

A DISCOURSE UPON GOD'S DOMINION.

The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.—PSALM CIII. 19.

THE psalm begins with the praise of God, wherein the penman excites his soul to a right and elevated management of so great a duty: ver. 1, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name;' and because himself and all men were insufficient to offer up a praise to God, answerable to the greatness of his benefits, he summons in the end of the psalm, the angels and all creatures to join in concert with him.

Observe,

1. As man is too shallow a creature to comprehend the excellency of God, so he is too dull and scanty a creature to offer up a true praise to God, both in regard of the excellency of his nature, and the multitude and greatness of his benefits.

2. We are apt to forget divine benefits; our souls must therefore be often jogged and roused up. 'All that is within me,' every power of my rational, and every affection of my sensitive, part. All his faculties, all his thoughts. Our souls will hang back from God in every duty, much more in this, if we lay not a strict charge upon them. We are so void of a pure and entire love to God, that we have no mind to those duties. Wants will spur us on to prayer, but a pure love to God can only spirit us to praise. We are more ready to reach out a hand to receive his mercies, than to lift up our heart to recognise them after the receipt.

After the psalmist had summoned his own soul to this task, he enumerates the divine blessings received by him, to awaken his soul by a sense of them to so noble a work. He begins at the first and foundation mercy to himself, the pardon of his sin, and justification of his person, the renewing of his sickly and languishing nature: ver. 3, 'Who forgives all thy iniquities, and heals all thy diseases;' his redemption from death or eternal destruction; his expected glorification thereupon, which he speaks of with that certainty as if it were present: ver. 4, 'Who redeems thy life from destruction, who crowns thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.' He makes his progress to the mercy manifested to the church in protection of it against, or delivery of it from, oppressors: ver. 6, 'The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed;' in the discovery of his will and law, and the glory of his merciful name to it: ver. 7, 8, 'He made known his ways unto Moses, and his acts unto the children of Israel.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.' Which latter words may refer also to the free and unmerited spring of the benefits he had reckoned up, viz., the mercy of God, which he mentions also, ver. 10, 'He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities;' and then extols the perfection of divine mercy in the pardoning of sin, ver. 11, 12; the paternal tenderness of God, ver. 13; the eternity of his mercy, ver. 17; but restrains it to the proper object, ver. 11-17, to them that fear him, *i. e.* to them that believe in him; *fear* being the word commonly used for *faith* in the Old Testament, under the legal dispensation, wherein the spirit of bondage was more eminent than the spirit of adoption, and their fear more than their confidence.

Observe,

1. All the true blessings grow up from the pardon of sin: ver. 3, 'Who forgives all thine iniquities.' That is the first blessing, the top and crown of all other favours, which draws all other blessings after it, and sweetens all other blessings with it. The principal intent of Christ was expiation of sin, redemption from iniquity; the purchase of other blessings was consequent upon it. Pardon of sin is every blessing virtually, and in the root and spring it flows from the favour of God, and is such a gift as cannot be tainted with a curse, as outward things may.

2. Where sin is pardoned the soul is renewed: ver. 3, 'Who heals all thy diseases.' Where guilt is remitted, the deformity and sickness of the soul is cured. Forgiveness is a teeming mercy, it never grows single; when we have an interest in Christ, as bearing the chastisement of our peace, we receive also a balsam from his blood to heal the wounds we feel in our nature. Isa. liii. 5, 'The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.' As there is a guilt in sin, which binds us over to punishment, so there is a contagion in sin, which fills us with pestilent diseases; when the one is removed, the other is cured. We should not know how to love the one without the other. The renewing the soul is necessary for a delightful relish of the other blessings of God. A condemned malefactor infected with a leprosy, or any other loathsome distemper, if pardoned, could take little comfort in his freedom from the gibbet without a cure of his plague.

3. God is the sole and sovereign author of all spiritual blessings: 'Who forgives all thy iniquities, and heals all thy diseases.' He refers all to God, nothing to himself in his own merit and strength. *All*; not the pardon of one sin merited by me, not the cure of one disease can I owe to my own power, and the strength of my free will, and the operations of nature; he, and he alone, is the prince of pardon, the physician that restores me, the redeemer that delivers me; it is a sacrilege to divide the praise between God and ourselves. God only can knock off our fetters, expel our distempers, and restore a deformed soul to its decayed beauty.

4. Gracious souls will bless God as much for sanctification as for justification. The initials of sanctification (and there are no more in this life) are worthy of solemn acknowledgment. It is a sign of growth in grace when our hymns are made up of acknowledgments of God's sanctifying as well [as] pardoning grace. In blessing God for the one, we rather shew a love to ourselves; in blessing God for the other, we cast out a pure beam of love to God: because by purifying grace we are fitted to the service of our Maker, prepared to every good work which is delightful to him; by the other, we are eased in ourselves. Pardon fills us with inward peace, but sanctification fills us with an activity for God. Nothing is so capable of setting the soul in a heavenly tune as the consideration of God as a pardoner and as a healer.

5. Where sin is pardoned, the punishment is remitted: ver. 3, 4, 'Who forgives all thy iniquities, and redeems thy life from destruction.' A malefactor's pardon puts an end to his chains, frees him from the stench of the dungeon and fear of the gibbet. Pardon is nothing else but the remitting of guilt, and guilt is nothing else but an obligation to punishment, as a penal debt for sin. A creditor's tearing a bond, frees the debtor from payment and rigour.

6. Growth in grace is always annexed to true sanctification: ver. 3, 'So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.' Interpreters trouble themselves much about the manner of the eagle's renewing its youth and regaining its vigour. He speaks best that saith the psalmist speaks only according to the opinion of the vulgar, and his design was not to write a natural history.* Growth always accompanies grace, as well as it doth nature in the body; not that it is without its qualms and languishing fits, as children are not, but still their distempers make them grow; grace is not an idle, but an active, principle. It is not like the psalmist means it of the strength of the body, or the prosperity and stability of his government, but the vigour of his grace and comfort, since they are spiritual blessings here that are the matter of his song. The healing the disease conduceth to the sprouting up and flourishing of the body. It is the nature of grace to go 'from strength to strength.'

7. When sin is pardoned, it is perfectly pardoned: ver. 11, 12, 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.' The east and west are the greatest distance in the world, the terms can never meet together. When sin is pardoned, it is never charged again; the guilt of it can no more return than east can become west, or west become east.

8. Obedience is necessary to an interest in the mercy of God: ver. 17, 'The mercy of the Lord is to them that fear him, to them that remember his commandments to do them.' Commands are to be remembered in order to practice; a vain speculation is not the intent of the publication of them.

After the psalmist had enumerated the benefits of God, he reflects upon the greatness of God, and considers him on his throne, encompassed with the angels, the ministers of his providence: ver. 19, 'The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.' He brings in this of his dominion, just after he had largely treated of his mercy; either,

1. To signify that God is not only to be praised for his mercy, but for his majesty, both for the height and extent of his authority.

2. To extol the greatness of his mercy and pity. What I have said now, O my soul, of the mercy of God, and his paternal pity, is commended by his majesty; his grandeur hinders not his clemency; though his throne be high, his bowels are tender; he looks down upon his meanest servants from the height of his glory. Since his majesty is infinite, his mercy must be as great as his majesty. It must be a greater pity lodging in his breast than what is in any creature, since it is not damped by the greatness of his sovereignty.

3. To render his mercy more comfortable. The mercy I have spoken of, O my soul, is not the mercy of a subject, but of a sovereign. An executioner may torture a criminal, and strip him of his life, and a vulgar pity cannot relieve him, but the clemency of the prince can perfectly pardon him. It is that God who hath none above him to control him, none below him to resist him, that hath performed all the acts of grace to thee. If God by his

* Amyrald *in loc.*

supreme authority pardons us, who can reverse it? If all the subjects of God in the world should pardon us, and God withhold his grant, what will it profit us? Take comfort, O my soul, since God from his throne in the highest, and that God who rules over every particular of the creation, hath granted and sealed thy pardon to thee. What would his grace signify if he were not a monarch, extending his royal empire over everything, and swaying all by his sceptre?

4. To render the psalmist's confidence more firm in any pressures; ver. 15, 16. He had considered the misery of man in the shortness of his life, his place should know him no more, he should never return to his authority, employments, opportunities that death would take from him; but howsoever, the mercy and majesty of God were the ground of his confidence. He draws himself from poring upon any calamities which may assault him, to heaven, the place where God orders all things that are done on the earth. He is able to protect us from our dangers, and to deliver us from our distresses; whatsoever miseries thou mayest lie under, O my soul, cast thy eye up to heaven, and see a pitying God in a majestic authority; a God who can perform what he hath promised to them that fear him, since he hath a throne above the heaven, and bears sway over all that envy thy happiness and would stain thy felicity; a God whose authority cannot be curtailed and dismembered by any. When the prophet solicits the sounding of the divine bowels, he urgeth him by his dwelling in heaven, the habitation of his holiness: Isa. lxiii. 15, 'His kingdom ruleth over all.' There is none therefore hath any authority to make him break his covenant or violate his promise.

5. As an incentive to obedience. The Lord is merciful, saith he, 'to them that remember his commandments to do them,' ver. 17, 18; and then brings in the text as an encouragement to observe his precepts. He hath a majesty that deserves it from us, and an authority to protect us in it. If a king in a small spot of earth is to be obeyed by his subjects, how much more is God, who is more majestic than all the angels in heaven and monarchs on earth; who hath a majesty to exact our obedience, and a mercy to allure it! We should not set upon the performance of any duty without an eye lifted up to God as a great king. It would make us willing to serve him; the more noble the person, the more honourable and powerful the prince, the more glorious is his service. A view of God upon his throne will make us think his service our privilege, his precepts our ornaments, and obedience to him the greatest honour and nobility. It will make us weighty and serious in our performances; it would stake us down to any duty. The reason we are so loose and unmannerly in the carriage of our souls before God, is because we consider him not as a great King, Mal. i. 14. *Our Father which art in heaven*, in regard of his majesty, is the preface to prayer.

Let us now consider the words in themselves, 'The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.'

The Lord hath prepared. The word signifies *established* as well as *prepared*, and might so be rendered. Due preparation is a natural way to the establishment of a thing; hasty resolves break and moulder. This notes,

1. The peculiarity of his authority. He prepares it, none else for him. It is a dominion that originally resides in his nature, not derived from any by birth or commission; he alone prepared it. He is the sole cause of his own kingdom; his authority therefore is unbounded, as infinite as his nature. None can set laws to him, because none but himself prepared his throne for him. As he will not impair his own happiness, so he will not abridge himself of his own authority.

2. Readiness to exercise it upon due occasions. He hath prepared his

throne, he is not at a loss, he needs not stay for a commission or instructions from any how to act. He hath all things ready for the assistance of his people, he hath rewards and punishments; his treasures and axes, the great marks of authority lying by him, the one for the good, the other for the wicked. His mercy he keeps by him for thousands, Exod. xxxiv. 7; his arrows he hath prepared by him for rebels, Ps. vii. 13.

3. Wise management of it. It is prepared; preparations imply prudence; the government of God is not a rash and heady authority. A prince upon his throne, a judge upon the bench, manages things with the greatest discretion, or should be supposed so to do.

4. Successfulness and duration of it. He hath prepared or established it. It is fixed, not tottering; it is an immoveable dominion; all the strugglings of men and devils cannot overturn it, nor so much as shake it. It is established above the reach of obstinate rebels; he cannot be deposed from it, he cannot be mated in it. His dominion, as himself, abides for ever. And as his counsel, so his authority, shall stand; and 'he will do all his pleasure,' Isa. xlv. 10.

His throne in the heavens. This is an expression to signify the authority of God; for as God hath no member properly, though he be so represented to us, so he hath properly no throne. It signifies his power of reigning and judging. A throne is proper to royalty, the seat of majesty in its excellency, and the place where the deepest respect and homage of subjects is paid, and their petitions presented. That the throne of God is in the heavens, that there he sits as a sovereign, is the opinion of all that acknowledge a God. When they stand in need of his authority to assist them, their eyes are lifted up, and their heads stretched out to heaven; so his Son Christ prayed, 'he lifted up his eyes to heaven,' as the place where his Father sat in majesty as the most adorable object, John xvii. 1. Heaven hath the title of his throne, as the earth hath that of his footstool, Isa. lxvi. 1; and therefore heaven is sometimes put for the authority of God: Dan. iv. 26, 'After that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule,' i.e. that God, who hath his throne in the heavens, orders earthly princes and sceptres as he pleases, and rules over the kingdoms of the world.

His throne in the heavens notes,

1. The glory of his dominion. The heavens are the most stately and comely pieces of the creation; his majesty is there most visible, his glory most splendid, Ps. xix. 1; the heavens speak out with a full mouth his glory. It is therefore called 'the habitation of his holiness and of his glory,' Isa. lxiii. 15; there is the greater glister and brightness of his glory. The whole earth indeed is full of his glory, full of the beams of it; the heaven is full of the body of it, as the rays of the sun reach the earth, but the full glory of it is in the firmament. In heaven his dominion is more acknowledged by the angels, standing at his beck, and by their readiness and swiftness obeying his commands, going and returning as a flash of lightning, Ezek. i. 14. His throne may well be said to be in the heavens, since his dominion is not disputed there by the angels that attend him, as it is on earth by the rebels that arm themselves against him.

2. The supremacy of his empire. The heavens are the loftiest part of the creation, and the only fit palace for him. It is in the heavens his majesty and dignity are so sublime, that they are elevated above all earthly empires.

3. Peculiarity of this dominion. He rules in the heavens alone; there is some shadow of empire in the world; royalty is communicated to men as his substitutes. He hath disposed a vicarious dominion to men in his footstool the earth, he gives them some share of his authority; and therefore

the title of his name: Ps. lxxxii. 6, 'I have said, Ye are gods;' but in heaven he reigns alone, without any substitutes. His throne is there; he gives out his orders to the angels himself; the marks of his immediate sovereignty are there most visible. He hath no vicars-general of that empire. His authority is not delegated to any creature, he rules the blessed spirits by himself; but he rules men that are on his footstool by others of the same kind, men of their own nature.

4. The vastness of his empire. The earth is but a spot to the heavens. What is England in a map to the whole earth, but a spot you may cover with your finger; much less must the whole earth be to the extended heavens. It is but a little point or atom to what is visible; the sun is vastly bigger than it, and several stars are supposed to be of a greater bulk than the earth; and how many and what heavens are beyond, the ignorance of man cannot understand. If the throne of God be there, it is a larger circuit he rules in than can well be conceived. You cannot conceive the many millions of little particles there are in the earth; and if all put together be but as one point to that place where the throne of God is seated, how vast must his empire be! He rules there over the angels, which excel in strength, those hosts of his which do his pleasure, in comparison of whom all the men in the world, and the power of the greatest potentates, is no more than the strength of an ant or fly. Multitudes of them encircle his throne, and listen to his orders without roving, and execute them without disputing. And since his throne is in the heavens, it will follow that all things under the heaven are parts of his dominion; his throne being in the highest place, the inferior things of earth cannot but be subject to him; and it necessarily includes his influence on all things below, because the heavens are the cause of all the motion in the world, the immediate thing the earth doth naturally address to for corn, and wine, and oil, above which there is no superior but the Lord: Hosea ii. 21, 22, 'The earth hears the corn, wine, and oil; the heavens hear the earth, and the Lord hears the heavens.'

5. The easiness of managing this government. His throne being placed on high, he cannot but behold all things that are done below; the height of a place gives advantage to a pure and clear eye to behold things below it. Had the sun an eye, nothing could be done in the open air out of its ken. The throne of God being in heaven, he easily looks from thence upon all the children of men: Ps. xiv. 2, 'The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand.' He looks not down from heaven as if he were in regard of his presence confined there, but he looks down majestically, and by way of authority; not as the look of a bare spectator, but the look of a governor, to pass a sentence upon them as a judge. His being in the heavens, renders him capable of 'doing whatsoever he pleases,' Ps. cxv. 3. His throne being there, he can by a word, in stopping the motions of the heavens, turn the whole earth into confusion. In this respect it is said 'he rides upon the heaven in thy help,' Deut. xxxiii. 26; discharges his thunders upon men, and makes the influences of it serve his people's interest. By one turn of a cock, as you see in grottoes, he can cause streams from several parts of the heavens to refresh or ruin the world.

6. Duration of it. The heavens are incorruptible, his throne is placed there in an incorruptible state. Earthly empires have their decays and dissolutions. The throne of God outlives the dissolution of the world.

His kingdom rules over all. He hath an absolute right over all things within the circuit of heaven and earth. Though his throne be in heaven,

as the place where his glory is most eminent and visible, his authority most exactly obeyed, yet his kingdom extends itself to the lower parts of the earth. He doth not muffle and cloud up himself in heaven, or confine his sovereignty to that place; his royal power extends to all visible as well as invisible things, he is proprietor and possessor of all: Deut. x. 14, 'The heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that is there.' He hath right to dispose of all as he pleases. He doth not say his kingdom rules all that fear him, but 'over all;' so that it is not the kingdom of grace he here speaks of, but his natural and universal kingdom. Over angels and men, Jews and Gentiles, animate and inanimate things.

The psalmist considers God here as a great monarch and general, and all creatures as his hosts and regiments under him, and takes notice principally of two things.

1. The establishment of his throne, together with the seat of it: 'He hath prepared his throne in the heavens.'

2. The extent of his empire: 'His kingdom rules over all.'

This text, in all the parts of it, is a fit basis for a discourse upon the dominion of God; and the observation will be this,

Doct. God is sovereign Lord and King, and exerciseth a dominion over the whole world, both heaven and earth.

This is so clear, that nothing is more spoken of in Scripture. The very name *Lord* imports it; a name originally belonging to gods, and from them translated to others. And he is frequently called 'the Lord of hosts,' because all the troops and armies of spiritual and corporeal creatures are in his hands and at his service. This is one of his principal titles, and the angels are called 'his hosts,' verse 21, following the text, his camp and militia. But more plainly, 1 Kings xxii. 19, God is presented upon his throne, encompassed with all the hosts of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left, which can be understood of no other than of the angels that wait for the commands of their sovereign, and stand about, not to counsel him, but to receive his orders. The sun, moon, and stars are called his hosts, Deut. iv. 19, appointed by him for the government of inferior things. He hath an absolute authority over the greatest and the least creatures, over those that are most dreadful and those that are most beneficial, over the good angels that willingly obey him, over the evil angels that seem most incapable of government; and as he is thus Lord of hosts, he is the 'King of glory,' or a glorious king, Ps. xxiv. 10. You find him called 'a great King,' the 'Most High,' Ps. xcii. 1, the supreme Monarch, there being no dignity in heaven or earth but what is dim before him, and infinitely inferior to him, yea, he hath the title of '*only* king,' 1 Tim. vi. 15. The title of royalty truly and properly only belongs to him. You may see it described very magnificently by David at the free-will offering for the building of the temple: 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12, 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: thine is the kingdom, O God, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thy hand is power and might, and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength to all.' He hath an eminency of power or authority above all. All earthly princes received their diadems from him, yea, even those that will not acknowledge him, and he hath a more absolute power over them than they can challenge over their meanest vassals. As God hath a knowledge infinitely above our knowledge, so he hath a dominion incomprehensibly above any dominion of man, and by all the shadows drawn from the authority of one man over another, we can have but weak glimmerings of the authority and dominion of God.

There is a threefold dominion of God :

1. Natural ; which is absolute over all creatures, and is founded in the nature of God as Creator.

2. Spiritual or gracious, which is a dominion over his church as redeemed, and founded in the covenant of grace.

3. A glorious kingdom at the winding up of all, wherein he shall reign over all, either in the glory of his mercy, as over the glorified saints, or in the glory of his justice in the condemned devils and men. The first dominion is founded in nature ; the second, in grace ; the third, in regard of the blessed, in grace, in regard of the damned, in demerit in them, and justice in him.

He is Lord of all things, and always in regard of propriety : Ps. 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 everything that moves upon it, are his. He hath the sole right, and what right soever any others have is derived from him. In regard also of possession : Gen. 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,

I. I shall lay down some general propositions for the clearing and confirming it.

II. I shall shew wherein this right of dominion is founded.

III. What the nature of it is.

IV. Wherein it consists, and how it is manifested.

I. Some general propositions for the clearing and confirming of it.

1. We must know the difference between the might and 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 stronger than his prince, but he hath not the same authority as his prince. Worldly dominion may be seated, not in a brawny arm, but a sickly and infirm body, as knowledge and wisdom are distinguished. Knowledge respects the matter, being, and nature of a thing ; wisdom respects the harmony, order, and actual usefulness of a thing ; knowledge searcheth the nature of a thing, and wisdom employs that thing to its proper use. A man may have much knowledge and little wisdom, so a man may have much strength, and little or no authority. A greater strength may be settled in the servant, but a greater authority resides in the master ; strength is the natural vigour of a man. God hath an infinite strength, he hath a strength to bring to pass whatsoever he decrees ; he acts without fainting and weakness, Isa. 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 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 the perfection of dominion. They all bespeak him fit for it, and are discovered in the exercise of it (which hath been manifested in the discourses of those attributes we have passed through hitherto). His goodness fits him for it, because he can never use his authority but for the good of the creatures, and conducting them to their true end. His wisdom can never be mistaken in the exercise of it, his power can accomplish the decrees that flow from his absolute authority. What can be more rightful than the placing authority in such an infinite goodness, that hath bowels to pity as well as a sceptre to sway his subjects ! that hath a mind to contrive, and a will to regulate his contrivances for his own glory and his creatures' good, and an arm of power to bring to pass what he orders. Without this dominion some perfections, as justice and mercy, would lie in obscurity, and much of his wisdom would be shrouded from our sight and knowledge.

3. This of dominion, as well as that of power, hath been acknowledged by all. The high priest was to 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 confessed by the heathen in the name of Baal, given to their idols, which signifies Lord, and was not a name of one idol adored for a God, but common to all the eastern idols. God hath interwoven the notion of his sovereignty in the nature and constitution of man, in the noblest and most inward acts of his soul, in that faculty 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 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 considered as the highest authority in the world. It is as possible for him not to be God, as not to be supreme. Wherein can the exercise of his excellencies be apparent, but in his sovereign rule ? To fancy an infinite power without a supreme dominion, is to fancy a mighty senseless statue fit to be beheld, but not fit to be obeyed, as not being able, or having no right, to give out orders, or not caring for the exercise of it. God cannot be supposed to be the chief being, but he must be supposed to give laws to all, and receive laws from none ; and if

we suppose him with a perfection of justice and righteousness (which we must do, unless we would make a lame and imperfect God), we must suppose him to have an entire dominion, without which he could never be able to manifest his justice; and without a supreme dominion, he could not manifest the supremacy and infiniteness of his righteousness.

(1.) We cannot suppose God as creator, without supposing a sovereign dominion in him. No creature can be made without some law in its nature; if it had not law, it would be created to no purpose, to no regular end. It would be utterly unbecoming an infinite wisdom to create a lawless creature, a creature wholly vain, much less can a rational creature be made without a law. If it had no law, it were not rational; for, the very notion of a rational creature implies reason to be a law to it, and implies an acting by rule.* If you could suppose rational creatures without a law, you might suppose that they might blaspheme their Creator and murder their fellow-creatures, and commit the most abominable villanies destructive to human society without sin; for 'where there is no law, there is no transgression.' But those things are accounted sins by all mankind, and sins against the supreme being, so that a dominion and the exercise of it is so fast linked to God, so entirely in him, so intrinsic in his nature, that it cannot be imagined that a rational creature can be made by him without a stamp and mark of that dominion in his very nature and frame, it is so inseparable from God in his very act of creation.

(2.) It is such a dominion as cannot be renounced by God himself. It is so intrinsic and connatural to him, so inlaid in the nature of God, that he cannot strip himself of it, nor of the exercise of it, while any creature remains. It is preserved by him, for it could not subsist of itself; it is governed by him, it could not else answer its end. It is impossible there can be a creature which hath not God for its Lord. Christ himself, though in regard of his Deity equal with God, yet in regard of his created state, and assuming our nature, was God's servant, was governed by him in the whole of his office, acted according to his command and directions; God calls him his servant, Isa. xlii. 1. And Christ, in that prophetic psalm of him, calls God his Lord: Ps. xvi. 2, 'O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.' It was impossible it should be otherwise. Justice had been so far from being satisfied, that it had been highly incensed, if the order of things in the due subjection to God had been broke, and his terms had not been complied with. It would be a judgment upon the world, if God should give up the government to any else, as it is when he gives 'children to be princes,' Isa. iii. 4, *i. e.* children in understanding.

(3.) It is so inseparable that it cannot be communicated to any creature. No creature is able to exercise it, every creature is unable to perform all the offices that belong to his dominion. No creature can impose laws upon the consciences of men; man knows not the inlets into the soul, his pen cannot reach the inwards of man. What laws he hath power to propose to conscience, he cannot see executed; because every creature wants omniscience, he is not able to perceive all those breaches of the law, which may be committed at the same time in so many cities, so many chambers. Or suppose an angel, in regard of the height of his standing, and the insufficiency of walls, and darkness, and distance to obstruct his view, can behold men's actions, yet he cannot know the internal acts of men's minds and wills without some outward eruption and appearance of them. And if he be ignorant of them, how can he execute his laws? If he only understand the outward fact without the inward thought, how can he dispense a justice proportionable

* Maccov. Colleg Theolog. x. Disput. xviii. p. 6, 7, or thereabout.

to the crime ? He must needs be ignorant of that, which adds the greatest aggravation sometimes to a sin, and inflict a lighter punishment upon that which receives a deeper tincture from the inward posture of the mind, than another fact may do, which in the outward act may appear more base and unjust ; and so, while he intends righteousness, may act a degree of injustice. Besides, no creature can inflict a due punishment for sin ;* that which is due to sin, is a loss of the vision and sight of God ; but none can deprive any of that but God himself ; nor can a creature reward another with eternal life, which consists in communion with God, which none but God can bestow.

II. 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 the 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. Ps. 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 requires the first place in our acknowledgment and adorations. Upon this account God claims it : Isa. xli. 9, ' I am God, and there is none like me ; I will do all my pleasure.' And the prophet Jeremiah, upon the same account, acknowledgeth it : chap. 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 control the soul and mind, it is

* Macovii Colleg Theolog. Disp. xviii. p. 12, 13. † Raynaud, Theolog. Nat. p. 757.

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 anything base and unworthy. He hath a foreknowledge whereby he is able to order all things to answer his own glorious designs, and the end of his government, that nothing can go awry, nothing put him to a stand, and constrain him to meditate new counsels. So that if it could be supposed, that the world had not been created by him, that the parts of it had met together by chance, and been compacted into such a body, none but God, the supreme and most excellent being in the world, could have merited and deservedly challenged the government of it ; because nothing had an excellency of nature to capacitate it for it as he hath, or to enter into a contest with him for a sufficiency to govern.*

2. It is founded in his act of creation. He is the sovereign Lord, as he is the almighty Creator. The relation of an entire Creator induceth the relation of an absolute Lord ; he that gives being, life, motion, that is the sole cause of the being of a thing which was before nothing, that had nothing to concur with him, nothing to assist him, but by his sole power commands it to stand up into being, is the unquestionable lord and proprietor of that thing that hath no dependence but upon him. And by this act of creation, which extended to all things, he became universal Sovereign over all things. And those that waive the excellency of his nature as the foundation of his government, easily acknowledge the sufficiency of it upon his actual creation. His dominion of jurisdiction results from creation. When God himself makes an oration in defence of his sovereignty, Job xxxviii., his chief arguments are drawn from creation ; and Ps. 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 : Ps. lxxxix. 11, '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 services 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 dependence upon him in regard of their being and well-being. It depends not upon the election of men ; God hath a natural dominion over us as creatures, before he hath a dominion by consent over us as converts. As soon as ever anything began to be a creature, it was a vassal to God as a lord. Every man is acknowledged to have a right of possessing what he hath made, and a power of dominion over what he hath framed. He may either cherish his own work or dash it in pieces ; he may either add a greater comeliness to it, or deface what he hath already imparted. He hath a right of property in it ; no other man can without injury pilfer his own work from him. The work hath no propriety in itself, the right must lie in the immediate framer, or in the person that employed him. The first cause of everything hath an unquestionable dominion of propriety in it upon the score of justice. By the law of nations, the first finder of a country is esteemed the rightful possessor and lord of that country, and the first inventor of an art hath a right of exercising it. If a man hath a just claim of dominion over that thing whose materials were not of his framing, but from only the addition of a new figure from his skill, as a

* Camero. p. 371, Amyrall, Dissert. p. 72, 73.

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 passed over to God by another hand, he could not be the supreme Lord, nor could have an absolute right to dispose of them at his pleasure. That would have been the invasion of another's right. Besides, creation is the only first discovery of his dominion. Before the world was framed, there was nothing but God himself, and properly nothing is said to have dominion over itself; this is a relative attribute, reflecting on the works of God.* He had a right of dominion in his nature from eternity, but before creation he was actually Lord only of a nullity. Where there is nothing, it can have no relation; nothing is not the subject of possession nor of dominion. There could be no exercise of this dominion without creation. What exercise can a sovereign have without subjects? Sovereignty speaks a relation to subjects; and none is properly a sovereign without subjects. To conclude; from hence doth result God's *universal* dominion; for being maker of all, he is the ruler of all. And his *perpetual* dominion; for as long as God continues in the relation of Creator, the right of his sovereignty as Creator cannot be abolished.

3. As God is the final cause or end of all, he is Lord of all. The end hath a greater sovereignty in actions than the actor itself.† The actor hath a sovereignty over others in action, but the end for which any one works hath a sovereignty over the agent himself. A limner hath a sovereignty over the picture he is framing or hath framed, but the end for which he framed it, either his profit he designed from it, or the 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 in all the progress of his work; it is the first cause for which the whole work is wrought. Now God, in his actual creation of all, is the sovereign end of all: 'For thy pleasure they are and were created,' Rev. 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

* Stoughton, Righteous Man's Plea, Serm. vi. p. 28.

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

that, as I said before, if the world had been compacted together by a jumbling chance, without a wise hand, as some have foolishly imagined, none could have been an antagonist with God for the government of the world, but God, in regard of the excellency of his nature, would have been the rector of it, unless those atoms that had composed the world had had an ability to govern it. Since there could be no universal end of all things but God, God only can claim an entire right to the government of it; for though man be the end of the lower creation, yet man is not the end of himself and his own being, he is not the end of the creation of the supreme heavens, he is not able to govern them, they are out of his ken, and out of his reach. None fit in regard of the excellency of nature to be the chief end of the whole world but God, and therefore none can have a right to the dominion of it but God. In this regard, God's dominion differs from the dominion of all earthly potentates. All the subjects in creation were made for God as their end; so are not people for rulers, but rulers made for people, for their protection, and the preservation of order in societies.

4. The dominion of God is founded upon his preservation of things. Ps. xc. 3, 4, 'The Lord is a great King above all gods.' Why? 'In his hand are all the deep places of the earth.' While his hand holds things, his hand hath a dominion over them. He that holds a stone in the air exerciseth a dominion over its natural inclination in hindering it from falling. The creature depends wholly upon God in its preservation; as soon as that divine hand which sustains everything were withdrawn, a languishment and swooning would be the next turn in the creature. He is called Lord, *Adonai*, in regard of his sustentation of all things by his continual influx, the word coming of **יְהוָה**, which signifies a basis or pillar that supports a building. God is the Lord of all, as he is the sustainer of all by his power, as well as the creator of all by his word. The sun hath a sovereign dominion over its own beams, which depend upon it, so that if he withdraws himself, they all attend him, and the world is left in darkness. God maintains the vigour of all things, conducts them in their operations, so that nothing that they are, nothing that they have, but is owing to this preserving power. The Master of this great family may as well be called the Lord of it, since every member of it depends upon him for the support of that being he first gave them, and holds of his empire. As the right to govern resulted from creation, so it is perpetuated by the preservation of things.

5. The dominion of God is strengthened by the innumerable benefits he bestows upon his creatures. The benefits he confers upon us after creation are not the original ground of his dominion. A man hath not authority over his servant from the kindness he shews to him, but his authority commenceth before any act of kindness, and is founded upon a right of purchase, conquest, or compact. Dominion doth not depend upon mere benefits; then inferiors might have dominion over superiors. A peasant may save the life of a prince to whom he was not subject; he hath not therefore a right to step up into his throne and give laws to him. And children that maintain their parents in their poverty might then acquire an authority over them, which they can never climb to; because the benefits they confer cannot parallel the benefits they have received from the authors of their lives. The bounties of God to us add nothing to the intrinsic right of his natural dominion, they being the effects of that sovereignty, as he is a rewarder and governor. As the benefits a prince bestows upon his favourite increases not that right of authority, which is inherent in the crown, but strengthens that dominion as it stands in relation to the receiver, by increasing the obligation of the favourite to an observance of him, not only as his natural prince, but

his gracious benefactor. The beneficence of God adds, though not an original right of power, yet a foundation of a stronger upbraiding the creature if he walks in a violation and forgetfulness of those benefits, and pull in pieces the links of that ingenuous duty they call for; and an occasion of exercising of justice in punishing the delinquent, which is a part of his empire: Isa. i. 2, 'Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth: the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished children, and they have rebelled against me.' Thus the fundamental right as creator is made more indisputable by his relation as a benefactor, and more as being so after a forfeiture of what was enjoyed by creation. The benefits of God are innumerable, and so magnificent, that they cannot meet with any compensation from the creature; and therefore do necessarily require a submission from the creature, and an acknowledgment of divine authority. But that benefit of redemption doth add a stronger right of dominion to God, since he hath not only as a creator given them being, and life as his creatures, but paid a price, the price of his Son's blood, for their rescue from captivity, so that he hath a sovereignty of grace as well as nature; and the ransomed ones belong to him as redeemer as well as creator: 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, 'Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price,' therefore your body and your spirits are God's. By this he acquired a right of another kind, and brought us from that uncontrollable lordship we affected over ourselves by the sin of Adam, that he might use us as his own peculiar for his own glory and service; by this redemption there results to God a right over our bodies, over our spirits, over our services, as well as by creation; and to shew the strength of this right the apostle repeats it, 'you are bought,'—a purchase cannot be without a price paid,—but he adds price also, 'bought with a price.' To strengthen the title, purchase gave him a new right; and the greatness of the price established that right. The more a man pays for a thing, the more usually we say he deserves to have it, he hath paid enough for it. It was indeed price enough, and too much for such vile creatures as we are.

III. The third thing is, the nature of this dominion.

1. This dominion is independent. His throne is in the heavens; the heavens depend not upon the earth, nor God upon his creatures. Since he is independent in regard of his essence, he is so in his dominion, which flows from the excellency and fulness of his essence. As he receives his essence from none, so he derives his dominion from none; all other dominion, except paternal authority, is rooted originally in the wills of men. The first title was the consent of the people, or the conquest of others by the help of those people that first consented;* and, in the exercise of it, earthly dominion depends upon assistance of the subjects, and the members being joined with the head carry on the work of government, and prevent civil dissensions; in the support of it, it depends upon the subjects' contributions and taxes. The subjects in their strength are the arms, and in their purses the sinews of government. But God depends upon none in the foundation of his government; he is not a Lord by the votes of his vassals. Nor is it successively handed to him by any predecessor, nor constituted by the power of a superior; nor forced he his way by war and conquest, nor precariously attained it by suit or flattery, or bribing promises. He holds not the right of his empire from any other; he hath no superior to hand him to his throne, and settle him by commission. He is therefore called 'King of kings, and Lord of lords,' having none above him. 'A great King above all gods,' Ps. xciv. 3; needing no license from any when to act, nor direction how to act, or assist-

* Raynaud. Theolog. Natural. p. 760-762.

ance in his action. He owes not any of those to any person; he was not ordered by any other to create, and therefore receives not orders from any other to rule over what he hath created. He received not his power and wisdom from another, and therefore is not subject to any for the rule of his government. He only made his own subjects, and from himself hath the sole authority; his own will was the cause of their beings, and his own will is the director of their actions. He is not determined by his creatures in any of his motions, but determines the creatures in all. His actions are not regulated by any law without him, but by a law within him, the law of his own nature. It is impossible he can have any rule without himself, because there is nothing superior to himself. Nor doth he depend upon any in the exercise of his government; he needs no servants in it; when he uses creatures, it is not out of want of their help, but for the manifestation of his wisdom and power. What he doth by his subjects, he can do by himself: 'The government is upon his shoulder,' Isa. ix. 6, to shew that he needs not any supporters. All other governments flow from him, all other authorities depend upon him; *Dei gratiâ*, or *Dei providentiâ*, is in the style of princes. As their being is derived from his power, so their authority is but a branch of his dominion. They are governors by divine providence; God is governor by his sole nature. All motions depend upon the first heaven, which moves all; but that depends upon nothing. The government of Christ depends upon God's uncreated dominion, and is by commission from him; Christ assumed not this 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.

2. This dominion is absolute. If his throne be in the heavens, there is nothing to control him. If he be independent, he must needs be absolute, since he hath no cause in conjunction with him as Creator, that can share with him in his right, or retain 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.*

(1.) Absolute in regard of freedom and liberty.

[1.] Thus creation is a work of his mere sovereignty. He created because it was his pleasure to create, Rev. iv. 11. He is not necessitated to do this or that. He might have chosen whether he would have framed an earth, and heavens, and laid the foundations of his chambers in the waters. He was under no obligation to reduce things from nullity to existence.

[2.] Preservation is the fruit of his sovereignty. When he had called the world to stand out, he might have ordered it to return into its dark den of nothingness, ripped up every part of its foundation, or have given being to many more creatures than he did. If you consider his absolute sovereignty, why might he not have divested Adam presently of those rational perfections wherewith he had endowed him; and might he not have metamorphosed him into some beast, and elevated some beast into a rational nature? Why might he not have degraded an angel to a worm, and advanced a worm to the nature and condition of an angel? Why might he not have revoked that grant of dominion, which he had passed to man over all creatures? It was free to him to permit sin to enter into the earth, or to have excluded it out of the earth, as he doth out of heaven.

* Sueton. de Tiberio, cap. xxvii.

[3.] Redemption is a fruit of his sovereignty. By his absolute sovereignty he might have confirmed all the angels in their standing by grace, and prevented the revolt of any of their members from him; and when there was a revolt both in heaven and earth, it was free to him to have called out his Son, to assume the angelical, as well as the human nature, or have exercised his dominion in the destruction of men and devils, rather than in the redemption of any; he was under no obligation to restore either the one or the other.

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

[5.] Affliction is an act of his sovereignty. By this right of sovereignty may not God take away any man's goods, since they were his doles? As he was not indebted to us when he bestowed them, so he cannot wrong us when he removes them. He takes from us what is more his own than it is ours, and was never ours but by his gift, and that for a time only, not for ever. By this right he may determine our times, put a period to our days when he pleases, strip us of one member, and lop off another. Man's being was from him, and why should he not have a sovereignty to take what he had a sovereignty to give? Why should this seem strange to any of us, since we ourselves exercise an absolute dominion over those things in our possession which have sense and feeling, as well as over those that want it? Doth not every man think he hath an absolute authority over the utensils of his house, over his horse, his dog, to preserve, or kill him, to do what he pleases with him, without rendering any other reason than, *It is my own*? May not God do much more? Doth not his dominion over the works of his hands transcend that which a man can claim over his beast, that he never gave life unto? He that dares dispute against God's absolute right, fancies himself as much a god as his Creator; understands not the vast difference between the divine nature and his own, between the sovereignty of God and his own, which is all the theme God himself discourseth upon in those stately chapters, Job xxxviii., xxxix., &c., not mentioning a word of Job's sin, but only vindicating the rights of his own authority. Nor doth Job in his reply, chap. xl. 4, speak of his sin, but of his natural vileness as a creature in the presence of his Creator.

By this right God unstops the bottles of heaven in one place, and stops them in another, causing it 'to rain upon one city and not upon another,' Amos iv. 7; ordering the clouds to move to this or that quarter, where he hath a mind to be a benefactor or a judge.

[6.] Unequal dispensations are acts of his sovereignty. By this right he is patient toward those whose sins by the common voice of men deserve speedy judgments, and pours out pain upon those that are patterns of virtue to the world. By this he gives sometimes the worst of men an ocean of wealth and honour to swim in, and reduceth an useful and exemplary grace to a scanty poverty. By this he rules the kingdoms of men, and sets a crown upon the head of the basest of men, Dan. iv. 17, while he deposeth another that seemed to deserve a weightier diadem. This is as he is the Lord of the ammunition of his thunders, and the treasures of his bounty.

[7.] He may inflict what torments he pleases. Some say by this right of sovereignty he may inflict what torments he pleaseth upon an innocent person, which indeed will not bear the nature of a punishment as an effect of justice, without the supposal of a crime, but a torment as an effect of that sovereign right he hath over his creature, which is as absolute over his

work, as the potter's power is over his own clay, Jer. xviii. 6, Rom. ix. 21. May not the potter after his labour, either set his vessel up to adorn his house, or knock it in pieces, and fling it upon the dunghill, separate it to some noble use, or condemn it to some sordid service ?* Is the right of God over his creatures less than that of the potter over his vessel, since God contributed all to his creature, but the potter never made the clay, which is the substance of the vessel, nor the water, which was necessary to make it tractable, but only moulded the substance of it into such a shape ? The vessel that is framed, and the potter that frames it, differ only in life ; the body of the potter, whereby he executes his authority, is of no better a mould than the clay, the matter of his vessel ; shall he have no absolute power over that which is so near him, and shall not God over that which is so infinitely distant from him ? The vessel perhaps might plead for itself that it was once part of the body of a man, and as good as the potter himself, whereas no creature can plead it was part of God, and as good as God himself. Though there be no man in the world but deserves affliction, yet the Scripture sometimes lays affliction upon the score of God's dominion, without any respect to the sin of the afflicted person. James v. 15, speaking of a sick person, ' If he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him,' whereby is implied, that he might be struck into sickness by God without any respect to a particular sin, but in a way of trial, and that his affliction sprung not from any exercise of divine justice, but from his absolute sovereignty. And so in the case of the blind man, when the disciples asked for what sin it was, whether for his own or his parents' sin he was born blind : John ix. 3, ' Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents,' which speaks in itself not against the whole current of Scripture, but the words import thus much, that God, in this blindness from the birth, neither respected any sin of the man's own, nor of his parents, but he did it as an absolute sovereign to manifest his own glory in that miraculous cure, which was wrought by Christ. Though afflictions do not happen without the desert of the creature, yet some afflictions may be sent without any particular respect to that desert, merely for the manifestation of God's glory, since the creature was made for God himself, and his honour, and therefore may be used in a serviceableness to the glory of the Creator.

(2.) His dominion is absolute in regard of unlimitedness by any law without him. He is an absolute monarch that makes laws for his subjects, but is not bound by any himself, nor receives any rules and laws from his subjects for the management of his government. But most governments in the world are bounded by laws made by common consent. But when kings are not limited by the laws of their kingdoms, yet they are bounded by the law of nature, and by the providence of God. But God is under no law without himself ; his rule is within him, the rectitude and righteousness of his own nature ; he is not under that law he hath prescribed to man. ' The law was not made for a righteous man,' 1 Tim. i. 9, much less for a righteous God. God is his own law, his own nature is his rule ; as his own glory is his end, himself is his end, and himself is his law. He is moved by nothing without himself, nothing hath the dominion of a motive over him but his own will, which is his rule for all his actions in heaven and earth : Dan. iv. 32, ' He rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will ;' and Rom. ix. 18, ' He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.' As all things are wrought by him according to his own eternal ideas in his own mind, so all is wrought by him according to the inward motive in his own will, which was the manifestation of his own honour. The greatest motives

* Lessius, de Perfect. Divin. p. 66, 67.

therefore that the best persons have used, when they have pleaded for any grant from God, was his own glory, which would be advanced by an answer of their petition.

(3.) His dominion is absolute in regard of supremacy and uncontrollableness. None can implead him, and cause him to render a reason of his actions. He is the sovereign king: 'Who may say unto him, What dost thou?' Ecces. viii. 4. It is an absurd thing for any to dispute with God. Rom. ix. 20, 'Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?' Thou, a man, a piece of dust, to argue with God incomprehensibly above thy reason, about the reason of his works! 'Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, but not with him that fashioned them,' Isa. xlv. 9. In all the desolations he works, he asserts his supremacy to silence men. Ps. xlv. 10, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' Beware of any quarrelling motions in your minds; it is sufficient that I am God, that is supreme, and will not be impleaded, and censured or worded with by any creature about what I do. He is not bound to render a reason of any of his proceedings. Subjects are accountable to their princes, and princes to God, God to none; since he is not limited by any superior, his prerogative is supreme.

(4.) His dominion is absolute in regard of irresistibleness. Other governments are bounded by law, so that what a governor hath strength to do he hath not a right to do. Other governors have a limited ability, that what they have a right to do they have not always a strength to do, they may want a power to execute their own counsels. But God is destitute of neither; he hath an infinite right, and an infinite strength; his word is a law, he commands things to stand out of nothing, and they do so. 'He commanded,' or spake, *ὁ εἰπὼν*, 'light to shine out of darkness,' 2 Cor. iv. 6. There is no distance of time between his word, 'Let there be light, and there was light,' Gen. i. 3. Magistrates often use not their authority, for fear of giving occasion to insurrections, which may overturn their empire. But if the Lord will work, 'who shall let it?' Isa. xliii. 13. And if God will not work, who shall force him? He can check and overturn all other powers, his decrees cannot be stopped, nor his hand held back by any; if he wills to dash the whole world in pieces, no creature can maintain its being against his order. He sets 'the ordinances of the heavens, and the dominion thereof in the earth.' And 'sends lightnings, that they may go, and say unto him, Here we are,' Job xxxviii. 33, 35.

3. Yet this dominion, though it be absolute, is not tyrannical; but it is managed by the rules of wisdom, righteousness, and goodness. If his throne be in the heavens, it is pure and good, because the heavens are the purest parts of the creation, and influence by their goodness the lower earth. Since he is his own rule, and his nature is infinitely wise, holy, and righteous, he cannot do a thing but what is unquestionably agreeable with wisdom, justice, and purity. In all the exercises of his sovereign right, he is never unattended with those perfections of his nature. Might not God, by his absolute power, have pardoned men's guilt, and thrown the invading sin out of his creatures? But in regard of his truth pawned in his threatening, and in regard of his justice, which demanded satisfaction, he would not. Might not God, by his absolute sovereignty, admit a man into his friendship without giving him any grace? But in regard of the incongruity of such an act to his wisdom and holiness, he will not. May he not, by his absolute power, refuse to accept a man that desires to please him, and reject a purely innocent creature? But in regard of his goodness and righteousness he will not. Though innocence be amiable in its own nature, yet it is not necessary in

regard of God's sovereignty that he should love it; but in regard of his goodness it is necessary, and he will never do otherwise. As God never acts to the utmost of his power, so he never exerts the utmost of his sovereignty; because it would be inconsistent with those other properties which render him perfectly adorable to the creature. As no intelligent creature, neither angel nor man, can be framed without a law in his nature, so we cannot imagine God without a law in his own nature, unless we would fancy him a rude, tyrannical, foolish being, that hath nothing of holiness, goodness, righteousness, wisdom. If he made the heavens in wisdom, Ps. 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.

(1.) This dominion is managed by the rule of wisdom. What may appear to us to have no other spring than absolute sovereignty, would be found to have a depth of amazing wisdom and accountable reason, were our short capacities long enough to fathom it. When the apostle had been discoursing of the eternal counsels of God, in seizing upon one man and letting go another, in rejecting the Jews and gathering in the Gentiles, which appears to us to be the 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, 'Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' There are some things in matters of state that may seem to be acts of mere will, but if we were acquainted with the *arcana imperii*, the inward engines which moved them, and the ends aimed at in those undertakings, we might find a rich vein of prudence in them, to incline us to judge otherwise than bare arbitrary proceedings. The other attributes of power and goodness are more easily perceptible in the works of God than his wisdom. The first view of the creation strikes us with this sentiment, that the author of this great fabric was mighty and beneficial, but his wisdom lies deeper than to be discerned at the first glance without a diligent inquiry; as at the first casting our eyes upon the sea, we behold its motion, colour, and something of its vastness, but we cannot presently fathom the depth of it, and understand those lower fountains that supply that great ocean of waters. It is part of God's sovereignty, as it is of the wisest princes, that he hath a wisdom beyond the reach of his subjects; it is not for a finite nature to understand an infinite wisdom, nor for a foolish creature that hath lost his understanding by the fall, to judge of the reason of the methods of a wise counsellor. Yet those actions that savour 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 perfection of his nature? What perfection could have been discovered in so quick an annihilation, but that of his power in creating, and of his sovereignty in snatching away the being of his rational creature, before it had laid the methods of acting? What wisdom to make a world and a reasonable creature for no use? not to praise and honour him, but to be broken in pieces, and destroyed by him?

(2.) His sovereignty is managed according to the rule of righteousness. Worldly princes often fancy tyranny and oppression to be the chief marks of sovereignty, and think their sceptres not beautiful till dyed in blood, nor the throne secure till established upon slain carcases. But 'justice and judgment are the foundation of the throne' of God, Ps. lxi. 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,' Ps. 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 unsearchable wisdom of it, Rom. xi. 33. 'In all his ways he is righteous,' Ps. 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 anything but what is agreeable to it, and becoming his other perfections. Though he be an absolute sovereign, he is not an arbitrary governor: 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' Gen. 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 the earth. The heathen poets represented their chief god, Jupiter, with Themis, or Right, sitting by him upon his throne in all his orders. God cannot by his absolute sovereignty command some things, because they are directly against unchangeable righteousness; as to command a creature to hate, or blaspheme the Creator, not to own him, nor praise him. It would be a manifest unrighteousness to order the creature not to own him, upon whom he depends both in its being and well-being. This would be against that natural duty which is indispensably due from every rational creature to God. This would be to order him to lay aside his reason while he retains it, to disown him to be the Creator while man remains his creature. This is repugnant to the nature of God, and the true nature of the creature; or to exact anything of man but what he had given him a capacity, in his original nature, to perform. If any command were above our natural power, it would be unrighteous, as to command a man to grasp the globe of the earth, to stride over the sea, to lave out the waters of the ocean, these things are impossible, and become not the righteousness and wisdom of God to enjoin. There can be no obligation on man to an impossibility. God had a free dominion over nullity before the creation, he could call it out into the being of man and beast: but he could not do anything in creation foolishly, because of his infinite wisdom, nor could he by the right of his absolute sovereignty make man sinful, because of his infinite purity. As it is impossible for him not to be sovereign, it is impossible for him to deny his deity and his purity. It is lawful for God to do what he will, but his will being ordered by the righteousness of his nature, as infinite as his will, he cannot do anything but what is just; and therefore, in his dealing with men, you find him in Scripture submitting the reasonableness and equity of

his proceedings to the judgment of his depraved creatures, and the inward dictates of their own 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 anything which savours of weakness; and what detracting is it from his authority that he cannot do anything unseemly for the dignity of his nature! It is rather from the infiniteness of his righteousness than the straitness of his authority; at most, it is but a voluntary bounding his dominion by the law of his own holiness.

(3.) His sovereignty is managed according to the rule of goodness. Some potentates there have been in the world, that have loved to suck the blood and drink the tears of their subjects, that would rule more by fear than love,† like Clearchas, the tyrant of Heraclia, who bore the figure of a thunderbolt instead of a sceptre, and named his son *Thunder*, thereby to tutor him to terrify his subjects. But as God's throne is a throne of holiness, so it is a 'throne of grace,' Heb. 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 transcendent over us, yet the majesty of his government is tempered with an unspeakable goodness. He acts not so much as an absolute Lord, as a gracious sovereign and obliging benefactor. He delights not to make his subjects slaves, exacts not of them any servile and fearful, but a generous and cheerful, obedience. He requires them not to fear or worship him so much for his power as his goodness. He requires not of a rational creature 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 laws as sweet as honey or the honeycomb 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 unbecom-

* Qu. 'cannot'?—Ed.

† Causin. Poly. Histor. lib. iv. cap. xxii.

seeming his other perfections, which render him majestic and adorable. To afflict an innocent creature for his own good, or for the good of the world, as in the case of the Redeemer, is so far from being against goodness, that it is the highest testimony of his tender bowels to the sons of men. God, though he be mighty, 'withdraws not his eyes,' *i. e.* his tender respect, 'from the righteous,' Job xxxvi. 5, 7-10. 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 Fabricius, You may as soon remove the sun from its course as Fabricius from his honesty, may be [said] of God, You may as soon dash in pieces his throne, as separate his goodness from his sovereignty.

4. Proposition. 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, *τῷ δὲ βασιλεὶ τῶν αἰώνων*. And the same word is 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. The Pyrenean mountains divide France from Spain, and the Alps Italy from France. None are called kings absolutely, but kings of this or that place. But God is *the King*, the spacious firmament limits not his dominion. If we could suppose him bounded by any place in regard of his presence, yet he could never be out of his own dominion; whatsoever he looks upon, wheresoever he were, would be under his rule. Earthly kings may step out of their own country into the territory of a neighbour prince, and as one leaves his country so he leaves his dominion behind him; but heaven and earth, and every particle of both, is the territory of God. 'He hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.'

(1.) The heaven of angels and other excellent creatures belong to his authority. He is principally called the 'Lord of hosts,' in relation to his entire command over the angelical legions. Therefore, verse 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 hosts 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 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: Ps. 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 battalion ; or 'he calls them by name,' *i. e.* he imposeth names upon them, a sign of dominion, the giving names to the inferior creatures being the first act of Adam's derivative dominion over them. These are under the sovereignty of God. The stars by their influences fight against Sisera, Judges 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, vapours, whereof hail and snow are formed, are part of the army, and do not only receive but fulfil his word of command, Ps. 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 going and returning. If he says, Go, they go ; if he say, Come, they come ; if he say, Do this, they gird up their loins, and stand stiff to their duty.

(2.) The hell of devils belong to his authority. They have cast themselves out of the arms of his grace into the furnace of his justice ; they have by their revolt forfeited the treasure of his goodness, but cannot exempt themselves from the sceptre of his dominion. When they would not own him as a Lord Father, they are under him as Lord Judge ; they are cast out of his affection, but not freed from his yoke. He rules over the good angels as his subjects, over the evil ones as his rebels. In whatsoever relation he stands, either as a friend or enemy, he never loses that of a Lord. A prince is the lord of his criminals, as well as of his loyalest subjects. By this right of his sovereignty, he uses them to punish some, and be the occasion of benefit to others : on the wicked he employs them as instruments of vengeance ; towards the godly, as in the case of Job, as an instrument of kindness for the manifestation of his sincerity against the intentions 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 for 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, Ps. 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.

(3.) The earth, of men and other creatures, belong to his authority, Ps. xlvii. 7. God is King 'of all the earth,' and rules to the ends of it, Ps. 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.

* Suarez. vol. ii. lib. viii. cap. xx. p. 736.

Pedum positio was the sign of the possession of a piece of land, and the dominion of the possessor of it, and land was resigned by such a ceremony, as now by the delivery of a twig or turf.*

But his dominion extends,

[1.] Over the least creatures. All the creatures of the earth are listed in Christ's muster-roll, and make up the number of his regiments. He hath a host on earth as well as in heaven: Gen. ii. 1, 'The heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them;' and they are 'all his servants,' Ps. cxix. 91, and move at his pleasure. And he vouchsafes the title of his army to the locust, caterpillar, and palmer-worm, Joel ii. 25, and describes their motions by military words, 'climbing the walls,' 'marching,' not 'breaking their ranks,' verse 7. He hath the command as a great general over the highest angel, and the meanest worm; all the kinds of the smallest insects he presseth for his service. By this sovereignty he muzzled the devouring nature of the fire, to preserve the three children, and let it loose to consume their adversaries; and if he speak the word, the stormy waves are hush, as if they had no principle of rage within them, Ps. lxxxix. 9. Since the meanest creature attains its end, and no arrow that God hath by his power shot into the world, but hits the mark he aimed at, we must conclude that there is a sovereign hand governs all. Not a spot of earth, or air, or water, in the world, but is his possession; not a creature in any element, but is his subject.

[2.] His dominion extends over men. It extends over the highest potentate as well as the meanest peasant; the proudest monarch is no more exempt than the most languishing beggar. He lays not aside his authority to please the prince, nor strains it up to terrify the indigent: 'He accepts not the persons of princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor: for they are all the work of his hands,' Job xxxiv. 19. Both the powers and weaknesses, the gallantry and peasantry, of the earth, stand and fall at his pleasure. Man in innocence was under his authority as his creature, and man in his revolt is further under his authority as a criminal; as a person is under the authority of a prince as a governor, while he obeys his laws, and further under the authority of the prince as a judge, when he violates his laws. Man is under God's dominion in every thing, in his settlement, in his calling, in the ordering his very habitation: Acts xvii. 26, 'He determines the bounds of their habitations.' He never yet permitted any to be universal monarch in the world, nor over the fourth part of it, though several, in the pride of their heart, have designed and attempted it. The pope, who hath bid the fairest for it in spirituals, never attained it; and when his power was most flourishing, there were multitudes that would never acknowledge his authority.

[3.] But especially this dominion, in the peculiarity of its extent, is seen in the exercise of it over the spirits and hearts of men. Earthly governors have by his indulgence a share with him in a dominion over men's bodies, upon which account he graceth princes and judges with the title of gods, Ps. lxxxii. 6; but the highest prince is but a prince 'according to the flesh,' as the apostle calls masters in relation to their servants, Col. iii. 22.

God is the sovereign; man rules over the beast in man, the body; and God rules over the man in man, the soul. It sticks not in the outward surface, but pierceth to the inward marrow. It is impossible God should be without this; if our wills were independent on him, we were in some sort equal with himself, in part gods as well as creatures. It is impossible a crea-

* Boldu. *in loc.*

ture, either in whole or in part, can be exempted from it, since he is the fashioner of hearts as well as of bodies. He is the Father of spirits, and therefore hath the right of a paternal dominion over them. When he established man lord of the other creatures, he did not strip himself of the propriety; and when he made man a free agent, and lord of the acts of his will, he did not divest himself of the sovereignty.

His sovereignty is seen,

(1.) In gifting of the spirits of men. Earthly magistrates have hands too short, to inspire the hearts of their subjects with worthy sentiments. When they confer an employment, they are not able to convey an ability with it fit for the station. They may as soon frame a statue of liquid water, and gild or paint it over with the costliest colours, as impart to any a state head for a state ministry. But when God chooseth a Saul from so mean an employment as seeking of asses, he can treasure up in him a spirit fit for government; and fire David, in age a stripling, and by education a shepherd, with courage to encounter and skill to defeat a massy Goliath; and when he designs a person for glory to stand before his throne, he can put a new and a royal spirit into him, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. God only can infuse habits into the soul, to capacitate it to act nobly and generously.

(2.) His sovereignty is seen in regard of the inclinations of men's wills. No creature can immediately work upon the will, to guide it to what point he pleaseth, though mediately it may, by proposing reasons which may master the understanding, and thereby determine the will; but God bows the hearts of men by the efficacy of his dominion to what centre he pleaseth. When the more over-weening sort of men, that thought their own heads as fit for a crown as Saul's, scornfully despised him, yet God touched the hearts of a band of men, to follow and adhere to him, 1 Sam. x. 26, 27. When the antichristian whore shall be ripe for destruction, God shall 'put it into the heart' of the ten horns or kings 'to hate the whore, burn her with fire, and fulfil his will,' Rev. xvii. 16, 17. He 'fashions the hearts alike,' and tunes one string to answer another, and both to answer his own design, Ps. xxxiii. 15. And while men seem to gratify their own ambition and malice, they execute the will of God by his secret touch upon their spirits, guiding their inclinations to serve the glorious manifestation of his truth. While the Jews would, in a reproachful disgrace to Christ, crucify two thieves with him, to render him more incapable to have any followers, they accomplished a prophecy, and brought to light a mark of the Messiah, whereby he had been characterized in one of their prophets, Isa. liii. 12, that he should be 'numbered among transgressors.' He can make a man of not willing willing; the wills of all men are in his hand, *i. e.* under the power of his sceptre, to retain or let go upon this or that errand, to bend this or that way, as water is carried by pipes to what house or place the owner of it is pleased to order: Prov. xxi. 1, 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of waters, he turns it whithersoever he will,' without any limitation. He speaks of the heart of princes, because, in regard of their height, they seem to be more absolute and impetuous, as waters; yet God holds them in his hand, under his dominion, turns them to acts of clemency or severity like waters, either to overflow and damage, or to refresh and fructify. He can convey a spirit to them, or cut it off from them, Ps. lxxvi. 12. It is with reference to his efficacious power, in graciously turning the heart of Paul, that the apostle breaks off his discourse of the story of his conversion, and breaks out into a magnifying and glorifying of God's dominion: 1 Tim. i. 17, 'Now unto the King eternal, &c., be honour and glory for ever and ever.' Our hearts are more subject to the divine sovereignty than our members in their

motions are subject to our own wills. As we can move our hand east or west to any quarter of the world, so can God bend our wills to what mark he pleases. The second cause in every motion depends upon the first, and that will being a second cause, may be furthered or hindered in its inclinations or executions by God; he can bend or unbend it, and change it from one actual inclination to another. It is as much under his authority and power to move or hinder, as the vast engine of the heavens is in its motion or standing still, which he can effect by a word. The work depends upon the workman, the clock upon the artificer, for the motions of it.

(3.) His dominion is seen in regard of terror or comfort. The heart or conscience is God's special throne on earth, which he hath reserved to himself, and never indulged human authority to sit upon it. He solely orders this in ways of conviction or comfort. He can flash terror into men's spirits in the midst of their earthly jollities, and put death into the pot of conscience, when they are boiling up themselves in a high pitch of worldly delights; and can raise men's spirits above the sense of torment under racks and flames. He can draw a handwriting, not only in the outward chamber, but the inward closet, bring the rack into the inwards of a man. None can infuse comfort when he writes bitter things, nor can any fill the heart with gall when he drops in honey. Men may order outward duties, but they cannot unlock the conscience, and constrain men to think them duties, which they are forced by human laws outwardly to act. And as the laws of earthly princes are bounded by the outward man, so do their executions and punishments reach no further than the case of the body. But God can run upon the inward man as a giant, and inflict wounds and gashes there.

5. Proposition. It is an eternal dominion. In regard of the exercise of it, it was not from eternity, because there was not from eternity any creature under the government of it; but in regard of the foundation of it, his essence, his excellency, it is eternal; as God was from eternity almighty, but there was no exercise or manifestation of it till he began to create. Men are kings only for a time, their lives expire like a lamp, and their dominion is extinguished with their lives; they hand their empire by succession to others, but many times it is snapped off before they are cold in their graves. How are the famous empires of the Chaldeans, Medes, Persians, and Greeks mouldered away, and their place knows them no more! And how are the wings of the Roman eagle cut, and that empire which overspread a great part of the world hath lost most of its feathers, and is confined to a narrower compass! The dominion of God flourisheth from one generation to another. 'He sits King for ever,' Ps. xxix. 10; his *session* signifies the establishment, and *for ever* the duration, and he sits *now*; his sovereignty is as absolute, as powerful as ever. How many lords and princes hath this or that kingdom had? in how many families hath the sceptre lodged? whenas God hath had an uninterrupted dominion. As he hath been always the same in his essence, he hath been always glorious in his sovereignty. Among men, he that is lord to-day may be stripped of it to-morrow. The dominions in the world vary: he that is a prince may see his royalty upon the wings, and feel himself laden with fetters; and a prisoner may be 'lifted from his dungeon' to a throne. But there can be no diminution of God's government: 'His throne is from generation to generation,' Lament. v. 19; it cannot be shaken. His sceptre, like Aaron's rod, is always green; it cannot be wrested out of his hands; none raised him to it, none therefore can depose him from it; it bears the same splendour in all human affairs; he is an eternal, an immortal King, 1 Tim. i. 17. As he is eternally mighty, so he is eternally sovereign; and being an eternal king, he is a king that gives not a

momentary and perishing, but a durable and everlasting, life to them that obey him; a durable and eternal punishment to them that resist him.

IV. Wherein this dominion and sovereignty consists, and how it is manifested.

1. 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 can only prescribe man his duty, and establish the rule of it; hence the law is called, 'the royal law,' James 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 lawgiver, 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 men's moral subjection to him and dependence on him. His sovereignty doth not appear so much in his promises as in his precepts.* A man's power over another is not discovered by promising, for a promise doth not suppose the promiser either superior or inferior to the person to whom the promise is made; it is not an exercising authority over another, but over a man's self. No man forceth another to the acceptance of his promise, but only proposeth and encourageth to an embracing of it. But commanding supposeth always an authority in the person giving the precept; it 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 lawgiver, both as they were a church and a commonwealth. As a church, he gave them ceremonial laws, for the regulating their worship; as a state, he gave them judicial laws, for the ordering their civil affairs; and as both, he gave them moral laws, upon which both the laws of the church and state were founded.

This dominion of God in this regard will be manifest,

(1.) In the supremacy of it. The sole power of making laws doth originally reside in him: James iv. 12, 'There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.' By his own law he judges of the eternal states of men, and no law of man is obligatory, but as it is agreeable to the laws of this supreme Lawgiver, and pursuant to his righteous rules for the government of the world. The power that the potentates of the world have to make laws, is but derivative from God. If their dominion be from him, as it is, for 'by him kings reign,' Prov. 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, when 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. The power of giving laws was acknowledged by the heathen to be solely in God by way of original; and therefore

* Suarez. de Legib. p. 23.

the greatest lawgivers among the heathen pretended their laws to be received from some deity, or supernatural power, by special revelation. Now, whether they did this seriously, acknowledging themselves this part of the dominion of God (for it is certain, that whatsoever just orders were issued out by princes in the world, was by the secret influence of God upon their spirits: Prov. viii. 15, 'By me princes decree justice,' by the secret conduct of divine wisdom), or whether they pretended it only as a public engine, to enforce upon people the observance of their decrees, and gain a greater credit to their edicts, yet this will result from it, that the people in general entertained this common notion, that God was the great lawgiver of the world. The first founders of their societies could never else have so absolutely gained upon them by such a pretence. There was always a revelation of a law from the mouth of God in every age. The exhortation of Eliphaz to Job, chap. 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.

(2.) The dominion of God is manifest in the extent of his laws. As he is the governor and sovereign of the whole world, so he enacts laws for the whole world. One prince cannot make laws for another, unless he makes him his subject by right of conquest. Spain cannot make laws for England, or England for Spain. But God having the supreme government, as king over all, is a lawgiver to all, to irrational as well as rational creatures: the 'heavens have their ordinances,' Job 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.

(3.) The dominion of God is manifest in the reason of some laws, which seem to be nothing else than purely his own will. Some laws there are for which a reason may be rendered from the nature of the thing enjoined, as to love, honour, and worship God. For others, none but this, God will have it so. Such was that positive law to Adam, of not eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Gen. ii. 17, which was merely an asserting his own dominion, and was different from that law of nature God had written in his heart. No other reason of this seems to us but a resolve to try man's obedience in a way of absolute sovereignty, and to manifest his right over all creatures, to reserve what he pleased to himself, and permit the use of what he pleased to man, and to signify to man that he was to

depend on him who was his Lord, and not on his own will. There was no more hurt in itself for Adam to have eaten of that than of any other in the garden, the fruit was pleasant to the eye and good for food; but God would shew the right he had over his own goods, and his authority over man, to reserve what he pleases of his own creation from his touch; that since man could not claim a propriety in anything, he was to meddle with nothing but by the leave of his sovereign, either discovered by a special or general license. Thus God shewed himself the Lord of man, and that man was but his steward to act by his orders. If God had forbidden man the use of more trees in the garden, his command had been just, since as a sovereign Lord he might dispose of his own goods; and when he had granted him the whole compass of that pleasant garden, and the whole world round about for him and his posterity, it was a more tolerable exercise of his dominion to reserve this one tree as a mark of his sovereignty, when he had left all others to the use of Adam. He reserved nothing to himself as Lord of the manor but this; and Adam was prohibited nothing else but this one, as a sign of his subjection. Now, for this no reason can be rendered by any man, but merely the will of God; this was merely a fruit of his dominion.

For the moral laws a reason may be rendered. To love God hath reason to enforce it besides God's will, viz., the excellency of his nature, and the greatness and multitudes of his benefits; to love our neighbour hath enforcing reasons, viz., the conjunction in blood, and the preservation of human society, and the need we may stand in of their love ourselves. But no reason can be assigned of this positive command about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but merely the pleasure of God. It was a branch of his pure dominion to try man's obedience, and a mark of his goodness to try it by so easy and light a precept, when he might have extended his authority further. Had not God given this or the like order, his absolute dominion had not been so conspicuous. It is true, Adam had a law of nature in him, whereby he was obliged to perpetual obedience; and though it was a part of God's dominion to implant it in him, yet his supreme dominion over the creatures had not been so visible to man but by this, or a precept of the same kind. What was commanded or prohibited by the law of nature did bespeak a comeliness in itself, it appeared good or evil to the reason of man; but this was neither good nor evil in itself, it received its sole authority from the absolute will of God, and nothing could result from the fruit itself, as a reason why man should not taste it, but only the sole will of God. And as God's dominion was most conspicuous in this precept, so man's obedience had been most eminent in observing it; for in his obedience to it, nothing but the sole power and authority of God, which is the proper rule of obedience, could have been respected, not any reason from the thing itself.

To this we may refer some other commands, as that of appointing the time of solemn and public worship the seventh day. Though the worship of God be a part of the law of nature, yet the appointing a particular day, wherein he would be more formally and solemnly acknowledged than on other days, was grounded upon his absolute right of legislation; for there was nothing in the time itself that could render that day more holy than another, though God respected his finishing the work of creation in his institution of that day, Gen. ii. 3. Such were the ceremonial commands of sacrifices and washings under the law, and the commands of sacraments under the gospel; the one to last till the first coming of Christ and his passion, the other to last till the second coming of Christ and his triumph. Thus he made natural and unavoidable uncleannesses to be sins, and the

touching a dead body to be pollution, which in their own nature were not so.

(4.) The dominion of God appears in the moral law, and his majesty in publishing it. As the law of nature was writ by his own fingers in the nature of man, so it was engraven by his own finger in the tables of stone, Exod. xxxi. 18, which is very emphatically expressed to be a mark of God's dominion. Chap. xxxii. 16, 'And the tables were the work of God; and the writing was the writing of God, engraven upon the tables.' And when the first tables were broken, though he orders Moses to frame the tables, yet the writing of the law he reserves to himself, chap. xxxiv. 1. It is not said of any part of the Scripture that it was writ by the finger of God, but only of the Decalogue. Herein he would have his sovereignty eminently appear; it was published by God in state, with a numerous attendance of his heavenly militia, Deut. xxxii. 2. And the artillery of heaven was shot off at the solemnity, and therefore it is called 'a fiery law,' coming 'from his right hand,' *i. e.* his sovereign power. It was published with all the marks of supreme majesty.

(5.) The dominion of God appears in the obligation of the law, which reacheth the conscience. The laws of every prince are framed for the outward conditions of men; they do not by their authority bind the conscience, and what obligations do result from them upon the conscience is either from their being the same immediately with divine laws, or as they are according to the just power of the magistrate, founded on the law of God. Conscience hath a protection from the King of kings, and cannot be arrested by any human power. God hath given man but an authority over half the man, and the worst half too, that which is of an earthly origin; but reserved the authority over the better and more heavenly half to himself. The dominion of earthly princes extends only to the bodies of men, they have no authority over the soul, their punishment and rewards cannot reach it. And therefore their laws by their single authority cannot bind it, but as they are coincident with the law of God, or as the equity of them is subservient to the preservation of human society, a regular and righteous thing, which is the divine end in government, and so they bind as they have a relation to God as the supreme magistrate. The conscience is only intelligible to God in its secret motions, and therefore only guidable by God; God only pierceth into the conscience by his eye, and therefore only can conduct it by his rule. Man cannot tell whether we embrace this law in our heart and consciences, or only in appearance. He only can judge it, Luke 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 raze out the law God hath stamped upon it. They cannot put a *supersedeas* to the writ of conscience, or stop its mouth with a *noli prosequi*. They can make no addition by their authority to bind it; it is a flower in the crown of divine sovereignty only.

[1.] His sovereignty appears in a power of dispensing with his own laws. It is as much a part of his dominion to dispense with his laws as to enjoin them; he only hath the power of relaxing his own right, no creature hath power to do it; that would be to usurp a superiority over him, and order above God himself. Repealing or dispensing with the law is a branch of royal authority. It is true God will never dispense with those moral laws which have an eternal reason in themselves and their own nature, as for a creature to fear, love, and honour God; this would be to dispense with his

own holiness and the righteousness of his nature, to sully the purity of his own dominion; it would write folly upon the first creation of man after the image of God, by writing mutability upon himself, in framing himself after the corrupted image of man. It would null and frustrate the excellency of the creature, wherein the image of God mostly shines; nay, it would be to dispense with a creature's being a creator,* and make him independent upon the sovereign of the world in moral obedience.

[2.] But God hath a right to dispense with the ordinary laws of nature in the inferior creatures; he hath a power to alter their course by an arrest of miracles, and make them come short, or go beyond his ordinances established for them. He hath a right to make the sun stand still or move backward, to bind up the womb of the earth and bar the influence of the clouds, bridle in the rage of the fire and the fury of lions, make the liquid waters stand like a wall, or pull up the dam which he hath set to the sea, and command it to overflow the neighbouring countries. He can dispense with the natural laws of the whole creation, and strain every string beyond its ordinary pitch.

Positive laws he hath reversed, as the ceremonial law given to the Jews. The very nature indeed of that law required a repeal, and fell of course; when that which was intended by it was come, it was of no longer significance; as before it was a useful shadow, it would afterwards have been an empty one. Had not God took away this, Christianity had not in all likelihood been propagated among the Gentiles. This was the 'partition wall' between Jews and Gentiles, Eph. ii. 14, which made them a distinct family from all the world, and was the occasion of the enmity of the Gentiles against the Jews. When God had, by bringing in what was signified by those rites, declared his decree for the ceasing of them; and when the Jews, fond of those divine institutions, would not allow him the right of repealing what he had the authority of enacting, he resolved, for the asserting his dominion, to bury them in the ruins of the temple and city, and make them for ever incapable of practising the main and essential parts of them; for the temple being the legal pillar of the service, by demolishing that God hath taken away the right of sacrificing, it being peculiarly annexed to that place; they have no altar dignified with a fire from heaven to consume their sacrifices, no legal high priest to offer them; God hath by his providence changed his own law, as well as by his precept.

Yea, he hath gone higher by virtue of his sovereignty, and changed the whole scene and methods of his government after the fall from king creator to king redeemer. He hath revoked the law of works as a covenant, released the penalty of it from the believing sinner by transferring it upon the surety, who interposed himself by his own will and divine designation. He hath established another covenant, upon other promises, in a higher root, with greater privileges and easier terms. Had not God had this right of sovereignty, not a man of Adam's posterity could have been blessed; he and they must have lain groaning under the misery of the fall, which had rendered both himself and all in his loins unable to observe the terms in the first covenant.

He hath, as some speak, dispensed with his own moral law in some cases, in commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son, his only son, a righteous son, a son whereof he had the promise, that 'in Isaac should his seed be called;' yet he was commanded to sacrifice him by the right of his absolute sovereignty, as the supreme Lord of the lives of his creatures, from the highest angel to the lowest worm, whereby he bound his subjects to this law, not himself.

* Qu. 'creature'?—Ed.

Our lives are due to him when he calls for them, and they are a just forfeit to him at the very moment we sin, at the very moment we come into the world, by reason of the venom of our nature against him, and the disturbance the first sin of man (whereof we are inheritors) gave to his glory. Had Abraham sacrificed his son of his own head, he had sinned, yea, in attempting it; but being authorised from heaven, his act was obedience to the sovereign of the world, who had a power to dispense with his own law; and with this law he had before dispensed in the case of Cain's murder of Abel, as to the immediate punishment of it with death, which indeed was settled afterwards by his authority, but then omitted because of the paucity of men, and for the peopling the world, but settled afterwards, when there was almost, though not altogether, the like occasion of omitting it for a time.

[3.] His sovereignty appears in punishing the transgression of his law.

First, This is a branch of God's dominion as lawgiver. So was the vengeance God would take upon the Amalekites. Exod. xvii. 16, 'The Lord hath sworn, that the Lord will have war.' The Hebrew is, 'the hand upon the throne of the Lord,' as in the margin. As a lawgiver, he saves or destroys, James iv. 12. He acts according to his own law, in a congruity to the sanction of his own precepts; though he be an arbitrary lawgiver, appointing what laws he pleases, yet he is not an arbitrary judge. As he commands nothing but what he hath a right to command, so he punisheth none but whom he hath a right to punish, and with such punishment as the law hath denounced. All his acts of justice and inflictions of curses are the effects of this sovereign dominion: Ps. xxix. 10, 'He sits king upon the floods;' upon the deluge of waters wherewith he drowned the world, say some. It is a right belonging to the authority of magistrates, to pull up the infectious weeds that corrupt a commonwealth. It is no less the right of God, as the lawgiver and judge of all the earth, to subject criminals to his vengeance, after they have rendered themselves abominable in his eyes, and carried themselves unworthy subjects of so great and glorious a king. The first name whereby God is made known in Scripture is *Elohim*: Gen. i. 1, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;' a name which signifies his power of judging, in the opinion of some critics. From him it is derived to earthly magistrates; their judgment is said therefore to be the 'judgment of God,' Deut. i. 17. When Christ came, he proposed this great motive of repentance, from the kingdom of heaven being at hand; the kingdom of his grace, whereby to invite men; the kingdom of his justice, in the punishment of the neglecters of it, whereby to terrify men. Punishments as well as rewards belong to royalty; it issued accordingly. Those that believed and repented came under his gracious sceptre; those that neglected and rejected it, fell under his iron rod. Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple demolished, the inhabitants lost their lives by the edge of the sword, or lingered them out in the chains of a miserable captivity. This term of judge, which signifies a sovereign right to govern and punish delinquents, Abraham gives him, when he came to root out the people of Sodom, and make them the examples of his vengeance, Gen. xviii. 25.

Secondly, 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,' Ps. 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,' Ps. 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,' Ps. 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 public respect to him, he reckons with particularly here as well as hereafter, that the life of his sovereignty might not always faint in the world.

Thirdly, This of punishing was the second discovery of his dominion in the world. His first act of sovereignty was the giving a law; the next, his appearance in the state of a judge. When his orders were violated, he rescues the honour of them by an execution of justice. He first judged the angels, punishing the evil ones for their crime; the first court he kept among them as a governor was to give them a law; the second court he kept, was as a judge trying the delinquents, and adjudging the offenders to be 'reserved in chains of darkness,' till the final execution, Jude 6. And at the same time probably 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.

Fourthly, 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, Lev. 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.

2. This dominion is manifested by God as a proprietor and lord of his creatures, and his own goods.

And this is evident,

(1.) In the choice of some persons from eternity. He hath set 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 on 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 top and foundation of all; and under what head of reason can man reduce this act, but to that

of his royal prerogative ! Why doth God save some, and condemn others at last ? Because of the faith of the one, and unbelief of the other. Why do some men believe ? Because God hath not only given them the means of grace, but accompanied those means with the efficacy of his Spirit. Why did God accompany those means with the efficacy of his Spirit in some, and not in others ? Because he had decreed by grace to prepare them for glory. But why did he decree or choose some, and not others ? Into what will you resolve this, but into his sovereign pleasure ? Salvation and condemnation at the last upshot, are acts of God as the judge, conformable to his own law of giving life to believers, and inflicting death upon unbelievers ; for those a reason may be rendered, but the choice of some and preterition of others, is an act of God as he is a sovereign monarch, before any law was actually transgressed, because not actually given. When a prince redeems* a rebel, he acts as a judge according to law ; but when he calls some out to pardon, he acts as a sovereign by a prerogative above law ; into this the apostle resolves it, Rom. 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.' Though the first scope of the apostle, in the beginning of the chapter, was to declare the reason of God's rejecting the Jews and calling in the Gentiles, had he only intended to demolish the pride of the Jews, and flat their opinion of merit, and aimed no higher than that providential act of God, he might, convincingly enough to the reason of men, have argued from the justice of God, provoked by the obstinacy of the Jews, and not have had recourse to his absolute will ; but since he asserts this latter,† the strength of his argument seems to lie thus : if God, by his absolute sovereignty, may resolve and fix his love upon Jacob, and estrange it from Esau, or any other of his creatures, before they have done good or evil, and man have no ground to call his infinite majesty to account, may he not deal thus with the Jews, when their demerit would be a bar to any complaints of the creature against him ? If God were considered here in the quality of a judge, it had been fit to have considered the matter of fact in the criminal ; but he is considered as a sovereign, rendering no other reason of his action but his own will : 'whom he will he hardens,' ver. 18 ; and then the apostle concludes, ver. 20, 'Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God ?' If the reason drawn from God's sovereignty doth not satisfy in this inquiry, no other reason can be found wherein to acquiesce. For the last condemnation there will be sufficient reason to clear the justice of his proceedings. But in this case of election no other reason but what is alleged, viz., the will of God, can be thought of, but what is liable to such knotty exceptions that cannot well be untied.

[1.] It could not be any merit in the creature that might determine God to choose him. If the decree of election falls not under the merit of Christ's passion, as the procuring cause, it cannot fall under the merit of any part of the corrupted mass. The decree of sending Christ did not precede, but followed in order of nature, the determination of choosing some. When men were chosen as the subjects for glory, Christ was chosen as the means for the bringing them to glory : Eph. i. 4, 'Chosen us in him, and predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.' The choice was not merely in Christ as the moving cause,—that the apostle asserts to be the good pleasure of his will,—but in Christ, as the means of conveying to the chosen ones the fruits of their election. What could there be in any man that could invite God to this act, or be a cause of distinction of one branch

* Qu. 'condemns?'—ED.

† A myrall, Dissert. p. 101, 102.

of Adam from another? Were they not all hewed out of the same rock, and tainted with the same corruption in blood? Had it been possible to invest them with a power of merit at the first, had not that venom contracted in their nature degraded all of power for the future? What merit was there in any but of wrathful punishment, since they were all considered as criminals, and the cursed brood of an ungrateful rebel? What dignity can there be in the nature of the purest part of clay to be made a vessel of honour, more than in another part of clay, as pure as that, which was formed into a vessel for mean and sordid use? What had any one to move his mercy more than another, since they were all children of wrath, and equally daubed with original guilt and filth? Had not all an equal proportion of it to provoke his justice? What merit is there in one dry bone more than another, to be inspired with the breath of a spiritual life? Did not all lie wallowing in their own filthy blood, and what could the steam and noisomeness of that deserve at the hands of a pure Majesty, but to be cast into a sink furthest from his sight? Were they not all considered in this deplorable posture, with an equal proportion of poison in their nature, when God first took his pen and singled out some names to write in the book of life? It could not be merit in any one piece of this abominable mass that should stir up that resolution in God to set apart this person for a vessel of glory, while he permitted another to putrefy in his own gore. He loved Jacob and hated Esau, though they were both parts of the common mass, the seed of the same loins, and lodged in the same womb.

[2.] Nor could it be any foresight of works to be done in time by them, or of faith, that might determine God to choose them. What good could he foresee resulting from extreme corruption, and a nature alienated from him? What could he foresee of good to be done by them, but what he resolved in his own will, to bestow an ability upon them to bring forth? His choice of them was *to* a holiness, not *for* a holiness preceding his determination, Eph. i. 4. He hath chosen us, 'that we might be holy' before him: he ordained us '*to* good works,' not *for* them, Eph. ii. 10. What is a fruit cannot be a moving cause of that whereof it is a fruit. Grace is a stream from the spring of electing love; the branch is not the cause of the root, but the root of the branch, nor the stream the cause of the spring, but the spring the cause of the stream. Good works suppose grace, and a good and right habit in the person, as rational acts suppose reason. Can any man say that the rational acts man performs after his creation were a cause why God created him? This would make creation and everything else not so much an act of his will as an act of his understanding. God foresaw no rational act in man before the act of his will to give him reason, nor foresees faith in any, before the act of his will determining to give him faith: Eph. ii. 8, 'Faith is the gift of God.' In the salvation which grows up from this first purpose of God, he regards not the works we have done as a principal motive to settle the top-stone of our happiness, but his own purpose, and the grace given in Christ: 2 Tim. i. 9, 'Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ before the world began.' The honour of our salvation cannot be challenged by our works, much less the honour of the foundation of it. It was a pure gift of grace, without any respect to any spiritual, much less natural perfection. Why should the apostle mention that circumstance, when he speaks of God's loving Jacob and hating Esau, 'when neither of them had done good or evil,' Rom. ix. 11, if there were any foresight of men's works as the moving acuse of his love or hatred? God regarded not the works of either as tho

first cause of his choice, but acted by his own liberty, without respect to any of their actions, which were to be done by them in time. If faith be the fruit of election, the prescience of faith doth not influence the electing act of God: Titus i. 1, it is called 'the faith of God's elect;' 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect;' *i.e.* settled in this office to bring the elect of God to faith. If men be chosen by God upon the foresight of faith, or not chosen till they have faith, they are not so much God's elect as God their elect; they choose God by faith, before God chooseth them by love. It had not been the faith of God's elect; *i.e.* of those already chosen, but the faith of those that were to be chosen by God afterwards. Election is the cause of faith, and not faith the cause of election.* Fire is the cause of heat, and not the heat of fire; the sun is the cause of the day, and not the day the cause of the rising of the sun. Men are not chosen because they believe, but they believe because they are chosen. The apostle did ill else to appropriate that to the elect which they had no more interest in by virtue of their election than the veriest reprobate in the world. If the foresight of what works might be done by his creatures was the motive of his choosing them, why did he not choose the devils to redemption, who could have done him better service by the strength of their nature than the whole mass of Adam's posterity?

Well, then, there is no possible way to lay the original foundation of this act of election and preterition, in anything but the absolute sovereignty of God.

Justice or injustice comes not into consideration in this case. There is no debt, which justice or injustice always respects in its acting. If he had pleased, he might have chosen all; if he had pleased, he might have chosen none. It was in his supreme power to have resolved to have left all Adam's posterity under the rack of his justice; if he determined to snatch out any, it was a part of his dominion, but without any injury to the creatures he leaves under their own guilt. Did he not pass by the angels and take man? And by the same right of dominion may he pick out some men from the common mass, and lay aside others to bear the punishment of their crimes. Are they not all his subjects? All are his criminals, and may be dealt with at the pleasure of their undoubted Lord and Sovereign. This is a work of arbitrary power, since he might have chosen none, or chosen all, as he saw good himself. It is at the liberty of the artificer to determine his wood or stone to such a figure, that of a prince or that of a toad; and his materials have no right to complain of him, since it lies wholly upon his own liberty. They must have little sense of their own vileness, and God's infinite excellency above them by right of creation, that will contend that God hath a lesser right over his creatures than an artificer over his wood or stone. If it were at his liberty whether to redeem man or send Christ upon such an undertaking, it is as much at his liberty, and the prerogative is to be allowed him, what persons he will resolve to make capable of enjoying the fruits of that redemption. One man was as fit a subject for mercy as another, as they all lay in their original guilt. Why would not divine mercy cast its eye upon this man as well as upon his neighbour? There was no cause in the creature, but all in God, it must be resolved into his own will.

Yet not into a will without wisdom. God did not choose hand over head, and act by mere will without reason and understanding. An infinite wisdom is far from such a kind of procedure; but the reason of God is inscrutable to us, unless we could understand God as well as he understands himself. The whole ground lies in God himself, no part of it in the creature: Rom.

* Daille *in loc.*

ix. 15, 16, 'Not in him that wills, nor in him that runs, but in God that shews mercy.' Since God hath revealed no other cause than his will, we can resolve it into no other than his sovereign empire over all creatures. It is not without a stop to our curiosity, that in the same place where God asserts the absolute sovereignty of his mercy to Moses, he tells him he could not see his face: Exod. xxxiii. 19, 20, 'I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious;' and he said, 'Thou canst not see my face.' The rays of his infinite wisdom are too bright and dazzling for our weakness. The apostle acknowledged not only a wisdom in this proceeding, but a riches and treasure of wisdom; not only that, but a depth and vastness of those riches of wisdom, but was unable to give us an inventory and scheme of it, Rom. xi. 33. The secrets of his counsels are too deep for us to wade into; in attempting to know the reason of those acts, we should find ourselves swallowed up into a bottomless gulf. Though the understanding be above our capacity, yet the admiration of his authority, and submission to it, are not. 'We should cast ourselves down at his feet, with a full resignation of ourselves to his sovereign pleasure.* This is a more comely carriage in a Christian, than all the contentious endeavours to measure God by our line.

(2.) In bestowing grace where he pleases. God in conversion and pardon works not as a natural agent, putting forth strength to the utmost, which God must do if he did renew man naturally, as the sun shines and the fire burns, which always act *ad extremum virtutum*, unless a cloud interpose to eclipse the one, and water to extinguish the other. But God acts as a voluntary agent, which can freely exert his power when he please, and suspend it when he please. Though God be necessarily good, yet he is not necessitated to manifest all the treasures of his goodness to every subject; he hath power to distil his dews upon one part and not upon another. If he were necessitated to express his goodness without a liberty, no thanks were due to him. Who thanks the sun for shining on him, or the fire for warming him? None; because they are necessary agents, and can do no other.

What is the reason he did not reach out his hand to keep all the angels from sinking as well as some, or recover them when they were sunk? What is the reason he engrafts one man into the true vine, and lets another remain a wild olive? Why is not the efficacy of the Spirit always linked with the motions of the Spirit? Why doth he not mould the heart into a gospel frame, when he fills the ear with a gospel sound? Why doth he strike off the chains from some, and tear the veil from the heart, while he leaves others under their natural slavery and Egyptian darkness? Why do some lie under the bands of death, while another is raised to a spiritual life? What reason is there for all this but his absolute will? The apostle resolves the question, if the question be asked why he begets one and not another? Not from the will of the creature, but his own will, is the determination of one, James i. 18. Why doth he work in one to will and to do, and not in another? Because of his good pleasure, is the answer of another, Philip. ii. 13. He could as well new create every one, as he at first created them, and make grace as universal as nature and reason; but it is not his pleasure so to do.

[1.] It is not for want of strength in himself. The power of God is unquestionably able to strike off the chains of unbelief from all. He could surmount the obstinacy of every child of wrath, and inspire every son of Adam with faith as well as Adam himself. He wants not a virtue superior to the greatest resistance of his creature; a victorious beam of light might be shot into their understandings, and a flood of grace might overspread

* This was Dr Goodwin's speech when he was in trouble.

their wills, with one word of his mouth, without putting forth the utmost of his power. What hindrance could there be in any created spirit, which cannot be easily pierced into, and new moulded by the Father of spirits? Yet he only breathes this efficacious virtue into some, and leaves others under that insensibility and hardness which they love, and suffers them to continue in their benighting ignorance, and consume themselves in the embraces of their dear though deceitful Delilahs.

He could have conquered the resistance of the Jews, as well as chased away the darkness and ignorance of the Gentiles; no doubt but he could overpower the heart of the most malicious devil, as well as that of the simplest and weakest man; but the breath of the almighty Spirit is in his own power, to breathe where he lists, John iii. 8; it is at his liberty whether he will give to any the feeling of the invincible efficacy of his grace. He did not want strength to have kept man as firm as a rock against the temptation of Satan, and poured in such a fortifying grace as to have made him impregnable against the powers of hell, as well as he did secure the standing of the angels against the sedition of their fellows. But it was his will to permit it to be otherwise.

[2.] Nor is it from any prerogative in the creature. He converts not any for their natural perfection, because he seizeth upon the most ignorant; not for their moral perfection, because he converts the most sinful; not for their civil perfection, because he turns the most despicable.

First, Not for their natural perfection of knowledge. He opened the minds and hearts of the more ignorant. Were the nature of the Gentiles better manured than that of the Jews, or did the tapers of their understandings burn clearer? No; the one were skilled in the prophecies of the Messiah, and might have compared the predictions they owned with the actions and sufferings of Christ, which they were spectators of. He let alone those that had expectations of the Messiah, and expectations about the time of Christ's appearance, both grounded upon the oracles wherewith he had entrusted them. The Gentiles were unacquainted with the prophets, and therefore destitute of the expectations of the Messiah, Eph. ii. 12. They were 'without Christ;' without any revelation of Christ, because 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world;' without any knowledge of God, or promises of Christ. The Jews might sooner in a way of reason have been wrought upon than the Gentiles, who were ignorant of the prophets, by whose writings they might have examined the truth of the apostles' declarations; thus are they refused, that were the kindred of Christ according to the flesh, and the Gentiles, that were at a greater distance from him, brought in by God. Thus he catcheth not at the subtle and mighty devils, who had an original in spiritual nature more like to him, but at weak and simple man.

Secondly, Not for any moral perfection, because he converts the most sinful; the Gentiles steeped in idolatry and superstition. He sowed more faith among the Romans than in Jerusalem, more faith in a city that was the common sewer of all the idolatry of the nations conquered by them, than in that city which had so signally been owned by him, and had not practised any idolatry since the Babylonish captivity. He planted saintship at Corinth, a place notorious for the infamous worship of Venus, a superstition attended with the grossest uncleanness; at Ephesus, that presented the whole world with a cup of fornication in their temple of Diana; among the Colossians, votaries to Cybele, in a manner of worship attended with beastly and lascivious ceremonies. And what character had the Cretians from one of their

own poets, mentioned by the apostle to Titus, whom he had placed among them to further the progress of the gospel, but the vilest and most abominable? Titus i. 12, 'Liars,' not to be credited; 'evil beasts,' not to be associated with; 'slow bellies,' fit for no service. What prerogative was there in the nature of such putrefaction? As much as in that of a toad, to be elevated to the dignity of an angel. What steam from such dunghills could be welcome to him, and move him to cast his eye on them, and sweeten them from heaven? What treasures of worth were here to open the treasures of his grace? Were such filthy snuffs fit of themselves to be kindled by, and become a lodging for, a gospel beam? What invitations could he have from lying, beastliness, gluttony, but only from his own sovereignty? By this he plucked firebrands out of the fire, while he left straighter and more comely sticks to consume to ashes.

Thirdly, Not for any civil perfection, because he turns the most despicable. He elevates not nature to grace upon the account of wealth, honour, or any civil station in the world; he dispenseth not ordinarily those treasures to those that the mistaken world foolishly admire and doat upon: 1 Cor. i. 26, 'Not many mighty, not many noble.' A purple robe is not usually decked with this jewel. He takes more of mouldy clay than refined dust to cast into his image, and lodges his treasures more in the earthly vessels than in the world's golden ones. He gives out his richest doles to those that are the scorn and reproach of the world. Should he impart his grace most to those that abound in wealth or honour, it had been some foundation for a conception that he had been moved, by those vulgarly esteemed excellencies, to indulge them more than others. But such a conceit languisheth, when we behold the subjects of his grace as void originally of any allurements as they are full of provocations.

Hereby he declares himself free from all created engagements, and that he is not led by any external motives in the object.

Fourthly, It is not from any obligation which lies upon him. He is indebted to none, disobliged by all. No man deserves from him any act of grace, but every man deserves what the most deplorable are left to suffer. He is obliged by the children of wrath to nothing else but showers of wrath, owes no more a debt to fallen man than to fallen devils, to restore them to their first station by a superlative grace; how was he more bound to restore them than he was bound to preserve them, to catch them after they fell, than to put a bar in the way of their falling? God, as a sovereign, gave laws to men, and a strength sufficient to keep those laws. What obligation is there upon God to repair that strength man wilfully lost, and extract him out of that condition into which he voluntarily plunged himself? What if man sinned by temptation, which is a reason alleged by some, might not many of the devils do so too? Though there was a first of them that sinned without a temptation, yet many of them might be seduced into rebellion by the ringleader. Upon that account he is no more bound to give grace to all men than to devils. If he promised life upon obedience, he threatened death upon transgression. By man's disobedience God is quit of his promise, and owes nothing but punishment upon the violation of his law. Indeed, man may pretend to a claim of sufficient strength from him by creation, as God is the author of nature, and he had it; but since he hath extinguished it by his sin, he cannot in the least pretend any obligation on God for a new strength. If it be a peradventure whether he will give repentance, as it is, 2 Tim. ii. 25, there is no tie in the case; a tie would put it beyond a peradventure with a God that never forfeited his obligation. No husbandman thinks himself obliged to bestow cost and pains, manure and tillage, upon one field more

than another; though the nature of the ground may require more, yet he is at liberty whether he will expend more upon one than another.* He may let it lie fallow as long as he please. God is less obliged to till and prune his creatures than man is obliged to his field or trees. If a king proclaim a pardon to a company of rebels, upon the condition of each of them paying such a sum of money, their estates before were capable of satisfying the condition, but their rebellion hath reduced them to an indigent condition, the proclamation itself is an act of grace, the condition required is not impossible in itself; the prince, out of a tenderness to some, sends them that sum of money he hath by his proclamation obliged them to pay, and thereby enabled them to answer the condition he requires: the first he doth by a sovereign authority; the second he doth by a sovereign bounty, he was obliged to neither of them; punishment was a debt due to all of them. If he would remit upon condition, he did relax his sovereign right; and if he would by his largess make any of them capable to fulfil the condition, by sending them presently a sufficient sum to pay the fine, he acted as proprietor of his own goods, to dispose of them in such a quantity to those to whom he was not obliged to bestow a mite.

Fifthly, It must therefore be an act of his mere sovereignty. This can only sit arbitrator in every gracious act. Why did he give grace to Abel and not to Cain, since they both lay in the same womb, and equally derived from their parents a taint in their nature, but that he would shew a standing example of his sovereignty to the future ages of the world in the first posterity of man? Why did he give grace to Abraham, and separate him from his idolatrous kindred, to dignify him to be the root of the Messiah? Why did he confine his promise to Isaac, and not extend it to Ishmael, the seed of the same Abraham by Hagar, or to the children he had by Keturah after Sarah's death? What reason can be alleged for this but his sovereign will? Why did he not give the fallen angels a moment of repentance after their sin, but condemned them to irrevocable pains? Is it not as free for him to give grace to whom he please, as create what worlds he please; to form this corrupted clay into his own image, as to take such a parcel of dust from all the rest of the creation whereof to compact Adam's body? Hath he not as much jurisdiction over the sinful mass of his creatures in a new creation, as he had over the chaos in the old? And what reason can be rendered of his advancing this part of matter to the nobler dignity of a star, and leaving that other part to make up the dark body of the earth, to compact one part into a glorious sun, and another part into a hard rock, but his royal prerogative? What is the reason a prince subjects one malefactor to punishment, and lifts up another to a place of trust and profit? that Pharaoh honoured the butler with an attendance on his person, and remitted the baker to the hands of the executioner? It was his pleasure. And is not as great a right due to God as is allowed to the worms of the earth? What is the reason he hardens a Pharaoh, by a denying him that grace which should mollify him, and allows it to another? It is because he will: Rom. ix. 18, 'Whom he will he hardens.' Hath not man the liberty to pull up the sluice and let the water run into what part of the ground he pleases? What is the reason some have not a heart to understand the beauty of his ways? Because the Lord doth not give it them, Deut. xxix. 4. Why doth he not give all his converts an equal measure of his sanctifying grace? Some have mites, and some have treasures. Why doth he give his grace to some sooner, to some later? Some are inspired in their infancy, others not till a full age and after; some not till they have fallen into some

* Claude sur la parabole des Noces, p. 29.

gross sin, as Paul; some betimes, that they may do him service, others later, as the thief upon the cross, and presently snatcheth them out of the world. Some are weaker, some stronger in nature; some more beautiful and lovely, others more uncomely and sluggish. It is so in supernaturals. What reason is there for this but his own will? This is instead of all that can be assigned on the part of God. He is the free disposer of his own goods, and, as a father, may give a greater portion to one child than to another. And what reason of complaint is there against God? May not a toad complain that God did not make it a man, and give it a portion of reason, or a fly complain that God did not make it an angel, and give it a garment of light, had they but any spark of understanding, as well as man complain that God did not give him grace as well as another? Unless he sincerely desired it, and then was denied it, he might complain of God, though not as a sovereign, yet as a promiser of grace to them that ask it. God doth not render his sovereignty formidable, he shuts not up his throne of grace from any that seek him; he invites man, his arms are open, and the sceptre stretched out; and no man continues under the arrest of his lusts but he that is unwilling to be otherwise; and such a one hath no reason to complain of God.

(3.) His sovereignty is manifest in disposing the means of grace to some, not to all. He hath caused the sun to shine bright in one place, while he hath left others benighted and deluded by the devil's oracles. Why do the evangelical dews fall in this or that place, and not in another? Why was the gospel published in Rome so soon, and not in Tartary? Why hath it been extinguished in some places as soon almost as it had been kindled in them? Why hath one place been honoured with the beams of it in one age, and been covered with darkness the next? One country hath been made a sphere for this star that directs to Christ to move in, and afterwards it hath been taken away and placed in another; sometimes more clearly it hath shone, sometimes more darkly in the same place. What is the reason of this? It is true, something of it may be referred to the justice of God, but much more to the sovereignty of God. That the gospel is published later and not sooner, the apostle tells us is 'according to the commandment of the living God,' Rom. xvi. 26.

[1.] The means of grace, after the families from Adam became distinct, were never granted to all the world. After that fatal breach in Adam's family by the death of Abel, and Cain's separation, we read not of the means of grace continued among Cain's posterity; it seems to be continued in Adam's sole family, and not published in societies till the time of Seth: Gen. iv. 26, 'Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.' It was continued in that family till the deluge, which was 1523 years after the creation according to some, or 1656 years according to others. After that, when the world degenerated, it was communicated to Abraham, and settled in the posterity that descended from Jacob; though he left not the world without a witness of himself, and some sprinklings of revelations in other parts, as appears by the book of Job, and the discourses of his friends.

[2.] The Jews had this privilege granted them above other nations, to have a clearer revelation of God. God separated them from all the world to honour them with the *depositum* of his oracles: Rom. iii. 2, 'To them were committed the oracles of God.' In which regard, all other nations are said to be 'without God,' as being destitute of so great a privilege, Eph. ii. 12. The Spirit blew in Canaan when the lands about it felt not the saving breath of it. 'He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them,' Ps. cxlvii. 20. The rest had no warnings from the prophets, no dictates from heaven, but what they had by

the light of nature, the view of the works of creation, and the administration of providence, and what remained among them of some ancient traditions derived from Noah, which in tract of time were much defaced. We read but of one Jonah sent to Nineveh, but frequent alarms to the Israelites by a multitude of prophets commissioned by God. It is true, the door of the Jewish church was open to what proselytes would enter themselves, and embrace their religion and worship; but there was no public proclamation made in the world; only God, by his miracles in their deliverance from Egypt (which could not but be famous among all the neighbour nations) declared them to be a people favoured by heaven. But the tradition from Adam and Noah was not publicly revived by God in other parts, and raised from that grave of forgetfulness wherein it had lain so long buried. Was there any reason in them for this indulgence? God might have been as liberal to any other nation, yea, to all the nations in the world, if it had been his sovereign pleasure. Any other people were as fit to be entrusted with his oracles, and be subjects for his worship, as that people, yet all other nations, till the rejection of the Jews, because of their rejection of Christ, were strangers from the covenant of promise. These people were part of the common mass of the world. They had no prerogative in nature above Adam's posterity. Were they the extract of an innocent part of his loins, and all the other nations drained out of his putrefaction? Had the blood of Abraham, from whom they were more immediately descended, any more precious tincture than the rest of mankind? They as well as other nations were made of one blood, Acts xvii. 16, and that corrupted both in the spring and in the rivulets. Were they better than other nations when God first drew them out of their slavery? We have Joshua's authority for it that they had complied with the Egyptian idolatry, and served other gods in that place of their servitude, Josh. xxiv. 14. Had they had an abhorrence of the superstition of Egypt while they remained there, they could not so soon have erected a golden calf for worship in imitation of the Egyptian idols. All the rest of mankind had as inviting reasons to present God with as those people had. God might have granted the same privilege to all the world as well as to them, or denied it them, and endowed all the rest of the world with his statutes; but the enriching such a small company of people with his divine showers, and leaving the rest of the world as a barren wilderness in spirituals, can be placed on no other account originally than that of his unaccountable sovereignty of his love to them. There was nothing in them to merit such high titles from God, as his first-born, his peculiar treasure, the apple of his eye. He disclaims any righteousness in them, and speaks a word sufficient to damp such thoughts in them, by charging them with their wickedness, while he 'loaded them with his benefits.' Deut. ix. 4, 6, the Lord 'gives thee not this land for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people.' It was an act of God's free pleasure to 'choose them to be a people to himself,' Deut. vii. 6.

[3.] God afterwards rejected the Jews, gave them up to the hardness of their hearts, and spread the gospel among the Gentiles. He hath cast off 'the children of the kingdom,' those that had been enrolled for his subjects for many ages, who seemed, by their descent from Abraham, to have a right to the privileges of Abraham, and called men 'from the east and from the west,' from the darkest corner of the world, 'to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven,' *i. e.* to partake with them of the promises of the gospel, Mat. viii. 11. The people that were accounted accursed by the Jews, enjoy the means of grace, which have been hid from those that were once dignified, these sixteen hundred years; that they have

neither ephod nor teraphim, nor sacrifice, nor any true worship of God among them, Hosea iii. 4. Why he should not give them grace to acknowledge and own the person of the Messiah, to whom he had made the promises of him for so many successive ages, but let their heart be fat, and their ears heavy, Isa. vi. 10; why the gospel at length after the resurrection of Christ should be presented to the Gentiles, not by chance, but pursuant to the resolution and prediction of God, declared by the prophets, that it should be so in time; why he should let so many hundreds of years pass over, after the world was peopled, and let the nations all that while soak in their idolatrous customs; why he should not call the Gentiles without rejecting the Jews, and bind them both up together in the bundle of life; why he should acquaint some people with it, a little after the publishing it in Jerusalem, by the descent of the Spirit, and others not a long time after; some in the first ages of Christianity enjoyed it; others have it not, as those in America, till the last age of the world: can be referred to nothing but his sovereign pleasure.

What merit can be discovered in the Gentiles? There is something of justice in the case of the Jews' rejection, nothing but sovereignty in the Gentiles' reception into the church. If the Jews were bad, the Gentiles were in some sort worse. The Jews owned the one true God, without mixture of idols, though they owned not the Messiah in his appearance, which they did in a promise; but the Gentiles owned neither the one nor the other. Some tell us, it was for the merit of some of their ancestors. How comes the means of grace then to be taken from the Jew, who had (if any people ever had) meritorious ancestors for a plea? If the merit of some of their former progenitors were the cause, what was the reason the debt due to their merit was not paid to their immediate progeny, or to themselves, but to a posterity so distant from them, and so abominably depraved, as the Gentile world was, at the day of the gospel-sun striking into their horizon? What merit might be in their ancestors (if any could be supposed in the most refined rubbish), it was so little for themselves, that no oil could be spared out of their lamps for others. What merit their ancestors might have, might be forfeited by the succeeding generations. It is ordinarily seen, that what honour a father deserves in a state for public service, may be lost by the son, forfeited by treason, and himself attainted.

Or was it out of a foresight that the Gentiles would embrace it, and the Jews reject it; that the Gentiles would embrace it in one place and not in another? How did God foresee it but in his own grace, which he was resolved to display in one, not in another! It must be then still resolved into his sovereign pleasure. Or did he foresee it in their wills and nature? What, were they not all one common dross? Was any part of Adam by nature better than another? How did God foresee that which was not, nor could be, without his pleasure to give ability and grace to receive?

Well then, what reason but the sovereign pleasure of God can be alleged, why Christ forbade the apostles at their first commission to preach to the Gentiles, Mat. x. 15, but at the second and standing commission orders them to preach 'to every creature'? Why did he put a demur to the resolutions of Paul and Timothy, to impart light to Bithynia, or order them to go into Macedonia? Was that country more worthy upon whom lay a great part of the blood of the world shed in Alexander's time, Acts xvi. 6, 7, 9, 10? Why should Chorazin and Bethsaida enjoy those means that were not granted to the Tyrians and Sidonians, who might probably have sooner reached out their arms to welcome it? Mat xi. 21. Why should God send the gospel into our island, and cause it to flourish so long here, and not send it or continue

it in the furthest eastern part of the world? Why should the very profession of Christianity possess so small a compass of ground in the world, but five parts in thirty, the Mahomedans holding six parts, and the other nineteen overgrown with paganism, where either the gospel was never planted, or else since rooted up? To whom will you refer this, but to the same cause our Saviour doth the revelation of the gospel to babes, and not to the wise, even to his Father? 'For so it seemed good in thy sight,' Mat xi. 25, 26. 'For so was thy good pleasure before thee' (as in the original). It is at his pleasure whether he will give any a clear revelation of his gospel, or leave them only to the light of nature. He could have kept up the first beam of the gospel in the promise in all nations, among the apostasies of Adam's posterity, or renew it in all nations, when it began to be darkened, as well as he first published it to Adam after his fall. But it was his sovereign pleasure, to permit it to be obscured in one place, and to keep it lighted in another.

(4.) His sovereignty is manifest in the various influences of the means of grace. He saith to these waters of the sanctuary, as to the floods of the sea, Hitherto you shall go, and no further. Sometimes they wash away the filth of the flesh, and outward man, but not that of the spirit. The gospel spiritualiseth some and only moraliseth others; some are by the power of it struck down to conviction, but not raised up to conversion. Some have only the gleams of it in their consciences, and others more powerful flashes; some remain in their thick darkness under the beaming of the gospel every day in their face, and after a long insensibleness, are roused by its light and warmth. Sometimes there is such a powerful breath in it, that it levels the haughty imaginations of men, and lays them at its feet, that before strutted against it in the pride of their heart. The foundation of this is not in the gospel itself, which is always the same, nor in the ordinances, which are channels as sound at one time as at another, but divine sovereignty, that spirits them as he pleaseth, and 'blows when and where it lists.' It has sometimes conquered its thousands, Acts ii. 41, at another time scarce its tens; sometimes the harvest hath been great when the labourers have been but few, at another time, it hath been small when the labourers have been many; sometimes whole sheaves, at another time scarce gleanings. The evangelical net hath been sometimes full at a cast, and at every cast, at another time many have laboured all night and day too, and caught nothing: Acts ii. 47, 'The Lord added to the church daily.' The gospel chariot doth not always return with captives chained to the sides of it, but sometimes blurred and reproached, wearing the marks of hell's spite, instead of imprinting the marks of its own beauty. In Corinth, it triumphed over many people, Acts xviii. 10; in Athens, it is mocked, and gathers but a few clusters, Acts xvii. 32, 34. God keeps the key of the heart as well as of the womb. The apostles had a power of publishing the gospel, and working miracles, but under the divine conduct. It was an instrumentality *durante bene placito*, and as God saw it convenient. Miracles were not upon every occasion allowed to them to be wrought, nor success upon every administration granted to them. God sometimes lent them the key, but to take out no more treasure than was allotted to them.

There is a variety in the time of gospel operation: some rise out of their graves of sin and beds of sluggishness at the first appearance of this sun, others lie snorting longer. Why doth not God spirit it at one season as well as at another, but set his distinct periods of time, but because he will shew his absolute freedom?

And do we not sometimes experiment that, after the most solemn preparations of the heart, we are frustrated of those incomes we expected. Per-

haps it was because we thought divine returns were due to our preparations, and God stops up the channel, and we return drier than we came, that God may confute our false opinion, and preserve the honour of his own sovereignty. Sometimes we leap with John Baptist in the womb at the appearance of Christ; sometimes we lie upon a lazy bed when he knocks from heaven; sometimes the fleece is dry and sometimes wet, and God withholds to drop down his dew of the morning upon it. The dews of his word, as well as the droppings of the clouds, belong to his royalty. Light will not shine into the heart, though it shine round about us, without the sovereign order of that God 'who commanded light to shine out of the darkness' of the chaos, 2 Cor. iv. 6. And is it not seen also in regard of the refreshing influences of the word? Sometimes the strongest arguments and clearest promises prevail nothing towards the quelling black and despairing imaginations, when afterwards we have found them frightened away by an unexpected word, that seemed to have less virtue in itself than any that passed in vain before it. The reasonings of wisdom have dropped down like arrows against a brazen wall, when the speech of a weaker person hath found an efficacy. It is God, by his sovereignty, spirits one word and not another. Sometimes a secret word comes in, which was not thought of before, as dropped from heaven, and gives a refreshing, when emptiness was found in all the rest. One word from the lips of a sovereign prince is a greater cordial than all the harangues of subjects without it. What is the reason of this variety, but that God would increase the proofs of his own sovereignty; that, as it was a part of his dominion to create the beauty of a world, so it is no less to create the peace as well as the grace of the heart? Isa. lvii. 19, 'I create the fruit of the lips, peace.'

Let us learn from hence to have adoring thoughts of, not murmuring fancies against, the sovereignty of God; to acknowledge it with thankfulness in what we have, to implore it with a holy submission in what we want. To own God as a sovereign in a way of dependence, is the way to be owned by him as subjects in a way of favour.

(5.) His sovereignty is manifested in giving a greater measure of knowledge to some than to others. What parts, gifts, excellency of nature any have above others are God's donative. 'He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding,' Dan. ii. 21. Wisdom the habit, and knowledge the right use of it in discerning the right nature of objects, and fitness of means conducing to the end; all is but a beam of divine light, and the different degrees of knowledge in one man above another are the effects of his sovereign pleasure. He enlightens not the minds of all men to know every part of his will; one eats with a doubtful conscience, another in faith without any staggering, Rom. xiv. 2. Peter had a desire to keep up circumcision, not fully understanding the mind of God in the abolition of the Jewish ceremonies, while Paul was clear in the truth of that doctrine. A thought comes into our mind, that like a sunbeam makes a Scripture truth visible in a moment, which before we were poring upon without any success; this is from his pleasure. One in the primitive times had the gift of knowledge, another of wisdom; one the gift of prophecy, another of tongues; one the gift of healing, another that of discerning spirits. Why this gift to one man, and not to another? Why such a distribution in several subjects? Because it is his sovereign pleasure. 'The Spirit divides to every man severally as he will,' 1 Cor. xii. 11. Why doth he give Bezaleel and Aholiab the gift of engraving, and making curious works for the tabernacle, Exod. xxxi. 3, and not others? Why doth he bestow the treasures of evangelical knowledge upon the meanest of earthen vessels,

the poor Galileans, and neglect the Pharisees, stored with the knowledge both of naturals and morals? Why did he give to some, and not to others, 'to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven'? Mat. xiii. 11. The reason is implied in the words, because it *was* the mystery of his kingdom, and therefore was the act of his sovereignty. How would it be a kingdom and monarchy, if the governor of it were bound to do what he did? It is to be resolved only into the sovereign right of propriety of his own goods, that he furnisheth babes with a stock of knowledge, and leaves the wise and prudent empty of it. Mat. xi. 26, 'Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.' Why did he not reveal his mind to Eli, a grown man, and in the highest office in the Jewish church, but open it to Samuel, a stripling? Why did the Lord go from the one to the other? Because his motion depends upon his own will. Some are of so dull a constitution, that they are incapable of any impression, like rocks too hard for a stamp; others like water, you may stamp what you please, but it vanisheth as soon as the seal is removed. It is God forms men as he pleaseth. Some have parts to govern a kingdom, others scarce brains to conduct their own affairs; one is fit to rule men, and another scarce fit to keep swine; some have capacious souls in crazy and deformed bodies, others contracted spirits and heavier minds in a richer and more beautiful case. Why are not all stones alike? Some have a more sparkling light, as gems, more orient than pebbles; some are stars of first, and others of less magnitude, others as mean as glow-worms, a slimy lustre. It is because he is the sovereign disposer of what belongs to him, and gives here, as well as at the resurrection, to one a glory of the sun, to another that of the moon, and to a third a less, resembling that of a star, 1 Cor. xv. 40. And this God may do by the same right of dominion as he exercised when he endowed some kind of creatures with a greater perfection than others in their nature. Why may he not as well garnish one man with a greater proportion of gifts, as make a man differ in excellency from the nature of a beast; or frame angels to a more purely spiritual nature than a man; or make one angel a cherubim or seraphim, with a greater measure of light than another? Though the foundation of this is his dominion, yet his wisdom is not uninterested in his sovereign disposal; he garnisheth those with a greater ability, whom he intends for greater service, than those he intends for less, or none at all; as an artificer bestows more labour, and carves a more excellent figure upon those stones that he designs for a more honourable place in the building. But though the intending this or that man for service, be the motive of laying in a greater provision in him than in others, yet still it is to be referred to his sovereignty, since that first act of culling him out for such an end was the fruit solely of his sovereign pleasure. As when he resolved to make a creature, actually to glorify him, in wisdom he must give him reason, yet the making such a creature was an act of his absolute dominion.

(6.) His sovereignty is manifest in the calling some to a more special service in their generation. God settles some in immediate offices of his service, and perpetuates them in those offices, with a neglect of others, who seem to have a greater pretence to them. Moses was a great sufferer for Israel, the solicitor for them in Egypt, and the conductor of them from Egypt to Canaan; yet he was not chosen to the high priesthood, but that was an office settled upon Aaron, and his posterity after him in a lineal descent. Moses was only pitched upon for the present rescue of the captivated Israelites, and to be the instrument of divine miracles; but notwithstanding all the success he had in his conduct, his faithfulness in his employment, and the transcendent familiarity he had with the great Ruler

of the world, his posterity were left in the common level of the tribe of Levi, without any special mark of dignity upon them above the rest for all the services of that great man. Why Moses for a temporary magistracy, Aaron for a perpetual priesthood above all the rest of the Israelites, hath little reason but the absolute pleasure of God, who distributes his employments as he pleaseth, and as a master orders this servant to do the noblest work, and another to labour in baser offices, according to his pleasure. Why doth he call out David, a shepherd, to sway the Jewish sceptre, above the rest of the brothers, that had a fairer appearance, and had been bred in arms, and inured to the toils and watchings of a camp? Why should Mary be the mother of Christ, and not some other of the same family of David, of a more splendid birth, and a nobler education? Though some other reasons may be rendered, yet that which affords the greatest acquiescence, is the sovereign will of God. Why did Christ choose out of the meanest of the people the twelve apostles, to be heralds of his grace in Judea and other parts of the world; and afterwards select Paul, before Gamaliel his instructor, and others of the Jews as learned as himself, and advance him to be the most eminent apostle, above the heads of those who had ministered to Christ in the days of his flesh? Why should he preserve eleven of those he first called to propagate and enlarge his kingdom, and leave the other to the employment of shedding his blood? Why in the times of our Reformation should he choose a Luther out of a monastery, and leave others to their superstitious nastiness, to perish in the traditions of their fathers? Why set up Calvin as a bulwark of the gospel, and let others as learned as himself wallow in the sink of popery? It is his pleasure to do so. The potter hath power to separate this part of the clay to form a vessel for a more public use, and another part of the clay to form a vessel for a more private one. God takes the meanest clay to form the most excellent and honourable vessels in his house. As he formed man, that was to govern the creatures, of the same clay and earth whereof the beasts were formed, and not of that nobler element of water which gave birth to the fish and birds, so he forms some that are to do him the greatest service of the meanest materials, to manifest the absolute right of his dominion.

(7.) His sovereignty is manifest in the bestowing much wealth and honour upon some, and not vouchsafing it to the more industrious labours and attempts of others. Some are abased, and others are elevated; some are enriched, and others impoverished; some scarce feel any cross, and others scarce feel any comfort, in their whole lives. Some sweat and toil, and what they labour for runs out of their reach; others sit still, and what they wish for falls into their lap. One of the same clay hath a diadem to beautify his head, and another wants a covering to protect him from the weather; one hath a stately palace to lodge in, and another is scarce master of a cottage where to lay his head; a sceptre is put into one man's hand, and a spade into another's; a rich purple garnisheth one man's body, while another wraps himself in dunghill rags. The poverty of some, and the wealth of others, is an effect of the divine sovereignty, whence God is said to be the maker of the poor as well as the rich, Prov. xxii. 2, not only of their persons, but of their conditions. The earth and the fulness thereof is his propriety, and he hath as much right as Joseph had, to bestow changes of raiment upon what Benjamins he please. There is an election to a greater degree of worldly felicity, as there is an election of some to a greater degree of supernatural grace and glory. As he makes it 'rain upon one city, and not upon another,' Amos iv. 7, so he causeth prosperity to distil upon the head of one, and not upon another, crowning some with earthly blessings, while he crosseth others

with continual afflictions ; for he speaks of himself as a great proprietor of the corn that nourisheth us, and the wine that cheers us, and the wool that warms us : Hosea ii. 8, 9, 'I will take away,' not *your* corn and wine, but '*my* corn, *my* wine, *my* wool.' His right to dispose of the goods of every particular person is unquestionable. He can take away from one, and pass over the propriety to another ; thus he devolved the right of the Egyptian jewels to the Israelites, and bestowed upon the captives what before he had vouchsafed to the oppressors ; as every sovereign state demands the goods of their subjects, for the public advantage in a case of exigency, though none of that wealth was gained by any public office, but by their private industry, and gained in a country not subject to the dominion of those that require a portion of them. By this right he changes strangely the scene of the world : sometimes those that are high are reduced to a mean and ignominious condition, those that are mean are advanced to a state of plenty and glory ; the counter which in accounting signifies now but a penny, is presently raised up to signify a pound. The proud ladies of Israel, instead of a girdle of curious needlework, are brought to make use of a cord ; as the vulgar translates *rent*, a rag, or list of cloth, Isa. iii. 24 ; and sackcloth for a stomacher, instead of silk. This is the sovereign act of God, as he is the Lord of the world : Ps. lxxi. 6, 7, 'Promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but God is Judge ; he pulls down one, and sets up another.' He doth no wrong to any man : if he lets him languish out his days in poverty and disgrace, if he gives or takes away, he meddles with nothing but what is his own more than ours ; if he did dispense his benefits equally to all, men would soon think it their due. The inequality and changes preserve the notion of God's sovereignty, and correct our natural unmindfulness of it ; if there were no changes, God would not be feared as the King of all the earth, Ps. lv. 19. To this might also be referred his investing some countries with greater riches in their bowels, and on the surface ; the disposing some in the fruitful and pleasant regions of Canaan or Italy, while he settles others in the icy and barren parts of the northern climates.

(8.) His sovereignty is manifest in the times and seasons of dispensing his goods. He is Lord of the times *when*, as well as of the goods *which*, he doth dispose of to any person ; these 'the Father hath put in his own power,' Acts i. 7. As it was his sovereign pleasure to restore the kingdom to Israel, so he would pitch upon the time when to do it, and would not have his right invaded, so much as by a question out of curiosity. This disposing of opportunities in many things, can be referred to nothing else but his sovereign pleasure. Why should Christ come at the twilight and evening of the world, at the fulness, and not at the beginning of time ? Why he should be from the infancy of the world so long wrapped up in a promise, and not appear in the flesh till the last times and grey hairs of the world, when so many persons in all nations had been hurried out of the world, without any notice of such a redeemer, what was this but his sovereign will ? Why the Gentiles should be left so long in the devil's chains, wallowing in the sink of their abominable superstitions, since God had declared his intention by the prophets, to call multitudes of them, and reject the Jews ; why he should defer it so long, can be referred to nothing but the same cause. What is the reason the veil continues so long upon the heart of the Jews, that is promised one time or other to be taken off ? Why doth God delay the accomplishment of those glorious predictions of the happiness and interest of that people ? Is it because of the sin of their ancestors ?—a reason that cannot bear much weight. If we cast it upon that account, their conversion can never be expected, can never be effected ; if for the

sins of their ancestors, is it not also for their own sins? Do their sins grow less in number, or less venomous, or provoking in quality, by this delay? Is not their blasphemy of Christ as malicious, their hatred of him as strong and rooted, as ever? Do they not as much approve of the bloody act of their ancestors, since so many ages are past, as their ancestors did applaud it at the time of the execution? Have they not the same disposition and will, discovered sufficiently by the scorn of Christ, and of those that profess his name, to act the same thing over again, were Christ now in the same state in the world, and they invested with the same power of government? If their conversion were deferred one age after the death of Christ for the sins of their preceding ancestors, is it to be expected now, since the present generation of the Jews in all countries have the sins of those remote, the succeeding, and their more immediate ancestors lying upon them? This, therefore, cannot be the reason; but as it was the sovereign pleasure of God to foretell his intention, to overcome the stoutness of their hearts, so it is his sovereign pleasure that it shall not be performed till 'the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,' Rom. xi. 25. As he is the Lord of his own grace, so he is Lord of the time when to dispense it. Why did God create the world in six days, which he could have erected and beautified in a moment? Because it was his pleasure so to do. Why did he frame the world when he did, and not many ages before? Because he is master of his own work. Why did he not resolve to bring Israel to the fruition of Canaan till after four hundred years? Why did he draw out their deliverance to so long time after he began to attempt it? Why such a multitude of plagues upon Pharaoh to work it, when he could have cut short the work by one mortal blow upon the tyrant and his accomplices? It was his sovereign pleasure to act so, though not without other reasons, intelligible enough by looking into the story. Why doth he not bring man to a perfection of stature in a moment after his birth, but let him continue in a tedious infancy, in a semblance to beasts for want of an exercise of reason? Why doth he not bring this or that man, whom he intends for service, to a fitness in an instant, but by long tracts of study, and through meanders and labyrinths? Why doth he transplant a hopeful person in his youth to the pleasures of another world, and let another of an eminent holiness continue in the misery of this, and wade through many floods of afflictions? What can we chiefly refer all these things to, but his sovereign pleasure? The times are determined by God, Acts xvii. 26.

3. The dominion of God is manifested as a governor, as well as a law-giver and proprietor.

(1.) In disposing of states and kingdoms. Ps. lxxv. 7, 'God is Judge, he pulls down one, and sets up another.' *Judge* is to be taken, not in the same sense that we commonly use the word for a judicial minister in a way of trial, but for a governor; as you know the extraordinary governors raised up among the Jews were called judges, whence one entire book in the Old Testament is so denominated, the Book of Judges. God hath a prerogative to 'change times and seasons,' Dan. ii. 21, *i. e.* the revolutions of government, whereby times are altered.* How many empires that have spread their wings over a great part of the world, have had their carcasses torn in pieces, and unheard of nations plucked off the wings of the Roman eagle, after it had preyed upon many nations of the world! And the Macedonian empire was as the dew, that is dried up a short time after it falls. He erected the Chaldean monarchy, used Nebuchadnezzar to overthrow and punish the ungrateful Jews, and by a sovereign act gave a great parcel of

* Mr Mede in one of his Letters.

land into his hands; and what he thought was his right by conquest, was God's donative to him. You may read the charter to Nebuchadnezzar, whom he terms his servant, Jer. xxvii. 6, 'And now I have given all those lands,'—the lands are mentioned, ver. 3,—'into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant.' Which decree he pronounceth after his asserting his right of sovereignty over the whole earth, ver. 5. After that, he puts a period to the Chaldean empire, and by the same sovereign authority decrees Babylon to be a spoil to the nations of the north country, and delivers her up as a spoil to the Persian, Jer. l. 9, 10. And this for the manifestation of his sovereign dominion, that he was the 'Lord, that made peace, and created evil,' Isa. xlv. 6, 7. God afterwards overthrows that by the Grecian Alexander, prophesied of under the figure of a goat, with 'one horn between his eyes,' Dan. viii. The swift current of his victories, as swift as his motion, shewed it to be from an extraordinary hand of heaven, and not either from the policy or strength of the Macedonian. His strength in the prophet is described to be less, being but one horn running against the Persian, described under the figure of a 'ram with two horns.*' And himself acknowledged a divine motion exciting him to that great attempt, when he saw Joddus, the high priest, coming out in his priestly robes, to meet him at his approach to Jerusalem, whom he was about to worship, acknowledging that the vision, which put him upon the Persian war, appeared to him in such a garb. What was the reason Israel was rent from Judah, and both split into two distinct kingdoms? Because Rehoboam would not hearken to sober and sound counsels, but follow the advice of upstarts. What was the reason he did not hearken to sound advice, since he had so advantageous an education under his father Solomon, the wisest prince of the world? 'The cause was from the Lord,' 1 Kings xii. 15, that he might perform what he had before spoke. In this he acted according to his royal word; but in the first resolve he acted as a sovereign Lord, that had the disposal of all nations in the world. And though Ahab had a numerous posterity, seventy sons to inherit the throne after him, yet God by his sovereign authority gives them up into the hands of Jehu, who strips them of their lives and hopes together; not a man of them succeeded in the throne, but the crown is transferred to Jehu by God's disposal.

In wars, whereby flourishing kingdoms are overthrown, God hath the chief hand; in reference to which it is observed, that in the two prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, God is called the 'Lord of hosts' one hundred and thirty times. It is not the sword of the captain, but the sword of the Lord, bears the first rank: 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon,' Judges vii. 18. The sword of a conqueror is the sword of the Lord, and receives its charge and commission from the great sovereign, Jer. xlvii. 6, 7. We are apt to confine our thought to second causes, lay the fault upon the miscarriages of persons, the ambition of the one, and the covetousness of another, and regard them not as the effects of God's sovereign authority, linking separate causes together to serve his own purpose. The skill of one man may lay open the folly of a counsellor, an earthly force may break in pieces the power of a mighty prince. But Job, in his consideration of those things, refers the matter higher. Job xii. 18, 'He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle.' 'He looseth the bonds of kings,' *i. e.* takes off the yokes they lay upon their subjects, 'and girds their loins with a girdle;' a cord, as the vulgar; he lays upon them those fetters they framed for others, such a girdle or band as is the mark of captivity, as the words, ver. 19, confirm it, 'He leads princes away spoiled, and overthrows the mighty.' God

* Josephus.

lifts up some to a great height, and casts down others to a disgraceful ruin. All those changes in the face of the world, the revolutions of empires, the desolating and ravaging wars which are often immediately the birth of the vice, ambition, and fury of princes, are the royal acts of God as governor of the world. All government belongs to him, he is the fountain of all the great and petty dominions in the world, and therefore may place in them what substitutes and vicegerents he pleaseth, as a prince may remove his officers at pleasure, and take their commissions from them. The highest are settled by God *durante bene placito*, and not *quamdiu bene se gesserint*. Those princes that have been the glory of their country have swayed the sceptre but a short time, when the more wolfish ones have remained longer in commission, as God hath seen fit for the ends of his own sovereign government. Now by the revolutions in the world, and changes in governors and government, God keeps up the acknowledgment of his sovereignty, when he doth arrest grand and public offenders, that wear a crown by his providence, and employ it by their pride against him that placed it there. When he arraigns such by a signal hand from heaven, he makes them the public examples of the rights of his sovereignty, declaring thereby that the cedars of Lebanon are as much at his foot as the shrubs of the valley; that he hath as sovereign an authority over the throne in the palace as over the stool in the cottage.

(2.) The dominion of God is manifested in raising up and ordering the spirits of men according to his pleasure. He doth, as the 'Father of spirits,' communicate an influence to the spirits of men as well as an existence; he puts what inclinations he pleaseth into the will, stores it with what habits he please, whether natural or supernatural, whereby it may be rendered more ready to act according to the divine purpose. The will of man is a finite principle, and therefore subject to him who hath an infinite sovereignty over all things; and God having a sovereignty over the will in the manner of its acting, causeth it to will what he wills, as to the outward act, and the outward manner of performing it. There are many examples of this part of his sovereignty. God, by his sovereign conduct, ordered Moses a protectoress as soon as his parents had formed an ark of bulrushes, wherein to set him floating on the river, Exod. ii. 3-6. They expose him to the waves, and the waves expose him to the view of Pharaoh's daughter, whom God, by his secret ordering her motion, had posted in that place; and though she was the daughter of a prince that inveterately hated the whole nation, and had by various acts endeavoured to extirpate them, yet God inspires the royal lady with sentiments of compassion to the forlorn infant, though she knew him to be one of the Hebrews' children, ver. 6, *i. e.* one of that race whom her father had devoted to the hands of an executioner, yet God, that doth by his sovereignty rule over the spirits of all men, moves her to take that infant into her protection, and nourish him at her own charge, give him a liberal education, adopt him her son, who in time was to be the ruin of her race and the saviour of his nation. Thus he appointed Cyrus to be his 'shepherd,' and gave him a pastoral spirit for the reformation of the city and temple of Jerusalem, Isa. xlv. 28, and xlv. 5, tells them in the prophecy that he had 'girded' him, though Cyrus had 'not known him,' *i. e.* God had given him a military spirit and strength for so great an attempt, though he did not know that he was acted by God for those divine purposes. And when the time came for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt, the spirits of the people were raised up, not by themselves, but by God: Ezra i. 5, 'Whose spirit God had raised to go up.' And not only the spirit of Zerubbabel the magistrate, and of Joshua the priest, but the spirit of all the people, from the highest to the meanest that attended him, were acted by God, to strengthen

their hands and promote the work, Hag. i. 14. The spirits of men, even in those works which are naturally desirable to them, as the restoration of the city and rebuilding of the temple was to those Jews, are acted by God, as the sovereign over them; much more when the wheels of men's spirits are lifted up above their ordinary temper and motion. It was this empire of God good Nehemiah regarded as that whence he was to hope for success; he did not assure himself so much of it from the favour he had with the king, nor the reasonableness of his intended petition, but the absolute power God had over the heart of that great monarch, and therefore he supplicates the heavenly before he petitioned the earthly throne: Nehem. ii. 4, 'So I prayed to the God of heaven.' The heathens had some glance of this; it is an expression that Cicero hath somewhere, that the Roman commonwealth was rather governed by the assistance of the supreme divinity over the hearts of men, than by their own counsels and management. How often hath the feeble courage of men been heightened to such a pitch as to stare death in the face, which before were damped with the least thought or glance of it! This is a fruit of God's sovereign dominion.

(3.) The dominion of God is manifest in restraining the furious passions of men, and putting a block in their way. Sometimes God doth it by a remarkable hand, as the Babel-builders were diverted from their proud design by a sudden confusion of their language, and rendering it unintelligible to one another; sometimes by ordinary though unexpected means, as when Saul, like a hawk, was ready to prey upon David, whom he had hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, he had another object presented for his arms and fury by the Philistines' sudden invasion of a part of his territory, 1 Sam. xxiii. 26-28. But it is chiefly seen by an inward curbing mutinous affections, when there is no visible cause. What reason but this can be rendered, why the nations bordering on Canaan, who bore no good will to the Jews, but rather wished the whole race of them rooted out from the face of the earth, should not invade their country, pillage their houses, and plunder their cattle, while they were left naked of any human defence, the males being annually employed at one time at Jerusalem in worship; what reason can be rendered, but an invisible curb God put into their spirits? What was the reason not a man of all the buyers and sellers in the temple should rise against our Saviour, when with a high hand he began to whip them out, but a divine bridle upon them; though it appears by the questioning his authority, that there were Jews enough to have chased out him, and his company? John ii. 15, 18. What was the reason that, at the publishing the gospel by the apostles at the first descent of the Spirit, those that had used the Master so barbarously a few days before, were not all in a foam against the servants, that by preaching that doctrine upbraided them with the late murder? Had they better sentiments of the Lord whom they had put to death? Were their natures grown tamer, and their malignity expelled? No; but that sovereign who loosed the reins of their malicious corruption, to execute the master for the purchase of redemption, curbed it from breaking out against the servants, to further the propagation of the doctrine of redemption. He that restrains the roaring lion of hell, restrains also his whelps on earth; he and they must have a commission, before they can put forth a finger to hurt, how malicious soever their nature and will be. His empire reaches over the malignity of devils, as well as the nature of beasts. The lions out of the den, as well as those in the den, are bridled by him in favour of his Daniels. His dominion is above that of principalities and powers, their decrees are at his mercy, whether they shall stand or fall; he hath a vote above their stiffest resolves. His single word, *I will*,

or *I forbid*, outweighs the most resolute purposes of all the mighty Nimrods of the earth in their rendezvouses, and cabals in their associations and counsels. Isa. viii. 9, 10, 'Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought.' 'When the enemy shall come in like a flood,' with a violent and irresistible force, intending nothing but ravage and desolation, 'the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against them,' Isa. lix. 19, shall give a sudden check and damp their spirits, and put them to a stand. When Laban furiously pursued Jacob with an intent to do him an ill turn, God gave him a command to do otherwise, Gen. xxxi. 24. Would Laban have respected that command any more than he did the light of nature, when he worshipped idols, had not God exercised his authority, in inclining his will to observe it, or laying restraints upon his natural inclinations, or denying his concurrence to the acting those ill intentions he had entertained? The stilling the principles of commotion in men, and the noise of the sea, are arguments of the divine dominion; neither the one nor the other is in the power of the most sovereign prince without divine assistance. As no prince can command a calm to a raging sea, so no prince can order stillness to a tumultuous people; they are both put together as equally parts of the divine prerogative, Ps. lxxv. 7, which 'stills the noise of the sea, and tumults of the people.' And David owns God's sovereignty more than his own, in 'subduing the people under him,' Ps. xviii. 47. In this his empire is illustrious: Ps. xxix. 10, 'The Lord sitteth upon the floods, yea, the Lord sitteth king for ever; a king impossible to be deposed; not only on the natural floods of the sea, that would naturally overflow the world, but the metaphorical floods or tumults of the people, the sea in every wicked man's heart, more apt to rage morally than the sea to foam naturally. If you will take the interpretation of an angel, waters and floods, in the prophetic style, signify the inconstant and mutable people: Rev. xvii. 1, 5, 'The waters where the whore sits, are people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.' So the angel expounds to John the vision which he saw, verse 1. The heathens acknowledged this part of God's sovereignty in the inward restraints of men. Those apparitions of the gods and goddesses, in Homer, to several of the great men when they were in a fury, were nothing else, in the judgment of the wisest philosophers, than an exercise of God's sovereignty in quelling their passions, checking their uncomely intentions, and controlling them in that which their rage prompted them to. And indeed did not God set bounds to the storms in men's hearts, we should soon see the funeral, not only of religion, but civility; the one would be blown out, and the other torn up by the roots.

(4.) The dominion of God is manifest in defeating the purposes and devices of men. God often makes a mock of human projects, and doth as well accomplish that which they never dreamt of, as disappoint that which they confidently designed. He is present at all cabals, laughs at men's formal and studied counsels, bears a hand over every egg they hatch, thwarts their best compacted designs, supplants their contrivances, breaks the engines they have been many years rearing, diverts the intentions of men, as a mighty wind blows an arrow from the mark which the archer intended: Job. v. 12, 'He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.' Enemies often draw an exact scheme of their intended proceedings, marshal their companies, appoint their rendezvous, think to make but one morsel of those they hate; God by his sovereign dominion turns the scale, changeth the

gloominess of the oppressed into a sunshine, and the enemies' sunshine into darkness. When the nations were gathered together against Zion, and said, 'Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion,' Micah iv. 11, what doth God do in this case? Ver. 12, 'He shall gather them,' *i. e.* those conspiring nations, 'as sheaves into the floor.' Then he sounds a trumpet to Zion: 'Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make thy horn iron, and thy hoofs brass; and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.' I will make them, and their counsels, them and their strength, the monuments and signal marks of my empire over the whole earth.

When you see the cunningest designs baffled by some small thing intervening, when you see men of profound wisdom infatuated, mistake their way, and 'grope in the noonday as in the night,' Job. v. 14, bewildered in a plain way; when you see the hopes of mighty attempters dashed into despair, their triumphs into funerals, and their joyful expectations into sorrowful disappointments; when you see the weak devoted to destruction victorious, and the most presumptuous defeated in their purposes: then read the divine dominion in the desolation of such devices. How often doth God take away the heart and spirit of grand designs, and burst a mighty wheel, by snatching but one man out of the world! How often doth he 'cut off the spirits of princes,' Ps. lxxvi. 12, either from the world by death, or from the execution of their projects by some unforeseen interruption, or from favouring those contrivances, which before they cherished, by a change of their minds! How often hath confidence in God, and religious prayer, edged the weakest and smallest number of weapons, to make a carnage of the carnally confident! How often hath presumption been disappointed, and the contemned enemy rejoiced in the spoils of the proud expectant of victory. Phydias made the image of Nemesis or revenge, at Marathon, of that marble which the haughty Persians, despising the weakness of the Athenian forces, brought with them to erect a trophy for an expected but an ungained victory.* Haman's neck, by a sudden turn, was in the halter, when the Jews' necks were designed to the block. Julian designed the overthrow of all the Christians, just before his breast was pierced by an unexpected arrow. The powder-traitors were all ready to give fire to the mine, when the sovereign hand of heaven snatched away the match. Thus the great Lord of the world cuts off men on the pinnacle of their designs, when they seem to threaten heaven and earth; puts out the candle of the wicked, which they thought to use to light them to the execution of their purposes; turns their own counsels into a curse to themselves, and a blessing to their adversaries, and makes his greatest enemies contribute to the effecting of his purposes. How may we take notice of God's absolute disposal of things in private affairs, when we see one man with a small measure of prudence, and little industry, have great success, and others with a greater measure of wisdom, and greater toil and labour, find their enterprises melt between their fingers! It was Solomon's observation, 'that the race was not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill,' Eccles. ix. 11.

Many things might interpose to stop the swift in his race, and damp the courage of the most valiant. Things do not happen according to men's ability, but according to the overruling authority of God. God never yet granted man the dominion of his own way, no more than to be lord of his own time: 'The way of man is not in himself, it is not in him that walketh

* Causin, Symb. lib. ii. cap. lxxv.

to direct his steps,' Jer. x. 23. He hath given man a power of acting, but not the sovereignty to command success. He makes even those things which men intended for their security to turn to their ruin. Pilate delivered up Christ, to be accounted a friend to Cæsar, and Cæsar soon after proves an enemy to him, removes him from his government, and sends him into banishment. The Jews imagined, by the crucifying Christ, to keep the Roman ensigns at a distance from them, and this hastened their march, by God's sovereign disposal, which ended in a total desolation. 'He makes the judges fools,' Job xii. 17, by taking away his light from their understanding, and suffering them to go on in the vanity of their own spirits, that his sovereignty in the management of things may be more apparent; for then he is known to be Lord, when he 'snares the wicked in the work of his own hands,' Ps. ix. 16. You have seen much of this doctrine in your experience, and, if my judgment fail me not, you will yet see much more.

(5.) The dominion of God is manifest in sending his judgments upon whom he pleases. He kills and makes alive, he wounds and heals whom he pleaseth. His thunders are his own, and he may cast them upon what subjects he thinks good. He hath a right in a way of justice to punish all men, he hath his choice in a way of sovereignty to pick out whom he please to make the examples of it. Might not some nations be as wicked as those of Sodom and Gomorrah, yet have not been scorched with the like dreadful flames? Zoar was untouched, while the other cities her neighbours were burned to ashes. Were there never any places and persons successors in Sodom's guilt? Yet those only by his sovereign authority are separated by him, to be the examples of his eternal vengeance, Jude 7. Why are not sinners as Sodom, like as those ancient ones, scalded to death by the like fiery drops? It is because it is his pleasure; and the same reason is to be rendered why he would in the way of justice cut off the Jews for their sins, and leave the Gentiles untouched in the midst of their idolatries. When the church was consumed because of her iniquities, they acknowledged God's sovereignty in this: Isa. lxiv. 7, 8, 'We are the clay, and thou art our potter, and we all the work of thy hands,' thou hast a liberty either to break or preserve us. Judgments move according to God's order. When the sword hath a charge against Ashkelon and the sea shore, thither it must march, and touch not any other place or person as it goes, though there may be demerit enough for it to punish: Jer. xlvii. 6, 7, when the prophet had spake to the sword, 'O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.' The prophet answers for the sword, 'How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon? there hath he appointed it.' If he hath appointed a judgment against London or Westminster, or any other place, there it shall drop, there it shall pierce, and in no other place without a like charge. God as a sovereign gives instructions to every judgment, when and against whom it shall march, and what cities, what persons it shall arrest, and he is punctually obeyed by them as a sovereign Lord. All creatures stand ready for his call, and are prepared to be executioners of his vengeance, when he speaks the word; they are his hosts by creation, and in array for his service; at the sound of his trumpet, or beat of his drum, they troop together with their arms in their hands, to put his orders exactly in execution.

(6.) The dominion of God is manifest in appointing to every man his calling and station in the world. If the hairs of every man's head fall under his sovereign care, the calling of every man, wherein he is to glorify God, and serve his generation, which is of greater concern than the hairs of

the head, falls under his dominion. He is the master of the great family, and divides to every one his work as he pleaseth. The whole work of the Messiah, the time of every action, as well as the hour of his passion, was ordered and appointed by God. The separation of Paul to the preaching of the gospel, was by the sovereign disposal of God, Rom. i. 1. By the same exercise of his authority, that he 'sets every man the bounds of his habitation,' Acts xvii. 26, he prescribes also to him the nature of his work. He that ordered Adam, the father of mankind, his work, and the place of it, the dressing the garden, Gen. ii. 15, doth not let any of his posterity be their own choosers, without an influence of his sovereign direction on them. Though our callings are our work, yet they are by God's order, wherein we are to be faithful to our great master and ruler.

(7.) The dominion of God is manifest in the means and occasions of men's conversion. Sometimes one occasion, sometimes another, one word lets a man go, another arrests him, and brings him before God and his own conscience; it is as God gives out the order. He lets Paul be a prisoner at Jerusalem, that his cause should not be determined there, moves him to appeal to Cæsar, not only to make him a prisoner but a preacher in Cæsar's court, and render his chains an occasion to bring in a harvest of converts in Nero's palace: Philip. i. 12, 13, his bonds in or for Christ are 'manifest in all the palace;' not the bare knowledge of his bonds, but the sovereign design of God in those bonds, and the success of them; the bare knowledge of them would not make others more confident for the gospel, as it follows, ver. 14, without a providential design of them. Onesimus, running from his master, is guided by God's sovereign order into Paul's company, and thereby into Christ's arms, and he who came a fugitive returns a Christian, Philem. 10, 15. Some by a strong affliction have had, by the divine sovereignty, their understandings awakened to consider, and their wills spirited to conversion. Monica being called Meribibula or toss-pot, was brought to consider her way, and reform her life. A word hath done that at one time which hath often before fallen without any fruit. Many have come to suck in the eloquence of the minister, and have found in the honey for their ears a sting for the consciences. Austin had no other intent in going to hear Ambrose, but to have a taste of his famous oratory; but while Ambrose spake a language to his ear, God spake a heavenly dialect to his heart. No reason can be rendered of the order, and timing, and influence of those things, but the sovereign pleasure of God, who will attend one occasion and season with his blessing and not another.

(8.) The dominion of God is manifest in disposing of the lives of men. He keeps the key of death, as well as that of the womb, in his own hand; he hath given man a life, but not power to dispose of it or lay it down at his pleasure; and therefore he hath ordered man not to murder, not another, not himself; man must expect his call and grant to dispose of the life of his body. Why doth he cut the thread of this man's life, and spin another's out to a longer term? Why doth one die an inglorious death, and another more honourable? One silently drops away in the multitude, while another is made a sacrifice for the honour of God, or the safety of his country. This is a mark of honour he gives to one and not to another: Philip. i. 29, 'To you it is given.' The manner of Peter's death was appointed, John xxi. 19. Why doth a small and slight disease, against the rules of physic, and the judgment of the best practitioners, dislodge one man's soul out of his body, while a greater disease is mastered in another, and discharges the patient to enjoy himself a longer time in the land of the living? Is it the effect of means so much as of the sovereign disposer of all things? If means only

did it, the same means would alway work the same effect, and sooner master a dwarfish than a giant-like distemper. 'Our times are only in God's hands,' Ps. xxxi. 15, either to cut short or continue long. As his sovereignty made the first marriage knot, so he reserves the sole authority to himself to make the divorce.

4. The dominion of God is manifest in his being a redeemer, as well as lawgiver, proprietor, and governor. His sovereignty was manifest in the creation, in bestowing upon this or that part of matter a form more excellent than upon another. He was a lawgiver to men and angels, and prescribed them rules according to the counsel of his own will. These were his creatures, and perfectly at his disposal; but in redemption a sovereignty is exercised over the Son, the second person in the Trinity, one equal with the Father in essence and works, by whom the worlds were created, and by whom they did consist. The whole gospel is nothing else but a declaration of his sovereign pleasure concerning Christ, and concerning us in him; it is therefore called 'the mystery of his will,' Eph. i. 9; the will of God as distinct from the will of Christ, a purpose in himself, not moved thereunto by any; the whole design was framed in the Deity, and as much the purpose of his sovereign will as the contrivance of his immense wisdom. He decreed in his own pleasure to have the second person assume our nature, for to deliver mankind from that misery whereinto it was fallen. The whole of the gospel and the privileges of it are in that chapter resolved into the will and pleasure of God.

God is therefore called 'the head of Christ,' 1 Cor. xi. 3. As Christ is superior to all men, and the man superior to the woman, so is God superior to Christ, and of a more eminent dignity; in regard of the constituting him mediator, Christ is subject to God, as the body to the head. Head is a title of government and sovereignty, and magistrates were called the heads of the people. As Christ is the head of man, so is God the head of Christ; and as man is subject to Christ, so is Christ subject to God; not in regard of the divine nature, wherein there is an equality, and consequently no dominion of jurisdiction, nor only in his human nature, but in the economy of a Redeemer, considered as one designed, and consenting to be incarnate, and take our flesh; so that after this agreement God had a sovereign right to dispose of him according to the articles consented to. In regard of his understanding, and the advantage he was to bring to the elect of God upon the earth, he calls God by the solemn title of his Lord, in that prophetic Psalm of him: Ps. xvi. 2, 'O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord; my goodness extends not unto thee, but unto the saints that are in the earth.' It seems to be the speech of Christ in heaven, mentioning the saints on earth as at a distance from him. I can add nothing to the glory of thy majesty, but the whole fruit of my mediation and sufferings will redound to the saints on earth; and it may be observed that God is called the Lord of hosts in the evangelical prophets Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, more in reference to this affair of redemption, and the deliverance of the church, than for any other works of his providence in the world.

(1.) This sovereignty of God appears in requiring satisfaction for the sin of man. Had he indulged man after his fall, and remitted his offence without a just compensation for the injury he had received by his rebellion, his authority had been vilified, man would always have been attempting against his jurisdiction, there would have been a continual succession of rebellions on man's part; and if a continual succession of indulgences on God's part, he had quite disowned his authority over man, and stripped himself of the

flower of his crown ; satisfaction must have been required, some time or other, from the person thus rebelling, or some other in his stead ; and to require it after the first act of sin was more preservative to the right of the divine sovereignty, than to do it after a multitude of repeated revolts. God must have laid aside his authority, if he had laid aside wholly the exacting punishment for the offence of man.

(2.) This sovereignty of God appears in appointing Christ to this work of redemption. His sovereignty was before manifest over angels and men by the right of creation, there was nothing wanting to declare the highest charge of it but his ordering his own Son to become a mortal creature ; the Lord of all things to become lower than those angels, that had, as well as all other things, received their being and beauty from him, and to be reckoned in his death among the dust and refuse of the world. He by whom God created all things not only became a man, but a crucified man by the will of his Father : Gal. i. 4, ' Who gave himself for our sins, according to the will of God ' ; to which may refer that expression, Prov. viii. 22, of his being ' possessed by God in the beginning of his way.' Possession is the dominion of a thing invested in the possessor ; he was possessed, indeed, as a Son by eternal generation. He was possessed also in the beginning of his way or works of creation as a mediator by special constitution ; to this the expression seems to refer, if you read on to the end of verse 31, wherein Christ speaks of his ' rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth,' the earth of the great God, who had designed him to this special work of redemption. He was a Son by nature, but a mediator by divine will, in regard of which Christ is often called God's servant, which is a relation to God as a Lord. God being the Lord of all things, the dominion of all things inferior to him is inseparable from him, and in this regard the whole of what Christ was to do, and did actually do, was acted by him as the will of God, and is expressed so by himself in the prophecy : Ps. xl. 7, ' Lo, I come : ' ver. 8, ' I delight to do thy will,' which are put together, Heb. x. 7, ' Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.' The designing Christ to do this work was an act of mercy, but founded on his sovereignty. His compassionate bowels might have pitied us without his being sovereign, but without it could not have relieved us. It was the counsel of his own will, as well as of his bowels. None was his counsellor or persuader to that mercy he shewed : Rom. xi. 34, ' Who hath been his counsellor ? ' For it refers to that mercy, in ' sending the deliverer out of Zion,' ver. 26, as well as to other things the apostle had been discoursing of. As God was at liberty to create or not to create, so he was at liberty to redeem or not to redeem, and at his liberty whether to appoint Christ to this work, or not to call him out to it. In giving this order to his Son, his sovereignty was exercised in a higher manner than in all the orders and instructions he hath given out to men or angels, and all the employments he ever sent them upon. Christ hath names which signify an authority over him. He is called an angel, and a messenger, Mal. iii. 1 ; an apostle, Heb. iii. 1, declaring thereby that God hath as much authority over him as over the angels, sent upon his messages ; or [he] over the apostles commissioned by his authority, as he was considered in the quality of mediator.

(3.) This sovereignty of God appears in transferring our sins upon Christ. The supreme power in a nation can only appoint or allow of a commutation of punishment ; it is a part of sovereignty to transfer the penalty due to the crime of one upon another, and substitute a sufferer, with the sufferer's own consent, in the place of a criminal, whom he had a mind to deliver from a deserved punishment. God transferred the sins of men upon Christ, and

inflicted on him a punishment for them. He summed up the debts of man, charged them upon the score of Christ, imputing to him the guilt, and inflicting upon him the penalty : Isa. liii. 6, 'The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all ;' he made them all to meet upon his back : 'He hath made him to be sin for us,' 2 Cor. v. 21. He was made so by the sovereign pleasure of God. A punishment for sin, as most understand it, which could not be righteously inflicted, had not sin been first righteously imputed by the consent of Christ, and the order of the Judge of the world. This imputation could be the immediate act of none but God, because he was the sole creditor. A creditor is not bound to accept of another's suretyship, but it is at his liberty whether he will or no ; and when he doth accept of him, he may challenge the debt of him, as if he were the debtor himself. Christ made himself sin for us by a voluntary submission, and God made him sin for us by a full imputation, and treated him penally, as he would have done those sinners in whose stead he suffered. Without this act of sovereignty in God we had for ever perished ; for, if we could suppose Christ laying down his life for us without the pleasure and order of God, he could not have been said to have borne our punishment. What could he have undergone in his humanity, but a temporal death ? But more than this was due to us, even the wrath of God, which far exceeds the calamity of a mere bodily death. The soul being principal in the crime, was to be principal in the punishment. The wrath of God could not have dropped upon his soul, and rendered it so full of agonies, without the hand of God. A creature is not capable to reach the soul, neither as to comfort nor terror ; and the justice of God could not have made him a sufferer, if it had not first considered him a sinner by imputation or by inherency, and actual commission of a crime in his own person. The latter was far from Christ, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled. He must be considered then, in the other state of imputation, which could not be without a sovereign appointment, or at least concession, of God ; for without it, he could have had no more authority to lay down his life for us, than Abraham could have had to have sacrificed his son, or any man to expose himself to death, without a call ; nor could any plea have been entered in the court of heaven, either by Christ for us, or by us for ourselves ; and though the death of so great a person had been meritorious in itself, it had not been meritorious for us or accepted for us. Christ is 'delivered up' by him, Rom. viii. 32, in every part of that condition wherein he was and suffered, and to that end, that 'we might become the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. v. 21, that we might have the righteousness of him that was God imputed to us, or that we might have a righteousness as great, and proportioned to the righteousness of God, as God required. It was an act of divine sovereignty to account him that was righteous a sinner in our stead, and to account us, who were sinners, righteous upon the merit of his death.

(4.) This was done by the command of God, by God as a lawgiver, having the supreme legislative and preceptive authority ; in which respect the whole work of Christ is said to be an answer to a law, not one given to him, but put into his heart, as the law of nature was in the heart of man at first : Ps. xl. 7, 8, 'Thy law is within my heart.' This law was not the law of nature or moral law, though that was also in the heart of Christ, but the command of doing those things which were necessary for our salvation, and not a command so much of doing, as of dying. The moral law in the heart of Christ would have done us no good without the mediatory law ; we had been where we were by the sole observance of the precepts of the moral law, without his suffering the penalty of it. The law in the heart of Christ was

the law of suffering or dying, the doing that for us by his death, which the blood of sacrifices was unable to effect. Legal 'sacrifices thou wouldest not; thy law is within my heart,' *i. e.* thy law ordered me to be a sacrifice. It was that law, his obedience to which was principally accepted and esteemed, and that was principally his passive, his obedience to death, Philip. ii. 8. This was the special command received from God, that he should die, John x. 18. It is not so clearly manifested when this command was given, whether after the incarnation of Christ, or at the point of his constitution as mediator, upon the transaction between the Father and the Son concerning the affair of redemption: 'The promise was given before the world began,' Titus i. 2. Might not the precepts be given before the world began, to Christ, as considered in the quality of mediator and redeemer? Precepts and promises usually attend one another; every covenant is made up of both. Christ, considered here as the Son of God in the divine nature, was not capable of a command or promise, but considered in the relation of mediator between God and man, he was capable of both; promises of assistance were made before his actual incarnation, of which the prophets are full. Why not precepts for his obedience, since long before his incarnation this was his speech in the prophet, Thy law is within my heart? However, a command, a law it was, which is a fruit of the divine sovereignty; that, as the sovereignty of God was impeached and violated by the disobedience of Adam, it might be owned and vindicated by the obedience of Christ; that, as we fell by disloyalty to it, we might rise by the highest submission to it in another head, infinitely superior in his person to Adam, by whom we fell.

(5.) This sovereignty of God appears in exalting Christ to such a sovereign dignity as our redeemer. Some indeed say, that this sovereignty of Christ's human nature was natural, and the right of it resulted from its union with the divine, as a lady of mean condition, when espoused and married to a prince, hath by virtue of that a natural right to some kind of jurisdiction over the whole kingdom, because she is one with the king.* But to waive this, the Scripture placeth wholly the conferring such an authority upon the pleasure and will of God. As Christ was a gift of God's sovereign will to us, so this was a gift of God's sovereign will to Christ: Mat. xxviii. 28, 'All power is given me;' and he 'gave him to be head over all things to the church;' Eph. i. 22, 'God gave him a name above every name,' Philip. ii. 9; and therefore his throne he sits upon is called 'the throne of his Father,' Rev. iii. 31; and he 'committed all judgments to the Son,' *i. e.* all government and dominion, an empire in heaven and earth, John v. 22, and that 'because he is the Son of man,' ver. 27, which may be understood, that the Father hath given him authority to exercise that judgment and government as the Son of man, which he originally had as the Son of God; or rather, because he became a servant and humbled himself to death, he gives him this authority as the reward of his obedience and humility, conformable to Philip. ii. 9. This is an act of the high sovereignty of God, to obscure his own authority in a sense, and take into association with him, or vicarious subordination to him, the human nature of Christ as united to the divine, not only lifting it above the heads of all the angels, but giving that person in our nature an empire over them, whose nature was more excellent than ours. Yea, the sovereignty of God appears in the whole management of this kingly office of Christ; for it is managed, in every part of it, according to God's order: Ezek. xxxvii. 24, 25, 'David my servant shall be king over them: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.' He shall be a prince over them, but my servant in that principality, in the exercise and

* Lessius, de perfect. divin. lib. x. p. 65.

duration of it. The sovereignty of God is paramount in all that Christ hath done as a priest, or shall do as a king.

V. The use.

1. For instruction.

1. How great is the contempt of this sovereignty of God. Man naturally would be free from God's empire, to be a slave under the dominion of his own lust. The sovereignty of God as a lawgiver is most abhorred by man, Lev. xxvi. 43. The Israelites, the best people in the world, were apt by nature not only to despise, but 'abhor his statutes.' There is not a law of God but the corrupt heart of man hath an abhorrency of. How often do men wish that God had not enacted this or that law that goes against the grain, and in wishing so, wish that he were no sovereign, or not such a sovereign as he is in his own nature, but one according to their corrupt model. This is the great quarrel between God and man, whether he or they shall be the sovereign ruler. He should not by the will of man rule in any one village in the world; God's vote should not be predominant in any one thing. There is not a law of his but is exposed to contempt by the perverseness of man: Prov. i. 21, 'Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof.' *Septuagint*, 'Ye have made all my counsels without authority.' The nature of man cannot endure one precept of God, nor one rebuke from him; and for this cause God is at the expense of judgments in the world, to assert his own empire to the teeth and consciences of men: Ps. lix. 13, 'Lord, consume them in wrath; and let them know that God rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth.' The dominion of God is not slighted by any creature of this world but man; all others observe it by observing his order; whether in their natural motions or preternatural irruptions, they punctually enact according to their commission. Man only speaks a dialect against the strain of the whole creation, and hath none to imitate him among all the creatures in heaven and earth, but only among those in hell. Man is more impatient of the yoke of God than of the yoke of man. There are not so many rebellions committed by inferiors against their superiors and fellow-creatures as are committed against God. A willing and easy sinning, is an equalling the authority of God to that of man: Hosea vi. 7, 'They, like men, have transgressed my covenant.' They have made no more account of breaking my covenant than if they had broken some league or compact made with a mere man, so slightly do they esteem the authority of God.* Such a disesteem of the divine authority is a virtual undeifying of him. To slight his sovereignty, is to stab his deity; since the one cannot be preserved without the support of the other, his life would expire with his authority. How base and brutish is it for vile dust and mouldering clay, to lift up itself against the majesty of God, whose throne is in the heavens, who sways his sceptre over all parts of the world; a majesty before whom the devils shake, and the highest cherubims tremble. It is as if the thistle, that can presently be trod down by the foot of a wild beast, should think itself a match for the cedar of Lebanon, as the phrase is, 2 Kings xiv. 9.

Let us consider this in general, and also in the ordinary practice of men.

First, In general.

(1.) All sin in its nature is a contempt of the divine dominion. As every act of obedience is a confirmation of the law, and consequently a subscription to the authority of the lawgiver, Deut. xxvii. 26, so every breach of it is a conspiracy against the sovereignty of the lawgiver; setting up our will

* Munster.

against the will of God is an articing against his authority, as setting up our reason against the methods of God is an articing against his wisdom; the intendment of every act of sin is to wrest the sceptre out of God's hand. The authority of God is the first attribute in the Deity which it directs its edge against; it is called therefore a 'transgression of his law,' 1 John iii. 4. And therefore a slight or neglect of the majesty of God, and the not keeping his commands, is called a 'forgetting God,' Deut. viii. 11, *i. e.* a forgetting him to be our absolute Lord. As the first notion we have of God as a creator is that of his sovereignty, so the first perfection that sin struck at in the violation of the law, was his sovereignty as a lawgiver. 'Breaking the law' is a 'dishonouring God,' Rom. ii. 23, a snatching off his crown; to obey our own wills before the will of God, is to prefer ourselves as our own sovereigns before him. Sin is a wrong and injury to God, not in his essence,—that is above the reach of a creature,—nor in anything profitable to him, or pertaining to his own intrinsic advantage; not an injury to God in himself, but in his authority, in those things which pertain to his glory, a disowning his due right, and not using his goods according to his will. Thus the whole world may be called, as God calls Chaldea, 'a land of rebels;' Jer. l. 21, 'Go up against the land of Merathaim,' or 'rebels;' rebels not against the Jews, but against God. The mighty opposition in the heart of man to the supremacy of God, is discovered emphatically by the apostle, Rom. viii. 7, in that expression, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God,' *i. e.* against the authority of God; because 'it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' It refuseth not subjection to this or that part, but to the whole, to every mark of divine authority in it; it will not lay down its arms against it, nay, it cannot but stand upon its terms against it; the law can no more be fulfilled by a carnal mind, than it can be disowned by a sovereign God. God is so holy, that he cannot alter a righteous law; and man is so averse, that he cares not for, nay, cannot fulfil, one tittle, so much doth the nature of man swell against the majesty of God. Now an enmity to the law, which is in every sin, implies a perversity against the authority of God that enacted it.

(2.) All sin in its nature is the despoiling God of his sole sovereignty, which was probably the first thing the devil aimed at. That pride was the sin of the devil, the Scripture gives us some account of, when the apostle adviseth not a novice, or one that hath but lately embraced the faith, to be chosen a bishop: 1 Tim. iii. 6, 'Lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil;' lest he fall into the same sin for which the devil was condemned. But in what particular thing this pride was manifest is not so easily discernible. The ancients generally conceived it to be an affecting the throne of God, grounding it on Isaiah xiv. 12, 'How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning! for thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.' It is certain the prophet speaks there of the king of Babylon, and taxeth him for his pride, and gives to him the title of Lucifer, perhaps likening him in his pride to the devil; and then it notes plainly the particular sin of the devil, attempting a share in the sovereignty of God. And some strengthen their conjecture from the name of the archangel who contended against Satan, Jude 9, which is *Michael*; which signifies, *Who as God?* or *Who like God?* the name of the angel giving the superiority to God, intimating the contrary disposition in the devil, against whom he contended. It is likely his sin was an affecting an equality with God in empire, or a freedom from the sovereign authority of God, because he imprinted such a kind of persuasion on man at his first temptation, 'Ye shall be as gods,'

Gen. iii. 5; and though it be restrained to the matter of knowledge, yet that being a fitness for government, it may be extended to that also. But it is plainly a persuading them, that they might be in some sort equal with God, and independent on him as their superior. What he had found so fatal to himself, he imagined would have the same success in the ruin of man. And since the devil hath in all ages of the world usurped a worship to himself, which is only due to God, and would be served by man, as if he were the god of the world; since all his endeavour was to be worshipped as the supreme god on earth, it is not unreasonable to think that he invaded the supremacy of God in heaven, and endeavoured to be like the Most High before his banishment, as he hath attempted to be like the Most High since. And since the devil and antichrist are reputed by John in the Revelation to be so near of kin, and so like in disposition, why might not that which is the sin of antichrist, the image of him, be also the sin of Satan, 'to exalt himself above all that is called God,' 2 Thes. ii. 4, and 'sit as God in his temple,' affecting a partnership in his throne and worship? Whether it was this, or attempting an unaccountable dominion over created things, or because he was the prime angel, and the most illustrious of that magnificent corporation, he might think himself fit to reign with God over all things else. Or if his sin were envy, as some think, at the felicity of man in paradise, it was still a quarrelling with God's dominion, and right of disposing his own goods and favours; he is therefore called *Belial*: 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 'What concord hath Christ with Belial?' *i.e.* with the devil, one *without yoke*, as the word *Belial* signifies.

(3.) It is more plain that this was the sin of Adam. The first act of Adam was to exercise a lordship over the lower creatures, in giving names to them, a token of dominion, Gen. ii. 19. The next was to affect a lordship over God, in rebelling against him. After he had writ the first mark of his own delegated dominion in the names he gave the creatures, and owned their dependence on him as their governor, he would not acknowledge his own dependence on God. As soon as the Lord of the world had put him into possession of the power he had allotted him, he attempted to strip his Lord of that which he had reserved to himself. He was not content to lay a yoke upon the other creatures, but desirous to shake off the divine yoke from himself, and be subject to none but his own will. Hence Adam's sin is more particularly called 'disobedience,' Rom. v. 19. For in the eating the apple there was no moral evil in itself, but a contradiction to the positive command and order of God, whereby he did disown God's right of commanding him, or reserving anything from him to his own use. The language all his posterity speaks, 'Let us break his bands, and cast away his cords from us,' Ps. ii. 3, was learned from Adam in that act of his. The next act we read of was that of Cain's murdering Abel, which was an invading God's right, in assuming an authority to dispose the life of his brother, a life which God had given him, and reserved the period of it in his own hands. And he persists in the same usurpation when God came to examine him, and ask him where his brother was. How scornful was his answer: Gen. iv. 9, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' As much as if he had said, What have you to do to examine me? Or, What obligation is there upon me to render an account of him? Or, as one saith,* it is as much as if he had said, Go look [for] him yourself. The sovereignty of God did not remain undisturbed. As soon as ever it appeared in creation, the devils rebelled against it in heaven, and man would have banished it from the earth.

* *Trap. in loc.*

(4.) The sovereignty of God hath not been less invaded by the usurpations of men. One single order of the Roman episcopacy hath endeavoured to usurp the prerogatives of God. The pope will prohibit what God hath allowed,—the marriage of priests, the receiving of the cup as well as of the bread in the sacrament, the eating of this or that sort of meat at special times, meats which God hath sanctified, and forbid them, too, upon pain of damnation. It is an invasion of God's right to forbid the use of what God hath granted, as though the earth, and the fulness thereof, were no longer the Lord's, but the pope's; much more to forbid what God hath commanded, as if Christ overreached his own authority when he enjoined all to drink of the sacramental wine, as well as eat of the sacramental bread. No lord but will think his right usurped by that steward who shall permit to others what his lord forbids, and forbid that which his master allows, and act the lord instead of the servant. Add to this the pardon of many sins, as if he had the sole key to the treasures of divine mercy, the disposing of crowns and dominions at his pleasure; as if God had divested himself of the title of King of kings, and transferred it upon the see of Rome. The allowing public stews, dispensing with incestuous marriages, as if God had acted more the part of a tyrant than of a righteous sovereign in forbidding them; depriving the Jews of the propriety in their estates upon their conversion to Christianity, as if the pilfering men's goods were the way to teach them self-denial, the first doctrine of Christian religion, and God shall have no honour from the Jew without a breach of his law by theft from the Christian; granting many years' indulgences upon slight performances, the repeating so many *Ave Marias* and *Paternosters* in a day, canonising saints, claiming the keys of heaven, and disposing of the honours and glory of it; and proposing creatures as objects of religious worship, wherein he answers the character of the apostle: 2 Thes. ii. 4, 'Shewing himself that he is god,' in challenging that power which is only the right of divine sovereignty; exalting himself above God, in indulging those things which the law of God never allowed, but hath severely prohibited.

This controlling the sovereignty of God, not allowing him the rights of his crown, is the soul and spirit of many errors. Why are the decrees of election and preterition denied? Because men will not acknowledge God the sovereign disposer of his creature. Why is effectual calling and efficacious grace denied? Because they will not allow God the proprietor and distributor of his own goods. Why is the satisfaction of Christ denied? Because they will not allow God a power to vindicate his own law in what way he pleaseth. Most of the errors of men may be resolved into a denial of God's sovereignty. All have a tincture of the first evil sentiment of Adam.

The sovereignty of God is contemned in the practices of men.

1. As he is a lawgiver.

(1.) When laws are made, and urged in any state, contrary to the law of God. It is part of God's sovereignty to be a lawgiver. Not to obey his law is a breach made upon his right of government; but it is treason in any against the crown of God to mint laws with a stamp contrary to that of heaven, whereby they renounce their due subjection, and vie with God for dominion; snatch the supremacy from him, and account themselves more lords than the sovereign Monarch of the world. When men will not let God be the judge of good and evil, but put in their own vote, controlling his to establish their own, such are not content to be as gods subordinate to the supreme God, to sit at his feet; nor co-ordinate with him, to sit equal upon his throne; but paramount to him, to overtop and shadow his crown,—a

boldness that leaves the serpent in the first temptation under the character of a more commendable modesty, who advised our first parents to attempt to be as gods, but not above him, and would enervate a law of God, but not enact a contrary one to be observed by them. Such was the usurpation of Nebuchadnezzar, to set up a golden image to be adored, Dan. iii., as if he had power to mint gods as well as to conquer men; to set the stamp of a deity upon a piece of gold, as well as his own effigies upon his current coin. Much of the same nature was that of Darius by the motion of his flatterers, to prohibit any petition to be made to God for the space of thirty days, as though God was not to have a worship without a license from a doating piece of clay, Dan. vi. 7. So Henry the Third of France, by his edict, silenced masters of families from praying with their households.* And it is a farther contempt of God's authority when good men are oppressed by the sole weight of power for not observing such laws,† as if they had a real sovereignty over the consciences of men more than God himself. When the apostles were commanded by an angel from God to preach in the temple the doctrine of Christ, Acts v. 19, 20, they were fetched from thence with a guard before the council, ver. 26. And what is the language of those statesmen to them? As absolute as God himself could speak to any transgressors of his law: ver. 28, 'Did not we straitly command you that you should not teach in this name?' It is sufficient that we gave you a command to be silent, and publish no more this doctrine of Jesus. It is not for you to examine our decrees, but rest in our order as loyal subjects, and comply with your rulers; they might have added, though it be with the damnation of your souls. How would those overrule the apostles by no other reason but their absolute pleasure? And though God had espoused their cause, by delivering them out of the prison wherein they had locked them the day before, yet not one of all this council had the wit or honesty to entitle it a fighting against God but Gamaliel, ver. 34. So foolishly fond are men to put themselves in the place of God, and usurp a jurisdiction over men's consciences, and to presume that laws made against the interest and command of God must be of more force than the laws of God's enacting.

(2.) The sovereignty of God is contemned in making additions to the laws of God. The authority of a sovereign lawgiver is invaded and vilified when an inferior presumes to make orders equivalent to his edicts. It is a *præsumptio* against heaven to set up an authority distinct from that of God, or to enjoin anything as necessary in matter of worship for which a divine commission cannot be shewn. God was always so tender of this part of his prerogative, that he would not have anything wrought in the tabernacle, not a vessel, not an instrument, but what himself had prescribed: Exod. xxv. 9, 'According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it;' which is strictly urged again, ver. 40, 'Look that thou make them after their pattern;' look to it, beware of doing anything of thine own head, and justling with my authority. It was so afterwards in the matter of the temple which succeeded the tabernacle; God gave the model of it to David, and 'made him understand in writing by his hand upon him, even all the works of this pattern,' 1 Chron. xxviii. 19. Neither the royal authority in Moses, who was 'king in Jeshurun,' nor in David, who was 'a man after God's own heart,' and called to the crown by a special and extraordinary providence, nor Aaron, and the high priests his successors, invested in the sacerdotal office, had any authority from God to do anything in the framing the taber-

* Trap. *in loc.*

† Faucheur, vol. ii. p. 663, 664.

nacle or temple of their own heads. God barred them from anything of that nature, by giving them an exact pattern, so dear to him was always this flower of his crown. And afterwards, the power of appointing officers and ordinances in the church was delegated to Christ, and was among the rest of those royalties given to him, which he fully completed 'for the edifying of the body,' Eph. iv. 11, 12. And he hath the elogy by the Spirit of God, to be 'faithful, as Moses was, in all his house, to him that appointed him,' Heb. iii. 2. Faithfulness in a trust implies a punctual observing directions. God was still so tender of this, that even Christ, the Son, should no more do anything in this concern, without appointment and pattern, than Moses a servant, ver. 5, 6. It seems to be a vote of nature to refer the original of the modes of all worship to God; and therefore, in all those varieties of ceremonies among the heathens, there were scarce any but were imagined by them to be the dictates and orders of some of their pretended deities, and not the resolves of mere human authority. What intrusion upon God's right hath the papacy made, in regard of officers, cardinals, patriarchs, &c., not known in any divine order; in regard of ceremonies in worship, pressed as necessary to obtain the favour of God, holy water, crucifixes, altars, images, cringings, reviving many of the Jewish and pagan ceremonies, and adopting them into the family of Christian ordinances, as if God had been too absolute and arbitrary in repealing the one, and dashing in pieces the other! When God had by his sovereign order framed a religion for the heart, men are ready to usurp an authority to frame one for the sense, to dress the ordinances of God in new and gaudy habits, to take the eye by a vain pomp, thus affecting a divine royalty, and acting a silly childishness; and after this, to impose the observation of those upon the consciences of men is a bold ascent into the throne of God. To impose laws upon the conscience, which Christ hath not imposed, hath deservedly been thought the very spirit of *antichrist*; it may be called also the spirit of *anti-God*. God hath reserved to himself the sole sovereignty over the conscience, and never indulged men any part of it; he hath not given man a power over his own conscience, much less one man a power over another's conscience. Men have a power over outward things, to do this or that where it is determined by the law of God, but not the least authority to control any dictate or determination of conscience. The sole empire of that is appropriate to God, as one of the great marks of his royalty. What an usurpation is it of God's right to make conscience a slave to man, which God hath solely, as the Father of spirits, subjected to himself! an usurpation which, though the apostles, those extraordinary officers, might better have claimed, yet they utterly disowned any imperious dominion over the faith of others, 2 Cor. i. 24. Though in this they do not seem to climb up above God, yet they set themselves in the throne of God, envy him an absolute monarchy, would be sharers with him in his legislative power, and grasp one end of his sceptre in their own hands. They do not pretend to take the crown from God's head, but discover a bold ambition to shuffle their hairy scalps under it, and wear part of it upon their own, that they may rule with him, not under him, and would be joint lords of his manor with him, who hath by the apostle forbidden any to be 'lords of his heritage,' 1 Peter v. 3. And therefore they cannot assume such an authority to themselves till they can shew where God hath resigned this part of his authority to them. If their exposition of that place, Mat. xvi. 18, 'Upon this rock I will build my church,' be granted to be true, and that the person and successors of Peter are meant by that rock, it could be no apology for their usurpations; it is not Peter and his successors shall build, but '*I will build*;' others are

instruments in building, but they are to observe the directions of the grand Architect.

(3.) The sovereignty of God is contemned when men prefer obedience to men's laws before obedience to God. As God hath an undoubted right, as the lawgiver and ruler of the world, to enact laws, without consulting the pleasure of men, or requiring their consent to the verifying and establishing his edicts, so are men obliged by their allegiance, as subjects, to observe the laws of their Creator, without consulting whether they be agreeable to the laws of his revolted creatures. To consult with flesh and blood whether we should obey, is to authorise flesh and blood above the purest and most sovereign Spirit. When men will obey their superiors, without taking in the condition the apostle prescribes to servants, Col. iii. 32, 'In singleness of heart, fearing God,' and postpone the fear of God to the fear of man, it is to render God of less power with them than the drop of a bucket or dust of the balance. When we, out of fear of punishment, will observe the laws of men against the laws of God, it is like the Egyptians, to worship a ravenous crocodile instead of a deity; when we submit to human laws, and stagger at divine, it is to set man upon the throne of God, and God at the footstool of man; to set man above, and God beneath; to make him the tail, and not the head, as God speaks in another case of Israel, Deut. xxviii. 13. When we pay an outward observation to divine laws because they are backed by the laws of man, and human authority is the motive of our observance, we subject God's sovereignty to man's authority; what he hath from us is more owing to the pleasure of men than any value we have for the empire of God. When men shall commit murders, and imbrue their hands in blood by the order of a grandee; when the worst sins shall be committed by the order of papal dispensations; when the use of his creatures, which God hath granted and sanctified, shall be abstained from for so many days in the week, and so many weeks in the year, because of a Roman edict, the authority of man is acknowledged not only equal, but superior to that of God. The dominion of dust and clay is preferred before the undoubted right of the Sovereign of the world. The commands of God are made less than human, and the orders of men more authoritative than divine, and a grand rebel usurpation of God's right is countenanced. When men are more devout in observance of uncertain traditions, or mere human inventions, than at the hearing of the unquestionable oracles of God; when men shall squeeze their countenances into a more serious figure, and demean themselves in a more religious posture, at the appearance of some mock ceremony clothed in a Jewish or pagan garb, which hath unhappily made a rent in the coat of Christ, and pay a more exact reverence to that which hath no divine, but only a human, stamp upon it, than to the clear and plain word of God, which is perhaps neglected with sleepy nods, or, which is worse, entertained with profane scoffs: this is to prefer the authority of man employed in trifles before the authority of the wise Lawgiver of the world. Besides, the ridiculousness of it is as great as to adore a glow-worm and laugh at the sun; or for a courtier to be more exact in his cringes and starched postures before a puppet than before his sovereign prince. In all this we make not the will and authority of God our rule, but the will of man; disclaim our dependence on God, to hang upon the uncertain breath of a creature; in all this God is made less than man, and man more than God. God is deposed, and man enthroned; God made a slave, and man a sovereign above him. To this we may refer the solemn addresses of some for the maintenance of the protestant religion according to law, the law of man, not so much minding the law of God; resolving to make the law, the

church, the state, the rule of their religion, and change that if the laws be changed, steering their opinions by the compass of the magistrate's judgment and interest.

2. The dominion of God as a proprietor is practically contemned ;—

(1.) By envy. When we are not as flush and gay, as well-spread and sparkling as others, this passion gnaws our souls ; and we become the executioners to rack ourselves, because God is the executor of his own pleasure. The foundation of this passion is a quarrel with God ; to envy others the enjoyment of their propriety is to envy God his right of disposal, and consequently the propriety of his own goods. It is a mental theft committed against God, we rob him of his right in our will and wish ; it is a robbery to make ourselves equal with God when it is not our due, which is implied, Phil. ii. 6, when Christ is said to 'think it no robbery to be equal with God.' We would wrest the sceptre out of his hand, wish he were not the conductor of the world, and that he would resign his sovereignty, and the right of the distribution of his own goods, to the *capricios* of our humour, and ask our leave to what subjects he should dispense his favours. All envy is either a tacit accusation of God as an usurper, and assuming a right to dispose of that which doth not belong to him, and so it is a denial of his propriety ; or else charges him with a blind or unjust distribution, and so it is a bespattering his wisdom and righteousness. When God doth punish envy, he vindicates his own sovereignty, as though this passion chiefly endeavoured to blast this perfection : Ezek. xxv. 11, 12, 'As I live, saith the Lord, I will do according to thy anger, and according to thy envy ; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.' The sin of envy in the devils was immediately against the crown of God ; and so was the sin of envy in the first man, envying God the sole prerogative in knowledge above himself. This base humour in Cain, at the preference of Abel's sacrifice before his, was the cause that he deprived him of his life ; denying God first his right of choice, and what he should accept, and then invading God's right of propriety, in usurping a power over the life and being of his brother, which solely belonged to God.

(2.) The dominion of God as a proprietor is practically contemned by a violent or surreptitious taking away from any what God hath given him the possession of. Since God is the Lord of all, and may give the possession and dominion of things to whom he pleaseth, all theft and purloining, all cheating and cozening another of his right, is not only a crime against the true possessor, depriving him of what he is entrusted with, but against God as the absolute and universal proprietor, having a right thereby to confer his own goods upon whom he pleaseth, as well as against God as a lawgiver forbidding such a violence. The snatching away what is another's denies man the right of possession, and God the right of donation. The Israelites taking the Egyptians' jewels had been theft, had it not been by a divine license and order ; but cannot be slandered with such a term, after the proprietor of the whole world had altered the title, and alienated them by his positive grant from the Egyptians, to confer them upon the Israelites.

(3.) The dominion of God as a proprietor is practically contemned, by not using what God hath given us for those ends for which he gave them to us. God passeth things over to us with a condition, to use that for his glory which he hath bestowed upon us by his bounty. He is Lord of the end for which he gives, as well as Lord of what he gives ; the donor's right of propriety is infringed, when the lands and legacies he leaves to a peculiar use are not employed to those ends to which he bequeathed them. The right of the lord of a manor is violated when the copyhold is not used accord-

ing to the condition of the conveyance ; so it is an invasion of God's sovereignty not to use the creatures for those ends for which we are entrusted with them ; when we deny ourselves a due and lawful support from them, hence covetousness is an invasion of his right ; or when we necessarily waste them, hence prodigality disowns his propriety ; or when we bestow not anything upon the relief of others, hence uncharitableness comes under the same title, appropriating that to ourselves, as if we were the lords, when we are but the usufructuaries for ourselves, and stewards for others ; this is to be 'rich to ourselves, not to God,' Luke xii. 24 ; for so are they who employ not their wealth for the service, and according to the intent of the donor. Thus the Israelites did not own God the true proprietor of their corn, wine, and oil, which God had given them for his worship, when they prepared offerings for Baal out of his stock : Hosea ii. 8, 'For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her gold and silver, which they prepared for Baal,' as if they had been sole proprietors, and not factors, by commission, to improve the goods for the true owner. It is the same invasion of God's right, to use the parts and gifts that God hath given us, either as fuel for our pride, or advancing self, or a witty scoffing at God and religion, when we use not religion for the honour of our sovereign, but a stool to rise by, and observe his precepts outwardly, not out of regard to his authority, but as a stale to our interest, and furnishing self with a little concern and trifle. When men will wrest his word for the favour of their lusts, which God intended for the checking of them, and make interpretations of it according to their humours, and not according to his will discovered in the Scripture, this is to pervert the use of the best goods and *depositum* he hath put into our hands, even divine revelations. Thus hypocrisy makes the sovereignty of God a nullity.

3. The dominion of God as a governor is practically contemned ;—

(1.) In idolatry. Since worship is an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, to adore any creature instead of God, or to pay to anything that homage of trust and confidence which is due to God, though it be the highest creature in heaven or earth, is to acknowledge that sovereignty to pertain to a creature, which is challenged by God ; as to set up the greatest lord in a kingdom in the government, instead of the lawful prince, is rebellion and usurpation ; and that woman incurs the crime of adultery who commits it with a person of great port and honour, as well as with one of a mean condition. While men create anything a god, they own themselves supreme above the true God, yea, and above that which they account a god ; for by the right of creation they have a superiority, as it is a deity blown up by the breath of their own imagination. The authority of God is, in this sin, acknowledged to belong to an idol ; it is called loathing of God as a husband, Ezek. xvi. 45 ; all the authority of God as a husband and lord over them : so when we make anything, or any person in the world, the chief object and prop of our trust and confidence, we act the same part. Trust in an idol is the formal part of idolatry : Ps. cxv. 8, 'So is every one that trusts in them,' *i. e.* in idols. Whatsoever thing we make the object of our trust, we rear as an idol ; it is not unlawful to have the image of a creature, but to bestow divine adoration upon it ; it was not unlawful for the Egyptians to possess and use oxen, but to dub them gods to be adored, it was. It is not unlawful to have wealth and honour, not to have gifts and parts ; they are the presents of God ; but to love them above God, to fix our reliances upon them more than upon God, is to rob God of his due, who, being our Creator, ought to be our confidence. What we want we are to desire of him, and expect from him. When we confide in anything else, we deny God the

glory of his creation, we disown him to be Lord of the world, imply that our welfare is in the hands of, and depends upon, that thing wherein we confide ; it is not only to equal it to God in sovereign power, which is his own phrase, Isa. xl. 25, but to prefer it before him in a reproach of him. When the hosts of heaven shall be served, instead of the Lord of those hosts, when we shall lacquey after the stars, depend barely upon their influences, without looking up to the great director of the sun, it is to pay an adoration unto a captain in a regiment, which is due to the general. When we shall 'make gold our hope, and say to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence,' it is to deny the supremacy of that 'God that is above,' as well as if we 'kiss our hands' in a way of adoration 'to the sun in its splendour, or the moon walking in its brightness,' for Job couples them together, chap. xxxi. 25-28. It is to prefer the authority of earth before that of heaven, and honour clay above the sovereign of the world ; as if a soldier should confide more in the rag of an ensign, or the fragment of a drum, for his safety, than in the orders and conduct of his general. It were as much as is in his power to uncommission him, and snatch from him his commander's staff. When we advance the creature in our love above God, and the altar of our soul smokes with more thoughts and affections to a petty interest than to God, we lift up that which was given us as a servant in the place of the sovereign, and bestow that throne upon it which is to be kept undefiled for the rightful Lord, and subject the interest of God to the demands of the creature ; so much respect is due to God, that none should be placed in the throne of our affections equal with him, much less anything to perk above him.

(2.) Impatience is a contempt of God as a governor. When we meet with rubs in the way of any design, when our expectations are crossed, we will break through all obstacles to accomplish our projects, whether God will or no. When we are too much dejected at some unexpected providence, and murmur at the instruments of it, as if God divested himself of his prerogative of conducting human affairs ; when a little cross blows us into a mutiny, and swells us into a sauciness to implead God, or make us fret against him (as the expression is, Isa. viii. 21), wishing him out of his throne : no sin is so devilish as this, there is not any strikes more at all the attributes of God than this, against his goodness, righteousness, holiness, wisdom, and doth as little spare his sovereignty as any of the rest. What can it be else but an impious invasion of his dominion, to quarrel with him for what he doth, and to say, What reason hast thou to deal thus with me ? This language is in the nature of all impatience, whereby we question his sovereignty, and parallel our dominion with his. When men have not that confluence of wealth or honour they greedily desired, they bark at God, and revile his government ; they are angry God doth not more respectfully observe them, as though he had nothing to do in their matters, and were wanting in that becoming reverence which they think him bound to pay to such great ones as they are. They would have God obedient to their minds, and act nothing but what he receives a commission for from their wills. When we murmur, it is as if we would command his will and wear his crown, a wresting the sceptre out of his hands to sway it ourselves, we deny him the right of government, disown his power over us, and would be our own sovereigns ; you may find the character of it in the language of Jehoram (as many understand it), 2 Kings vi. 28, 'Behold, this evil is of the Lord ; what should I wait for the Lord any longer ?' This an evil of such a nature, that it could come from none but the hand of God ; why should I attend upon him as my sovereign, that delights to do me so much mischief, that throws curses upon me when I expected blessings ? I will no more observe his

directions, but follow my own sentiments, and regard not his authority in the lips of his doating prophet. The same you find in the Jews, when they were under God's lash : Jer. xviii. 12, ' And they said, There is no hope : but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart ;' we can expect no good from him, and therefore we will be our own sovereigns, and prefer the authority of our own imaginations before that of his precepts. Men would be their own carvers, and not suffer God to use his right ; as if a stone should order the mason in what manner to hew it, and in what part of the building to place it. We are not ordinarily concerned so much at the calamities of our neighbours, but swell against heaven at a light drop upon ourselves. We are content God should be the sovereign of others, so that he will be a servant to us ; let him deal as he will himself with others, so he will treat us, and what relates to us, as we will ourselves. We would have God resign his authority to our humours, and our humours should be in the place of a god to him, to direct him what was fit to do in our own cause. When things go not according to our vote, our impatience is a wish that God were deposed from his throne, that he would surrender his seat to some that would deal more favourably, and be more punctual observers of our directions. Let us look to ourselves in regard of this sin, which is too common, and the root of much mischief. This seems to be the first bubbling of Adam's will ; he was not content with the condition wherein God had placed him, but affected another, which ended in the ruin of himself and of mankind.

(3.) Limiting God in his way of working to our methods, is another part of the contempt of his dominion. When we will prescribe him methods of acting, that he should deliver us in this or that way, we would not suffer him to be the Lord of his own favours, and have the privilege to be his own director. When we will limit him to such a time wherein to work our deliverance, we would rob him of the power of times and seasons, which are solely in his hand. We would regulate his conduct according to our imaginations, and assume a power to give laws to our sovereign. Thus the Israelites ' limited the Holy One of Israel,' Ps. lxxviii. 41. They would control his absolute dominion, and of a sovereign make him their slave. Man that is God's vassal would set bounds to his Lord, and cease to be a servant and commence master, when he would give, not take, directions from him. When God had given them manna, and their fancies were weary of that delicious food, they would prescribe heaven to rain down some other sort of food for them. When they wanted no sufficient provision in the wilderness, they quarrelled with God for bringing them out of Egypt, and not presently giving them a place of seed, of figs, vines, and pomegranates, Num. xx. 5, which is called a ' striving with the Lord,' ver. 13, a contending with him for his Lordship. When we tempt God, and require a sign of him as a mark of his favour, we circumscribe his dominion ; when we will not use the means he hath appointed, but father our laziness upon a trust in his providence, as if we expected he should work a miracle for our relief ; when we censure him for what he hath done in the course of his providence ; when we capitulate with him, and promise such a service, if he will do us such a good turn according to our platform, we would bring down his sovereign pleasure to our will, we invade his throne, and expect a submissive obedience from him. Man, that hath not wit enough to govern himself, would be governing God, and those that cannot be their own sovereigns affect a sovereignty over heaven.

(4.) Pride and presumption is another invasion of his dominion. When men will resolve to go to-morrow to such a city, to such a fair and market, to traffic and get gain, without thinking of the necessity of a divine license,

as if ourselves were the lords of our time, and of our lives, and God were to lacquey after us,—James iv. 13, 15, ‘Ye that say, To-day we will go into such a city, and buy and sell, whereas ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live,’—as if they had a freehold, and were not tenants at will to the lord of the manor; when we presume upon our own strength or wit to get the better of our adversaries, as the Germans (as Tacitus relates) assured themselves by the numerousness of their army of a victory against the Romans, and prepared chains to fetter the captives before the conquest, which were found in their camp after their defeat; when we are peremptory in expectations of success according to our will, as Pharaoh, Exod. xv. 9, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them,’—he speaks more like a God than a man, as if he were the sovereign power, and God only his vicar and lieutenant; how he struts, without thinking of a superior power to curb him; when men ascribe to themselves what is the sole fruit of God’s sovereign pleasure, as the king of Assyria speaks a language fit only to be spoken by God,—Isa. x. 13, 14, &c., ‘I have removed the bounds of the people; my hand hath found, as a nest, the riches of the people; I have gathered all the earth,’—which God declares to be a wrong to his sovereignty, by the title wherewith he prefaceth his threatening against him, ver. 16, ‘Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness,’ &c.: it is indeed a rifling, if not of his crown, yet of the most glittering jewel of it, his glory. ‘He that mocks the poor reproacheth his maker,’ Prov. xvii. 5. He never thinks that God made them poor, and himself rich; he owns not his riches to be dropped upon him by the divine hand. Self is the great invader of God’s sovereignty, doth not only spurn at it, but usurp it, and assume divine honours, payable only to the universal sovereign. The Assyrian was not so modest as the Chaldean, who would impute his power and victories to his idol, Hab. i. 11, whom he thought to be God, though yet robbing the true God of his authority; and so much was signified by their names, *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Evil-Merodach*, *Belshazzar*, *Nebo*, *Merodach*, *Bel*, being the Chaldean idols, and the names signifying *lord of wealth*, *giver of riches*, and the like. When we behave ourselves proudly towards others, and imagine ourselves greater than our Maker ever meant us; when we would give laws to others, and expect the most submissive observances from them, as if God had resigned his authority to us, and made us in his stead the rightful monarchs of the world; to disdain that any creature should be above us, is to disdain God’s sovereign disposition of men, and consequently his own superiority over us. A proud man would govern all, and would not have God his sovereign, but his subject; to over-value ourselves is to under-value God.

(5.) Slight and careless worship of God, is another contempt of his sovereignty. A prince is contemned, not only by a neglect of those reverential postures which are due to him, but in a reproachful and scornful way of paying them. To behave ourselves uncomely or immodestly before a prince, is a disesteem of majesty. Sovereignty requires awe in every address; where this is wanting, there is a disrespect of authority. We contemn God’s dominion when we give him the service of the lip, the hand, the knee, and deny him that of the heart, as they in Ezekiel, chap. xxxiii. 31, as though he were the sovereign only of the body, and not of the soul. To have devout figures of the face and uncomely postures of the soul, is to exclude his dominion from our spirits, while we own it only over our outward man; we render him an insignificant Lord, not worthy of any higher adorations from us than a senseless statue; we demean not ourselves according to his majestical

authority over us, when we present him not with the cream and quintessence of our souls. The greatness of God required a great house and a costly palace : 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 16, David speaks it in order to the building God a house and temple ; God being a great king, expects a male, the best of our flock, Mal. i. 14, a masculine and vigorous service. When we present him with a sleepy, sickly, rheumatic service, we betray our conceptions of him to be as mean as if he were some petty lord, whose dominion were of no larger extent than a mole-hill, or some inconsiderable village.

(6.) Omission of the service he hath appointed, is another contempt of his sovereignty. This is a contempt of his dominion, whereby he hath a right to appoint what means and conditions he pleaseth, for the enjoyment of his proffered and promised benefits. It is an enmity to his sceptre not to accept of his terms after a long series of precepts and invitations, made for the restoring us to that happiness we had lost, and providing all means necessary thereunto, nothing being wanting but our own concurrence with it and acceptance of it, by rendering that easy homage he requires. By withholding from him the service he enjoins, we deny that we hold anything of him, as he that pays not the quit-rent, though it be never so small, disowns the sovereignty of the lord of the manor. It implies that he is a miserable poor lord, having no right, or destitute of any power to dispose of anything in the world to our advantage : Job xxii. 17, 'They say unto God, Depart from us, what can the Almighty do for them ?' They will have no commerce with him in a way of duty, because they imagine him to have no sovereign power to do anything for them in way of benefit, as if his dominion were an empty title, and as much destitute of any authority to command a favour for them as any idol. They think themselves to have as absolute a disposal of things as God himself. What can he do for us ? What can he confer upon us, that we cannot invest ourselves in, as though they were sovereigns in an equality with God. Thus men live 'without God in the world,' Eph. ii. 12, as if there were no supreme being to pay a respect to, or none fit to receive any homage at their hands, withholding from God the right of his time and the right of his service, which is the just claim of his sovereignty.

(7.) Censuring others is a contempt of his sovereignty. When we censure men's persons or actions by a rash judgment, when we will be judges of the good and evil of men's actions, where the law of God is utterly silent, we usurp God's place and invade his right, we claim a superiority over the law, and judge God defective as the rector of the world, in his prescriptions of good and evil : James iv. 11, 12, 'He that speaks evil of his brother, and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judgeth the law ; there is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. Who art thou that judgest another ?' Do you know what you do in-judging another ? You take upon you the garb of a sovereign, as if he were more your servant than God's, and more under your authority than the authority of God ; it is a setting thyself in God's tribunal, and assuming his rightful power of judging. Thy brother is not to be governed by thy fancy, but by God's law and his own conscience.

2. Information. Hence it follows that God doth actually govern the world. He hath not only a right to rule, but 'he rules over all,' so saith the text. He is 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.' What, to let them do what they please, and all that their lust prompts them to ? Hath God an absolute dominion ? Is it good, and is it wise ? Is it, then, a useless prerogative of the divine nature ? Shall so excellent a power lie idle, as if God were a lifeless image ? Shall we fancy God like some lazy monarch,

that solaceth himself in the gardens of his palace, or steeps himself in some charming pleasures, and leaves his lieutenants to govern the several provinces, which are all members of his empire, according to their own humour? Not to exercise this dominion, is all one as not to have it; to what purpose is he invested with this sovereignty, if he were careless of what were done in the world, and regarded not the oppressions of men? God keeps no useless excellency by him; he actually reigns over the heathen, Ps. xlvii. 8, and those as bad or worse than heathens. It had been a vanity in David to call upon 'the heavens to be glad, and the earth to rejoice,' under the rule of a sleepy deity, 1 Chron. xvi. 31. No; his sceptre is full of eyes, as it was painted by the Egyptians; he is always waking, and always, more than Ahasuerus, reading over the records of human actions. Not to exercise his authority, is all one as not to regard whether he keep the crown upon his head, or continueth the sceptre in his hand. If this sovereignty were exempt from care, it would be destitute of justice; God is more righteous than to resign the ensigns of his authority to blind and oppressive man. To think that God hath a power, and doth not use it for just and righteous ends, is to imagine him an unrighteous as well as a careless sovereign. Such a thing in a man renders him a base man, and a worse governor; it is a vice that disturbs the world, and overthrows the ends of authority, as to have a power and use it well, is the greatest virtue of an earthly sovereign. What an unworthy conception is it of God, to acknowledge him to be possessed of a greater authority than the greatest monarch, and yet to think that he useth it less than a petty lord, that his crown is of no more value with him than a feather! This represents God impotent, that he cannot, or unrighteous and base, that he will not, administer the authority he hath for the noblest and justest end. But can we say that he neglects the government of the world? How come things, then, to remain in their due order? How comes the law of nature yet to be preserved in every man's soul? How comes conscience to check, and censure, and judge? If God did not exercise his authority, what authority could conscience have to disturb man in unlawful practices, and to make his sports and sweetness so unpleasant and sour to him? Hath he not given frequent notices and memorials that he holds a curb over corrupt inclinations, puts rubs in the way of malicious attempters, and often oversets the disturbers of the peace of the world?

3. Information. God can do no wrong, since he is absolute sovereign. Man may do wrong, princes may oppress and rife, but it is a crime in them so to do, because their power is a power of government, and not of propriety in the goods or lives of their subjects; but God cannot do any wrong, whatsoever the clamours of creatures are, because he can do nothing but what he hath a sovereign right to do. If he takes away [y]our goods, he takes not away anything that is yours more than his own, since, though he entrusted you with them, he divested not himself of the propriety. When he takes away our lives, he takes what he gave us by a temporary donation, to be surrendered at his call. We can claim no right in anything, but by his will. He is no debtor to us, and since he owes us nothing, he can wrong us in nothing that he takes away. His own sovereignty excuseth him in all those acts which are most distasteful to the creature. If we crop a medicinal plant for our use, or a flower for our pleasure, or kill a lamb for our food, we do neither of them any wrong, because the original of them was for our use, and they had their life and nourishment, and pleasing qualities for our delight and support; and are not we much more made for the pleasure and use of God, than any of those can be for us? 'Of him, and to him are

all things,' Rom. xi. 36. Hath not God as much right over any one of us, as over the meanest worm? Though there be a vast difference in nature between the angels in heaven and the worms on earth, yet they are all one in regard of subjection to God; he is as much the Lord of the one as the other, as much the proprietor of the one as the other, as much the governor of the one as the other. Not a cranny in the world is exempt from his jurisdiction, not a mite or grain of a creature exempt from his propriety.

He is not our Lord by election. He was a Lord before we were in being; he had no terms put upon him. Who capitulated with him, and set him in his throne by covenant? What oath did he take to any subject at his first investiture in his authority? His right is as natural, as eternal, as himself; as natural as his existence, and as necessary as his deity. Hath he any law but his own will? What wrong can he do that breaks no law, that fulfils his law in everything he doth by fulfilling his own will, which, as it is absolutely sovereign, so it is infinitely righteous? In whatsoever he takes from us, then, he cannot injure us; it is no crime in any man to seize upon his own goods, to vindicate his own honour; and shall it be thought a wrong in God to do such things? besides the occasion he hath from every man, and that every day provoking him to do it. He seems rather to wrong himself by forbearing such a seizure, than wrong us by executing it.

4. If God have a sovereignty over the whole world, then merit is totally excluded. His right is so absolute over all creatures, that he neither is nor can be a debtor to any; not to the undefiled holiness of the blessed angels, much less to poor earthly worms. Those blessed spirits enjoy their glory by the title of his sovereign pleasure, not by virtue of any obligation devolving from them upon God. Are not the faculties whereby they and we perform any act of obedience his grant to us? Is not the strength whereby they and we are enabled to do anything pleasing to him, a gift from him? Can a vassal merit of his lord, or a slave of his master, by using his tools, and employing his strength in his service, though it was a strength he had naturally, not by donation from the man in whose service it is employed? God is Lord of all, all is due to him; how can we oblige him by giving him what is his own, more his to whom it is presented than ours by whom it is offered? He becomes not a debtor by receiving anything from us, but by promising something to us.*

5. If God hath a sovereign dominion over the whole world, then hence it follows, that all magistrates are but sovereigns under God. He is King of kings and Lord of lords; all the potentates in the world are no other than his lieutenants, moveable at his pleasure, and more at his disposal than their subjects are at theirs. Though they are dignified with the title of *gods*, yet still they are at an infinite distance from the supreme Lord. Gods under God, not to be above him, not to be against him. The want of the due sense of their subordination to God, hath made many in the world act as sovereigns above him, more than sovereigns under him. Had they all bore a deep conviction of this upon their spirits, such audacious language had never dropped from the mouth of Pharaoh, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?' Exod. v. 2, presuming that there was no superior to control him, nor any in heaven able to be a match for him. Darius had never published such a doating edict as to prohibit any petition to God. Nero had never fired Rome, and sung at the sight of the devouring flames; nor ever had he ripped up his mother's belly, to see the womb where he first lodged and received a life so hateful to his country; nor would Abner

and Joab, the two generals, have accounted the death of men but a sport and interlude: 2 Sam. ii. 14, 'Let the young men arise and play before us;' what play it was the next verse acquaints you with, thrusting their swords into one another's sides. They were no more troubled at the death of thousands, than a man is to kill a fly or a flea. Had a sense of this but hovered over their souls, people in many countries had not been made their footballs, and used worse than their dogs; nor had the lives of millions, worth more than a world, been exposed to fire and sword, to support some sordid lust, or breach of faith upon an idle quarrel, and for the depredation of their neighbours' estates; the flames of cities had not been so bright, nor the streams of blood so deep, nor the cries of innocents so loud.

In particular,

(1.) If God be sovereign, all under-sovereigns are not to rule against him, but to be obedient to his orders. If they rule by his authority, Prov. viii. 15, they are not to rule against his interest, they are not to imagine themselves as absolute as God, and that their laws must be of as sovereign authority against his honour as the divine are for it. If they are his lieutenants on earth, they ought to act according to his orders. No man but will account a governor of a province a rebel, if he disobeys the orders sent him by the sovereign prince that commissioned him. Rebellion against God is a crime of princes, as well as rebellion against princes a crime of subjects. Saul is charged with it by Samuel in a high manner for an act of simple disobedience, though intended for the service of God, and the enriching his country with the spoils of the Amalekites: 1 Sam. xv. 23, 'Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft;' like witchcraft or covenanting with the devil, acting as if he had received his commission, not from God, but from Satan. Magistrates, as commissioned by God, ought to act for him. Doth human authority ever give a commission to any to rebel against itself? Did God ever depute any earthly sovereignty against his glory, and give them leave to outlaw his laws, to introduce their own? No; when he gave the vicarious dominion to Christ, he calls upon the kings of the earth to be instructed, and be wise, and kiss the Son, Ps. ii. 10, 12; *i.e.* to observe his orders, and pay him homage as their governor. What a silly, doltish thing is it to resist that supreme authority to which the archangels submit themselves, and regulate their employments punctually by their instructions! Those excellent creatures exactly obey him in all the acts of their subordinate government in the world, those in whose hand the greatest monarch is no more than a silly fly between the fingers of a giant. A contradiction to the interest of God hath been fatal to kings. The four monarchies have had their wings clipped, and most of them have been buried in their own ashes; they have all, like the imitators of Lucifer's pride, fallen from the heaven of their glory to the depth of their shame and misery. All governors are bound to be as much obedient to God as their subjects are bound to be submissive to them. Their authority over men is limited, God's authority over them is absolute and unbounded. Though 'every soul' ought to be 'subject to the higher powers,' yet there is a higher power of all, to which those higher powers are to subject themselves. They are to be keepers of both the tables of the law of God; and are then most sovereigns when they set in their own practice an example of obedience to God for their subjects to write after.

(2.) They ought to imitate God in the exercise of their sovereignty in ways of justice and righteousness. Though God be an absolute sovereign, yet his government is not tyrannical, but managed according to the rules of righteousness, wisdom, and goodness. If God, that created them as well as their subjects, doth so exercise his government, it is a duty incumbent upon them

to do the same, since they are not the creators of their people, but the conductors. As God's government tends to the good of the world, so ought theirs to the good of their countries. God committed not the government of the world to the Mediator in an unlimited way, but for the good of the church, in order to the eternal salvation of his people: Eph. i. 12, 'He gave him to be head over all things to the church.' He had power over the devils, to restrain them in their temptation and malice; power over the angels, to order their ministry for the heirs of salvation. So power is given to magistrates for the civil preservation of the world and of human society; they ought therefore to consider for what ends they are placed over the rest of mankind, and not exercise their authority in a licentious way, but conformable to that justice and righteousness wherein God doth administer his government, and for the preservation of those that are committed to them.

(3.) Magistrates must then be obeyed when they act according to God's order, and within the bounds of the divine commission. They are no friends to the sovereignty of God that are enemies to magistracy, his ordinance. Saul was a good governor, though none of the best men, and the despisers of his government after God's choice were the sons of Belial, 1 Sam. x. 27. Christ was no enemy to Cæsar. To pull down a faithful magistrate, such an one as Zerubbabel, is to pluck a signet from the hand of God; for in that capacity he accounts him, Haggai ii. 23. God's servants stand or fall to their own Master. How doth he check Aaron and Miriam for speaking against Moses his servant! Num. xii. 8, 'Were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?' against Moses, as related to you in the capacity of a governor; against Moses, as related to me in the capacity of my servant? To speak anything against them, as they act by God's order, is an invasion of God's sovereign right, who gave them their commission. To act against just power, or the justice of an earthly power, is to act against God's ordinance, who ordained them in the world, but not any abuse or ill use of their power.

Use 2. How dreadful is the consideration of this doctrine to all rebels against God. Can any man that hath brains in his head imagine it an inconsiderable thing to despise the Sovereign of the world? It was the sole crime of disobedience to that positive law, whereby God would have a visible memorial of his sovereignty preserved in the eye of man, that showered down that deluge of misery under which the world groans to this day. God had given Adam a soul, whereby he might live as a rational creature; and then gives him a law whereby he might live as a dutiful subject; for God forbidding him to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, declared his own supremacy over Adam, and his propriety in the pleasant world he had given him by his bounty; he let him know hereby that man was not his own lord, nor was to live after his own sentiments, but the directions of a superior. As when a great lord builds a magnificent palace, and brings in another to inhabit it, he reserves a small duty to himself, not of an equal value with the house, but for an acknowledgment of his own right, that the tenant may know he is not the lord of it, but hath his grant by the liberality of another.* God hereby gave Adam matter for a pure obedience, that had no foundation in his own nature by any implanted law; he was only in it to respect the will of his sovereign, and to understand that he was to live under the power of a higher than himself. There was no more moral evil in the eating of this fruit, as considered distinct from the command, than in eating of any other fruit in the garden. Had there been no prohibition, he might with as much safety have fed upon it as on any other. No law of

* Chrysost. in Gen. Hom. xvi.

nature was transgressed in the act of eating of it, but the sovereignty of God over him was denied by him; and for this, the death threatened was inflicted on him and his posterity; for though divines take notice of other sins in the fall of Adam, yet God in his trial chargeth him with none but this, and doth put upon his question an emphasis of his own authority: Gen. iii. 11, 'Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?' This I am displeased with, that thou shouldst disown my dominion over thyself and this garden. This was the inlet to all other sins; as the acknowledgment of God's sovereignty is the first step to the practice of all the duties of a creature, so the disowning his sovereignty is the first spring of all the extravagancies of a creature. Every sin against the sovereign lawgiver is worthy of death. The transgression of this positive command deserved death, and procured it to spread itself over the face of the world. God's dominion cannot be despised without meriting the greatest punishment.

1. Punishment necessarily follows upon the doctrine of sovereignty. It is a faint and feeble sovereignty that cannot preserve itself, and vindicate its own wrongs against rebellious subjects. The height of God's dominion infers a vengeance on the contemners of it. If God be an eternal King, he is an eternal Judge. Since sin unlinks the dependence between God the sovereign, and man the subject, if God did not vindicate the rights of his sovereignty, and the authority of his law, he would seem to despise his own dominion, be weary of it, and not act the part of a good governor; but God is tender of his prerogative, and doth most bestir himself when men exalt themselves proudly against him: Exod. xviii. 11, 'In the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he will be above them.' When Pharaoh thought himself a mate for God, and proudly rejected his commands, as if they had been the messages of some petty Arabian lord, God rights his own authority upon the life of his enemy by the ministry of the Red Sea. He turned a great king into a beast, to make him know, 'that the Most High ruled in the kingdoms of men:' Dan. iv. 16, 17, 'The demand is by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men;' and that by the petitions of the angels, who cannot endure that the empire of God should be obscured and diminished by the pride of man. Besides the tender respect he hath to his own glory, he is constantly presented with the solicitations of the angels to punish the proud ones of the earth, that darken the glory of his majesty. It is necessary for the rescue of his honour, and necessary for the satisfaction of his illustrious attendants, who would think it a shame to them to serve a Lord that were always unconcerned in the rebellions of his creatures, and tamely suffer their spurns at his throne; and therefore there is a day wherein the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, the cedars of Lebanon overthrown, and high mountains levelled, that 'God may be exalted in that day,' Isa. ii. 11, 12, &c. Pride is a sin that immediately swells against God's authority; this shall be brought down that God may be exalted; not that he should have a real exaltation, as if he were actually deposed from his government, but that he shall be manifested to be the sovereign of the whole world. It is necessary there should be a day to chase away those clouds that are upon his throne, that the lustre of his majesty may break forth, to the confusion of all the children of pride that vaunt against him. God hath a dominion over us as a lawgiver, as we are his creatures, and a dominion over us in a way of justice, as we are his criminals.

2. This punishment is unavoidable.

(1.) None can escape him. He hath the sole authority over hell and

death ; the keys of both are in his hand. The greatest Cæsar can no more escape him than the meanest peasant : ' Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel ? ' Zech. iv. 7. The height of angels is no match for him, much less that of the mortal grandees of the world ; they can no more resist him than the meanest person ; but are rather as the highest steeples, the fittest marks for his crushing thunder. If he speaks the word, the principalities of men come down, and the crown of their glory, Jer. xiii. 18. He can ' take the mighty away in a moment,' and that ' without hands,' *i. e.* without instruments, Job xxxiv. 20. The strongest are like the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image, iron and clay, iron to man, but clay to God, to be crumbled to nothing.

(2.) What comfort can be reaped from a creature, when the Sovereign of the world arms himself with terrors, and begins his visitation ? Isa. x. 3, ' What will you do in the day of visitation ; to whom will you fly for help, and where will you leave your glory ? ' The torments from a subject may be relieved by the prince, but where can there be an appeal from the Sovereign of the world ? Where is there any above him to control him, if he will overthrow us ? who is there to call him to account, and say to him, What dost thou ? He works by an uncontrollable authority, he needs not ask leave of any : Isa. xliii. 13, ' He works, and none can let it.' As when he will relieve, none can afflict ; so when he will wound, none can relieve. If a king appoint the punishment of a rebel, the greatest favourite in the court cannot speak a comfortable word to him. The most beloved angel in heaven cannot sweeten and ease the spirit of a man, that the sovereign power is set against to make the butt of his wrath. The devils lie under his sentence, and wear their chains as marks of their condemnation, without hope of ever having them filed off, since they are laid upon them by the authority of an unaccountable* Sovereign.

(3.) By his sovereign authority, God can make any creature the instrument of his vengeance. He hath all the creatures at his beck, and can commission any of them to be a dreadful scourge. ' Strong winds and tempests fulfil his word, Ps. cxlviii. 8. The lightnings answer him at his call, and cry aloud, ' Here are we,' Job xxxviii. 35. By his sovereign authority he can render locusts as mischievous as lions, forge the meanest creatures into swords and arrows, and commission the most despicable to be his executioners ; he can cut off joy from our spirits, and make our own hearts be our tormentors, our most confident friends our persecutors, our nearest relations to be his avengers. They are more his, who is their Sovereign, than ours, who place a vain confidence in them. Rather than Abraham shall want children, he can raise up stones, and adopt them into his family ; and rather than not execute his vengeance, he can array the stones in the streets, and make them his armed subjects against us. If he speak the word, a hair shall drop from our heads to choke us, or a vapour, congealed into rheum in our heads, shall drop down and putrefy our vitals. He can never want weapons, who is sovereign over the thunders of heaven, and stones of the earth, over every creature, and can by a sovereign word turn our greatest comforts into curses.

(4.) This punishment must be terrible. How doth David, a great king, sound in his body, prosperous in his crown, and successful in his conquests, settled in all his royal conveniences, groan under the wrathful touch of a greater king than himself, Ps. vi., Ps. xxxviii., and his other penitential psalms ; not being able to give himself a writ of ease, by all the delights of his palace and kingdom. If ' the wrath of a king be as a roaring lion ' to a poor sub-

* That is, ' irresponsible.'—ED.

ject, Prov. xix. 12, how great is the wrath of the King of kings, that cannot be set forth by the terror of all the amazing volleys of thunder that have been since the creation, if the noise of all were gathered into one single crack ! As there is an unconceivable ground of joy in the special favour of so mighty a king, so is there of terror in his severe displeasure. Ps. lxxvi. 12, he is 'terrible to the kings of the earth, with God is terrible majesty.' What a folly is it then to rebel against so mighty a sovereign !

Use 3. Of comfort. The throne of God drops honey and sweetness, as well as dread and terror ; all his other attributes afford little relief, without this of his dominion and universal command. When therefore he speaks of his being the God of his people, he doth often preface it with 'the Lord thy God ;' his sovereignty as a lord being the ground of all the comfort we can take in his federal relation as our God ; *thy* God, but superior to thee ; *thy* God, not as *thy* cattle and goods are *thine*, in a way of sole propriety, but a lord too in a way of sovereignty, not only over thee, but over all things else for thee. As the end of God's settling earthly governments was for the good of the communities over which the governors preside, so God exerciseth his government for the good of the world, and more particularly for the good of the church, over which he is a peculiar governor.

1. His love to his people is as great as his sovereignty over them. He stands not upon his dominion with his people so much as upon his affection to them ; he would not be called *Baali*, my lord, *i. e.* he would not be known only by the name of sovereignty, but *Ishi*, my husband, a name of authority and sweetness together, Hosea ii. 16, 19, &c. He signifies that he is not only the Lord of our spirits and bodies, but a husband by a marriage knot, admitting us to a nearness to him, and communion of goods with him. Though he majestically sits upon a high throne, yet it is a throne 'encircled with a rainbow,' Ezek. i. 28, to shew that his government of his people is not only in a way of absolute dominion, but also in a way of federal relation. He seems to own himself their subject rather than their sovereign, when he gives them a charter to command him in the affairs of his church : Isa. xlv. 11, 'Ask of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command you me.' Some read it by way of question, as a corrective of a sauciness : Do you ask of me things to come, and seem to command me concerning the works of my hands, as if you were more careful of my interest among my people than I am, who have formed them ? But if this were the sense, it would seem to discourage an importunity of prayer for public deliverance, and therefore, to take it according to our translation, it is an exhortation to prayer, and a mighty encouragement in the management and exercise of it. Urge me with my promise in a way of humble importunity, and you shall find me as willing to perform my word, and gratify your desires, as if I were rather under your authority than you under mine ; as much as to say, If I be not as good as my word to satisfy those desires that are according to my promise, implead me at my own throne, and if I be failing in it, I will give judgment against myself. Almost like prince's charters, and gracious grants, 'we grant such a thing against us, and our heirs,' giving the subject power to implead them, if they be not punctually observed by them. How is the love of God seen in his condescension below the majesty of earthly governors ! He that might command by the absoluteness of his authority, doth not only [not] do that, but entreats in the quality of a subject, as if he had not a fulness to supply us, but needed something from us for a supply of himself : 2 Cor. v. 20, 'As though God did beseech you by us.' And when he may challenge as a due by the right of his propriety, what we bestow upon his poor, which are his subjects as

well as ours, he reckons it as a loan to him, as if what we had were more our own than his, Prov. xix. 17. He stands not upon his dominion so much with us, when he finds us conscientious in paying the duty we owe to him. He rules as a Father by love, as well as by authority; he enters into a peculiar communion with poor earthly worms, plants his gracious tabernacle among the troops of sinners, instructs us by his word, invites us by his benefits, admits us into his presence, is more desirous to bestow his smiles than we to receive them, and acts in such a manner as if he were willing to resign his sceptre into the hands of any that were possessed with more love and kindness to us than himself. This is the comfort of believers.

2. In his being sovereign, his pardons carry in them a full security. He that hath the keys of hell and death pardons the crime, and wipes off the guilt. Who can repeal the act of the chief governor? What tribunal can null the decrees of an absolute throne? Isa. xliii. 25, 'I, even I, am he that blots out thy transgressions for my name's sake.' His sovereign dominion renders his mercy comfortable. The clemency of a subject, though never so great, cannot pardon; people may pity a criminal while the executioner tortures him, and strips him of his life, but the clemency of the supreme prince establisheth a pardon. Since we are under the dominion of God, if he pardons, who can reverse it? If he doth not, what will the pardons of men profit us in regard of an eternal state? If God be a king for ever, then he whom God forgives, he in whom God reigns, shall live for ever; else he would want subjects on earth, and have none of his lower creatures, which he formed upon the earth, to reign over [after] the dissolution of the world. If his pardons did not stand secure, he would after this life have no voluntary subjects that had formerly a being upon the earth; he would be a king only over the damned creatures.

3. Corruptions will certainly be subdued in his voluntary subjects. The covenant, *I will be your God*, implies protection, government, and relief, which are all grounded upon sovereignty; that therefore which is our greatest burden will be removed by his sovereign power. Micah vii. 19, 'He will subdue our iniquities.' If the outward enemies of the church shall not bear up against his dominion, and perpetuate their rebellions unpunished, those within his people shall as little bear up against his throne without being destroyed by him. The billows of our own hearts, and the raging waves within us, are as much at his beck as those without us. And his sovereignty is more eminent in quelling the corruptions of the heart than the commotions of the world; in reigning over men's spirits, by changing them, or curbing them, more than over men's bodies, by pinching and punishing them. The remainders of Satan's empire will moulder away before him, since 'he that is in us' is a greater sovereign 'than he that is in the world,' 1 John iv. 4. His enemies will be laid at his feet, and so never shall prevail against him, when his kingdom shall come. He could not be Lord of any man as a happy creature, if he did not by his power make them happy; and he could not make them happy unless by his grace he made them holy. He could not be praised as a Lord of glory, if he did not make some creatures glorious to praise him; and an earthly creature could not praise him perfectly, unless he had every grain of enmity to his glory taken out of his heart. Since God is the only sovereign, he only can still the commotions in our spirits, and pull down all the ensigns of the devil's royalty; he can waste him by the powerful word of his lips.

4. Hence is a strong encouragement for prayer. *My King* was the strong compellation David used in prayer, as an argument of comfort and confidence, as well as that of *my God*: Ps. v. 2, 'Hearken to the voice of my cry, my

King, and my God.' To be a king is to have an office of government and protection. He gives us liberty to approach to him as the 'Judge of all,' Heb. xii. 23, *i. e.* as the governor of the world; we pray to one that hath the whole globe of heaven and earth in his hand, and can do whatsoever he will. Though he be higher than the cherubims, and transcendently above all in majesty, yet we may soar up to him with the wings of our soul, faith, and love, and lay open our cause, and find him as gracious as if he were the meanest subject on earth, rather than the most sovereign God in heaven.

He hath as much of tenderness as he hath of authority, and is pleased with prayer, which is an acknowledgment of his dominion, an honouring of that which he delights to honour; for prayer, in the notion of it, imports thus much: that God is the rector of the world, that he takes notice of human affairs, that he is a careful, just, wise governor, a storehouse of blessing, a fountain of goodness to the indigent, and a relief to the oppressed. What have we reason to fear, when the Sovereign of the world gives us liberty to approach to him, and lay open our case? That God who is King of the whole earth, not only of a few villages or cities in the earth, but the whole earth, and not only King of this dreggy place of our dross, but of heaven, having prepared or established his throne in the most glorious place of the creation.

5. Here is comfort in afflictions. As a sovereign, he is the author of afflictions; as a sovereign, he can be the remover of them; he can command the waters of affliction to go so far, and no farther. If he speaks the word, a disease shall depart, as soon as a servant shall from your presence with a nod. If we are banished from one place, he can command a shelter for us in another. If he orders Moab, a nation that had no great kindness for his people, to let his outcasts dwell with them, they shall entertain them, and afford them sanctuary, Isa. xvi. 4. Again, God chasteneth as a sovereign, but teacheth as a father, Ps. xc. 12. The exercise of his authority is not without an exercise of his goodness. He doth not correct for his own pleasure, or the creature's torment, but for the creature's instruction; though the rod be in the hand of a sovereign, yet it is tinctured with the kindness of divine bowels. He can order them as a sovereign to mortify our flesh, and try our faith. In the severest tempest, the Lord that raised the wind against us, which shattered the ship, and tore its rigging, can change that contrary wind for a more happy one, to drive us into the port.

6. It is a comfort against the projects of the church's adversaries in times of public commotions. The consideration of the divine sovereignty may arm us against the threatenings of mighty ones, and the menaces of persecutors. God hath authority above the crowns of men, and a wisdom superior to the cabals of men. None can move a step without him, he hath a negative voice upon their counsels, a negative hand upon their motions; their politic resolves must stop at the point he hath prescribed them. Their formidable strength cannot exceed the limits he hath set them, their overreaching wisdom expires at the breath of God: 'There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord,' Prov. xxi. 30. Not a bullet can be discharged, nor a sword drawn, a wall battered, nor a person despatched out of the world, without the leave of God, by the mightiest in the world. The instruments of Satan are no more free from his sovereign restraint than their inspirer; they cannot pull the hook out of their nostrils, nor cast the bridle out of their mouths. This sovereign can shake the earth, rend the heavens, overthrow mountains, the most mountainous opposer of his interest. Though the nations rush in against his people, like the rush-

ing of many waters, 'God shall rebuke them, they shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind; and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind,' Isa. xvii. 13; so doth he often burst in pieces the most mischievous designs, and conducts the oppressed to a happy port. He often turns the severest tempests into a calm, as well as the most peaceful calm into a horrible storm. How often hath a well-rigged ship, that seemed to spurn the sea under her feet, and beat the waves before her to a foam, been swallowed up into the bowels of that element, over whose back she rode a little before! God never comes to deliver his church as a governor, but in a wrathful posture: Ezek. xx. 33, 'Surely, saith the Lord, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you;' not with fury poured out upon the church, but fury poured out upon her enemies, as the words following evidence. The church he would bring out from the countries where she was scattered, and bring the people into the bond of the covenant. He sometimes 'cuts off the spirits of princes,' Ps. lxxvi. 12, *i. e.* cuts off their designs, as men do the pipes of a water-course. The hearts of all are as open to him, as the riches of heaven where he resides. He can slip an inclination into the heart of the mighty, which they dreamed not of before; and if he doth not change their projects, he can make them abortive, and way-lay them in their attempts. Laban marched with fury, but God put a padlock upon his passion against Jacob, Gen. xxxi. 24-29. The devils which ravage men's minds must be still when he gives out his sovereign orders. This sovereign can make his people find favour in the eyes of the cruel Egyptians, which had so long oppressed them, Exod. xi. 3; and speak a good word in the heart of Nebuchadnezzar for the prophet Jeremiah, that he should order his captain to take him into his special protection, when he took Zedekiah away prisoner in chains, and put out his eyes, Jer. xxxix. 11. His people cannot want deliverance from him, who hath all the world at his command, when he is pleased to bestow it: he hath as many instruments of deliverance as he hath creatures at his beck in heaven or earth, from the meanest to the highest. As he is the Lord of hosts, the church hath not only an interest in the strength he himself is possessed with, but in the strength of all the creatures that are under his command, in the elements below and angels above; in those armies of heaven, and in the inhabitants of the earth, he doth what he will, Dan. iv. 35. They are all in order and array at his command. There are angels to employ in a fatal stroke, lice and frogs to quell the stubborn hearts of his enemies. He can range his thunders and lightnings, the cannon and granadoes of heaven, and the worms of the earth in his service. He can muzzle lions, calm the fury of the fire, turn his enemies' swords into their own bowels, and their artillery on their own breasts; set the wind in their teeth, and make their chariot-wheels languish; make the sea enter a quarrel with them, and wrap them in its waves, till it hath stifled them in its lap. The angels have storms, and tempests, and wars in their hands, but at the disposal of God; when they shall cast them out against the empire of antichrist, Rev. vii. 1, 2, then shall Satan be discharged from his throne, and no more seduce the nations; the everlasting gospel shall be preached, and God shall reign gloriously in Zion. Let us therefore shelter ourselves in the divine sovereignty, regard God as the most high in our dangers, and in our petitions. This was David's resolution: Ps. lvii. 1, 2, 'I will cry unto God most high.' This dominion of God is the true tower of David, wherein there are a thousand shields for defence and encouragement, Cant. iv. 4.

Use 4. If God hath an extensive dominion over the whole world, this ought to be often meditated on, and acknowledged by us. This is the uni-

versal duty of mankind : if he be the sovereign of all, we should frequently think of our great prince, and acknowledge ourselves his subjects, and him our Lord. God will be acknowledged the Lord of the whole earth ; the neglect of this is the cause of the judgments which are sent upon the world. All the prodigies were to this end, that they might know, or acknowledge, that God was the Lord, *Exod. x. 2.* As God was proprietor, he demanded the first-born of every Jew, and the first-born of every beast ; the one was to be redeemed, and the other sacrificed ; this was the quit-rent they were to pay to him for their fruitful land. The first fruits of the earth were ordered to be paid to him as a homage due to the landlord, and an acknowledgment they held all in chief of him. The practice of offering first-fruits for an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty was among many of the heathens, and very ancient ; hence they dedicated some of the chief of their spoils, owning thereby the dominion and goodness of God, whereby they had gained the victory. Cain owned this in offering the fruits of the earth, and it was his sin he owned no more, viz. his being a sinner, and meriting the justice of God, as his brother Abel did in his bloody sacrifice. God was a sovereign proprietor and governor, while man was in a state of innocence ; but when man proved a rebel, the sovereignty of God bore another relation towards him, that of a judge, added to the other. The first fruits might have been offered to God in a state of innocence, as a homage to him as Lord of the manor of the world ; the design of them was to own God's propriety in all things, and men's dependence on him for the influences of heaven in producing the fruits of the earth, which he had ordered for their use. The design of sacrifices, and placing beasts instead of the criminal, was to acknowledge their own guilt, and God as a sovereign judge. Cain owned the first, but not the second ; he acknowledged his dependency on God as a proprietor, but not his obnoxiousness to God as a judge, which may be probably gathered from his own speech, when God came to examine him, and ask him for his brother, *Gen. iv. 9*, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Why do you ask me ? Though I own thee as the Lord of my land and goods, yet I do not think myself accountable to thee for all my actions. This sovereignty of God ought to be acknowledged in all the parts of it, in all the manifestations of it to the creature. We should bear a sense of this always upon our spirits, and be often in the thoughts of it in our retirements. We should fancy that we saw God upon his throne in his royal garb, and great attendants about him, and take a view of it, to imprint an awe upon our spirits.

The meditation on this would,

1. Fix us on him as an object of trust. It is upon his sovereign dominion, as much as upon anything, that safe and secure confidence is built ; for if he had any superior above him to control him in his designs and promises, his veracity and power would be of little efficacy to form our souls to a close adherency to him. It were not fit to make him the object of our trust, that can be gainsaid by a higher than himself, and had not a full authority to answer our expectations. If we were possessed with this notion fully and believingly, that God were high above all, and his kingdom rules over all, we should not catch at every broken reed, and stand gaping for comforts from a pebble stone. He that understands the authority of a king, would not waive a reliance on his promise, to depend upon the breath of a changeling favourite. None but an ignorant man would change the security he may have upon the height of a rock, to expect it from the dwarfishness of a molehill. To put confidence in any inferior lord more than in the prince, is a folly in civil converse, but a rebellion in divine ; God only being above all, can only rule all,

can command things to help us, and check other things which we depend on, and make them fall short of our expectations. The due consideration of this doctrine would make us pierce through second causes to the first, and look further than to the smaller sort of sailors, that climb the ropes, and dress the sails, to the pilot that sits at the helm, the master that, by an indisputable authority, orders all their motions. We should not depend upon second causes for our support, but look beyond them, to the authority of the Deity, and the dominion he hath over all the works of his hands. Zech. x. 1, 'Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain.' When the seasons of the year conspire for the producing such an effect, when the usual time of rain is wheeled about in the year, stop not your thoughts at the point of the heavens, whence you expect it, but pierce the heavens and solicit God, who must give order for it before it comes. The due meditation of all things depending on the divine dominion would strike off our hands from all other holds, so that no creature would engross the dependence and trust which is due to the first cause. As we do not thank the heavens when they pour out rain, so we are not to depend upon them when we want it; God is to be sought to when the womb of second causes is opened to relieve us, as well as when the womb of second causes is barren, and brings not forth its wonted progeny.

2. It would make us diligent in worship. The consideration of God as the supreme Lord is the foundation of all religion. *Our Father which art in heaven* prefaceth the Lord's prayer. *Father* is a name of authority; in *heaven*, the place where he hath fixed his throne, notes his government; not *my* Father, but *our* Father, notes the extent of this authority. In all worship, we acknowledge the object of our worship our Lord, and ourselves his vassals. If we bear a sense that he is our sovereign King, it would draw us to him in every exigence, and keep us with him in a reverential posture in every address. When we come, we should be careful not to violate his right, but render him the homage due to his royalty. We should not appear before him with empty souls, but filled with holy thoughts. We should bring him the best of our flock, and present him with the prime of our strength. Were we sensible we hold all of him, we should not withhold anything from him which is more worthy than another. Our hearts would be framed into an awful regard of him, when we consider that 'glorious and fearful name, the Lord our God,' Deut. xxviii. 58. We should 'look to our feet' when we enter into his house, if we considered him in heaven upon his throne, and ourselves on earth at his footstool, Eccles. v. 2, lower before him than a worm before an angel; it would hinder garishness and lightness. The Jews, saith Capel, on the 1 Tim. i. 17, repeat this expression, מלך העולם, King of worlds, or eternal King; probable the first original of it might be to stake them down from wandering. When we consider the majesty of God, clothed with a robe of light, sitting upon his high throne, adorned with his royal ensigns, we should not enter into the presence of so great a Majesty with the sacrifice of fools, with light motions and foolish thoughts, as if he were one of our companions to be drolled with. We should not hear his word as if it were the voice of some ordinary peasant. The consideration of majesty would engender reverence in our service. It would also make us speak of God with honour and respect, as of a great and glorious king, and not use defaming expressions of him, as if he were an infamous being. And were he considered as a terrible majesty, he would not be frequently solicited by some to pronounce a damnation upon them upon every occasion.

3. It would make us charitable to others. Since he is our Lord, the

great proprietor of the world, it is fit he should have a part of our goods as well as our time, he being the Lord both of our goods and time. The Lord is to be honoured with our substance, Prov. iii. 9. Kings were not to be approached to without a present. Tribute is due to kings; but because he hath no need of any from us to bear up his state, maintain the charge of his wars, or pay his military officers and host, it is a debt due to him to acknowledge him in his poor, to sustain those that are part of his substance; though he stands in no need of it himself, yet the poor, that we have always with us, do. As a seventh part of our weekly time, so some part of our weekly gains are due to him. There was to be a weekly laying by in store somewhat of what God had prospered them for the relief of others, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2; the quantity is not determined, that is left to every man's conscience, 'according as God hath prospered him' that week. If we did consider God as the donor and proprietor, we should dispose of his gifts according to the design of the true owner, and act in our places as stewards entrusted by him, and not purse up his part as well as our own in our coffers. We should not deny him a small quit-rent as an acknowledgment that we have a greater income from him; we should be ready to give the inconsiderable pittance he doth require of us, as an acknowledgment of his propriety as well as liberality.

4. It would make us watchful, and arm us against all temptations. Had Eve stuck to her first argument against the serpent, she had not been instrumental to that destruction which mankind yet feel the smart of: Gen. iii. 3, 'God hath said ye shall not eat of it;' the great governor of the world hath laid his sovereign command upon us in this point. The temptation gained no ground till her heart let go the sense of this for the pleasure of her eye and palate. The repetition of this, The great Lord of the world hath said or ordered, had both unargmented and disarmed the tempter. A sense of God's dominion over us would discourage a temptation, and put it out of countenance; it would bring us with a vigorous strength to beat it back to a retreat. If this were as strongly urged as temptation, it would make the heart of the tempted strong, and the motion of the tempter feeble.

5. It would make us entertain afflictions as they ought to be entertained, viz., with a respect to God. When men make light of any affliction from God, it is a contempt of his sovereignty; as to condemn the frown, displeasure, and check of a prince is an affront to majesty; it is as if they did not care a straw what God did with them, but dare him to do his worst. There is a despising the chastening of the Almighty, Job v. 17. To be unhumbled under his hand is as much or more affront to him than to be impatient under it. Afflictions must be entertained as a check from heaven, as a frown from the great monarch of the world; under the feeling of every stroke, we are to acknowledge his sovereignty and bounty; to despise it is to make light of his authority over us, as to despise his favours is to make light of his kindness to us. A sense of God's dominion would make us observe every check from him, and not diminish his authority by casting off a due sense of his correction.

6. This dominion of God would make us resign up ourselves to God in everything. He that considers himself a thing made by God, a vassal under his authority, would not expostulate with him, and call him to an account why he hath dealt so or so with him. It would stab the vitals of all pleas against him. We should not then contest with him, but humbly lay our cause at his feet, and say with Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seems good.' We should not commence a suit against God when he doth not answer our prayers presently, and send the mercy we want upon the wings of the wind; he is the Lord, the Sovereign. The consideration

of this would put an end to our quarrels with God. Should I expect that the monarch of the world should wait upon me, or I, a poor worm, wait upon him? Must I take state upon me before the throne of heaven, and expect the King of kings should lay by his sceptre to gratify my humour? Surely Jonah thought God no more than his fellow, or his vassal, at that time when he told him to his face he did well to be angry, as though God might not do what he pleased with so small a thing as a gourd; he speaks as if he would have sealed a lease of ejection, to exclude him from any propriety in anything in the world.

7. This dominion of God would stop our vain curiosity. When Peter was desirous to know the fate of John, the beloved disciple, Christ answereth no more than this: John xxi. 22, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.' Consider your duty, and lay aside your curiosity, since it is my pleasure not to reveal it. The sense of God's absolute dominion would silence many vain disputes in the world. What if God will not reveal this or that? The manner and method of his resolves should humble the creature under intruding inquiries.

Use 5. Of exhortation.

1. The doctrine of the dominion of God may teach us humility. We are never truly abased but by the consideration of the eminence and excellency of the Deity. Job never thought himself so pitiful a thing, so despicable a creature, as after God's magnificent declamation upon the theme of his own sovereignty, Job xlii. 5, 6. When God's name is regarded as the most excellent and sovereign name in all the earth, then is the soul in the fittest temper to lie low, and cry out, What is man, that so great a Majesty should be mindful of him? When Abraham considers God as the supreme judge of all the earth, he then owns himself 'but dust and ashes,' Gen. xviii. 25, 27. Indeed, how can vile and dusty man vaunt before God, when the angels, far more excellent creatures, cannot stand before him but with a veil on their faces? How little a thing is man in regard of all the earth! How mean a thing is the earth in regard of the vaster heavens! How poor a thing is the whole world in comparison of God! How pitiful a thing is man, if compared with so excellent a majesty! There is as great a distance between God and man as between being and not being; and the more man considers the divine royalty, the more disesteem he will have of himself. It would make him stoop, and disrobe himself, and fall low before the throne of the King of kings, throwing down before his throne any crown he gloried in, Rev. iv. 10.

(1.) In regard of authority. How unreasonable is pride in the presence of majesty. How foolish is it for a country justice of peace to think himself as great as his prince that commissioned him. How unreasonable is pride in the presence of the greatest sovereignty. What is human greatness before divine? The stars discover no light when the sun appears, but in an humble posture withdraw in their lesser beams, to give the sole glory of enlightening the world to the sun, who is, as it were, the sovereign of those stars, and imparts a light unto them. The greatest prince is infinitely less, if compared with God, than the meanest scullion in his kitchen can be before him. As the wisdom, goodness, and holiness of man is a mere mote compared to the goodness and holiness of God, so is the authority of man a mere trifle in regard of the sovereignty of God. And who but a simple child would be proud of a mote or trifle. Let man be as great as he can, and command others, he is still a subject to one greater than himself. Pride would then vanish like smoke at the serious consideration of this sovereignty.

One of the kings of this country did very handsomely shame the flattery of his courtiers, that cried him up as lord of sea and land, by ordering his chair to be set on the sand of the sea-shore when the tide was coming in, and commanding the waters not to touch his feet, which, when they did, without any regard to his authority, he took occasion thereby to put his flatterers out of countenance, and instruct himself in a lesson of humility. See, saith he, how I rule all things, when so mean a thing as the water will not obey me. It is a ridiculous pride that the Turk and Persian discover in their swelling titles. What poor sovereigns are they, that cannot command a cloud, give out an effectual order for a drop of rain in a time of drought, or cause the bottles of heaven to turn their mouth another way in a time of too much moisture. Yet their own prerogatives are so much in their minds, that they jostle out all thoughts of the supreme prerogative of God, and give thereby occasion to frequent rebellions against him.

(2.) In regard of propriety. And this doctrine is no less an abatement of pride in the highest as well as in the meanest. It lowers pride in point of propriety, as well as in point of authority. Is any proud of his possessions? How many lords of those possessions have gone before you!* How many are to follow you! Your dominion lasts but for a short time, too short to be a cause of any pride and glory in it. God, by a sovereign power, can take you from them, or them from you, when he pleaseth. The traveller refresheth himself in the heat of summer under a shady tree; how many have done so before him the same day he knows not, and how many will have the benefit after, before night comes, he is as much ignorant of. He, and the others that went before him, and follow after him, use it for their refreshment, but none of them can say they are the lords of it. The property is invested in some other person, whom perhaps they know not. The propriety of all you have is in God, not truly in yourselves. Doth not that man deserve scorn from you who will play the proud fool in gay clothes and attire, which are known to be none of his own, but borrowed? Is it not the same case with every proud man, though he hath a property in his goods by the law of the land? Is anything you have your own truly? Is it not lent you by the great Lord? Is it not the same vanity in any of you to be proud of what you have as God's loan to you, as for such a one to be proud of what he hath borrowed of man? And do you not make yourselves as ridiculous to angels and good men, who know that though it is yours in opposition to man, yet it is not yours in opposition to God; they are granted you only for your use, as the *collar of eses† and sword*, and other ensigns of the chief magistrate in the city, pass through many hands in regard of the use of them, but the propriety remains in the community and body of the city; or as the silver plate of a person that invites you to a feast is for your use during the time of the invitation. What ground is there to be proud of those things? You are not the absolute lords and proprietors of, but only have the use of them granted to you during the pleasure of the Sovereign of the world.

2. Praise and thankfulness results from this doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

(1.) He is to be praised for his royalty: Ps. cxlv. 1, 'I will extol thee my God, O King.' The psalmist calls upon men five times to sing praise to him as the King of all the earth: Ps. xlvii. 6, 7, 'Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of

* Raynard de Deo. p. 766.

† That is, a collar made of links in the form of the letter S.—Ed.

all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding.' All creatures, even the inanimate ones, are called upon to praise him, because of the excellency of his name, and the supremacy of his glory, in the 148th Psalm throughout, and ver. 13. That sovereign power that gave us hearts and tongues deserves to have them employed in his praises, especially since he hath by the same hand given us so great matter for it. As he is a sovereign, we owe him thankfulness [that] he doth not deal with us in a way of absolute dominion; he might then have annihilated us, since he hath as full a dominion to reduce us to nothing as to bring us out of nothing. Consider the absoluteness of his sovereignty in itself, and you must needs acknowledge that he might have multiplied precepts, enjoined us the observance of more than he hath done; he might have made our tether much shorter; he might exact obedience, and promise no reward for it; he might dash us against the walls as a potter doth his vessel, and no man have any just reason to say, What dost thou? or Why dost thou use me so? A greater right is in him to use us in such a manner, as we do sensible as well as insensible things. And if you consider his dominion, as it is capable to be exercised in a way of unquestionable justice, and submitted to the reason and judgments of creatures, he might have dealt with us in a smarter way than he hath hitherto done; instead of one affliction, we might have had a thousand. He might have shut his own hands from pouring out any good upon us, and ordered innumerable scourges to be prepared for us; but he deals not with us according to the rights of his dominion. He doth not oppress us by the greatness of his majesty; he enters into covenant with us, and allures us by the cords of a man, and shews himself as much a merciful as an absolute sovereign.

(2.) As he is a proprietor, we owe him thankfulness. He is at his own choice, whether he will bestow upon us any blessings or no; the more value therefore his benefits deserve from us, and the donor the more sincere returns. If we have anything from the creature to serve our turn, it is by the order of the chief proprietor. He is the spring of honour, and the fountain of supplies; all creatures are but as the conduit-pipes in a great city, which serve several houses with water, but from the great spring. All things are conveyed originally from his own hand, and are dispensed from his exchequer. If this great Sovereign did not order them, you would have no more supplies from a creature, than you could have nourishment from a chip. It is the divine will in everything that doth us good; every favour from creatures is but a smile from God, an evidence of his royalty, to move us to pay a respect to him as the great Lord. Some heathens had so much respect for God, as to conclude that his will, and not their own prudence, was the chief conductor of their affairs. His goodness to us calls for our thankfulness, but his sovereignty calls for a higher elevation of it; a smile from a prince is more valued, and thought worthy of more gratitude, than a present from a peasant. A small gift from a great person is more gratefully to be received, than a larger from an inferior person. The condescension of royalty magnifies the gift. 'What is man, that thou,' so great a majesty, 'art mindful of him,' to bestow this or that favour upon him, is but a due reflection upon every blessing we receive. Upon every fresh blessing we should acknowledge the donor and true proprietor, and give him the honour of his dominion. His property ought to be thankfully owned in everything we are capable of consecrating to him. As David, after the liberal collection he had made for the building of the temple, owns in his dedication of it to that use the propriety of God, 1 Chron. xxix. 14, 'Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for

all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.' It was but a return of God's own to him, as the waters of the river are no other than the return to the sea of what was taken from it.

Praise and thankfulness is a rent due from all mankind, and from every creature, to the great landlord, since all are tenants, and hold by him at his will. 'Every creature in heaven and earth, under the earth, and in the sea,' were heard by John to ascribe 'blessing, honour, glory, and power to him that sits on the throne,' Rev. v. 13. We are as much bound to the sovereignty of God for his preservation of us, as for his creation of us. We are no less obliged to him, that preserves our beings, when exposed to dangers, than we are for bestowing a being upon us, when we were not capable of danger. Thankfulness is due to this sovereign for public concerns: hath he not preserved the ship of his church in the midst of whistling winds and roaring waves, in the midst of the combats of men and devils, and rescued it often when it hath been near shipwrecked?

3. How should we be induced from hence to promote the honour of this sovereign? We should advance him as supreme, and all our actions should concur in his honour. We should return to his glory what we have received from his sovereignty, and enjoy by his mercy. He that is the superior of all, ought to be the end of all. This is the harmony of the creation, that which is of an inferior nature is ordered to the service of that which is of a more excellent nature; thus water and earth, that have a lower being, are employed for the honour and beauty of the plants of the earth, who are more excellent in having a principle of a growing life; these plants are again subservient to the beasts and birds, which exceed them in a principle of sense, which the others want; those beasts and birds are ordered for the good of man, who is superior to them in a principle of reason, and is invested with a dominion over them; man having God for his superior, ought as much to serve the glory of God, as other things are designed to be useful to man. Other governments are intended for the good of the community, the chief end is not the good of the governors themselves; but God being every way sovereign,—the sovereign being, giving being to all things; the sovereign ruler, giving order and preservation to all things,—is also the end of all things, to whose glory and honour all things, all creatures are to be subservient. Rom. xi. 36, 'For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever:' *of* him, as the efficient cause; *through* him, as the preserving cause; *to* him, as the final cause. All our actions and thoughts ought to be addressed to his glory, our whole beings ought to be consecrated to his honour, though we should have no reward, but the honour of having been subservient to the end of our creation; so much doth the excellency and majesty of God, infinitely elevated above us, challenge of us. Subjects use to value the safety, honour, and satisfaction of a good prince above their own; David is accounted worth ten thousand of the people, and some of his courtiers thought themselves obliged to venture their lives for his satisfaction in so mean a thing as a little water from the well of Bethlehem. Doth not so great, so good a sovereign as God, deserve the same affection from us? Do we swear, saith a heathen, to prefer none before Cæsar, and have we not greater reason to prefer none before God? * It is a justice due from us to God, to maintain his glory, as it is a justice to preserve the right and property of another. As God would lay aside his Deity, if he did deny himself, so a creature acts irregularly, and out of the rank of a creature, if it doth not deny itself for God. He that makes himself his own end, makes himself his own sovereign.

* Arrian in Epictet.

To napkin up a gift he hath bestowed upon us, or to employ what we possess, solely to our own glory, to use anything barely for ourselves, without respect to God, is to apply it to a wrong use, and to injure God in his propriety, and the end of his donation. What we have, ought to be used for the honour of God ; he retains the dominion and lordship, though he grants us the use ; we are but stewards, not proprietors, in regard of God, who expects an account from us, how we have employed his goods to his honour. The kingdom of God is to be advanced by us : we are to pray that his kingdom may come, we are to endeavour that his kingdom may come ; that is, that God may be known to be the chief sovereign ; that his dominion, which was obscured by Adam's fall, may be more manifested ; that his subjects which are suppressed in the world, may be supported, his laws which are violated by the rebellions of men, may be more obeyed, and his enemies be fully subdued by his final judgment, the last evidence of his dominion in this state of the world ; that the empire of sin and the devil may be abolished, and the kingdom of God be perfected ; that none may rule but the great and rightful sovereign. Thus, while we endeavour to advance the honour of his throne, we shall not want an honour to ourselves. He is too gracious a sovereign to neglect them that are mindful of his glory ; ' those that honour him, he will honour,' 1 Sam. ii. 30.

4. Fear and reverence of God in himself, and in his actions, is a duty incumbent on us from this doctrine : Jer. x. 7, ' Who would not fear thee, O King of nations ! ' The ingratitude of the world is taxed, in not reverencing God as a great king, who had given so many marks of his royal government among them. The prophet wonders there was no fear of so great a King in the world, since among all the wise men of the nations, and among all their kings, there is none like unto this ; no more reverence of him, since none ruled so wisely, nor any ruled so graciously. The dominion of God is one of the first sparks that gives fire to religion and worship, considered with the goodness of this sovereign : Ps. xxii. 27, 28, ' All the nations shall worship before thee, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is governor among the nations.' Epicurus, who thought God careless of human affairs, leaving them at hap-hazard to the conduct of men's wisdom, and mutability of fortune, yet acknowledged that God ought to be worshipped by man for the excellency of his nature, and greatness of his majesty. How should we reverence that God, that hath a throne encompassed with such glorious creatures as angels, whose faces we are not able to behold, though shadowed in assumed bodies ! How should we fear the Lord of hosts, that hath so many armies at his command in the heavens above, and in the earth below, whom he can dispose to the exact obedience of his will ! How should men be afraid to censure any of his actions, to sit judge of their Judge, and call him to an account to their bar ! How should such an earth-worm, a mean animal as man, be afraid to speak irreverently of so great a king among his pots and strumpets ! Not to fear him, not to reverence him, is to pull his throne from under him, and make him of a lower authority than ourselves, or any creature that we can reverence more.

5. Prayer to God, and trust in him, is inferred from his sovereignty. If he be the supreme sovereign, holding heaven and earth in his hand, disposing all things here below, not committing every thing to the influence of the stars, or the humours of men, we ought then to apply ourselves to him in every case, implore the exercise of his authority ; we hereby own his peculiar right over all things and persons. He only is the supreme head in all causes and over all persons ; *Thine is the kingdom* concludes the Lord's prayers, both as a motive to pray, Mat. vi. 13, and a ground to expect what we want.

He that believes not God's government, will think it needless to call upon him, will expect no refuge under him in a strait, but make some creature-reed his support. If we do not seek to him, but rely upon the dominion we have over our own possessions, or upon the authority of anything else, we disown his supremacy and dominion over all things; we have as good an opinion of ourselves, or of some creature, as we ought to have of God. We think ourselves, or some natural cause we seek to, or depend upon, as much sovereigns as he, and that all things which concern us are as much at the dispose of an inferior, as of the great Lord. It is indeed to make a God of ourselves, or of the creature; when we seek to him upon all occasions, we own this divine eminency, we acknowledge that it is by him men's hearts are ordered, the world governed, all things disposed; and God, that is jealous of his glory, is best pleased with any duty in the creature that doth acknowledge and desire the glorification of it, which prayer and dependence on him doth in a special manner, desiring the exercise of his authority, and the preservation of it, in ordering the affairs of the world.

6. Obedience naturally results from this doctrine. As his justice requires fear, his goodness thankfulness, his faithfulness trust, his truth belief, so his sovereignty, in the nature of it, demands obedience. As it is most fit he should rule in regard of his excellency, so it is most fit we should obey him in regard of his authority. He is our Lord, and we his subjects; he is our Master, and we his servants; it is righteous we should observe him, and conform to his will. He is everything that speaks an authority to command us, and that can challenge an humility in us to obey. As that is the truest doctrine that subjects us most to God, so he is the truest Christian that doth in his practice most acknowledge this subjection. And as sovereignty is the first notion a creature can have of God, so obedience is the first and chief thing conscience reflects upon the creature. Man holds all of God, and therefore owes all the operations capable to be produced by those faculties to that sovereign power that endowed him with them. Man had no being but for him, he hath no motion without him; he should therefore have no being but for him, and no motion but according to him. To call him Lord, and not to act in subjection to him, is to mock and put a scorn upon him: Luke vi. 46, 'Why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?' It is like the crucifying Christ under the title of a king. It is not by professions, but by observance of the laws of a prince, that we manifest a due respect to him. By that, we reverence that authority that enacted them, and the prudence that framed them.

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

Motives to obey.

1. It is comely and orderly. Is it not a more becoming thing to be ruled by the will of our sovereign, than by that of our lusts? to observe a wise and gracious authority, than to set up inordinate appetites in the room of his law? Would not all men account it a disorder to be abominated, to see a slave or vassal control the just orders of his lord, and endeavour to subject his master's will to his own? Much more to expect God should serve our humour, rather than we be regulated by his will. It is more orderly that subjects should obey their governors, than governors their subjects; that passion should obey reason, than reason obey passion. When good governors are to conform to subjects, and reason veil to passion, it is monstrous; the one disturbs the order of a community, and the other defaceth the beauty of the soul. Is it a comely thing for God to stoop to our meanness, or for us to stoop to his greatness?

2. In regard of the divine sovereignty, it is both honourable and advantageous to obey God. It is indeed the glory of a superior to be obeyed by his inferior, but where the sovereign is of transcendent excellency and dignity, it is an honour to a mean person to be under his immediate commands, and enrolled in his service. It is more honour to be God's subject than to be the greatest worldly monarch; his very service is an empire, and disobedience to him is a slavery. It is a part of his sovereignty to reward any service done to him.* Other lords may be willing to recompense the service of their subjects, but are often rendered unable; but nothing can stand in the way of God to hinder your reward, if nothing stand in your way to hinder your obedience: Levit. xviii. 5, 'If you keep my statutes, you shall live in them; I am the Lord.' Is there anything in the world can recompense you for rebellion against God and obedience to a lust? Saul cools the hearts of his servants from running after David, by David's inability to give them fields and vineyards: 1 Sam. xxii. 7, 'Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, that you have conspired against me?' But God hath a dominion to requite, as well as authority to command your obedience. He is a great sovereign, to bear you out, in your observance of his precepts, against all reproaches and violences of men, and at last to crown you with eternal honour. If he should neglect vindicating one time or other your loyalty to him, he will neglect the maintaining and vindicating his own sovereignty and greatness.

3. God, in all his dispensations to man, was careful to preserve the rights of his sovereignty, in exacting obedience of his creature. The second thing he manifested his sovereignty in was that of a lawgiver to Adam; after that of a proprietor, in giving him the possession of the garden; one followed immediately the other: Gen. ii. 15, 16, 'The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it. And the Lord commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it,' &c. Nothing was to be enjoyed by man but upon the condition of obedience to his Lord; and it is observed, that in the description of the creation, God is not called *Lord* till the finishing of the creation, and particularly in the forming of man: Gen. ii. 7, 'And the Lord God formed man.' Though he was Lord of all creatures, yet it was in man he would have his sovereignty particularly manifested, and by man have his authority specially acknowledged. The law is prefaced with this title, 'I am the Lord thy God,' Exod. xx. 2: authority in *Lord*, sweetness in *God*; the one to enjoin, the other to allure, obedience; and God enforceth several of the commands with the same title. And as he begins many precepts with it, so he concludes them with the same title, 'I am the Lord,' Lev. xix. 37, and in other places.

In all his communications of his goodness to man in his ways of blessing them, he stands upon the preservation of the rights of his sovereignty, and manifests his graciousness in favour of his authority. 'I am the Lord your God;' your God in all my perfections for your advantage, but yet your sovereign for your obedience. In all his condescensions he will have the rights of this untouched and unviolated by us. When Christ would give the most pregnant instance of his condescending and humble kindness, he urgeth his authority, to ballast their spirits from any presumptuous eruptions because of his humility; John xiii. 13, 'You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.' He asserts his authority, and presseth them to their duty, when he had seemed to lay it for the demeanour of a servant, and had

* Servire Deo, regnare est.

below the dignity of a master put on the humility of a mean underling, to wash the disciples' feet, all which was to oblige them to perform the command he then gave them, ver. 14, in obedience to his authority and imitation of his example.

4. All creatures obey him. All creatures punctually observe the law he hath imprinted on their nature, and in their several capacities acknowledge him their sovereign; they move according to the inclinations he imprinted on them. The sea contains itself in its bounds, and the sun steps not out of his sphere; the stars march in their order, 'they continue this day according to thy ordinance, for all are thy servants,' Ps. cxix. 91. If he orders things contrary to their primitive nature, they obey him. When he speaks the word, the devouring fire becomes gentle, and toucheth not a hair of the children he will preserve; the hunger-starved lions suspend their ravenous nature, when so good a morsel as Daniel is set before them; and the sun, which had been in perpetual motion since its creation, obeys the writ of ease God sent in Joshua's time, and stands still. Shall insensible and sensible creatures be punctual to his orders, passively acknowledge his authority? Shall lions and serpents obey God in their places, and shall not man, who can by reason argue out the sovereignty of God, and understand the sense and goodness of his laws, and actively obey God with that will he hath enriched him with above all other creatures? Yet the truth is, every sensitive, yea, every senseless creature, obeys God more than his rational, more than his gracious creatures in this world. The rational creatures, since the fall, have a prevailing principle of corruption. Let the obedience of other creatures incite us more to imitate them, and shame our remissness in not acknowledging the dominion of God, in the just way he prescribes us to walk in.

Well then, let us not pretend to own God as our Lord, and yet act the part of rebels. Let us give him the reverence, and pay him that obedience, which of right belongs to so great a King. Whatsoever he speaks as a true God ought to be believed, whatsoever he orders as a sovereign God ought to be obeyed. Let not God have less than man, nor man have more than God. It is a common principle, writ upon the reason of all men, that respect and observance is due to the majesty of a man, much more to the majesty of God as a lawgiver.

As this doctrine presents us motives, so it directs us to the manner and kind of our obedience to God.

1. It must be with a respect to his authority. As the veracity of God is the formal object of faith, and the reason why we believe the things he hath revealed, so the authority of God is the formal object of our obedience, or the reason why we observe the things he hath commanded. There must be a respect to his will as the rule, as well as to his glory as the end. It is not formally obedience that is not done with a regard to the order of God, though it may be materially obedience, as it answers the matter of the precept. As when men will abstain from excess and rioting, because it is ruinous to their health, not because it is forbidden by the great Lawgiver, this is to pay a respect to our own conveniency and interest, not a conscientious observance to God; a regard to our health, not to our sovereign; a kindness to ourselves, not a justice due to the rights of God. There must not only be a consideration of the matter of the precept as convenient, but a consideration of the authority of the lawgiver as obligatory. *Thus saith the Lord*, ushers in every order of his, directing our eye to the authority enacting it. Jeroboam did God's will of prophecy in taking the kingdom of Israel, and the devils may be subservient in God's will or providence, but neither of them are put upon the account of obedience, because not done intentionally with

any conscience of the sovereignty of God. God will have this owned by a regular respect to it; so much he insists upon the honour of it, that the sacrifice of Christ, God-man, was most agreeable to him, not only as it was great and admirable in itself, but also for that ravishing obedience to his will, which was the life and glory of his sacrifice, whereby the justice of God was not only owned in the offering, but the sovereignty of God owned in the obedience; Phil. ii. 8, 'He became obedient unto death; wherefore God highly exalted him.'

2. It must be the best and most exact obedience. The most sovereign authority calls for the exactest and lowest observance, the highest Lord for the deepest homage: being he is a great king, he must have the best in our flock, Mal. i. Obedience is due to God, as king, and the choicest obedience is due to him, as he is the most excellent king. The more majestic and noble any man is, the more careful we are in our manner of service to him. We are bound to obey God, not only under the title of a Lord in regard of jurisdiction and political subjection, but under the title of a true Lord and Master in regard of propriety. Since we are not only his subjects but servants, the exactest obedience is due to God *jure servitutis*: Luke xvii. 10, 'When you have done all, say you are unprofitable servants,' because we can do nothing which we owe not to God.

3. Sincere and inward obedience. As it is a part of his sovereignty to prescribe laws, not only to man in his outward state, but to his conscience, so it is a part of our subjection to receive his laws into our will and heart. The authority of his laws exceeds human laws in the extent and riches of them, and our acknowledgment of his sovereignty cannot be right but by subjecting the faculties of our soul to the Lawgiver of our souls; we else acknowledge his authority to be as limited as the empire of man. When his will not only sways the outward action but the inward motion, it is a giving him the honour of his high throne above the throne of mortals. The right of God ought to be preserved undamaged in affection, as well as action.

4. It must be sole obedience. We are ordered to serve him only: Mat. iv. 10, 'Him only shalt thou serve.' As the only supreme Lord, as being the highest Sovereign, it is fit he should have the highest obedience before all earthly sovereigns; and as being unparalleled by any among all the nations, so none must have an obedience equal to him. When God commands, if the highest power on earth countermands it, the precept of God must be preferred before the countermand of the creature: Acts iv. 18, 19, 'Whether it be right, in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.' We must never give place to the authority of all the monarchs in the world, to the prejudice of that obedience we owe to the supreme monarch of heaven and earth. This would be to place the throne of God at the footstool of man, and debase him below the rank of a creature. Loyalty to man can never recompense for the mischief accruing from disloyalty to God. All the obedience we are to give to man, is to be paid in obedience to God, and with an eye to his precept; therefore, what servants do for their masters they must do 'as to the Lord,' Col. iii. 23, and children are to 'obey their parents in the Lord,' Eph. vi. 1. The authority of God is to be eyed in all the services payable to man. Proper and true obedience hath God solely for its principal and primary object; all obedience to man that interferes with that, and would jostle out obedience to God, is to be refused. What obedience is due to man, is but rendered as a part of obedience to God, and a stooping of his authority.

5. It must be universal obedience. The laws of man are not to be universally obeyed; some may be oppressive and unjust. No man hath

authority to make an unjust law, and no subject is bound to obey an unrighteous law; but God being a righteous sovereign, there is not one of his laws but doth necessarily oblige us to obedience. Whatsoever this supreme power declares to be his will, it must be our care to observe. Man, being his creature, is bound to be subject to whatsoever laws he doth impose, to the meanest as well as to the greatest, they having equally a stamp of divine authority upon them. We are not to pick and choose among his precepts; this is to pare away part of his authority, and render him a half sovereign.

It must be universal in all places. An Englishman in Spain is bound to obey the laws of that country wherein he resides, and so not responsible there for the breach of the laws of his native country. In the same condition is a Spaniard in England. But the laws of God are to be obeyed in every part of the world; wheresoever divine providence doth cast us, it casts us not out of the places where he commands, nor out of the compass of his own empire. He is Lord of the world, and his laws oblige in every part of the world; they were ordered for a world, and not for a particular climate and territory.

6. It must be indisputable* obedience. All authority requires readiness in the subject; the centurion had it from his soldiers: they went when he ordered them, and came when he beckoned to them, Mat. viii. 9. It is more fit God should have the same promptness from his subjects. We are to obey his orders, though our purblind understandings may not apprehend the reason of every one of them. It is without dispute that he is sovereign, and therefore it is without dispute that we are bound to obey him, without controlling his conduct. A master will not bear it from his slave, why should God from his creature? Though God admits his creatures sometimes to treat with him about the equality of his justice, and also about the reason of some commands, yet sometimes he gives no other reason but his own sovereignty, 'Thus saith the Lord,' to correct the malapertness of men, and exact from them an entire obedience to this unlimited and absolute authority. When Abraham was commanded to offer Isaac, God acquaints him not with the reason of his demand till after, Gen. xxii. 2, 12; nor did Abraham enter any demur to the order, or expostulate with God, either from his own natural affection to Isaac, the hardness of the command, it being as it were a ripping up his own bowels, nor the quickness of it after he had been a child of the promise, and a divine donation above the course of nature. Nor did Paul confer with flesh and blood, and study arguments from nature and interest to oppose the divine command, when he was sent upon his apostolical employment, Gal. i. 16. The more indisputable his right is to command, the stronger is our obligation to obey, without quenching the reason of his orders.

7. It must be a joyful obedience. Men are commonly more cheerful in their obedience to a great prince, than to a mean peasant, because the quality of the master renders the service more honourable. It is a discredit to a prince's government when his subjects obey him with discontent and dejectedness, as though he were a hard master, and his laws tyrannical and unrighteous. When we pay obedience but with a dull and feeble pace, and a sour and sad temper, we blemish our great sovereign, imply his commands to be grievous, void of that peace and pleasure he proclaims to be in them, that he deserves no respect from us, if we obey him because we must, and not because we will. Involuntary obedience deserves not the title; it is rather submission than obedience, an act of the body, not of the mind; a mite of obedience with cheerfulness is better than a talent without it. In the

* That is 'undisputing.'—Ed.

little Paul did, he comforts himself in this, that 'with the mind he served the law of God,' Rom. vii. 25. 'The testimonies of God were David's delight,' Ps. cxix. 24. Our understandings must take pleasure in knowing him, our wills delightfully embrace him, and our actions be cheerfully squared to him. This credits the sovereignty of God in the world, makes others believe him to be a gracious Lord, and move them to have some veneration for his authority.

8. It must be perpetual obedience. As man is a subject as soon as he is a creature, so he is a subject as long as he is a creature. God's sovereignty is of perpetual duration, as long as he is God; man's obedience must be perpetual while he is man. God cannot part with his sovereignty, and a creature cannot be exempted from subjection; we must not only serve him, but cleave to him, Deut. xiii. 4. Obedience is continued in heaven, his throne is established in heaven; it must be bowed to in heaven, as well as in earth. The angels continually fulfil his pleasure.

7. Exhortation. Patience is a duty flowing from this doctrine. In all strokes upon ourselves, or thick showers upon the church, *the Lord reigns*, is a consideration to prevent muttering against him, and makes us quietly wait to see what the issue of his divine pleasure will be. It is too great an insolence againsty the divine Majesty to censure what he acts, or quarrel with him for what he inflicts. Proud clay doth very unbecomingly swell against an infinite superior. If God be our sovereign, we ought to subscribe to his afflicting will without debates, as well as to his liberal will with affectionate applauses. We should be as full of patience under his sharper, as of praise under his more grateful, dispensations, and be without reluctance against his penal, as well as his preceptive, pleasure. It is God's part to inflict, and the creature's part to submit.

This doctrine affords us motives, and shews us the nature of patience. Motives to it.

1. God being sovereign, hath an absolute right to dispose of all things. His title to our persons and possessions is upon this account stronger than our own can be. We have as much reason to be angry with ourselves when we assert our worldly right against others, as to be angry with God for asserting the right of his dominion over us. Why should we enter a charge against him, because he had not tempered us so strong in our bodies, drawn us with as fair colours, embellished our spirits with as rich gifts as others? Is he not the Sovereign of his own goods, to impart what, and in what measure, he pleaseth? Would you be content your servant should check your pleasure in dispensing your own favours? It is an unreasonable thing not to leave God to the exercise of his own dominion. Though Job were a pattern of patience, yet he had deep tinctures of impatience, he often complains of God's usage of him as too hard, and stands much upon his own integrity; but when God comes in the latter chapters of that book to justify his carriage towards him, he chargeth him not as a criminal, but considers him only as his vassal. He might have found flaws enough in Job's carriage, and corruption enough in Job's nature, to clear the equity of his proceeding as a Judge, but he useth no other medium to convince him, but the greatness of his majesty, the unlimitedness of his sovereignty, which so appals the good man, that he puts his finger on his mouth, and stands mute with a self-aborrency before him as a sovereign, rather than as a judge. When he doth pinch us, and deprive us of what we most affect, his right to do it should silence our lips, and calm our hearts from any boisterous uproars against him.

2. The property of all still remains in God, since he is sovereign. He did not divest himself of the property when he granted us the use. The

earth is his, not ours; the fulness of the earth is his, it is not ours; the fulness any of us have, as well as the fulness others have. After he had given the Israelites corn, wine, and oil, he calls them all his, and emphatically adds *my* to every one of them, Hosea ii. 9. His right is universal over every mite we have, and perpetual too. He may therefore take from us what he please. He did but deposit in our hands for a while the benefits we enjoy, either children, friends, estate, or lives; he did not make a total conveyance of them, and alienate his own property when he put them into our hands; we can shew no patent for them, wherein the full right is passed over to us, to hold them against his will and pleasure, and implead him if he offer to reassume them. He reserved a power to dispossess us upon a forfeiture, as he is the lord and governor. Did any of us yet answer the condition of his grant? It was his indulgence to allow them so long. There is reason to submit to him, when he reassumes what he lent to us, and rather to thank him that he lent it so long, and did not seize upon it sooner.

3. Other things have more reason to complain of our sovereignty over them, than we of God's exercise of his sovereignty over us. Do we not exercise an authority over our beasts, as to strike them when we please, and merely for our pleasure, and think we merit no reproof for it, because they are our own, and of a nature inferior to ours? And shall not God, who is absolute, do as much with us, who are more below him than the meanest creatures are below us? They are creatures as well as we, and we no more creatures than they; they were framed by omnipotence as well as we; there is no more difference between them and us in the notion of creatures. As there is no difference between the greatest monarch on earth, and the meanest beggar on the dunghill, in the notion of a man,—the beggar is a man as well as the monarch, and as much a man,—the difference consists in the special endowments we have above them by the bounty of their and our common Creator. We are less, if compared with God, than the worst, meanest, most sordid creature can be, if compared with us. Hath not a bird or a hare (if they had a capacity) more reason to complain of men's persecuting them by their hawks and their dogs? But would their complaints appear reasonable, since both were made for the use of man, and man doth but use the nature of the one to attain a benefit by the other? Have we any reason to complain of God, if he lets loose other creatures, the devouring hounds of the world, to bite and afflict us? We must not open our lips against him, nor let our heart swell against his scourge, since both they and we were made for his use, as well as other creatures for ours. This is a reason to stifle all complaints against God, but not to make us careless of preventing afflictions, or emerging out of them by all just ways. The hare hath a nature to shift for itself by its winding and turning, and the bird by its flight; and neither of them could be blamed, if they were able, should the one scratch out the eyes of the hounds, and the other sacrifice the hawk to its own fury.

4. It is a folly not to submit to him. Why should we strive against him, since he is an unaccountable Sovereign, and 'gives no account of any of his matters'? Job xxxiii. 13. Who can disannul the judgment God gives? There is no appeal from the supreme court; a higher court can repeal or null the sentence of an inferior court, but the sentence of the highest stands irreversible, but by itself and its own authority. It is better to lower our sails than to grapple with one that can shoot us under water; to submit to that sovereign whom we cannot subdue.

It shews us the true nature of patience in regard of God. It is a sub-

mission to God's sovereignty. As the formal object of obedience is the authority of God enacting the law, so the formal object of patience is the authority of God inflicting the punishment. As his right of commanding is to be eyed in the one, so his right of punishing is to be considered in the other. This was Eli's condition, when he had received a message, that might put flesh and blood into a mutiny, the rending the priesthood from his family, and the ruin of his house ; yet this consideration, *It is the Lord*, calms him into submission, and a willing compliance with the divine pleasure : 1 Sam. iii. 18, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seems good in his sight.' Job was of the same strain : Job i. 21, 'The Lord gives, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' He considers God as a sovereign who was not to be reproached, or have anything uncomely uttered of him for what he had done. To be patient, because we cannot avoid it or resist it, is a violent, not a loyal patience ; but to submit because it is the will of God to inflict, to be silent because the sovereignty of God doth order it, is a patience of a true complexion. The other kind of patience is no other than that of an enemy, that will free himself as soon as he can, and by any way, though never so violent, that offers itself. This sort of patience is that of a subject acknowledging the supreme authority over him, and that he ought to be ordered by the will, and to the glory of God, more than by his own will, and for his own ease. 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth,' Ps. xxxix. 9, not because I could not help it, but 'because thou didst it,' thou who art my sovereign Lord. The greatness of God claims an awful and inviolable respect from his creatures, in what way soever he doth dispose of them ; this is due to him. Since his kingdom ruleth over all, his kingdom should be acknowledged by all, and his royal authority submitted to it in all that he doth.