ; these low running dregs of time afford us many of these monsters ; for many to reconcile their principles with their practices ; that they may undisturbedly enjoy their lusts, take this as an opiate portion, that there is no God ; but this is the most irrational and impious blasphemy.

1. Irrational ; for the name of God is written in so fair a character upon this universal frame, that even whilst men run they may read it ; and therefore God never wrought a miracle to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it : moreover, the notion of a Deity is so deeply impressed on the tables of all men's hearts, that to deny God, is to kill the soul in the eye, to quench the very principles of common nature, to leave never a vital spark or seed of humanity behind ; it is as if an ungracious soul should deny he ever had a father. He that does ungod God, does unman himself.

2. It is the most impious ; it is formally *Deicidium*, a killing of God as much as in them lies ; but there are no atheists in hell, the devils believe and tremble ; he that willingly quenches that light which is planted in his breast, he is passing from that voluntary darkness to a worse ; like an offender on the scaffold, he doth but blind his eyes to have his head cut off ; he goes from inward darkness to utter darkness.

Use 2. Let us establish our hearts in the belief of God's being ; in the latter times the world is wholly disposed to atheism ; as the scripture attributes the ruin of the old world to their atheism and profaneness, so it foretels the universal disease of the last age will be atheism and infidelity. Luke 18. 8. "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" it were impossible there should be such a palpable contradiction between the lives of men and this fundamental of religion, did they with assurance and certainty believe it. Psal.

14. 1. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God; they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doth good." Atheism is the root of profaneness; moreover, the spiritual mysteries of religion, which exceed the flight of reason, are 'opposed by many upon the account of their atheism; they question the truth of God's being, and therefore disbelieve supernatural revelations; let us then treasure up this truth:

First. As the foundation of faith; for all the truths of religion spring from this as their common principle; the watering of the root will cause the branches to flourish; so the confirming of this will render our assent to the doctrine of the gospel more clear and strong.

Secondly. As the fountain of obedience; the true and sound belief of every holy truth always includes a correspondency in the believer to the thing believed; and this must descend from the understanding to the affections, and the conversation: now the fundamental duties which we are to pay to God, are, love, fear, dependance and submission to the will of his law, and of his providence.

1. *Love*: He is the supreme object of love for his excellencies and benefits, Psal. 5. 11. "Let them also that love thy name rejoice in thee;" the name of God imports those glorious attributes whereby he hath expressed himself to us; all the excellencies of the creature meet eminently in him, and all their imperfections are removed; in him there is nothing unlovely. In worldly things how refined soever they be, there is an alloy of dregs; the all that is in them is mixed with corruption; but in God the all that he is, is perfection; in the most glorious creature as a creature, there is *aliquid nihili*, some imperfection, it is not exactly fitted for the soul; but God is the adequate and complete object of our love. There is such an infinite eminency in God, that we are obliged to a proportionable affection; the first and great commandment is, Matth. 22. 36. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy strength:" all the kinds and degrees of our love are due to him; we must put no bounds nor limits to it; in him it must begin, in him it must end; a remisser love is a degree of hatred; we disparage his excellencies by the coldness of our affections. O had we but eyes to see his beauty, how would all the excellencies

of the creatures become a very glow-worm that only glitters in the night!

Moreover, God planted this affection in the nature of man, that it might be terminated upon himself as its centre and treasure. As our natural faculties are fitted for their several objects; the eye for colours, the ear for sounds, the palate for tastes; so love is fitted for God, that being as the sovereign which sways all our powers. Love is called *pondus animæ*, that sets all the wheels in the clock of the soul a going; this sets the understanding at work in the serious contemplation of the divine excellencies, it diverts the thoughts from other things, and fixes them on God; it excites strong desires, and earnest aspirings after him; it stirs up zeal, which is *flamma amoris*, love in a flame, to remove all obstacles which hinder the most intimate union with him; it produces joy, when the soul reposes itself in God, and with infinite sweetness possesses him; it causes the greatest diligence, alacrity, and resolution in all our ways to please him: for love is ever the spring and rule of all our actions; such as it is, such likewise will they be: thus we may see that God (as there is in him an union of all excellencies) challenges the most intense and vehement degree of our love, he being only fitted for it; and that our love being a superlative affection, is only proper to God; and therefore to love any creature without God, or in an equal manner to him, is to deify the creature, to place it in the room of God, and so it renders us guilty of idolatry in a spiritual sense. But such is the ignorance of men's minds, and the depravedness of their wills, that few there be who love God; it is true, there may be something like love in natural men to God, grounded upon the persuasion of his glorious being, and the goodness of his nature, which is not terrible to them; but when they consider his mercy is a holy mercy, and that it is never dispensed to the prejudice of his justice, though they cannot hate God for his goodness directly, yet they hate him with it; for although he is the perfection of beauty and goodness itself, yet they being evil, there is no congruity or conveniency between God and them; they love sin, and hate punishment: now God as *Author legis*, by the most strict laws forbids sin, and as *ultor peccati*, inflicts severe punishments; from hence it proceeds, the most lovely and sweet attributes of God cannot endear him to them; no more than the natural or moral excellencies of a

judge, the comeliness of his person, or his wisdom and knowledge can draw forth the love of a malefactor when he is condemned by him.

Moreover, since the general nature of sin is an eternal contrariety to the nature and will of God; the love of it must needs argue the hatred of God; for as the Lord Jesus requires an universal, cheerful and constant obedience, as the most clear evidence of love to him; "if you love me, keep my commandments;" so the argument will be as strong to conclude backward. If you keep not God's commandments, you hate him; to live in the practice of known sins, is a virtual and interpretative hatred of God.

2. The benefits which God bestows upon us deserve our love. How great an endearment did he pass upon us in our creation? We might have been admitted into the lowest form of creatures, and have only enjoyed the life of flies or worms; but "he made us little lower than the angels, and crowned us with glory and honour, and gave us dominion over all the works of his hands." Psal. 8. 5. Whereas the rest of the creatures were the acts of his power; the creation of man was an act of power and wisdom; in all the rest there was nothing, but "he spake the word, and they were made." Psal. 148. 5. But in the making of man there was a consultation about it, Gen. 1. "Let us make man;" he framed our bodies, so that all the parts conspire for the ornament and service of the whole: Psal. 139. 15. "Thine eye did see my substance being yet imperfect, and in thy book were all my members written;" and therefore Lactantius said truly, *hominem non patrem esse sed generandi ministrum*; man is only the instrument which the Lord doth use for the effecting of his purpose to raise the beautiful fabric of man's body: now if we are obliged to express the dearest love to our parents, with how much greater reason should we love God, who is the fountain of all our beings?

He hath breathed into man a spiritual, immortal, rational soul, which is more worth than the whole world; this is in some sort a spark and ray of divine brightness; it is capable of God's image, it is a fit companion for angels, to join with them in the praises of God, and enjoy a blessed eternity with them. It is capable of communion with God himself, who is the fountain of

life and happiness. The soul is endowed with those faculties which being terminated upon God, it enjoys an infinite and everlasting blessedness. The understanding by knowledge rests in God as the first and highest *in generi veri* ; the will by love embraces him as the last and greatest *in genere boni* ; and so receives perfection and satisfaction, which is the incommunicable privilege of the rational soul. Beasts can only converse with drossy and material objects, they are confined to earthly things ; but the soul of man may enjoy the possession and fruition of God, who is the supreme and sovereign good. Now this should inflame our love to God ; he formed our bodies, he inspired our souls. Moreover, if we consider our lives, we shall find a chain of mercy which reaches from one end to the other of them.

How many miracles of providence do we enjoy in our preservation ? how many unseen dangers do we escape ? how great are our daily supplies ? The provisions we receive, do serve not only for necessity, but for delight ; every day we have the provisions of meat and drink not only to cure hunger, and all our thirst, but to refresh the heart, and to make us cheerful in our work ; every hour is filled with the bounties of God : now what shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits ? he desires our love ; this is the most proper return we can make ; for love is of an opening and expansive quality calling forth the heart ; our love within should break forth to close with God's love without ; the love of obedience in us, with the love of favour and bounty in him. It is a principle of nature deeply implanted in the hearts of men, to return love for love ; nay, the very beasts are not deficient in this ; Isa. 1. 3. " the ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib : " those creatures which are of all the most stupid and heavy, respect their feeders, and express dumb signs of love unto them. How much more should we love God, who spreads our table, fills our cup, and causes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall on us ? It is an argument of secret atheism in the heart, that in the confluence of mercies we enjoy, we do not look up to the Author of them, as if common mercies were the effects of chance, and not of providence ; if a man constantly relieves our wants, we judge it the most barbarous disingenuity not to repay love to him ; but God loads us with his benefits

every day; his wisdom is always busied to serve his mercy, and his mercy to serve our necessities, but we are insensible and unaffected; and yet the meanest mercy as it comes from God hath an excellency stamped upon it. We should upbraid our souls for our coldness to God; every where we encounter sensible demonstrations of his love to us; in every moment of our lives we have some pledges of his goodness. Let us light our torch at this mountain of fire; let the renewed acts of his bounty constrain us to love him; we should love him for his excellency, though we had no benefit by him; nay, though he hated us, we are bound to love him; as he is truly amiable in himself; how much more when he draws us with the cords of a man, with bands of love? whosoever requites the love of God with hatred, (as every impenitent sinner doth) puts off the nature of man, and degenerates into a devil.

2. *Fear*; this is that eternal respect which is due to our Creator; an humble reverence we owe to him, as he is infinitely above us; the holy angels cover their faces when they have the clearest views of his glory: Isa. 6. 1, 2, 3. the Lord is represented as sitting on a throne, "and the seraphims stood about, each having six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain his feet, and with twain did he fly; and one cried to another, holy, holy, holy Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory:" the angels are pure and innocent creatures; they fear not his angry justice, but they adore his excellencies and perfections; he is a dread, when a most serene majesty. Penal fear is inconsistent with the joys of heaven, but the fear of admiration is perfected there; and in this sense the "fear of God continues for ever." Psal. 19. 9. In all our addresses to him we should compose our spirits, by the awful apprehension of that infinite distance which is between God and us. Eccles. 5. 2. "Let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth;" the greatest distance in nature is but an imperfect discovery how much we are beneath God; it is the effect of grace to represent the divine being and glory so to the soul, that in the most social duties it may have impressions of fear; Psal. 2. 11. "serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." We should fear his greatness and power, in whose hands our life and breath, and all

our ways are ; the fear of God having its actual force upon the soul, is operative and instrumental to holy walking, from whence the fear of God is taken in scripture for the whole duty of man, it being an introduction to it. "The fear of God and keeping his commandments" are joined together." Eccles. 12. 13. This is the *præpositus* which governs our actions according to God's will ; this is a watchful sentinel against the most pleasant temptations ; it kills delight in sin, (by which the integrity of most men is lost ;) for delight cannot dwell with fear ; this is the guard and security of the soul in the days of trouble ; the fear of God countermines the fear of men ; this cuts off base and unworthy complyings ; therefore the Lord brings this as an antidote against the base fear of men ; Isa. 51. 12, 13. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, that shall be made as grass ? and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that stretcheth forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ?" This exalts a christian above human frailty, and makes him despise the threatenings of the world, whereby many are terrified from their constancy. It is the most unreasonable thing to be cowards to men and fearless of God. Men have but finite power, and so they cannot do that hurt they would ; and they are under the divine providence, and therefore are disabled from doing that hurt, which otherwise they could do ; but the power of God is absolute and unconfin'd ; therefore our Saviour presses with vehemency upon his disciples, Matt. 10. 28. 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell : ' he lives for ever, and can punish for ever, therefore when duty and life cannot stand together, he that flies the danger by delivering up his soul, exchanges the pain of a moment for the torments of eternity : * Austin upbraids the folly of such ; ' they fear the prison, but they fear not hell ; they fear temporal torment, but they fear not the pains of unquenchable fire ; they fear the first but not the second death.'

3. *Dependence*, in respect of his all-sufficiency to supply our wants ; and omnipotency to secure us from dangers.

* *Timent carcerem, non timent gehennam, timent cruciatum temporalem, non pœnas igitur æterni ; timent modicum mori, non æternum mori.*

First. His all-sufficiency can supply our wants ; he is the sun, fountain, and mine of all that is good ; from hence the prophet glories in God, Habbak. 3. 17, 18. " Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." He expresses not only things for delight, as the " fruit of the vine and fig-tree," but things for necessity, as " the meat of the field," and the " flocks of the stall," and the utter failing of these together ; for otherwise the want of one might be supplied by the enjoyment of another. Now in the absolute loss of these supports and comforts of life, the prophet saw all things in God ; want of all outward things is infinitely recompensed in the presence of God : the sun needs not the glimmering light of the stars to make day ; God without the assistance of the creatures can make us really happy ; in the enjoying of him we have all things, and that to the greatest advantage. The things of this world deceive our expectations, and draw forth our corruptions ; but in God we enjoy them more refinedly ; and more satisfyingly ; the dregs of sin and sorrow being removed ; by possessing God there is no burden which we are not able to bear, but he takes it away, our wants, weakness and sufferings ; and there is no excellency of his which we are able to enjoy, but he conveys to us, his grace, his glory. There is true riches in his favour, true honour in his approbation, true pleasure in his peace. He is the treasure and triumph of the soul. Lam. 3. 24. " The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him : " he is such a portion, that all temporal crosses cannot hinder its influence on us, and his influxive presence makes heaven ; he is a portion that cannot be lost, he inseparably abides with the soul.

The real belief and application of this will keep a saint in a holy independency on earthly things ; * the flames which shall burn the world, cannot touch his portion ; he may stand upon its ruins, and say, I have lost nothing.

Moreover, this will keep the soul upright in the course of obedience ; for all the exorbitances and swervings from the rule

* Cum mundus exarserit, cogitat se nihil habere de tanta mole perdendum.

proceed from the apprehensions of some particular good in the creature, which draws men aside. Those who want the light of faith (which discovers God's all-sufficiency) only admire present and sensible things; and to obtain these, they depart from God; but the more eagerly they seek after these temporal good things, the further they run from the fountain of goodness, which alone can sweeten the best things we enjoy; and counterbalance their absence. The creatures are but of a limited benignity, the necessity of their number proves the meanness of their value; but one God answers all, he is an infinite and indefective good; he is for all the powers of soul and body, to hold them in their pleasant exercise, and to give them rest; he is alone able to impart happiness, and to preserve that happiness he imparts.

Secondly. His omnipotency can secure us from dangers. The creation is a standing monument of his almighty power; for what but omnipotency could out of nothing produce the beautiful fabric of heaven and earth? man cannot work without materials, but God doth; and that which exalts his power, is, that he made it by his word; "he spake the word, and they were made," saith the psalmist, Psal. 33. 9. There went no greater pains to the world's creation, than God's command.

Moreover, the world is preserved from perishing by the power of its Maker. Certainly, without the support of his mighty hand, the world had long before this time relapsed to its primitive nothing: many instances we have of his power, in those miraculous deliverances which he hath shown to his people in their extremity; sometimes by suspension of the works of nature: his dividing the red sea, and making it as a solid wall, that the Israelites might have a secure passage! his stopping the sun in its course, that Joshua might have time to destroy his enemies! his suspending the nature of the fire, that it might not so much as singe the garments of the three Hebrews! his shutting the mouths of the devouring lions, and returning Daniel in safety from that dreadful den! And are not all these, and many others of this kind, not only the pregnant testimonies of his love, but the everlasting characters of his omnipotency. Moreover, that which expresses the power of God with as great a lustre, is the turning of the hearts of many cruel enemies from their intended rage to favour his people; thus did he change the heart of Esau, who had resolved the death of his brother; that

instead of killing him, he expressed the greatest tenderness, and the most endearing affections unto him ; thus did he so sway the hearts of the Egyptians towards the oppressed Israelites, that instead of securing them under bondage, they encouraged their departure, by enriching them with jewels of silver and of gold. Exod. 12. 35. Now our duty is to glorify this power of God, by placing our trust on him. Psal. 121. 2, 3. " My help comes from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth ;" he will not suffer thy foot to be moved ; by dependance on God the soul is composed in the midst of the most apparent dangers ; as the upper region of the air is calm and serene, whatever storms are here below. Thus David expresses the same courage in all estates ; when he was retired into a cave to shelter himself from the fury of Saul, he sung the fifty-seventh Psalm which he then composed ; " my heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise ;" Psal. 57. 7. and afterwards when he triumphed over Hadadezer the King of Zebah, he composed the hundred and eighth Psalm, and sung the same words : " O God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise ;" Psal. 108. 1. faith taught him the same song in the cave, and on the throne ; in all our exigencies we should apply the power of God ; the cause of our perplexing fears, is our low apprehensions of God's power, and therefore when we are surrounded with difficulties and dangers, then we are surprised with terror and despondency ; whereas when there are visible means to rescue us, we lift up our heads ; but our duty is in the greatest extremities to glorify his power, and to refer ourselves to his goodness ; and though we cannot be certain that God will by miracles rescue us from dangers, as he did many of his people in former ages ; yet we are sure he will so abate the power and force of the most injurious enemies, as they shall not conquer the patience, nor break the hope of his people.

4. We owe perfect *submission* to God's will ; viz. subjection to his commands, and submission to his providence. 1. Subjection to his commands. As he is the first cause, so he is the supreme Lord ; he that gave us life, must give us law : God hath an absolute title to our service as Creator ; this made the psalmist desire the knowledge of God's commandments in order to his obedience. Psal. 119. 73. " Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me, give me understanding, that I may learn thy

commandments ;" he may learn this from the universal obedience of all creatures, those which are without reason, sense or life, inviolably observe his commands. Isa. 48. 13. " Mine hand hath laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens, when I call to them they stand up together," as prepared to execute his commands. The insensible parts of the world are so compliant with his will, as to contradict their proper natures to serve his glory ; fire descends from heaven at his command ; the fluid sea stands up as a solid wall in obedience to him ; this upbraids our degeneration and apostacy, that we who are most indebted to the goodness of our Creator, should prove disloyal and rebellious, when the inferior creatures with one consent serve and glorify him.

Lastly. We owe submission to the will of his providence ; there is no shadow of exception can be formed against his sovereignty, he may do by right whatever he can do by power, therefore we should acquiesce in his dispensations ; this consideration silenced David, Psal. 39. 9. " I held my tongue, and said nothing, because thou didst it ;" as the presence of a grave person in authority quiets a disordered multitude ; so the apprehension of God's supremacy composes our riotous thoughts and passions ; unquietness of spirit in troubles, springs from the ignorance of God, and of ourselves ; by impatience we cite God before our tribunal, and do as it were usurp his throne ; we set up an antiprovidence, as if his wisdom should be taught by our folly ; and sometimes in afflictions we eye the next cause, but do not look upward to the Sovereign Disposer of all things, like Balaam, who struck the ass, but did not see the angel which opposed him ;" thus from a brutish imagination we regard the visible instrument of our trouble, but consider not the providence of God in all ; from hence it is that our spirits are full of unquiet agitations ; we live continually upon self-created racks : now the humble acknowledgment of God's hand, and the submitting of ourselves to his will, as it glorifies God, so it gives ease to us ; as there is the greatest equity, so policy in our willing stooping to him, Rom. 14. 11. " As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God ;" he engages his life and honour for this : if there is not a voluntary, there must be a violent subjection to him ; the wilful man never wants woe ; the spring of our daily misery, as well as our sins

is, opposition to God's will ; but the cheerful resignation to his providence, what a blessed pill of rest is this to the soul ? what a sabbath from all those sinful and penal disturbances which discompose our spirits ; it is a lower heaven ; for as in the state of glory there is an unchangeable agreement between the will of the Creator and the creature, so according to the same measure and degree wherein we conform our wills to God's, we proportionably enjoy the holiness and blessedness of that state.