

## A DISCOURSE UPON THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

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

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

But the first reply Christ makes to him respects the title of 'good Master,' which this ruler gave him in his salutation.

1. Some think that Christ hereby would draw him to an acknowledgment of him as God: You acknowledge me good, how come you to salute me with so great a title, since you do not afford it to your greatest doctors? Light-foot *in loc.* observes, that the title of *Rabbi bone* is not in all the Talmud. You must own me to be God, since you own me to be good, goodness being a title only due and properly belonging to the Supreme Being.

If you take me for a common man, with what conscience can you salute me in a manner proper to God, since no man is good, no, not one, but the heart of man is evil continually? The Arians used this place to back their denying the deity of Christ; because, say they, he did not acknowledge himself good, therefore he did not acknowledge himself God. But he doth not here deny his deity, but reproves him for calling him good, when he had not

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

2. Others say that Christ had no intention to draw him to an acknowledgment of his Deity, but only asserts his divine authority or mission from God; for which interpretation Maldonat calls Calvin an Arianiser.§ He doth not here assert the essence of his deity, but the authority of his doctrine; as if he should have said, You do without ground give me the title of good, unless you believe I have a divine commission for what I declare and act. Many do think me an impostor, an enemy of God, and a friend to devils; you must firmly believe that I am not so as your rulers report me, but that I am sent of God, and authorised by him; you cannot else give me the title of good, but of wicked. And the reason they give for this interpretation is, because it is a question whether any of the apostles understood him at this time to be God, which seems to have no great strength in it, since not only the devil had publicly owned him to be the holy One of God, Luke iv. 34, but John the Baptist had borne record that he was the Son of God, John i. 32, 34, and before this time Peter had confessed him openly, in the hearing of the rest of the disciples, that he was 'the Christ, the Son of the living God,' Mat. xvi. 16. But I think Paræus his interpretation is best, which takes in both those: Either you are serious or deceitful in this address; if you are serious, why do you call me good, and make bold to fix so great a title upon one you have no higher thoughts of than of a mere man? Christ takes occasion from hence to assert God to be the only and sovereignly good: 'There is none good but God.'|| God only hath the honour of absolute goodness, and none but God merits the name of good. A heathen could say much after the same manner: 'All other things are far from the nature of good. Call none else good but God, for this would be a profane error. Other things are only good in opinion, but have not the true substance of goodness. He is good in a more excellent way than any creature can be denominated good.'¶

(1.) God is only originally good of himself. All created goodness is a rivulet from this fountain, but divine goodness hath no spring; God depends upon no other for his goodness, he hath it in and of himself. Man hath no goodness from himself, God hath no goodness from without himself; his goodness is no more derived from another than his being. If he were good by any external thing, that thing must be in being before him, or after him: if before him, he was not then himself from eternity; if after him, he was not good in himself from eternity. The end of his creating things, then, was not to confer a goodness upon his creatures, but to partake of a goodness from his creatures. God is good by and in himself, since all things are

\* Erasm. *in loc.*

† Augustin.

‡ Hensius in Mat.

§ Calvin *in loc.*

|| Trismegist. Pæmond, cap. 2.

¶ Eugubin, de Peren. Philos. lib. v. cap. 9.

only good by him, and all that goodness which is in creatures is but the breathing of his own goodness upon them. They have all their loveliness from the same hand they have their being from. Though by creation God was declared good, yet he was not made good by any, or by all the creatures. He partakes of none, but all things partake of him. He is so good that he gives all, and receives nothing; only good, because nothing is good but by him; nothing hath a goodness but from him.

(2.) God only is infinitely good.

A boundless goodness that knows no limits, a goodness as infinite as his essence, not only good, but best; not only good, but goodness itself, the supreme unconceivable goodness. All things else are but little particles of God, small sparks from this immense flame, sips of goodness to this fountain. Nothing that is good by his influence can equal him, who is good by himself; derived goodness can never equal primitive goodness. Divine goodness communicates itself to a vast number of creatures in various degrees; to angels, glorified spirits, men on earth, to every creature, and when it hath communicated all that the present world is capable of, there is still less displayed than left to enrich another world. All possible creatures are not capable of exhausting the wealth, the treasures, that divine bounty is filled with.

(3.) God is only perfectly good, because only infinitely good.

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

(4.) God only is immutably good.

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

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

1. The opinion of gaining eternal life by the outward observation of the law will appear very unsatisfactory to an inquisitive conscience. This ruler affirmed, and certainly did confidently believe, that he had fulfilled the law: 'All this have I observed from my youth,' ver. 20, yet he had not any full satisfaction in his own conscience; his heart misgave, and started upon some sentiments in him, that something else was required, and what he

\* Eugubin. peren. Philos., lib. v. cap. ix. p. 27. col. 1.

had done might be too weak, too short to shoot heaven's lock for him. And to that purpose he comes to Christ, to receive instructions for the piecing up whatsoever was defective. Whosoever will consider the nature of God, and the relation of a creature, cannot with reason think that eternal life was of itself due from God as a recompence to Adam, had he persisted in a state of innocence. Who can think so great a reward due for having performed that which a creature in that relation was obliged to do? Can any man think another obliged to convey an inheritance of £1000 per annum upon his payment of a few farthings, unless any compact appears to support such a conceit? And if it were not to be expected in the integrity of nature, but only from the goodness of God, how can it be expected since the revolt of man, and the universal deluge of natural corruption! God owes nothing to the holiest creature; what he gives is a present from his bounty, not the reward of the creature's merit. And the apostle defies all creatures, from the greatest to the least, from the tallest angel to the lowest shrub, to bring out any one creature that hath first given to God: Rom. xi. 35, 'Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?' The duty of the creature, and God's gift of eternal life, is not a bargain and sale.

God gives to the creature, he doth not properly repay; for he that repays hath received something of an equal value and worth before. When God crowns angels and men, he bestows upon them purely what is his own, not what is theirs by merit and natural obligation; though indeed what God gives by virtue of a promise made before is upon the performance of the condition due by gracious obligation. God was not indebted to man in innocence, but every man's conscience may now mind him that he is not upon the same level as in the state of integrity; and that he cannot expect anything from God, as the salary of his merit, but the free gift of divine liberality. Man is obliged to the practice of what is good, both from the excellency of the divine precepts, and the duty he owes to God, and cannot without some declaration from God hope for any other reward than the satisfaction of having well acquitted himself.\*

2. It is the disease of human nature, since its corruption, to hope for eternal life by the tenor of the covenant of works.

Though this ruler's conscience was not thoroughly satisfied with what he had done, but imagined he might for all that fall short of eternal life, yet he still hugs the imagination of obtaining it by doing: ver. 17, 'What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' This is natural to corrupted man. Cain thought to be accepted for the sake of his sacrifice, and when he found his mistake he was so weary of seeking happiness by doing, that he would court misery by murdering. All men set too high a value upon their own services. Sinful creatures would fain make God a debtor to them, and be purchasers of felicity; they would not have it conveyed to them by God's sovereign bounty, but by an obligation of justice upon the value of their works. The heathens thought God would treat men according to the merit of their services, and it is no wonder they should have this sentiment, when the Jews, educated by God in a wiser school, were wedded to that notion. The Pharisees were highly fond of it, it was the only argument they used in prayer for divine blessing; you have one of them boasting of his frequency in fasting, and his exactness in paying his tithes, Luke xviii. 12, as if God had been beholding to him, and could not without manifest wrong deny him his demand. And Paul confesseth it to be his own sentiment before his conversion, he accounted this righteousness of the law gain to him, Philip. iii. 7; he thought by this to make his market with God. The whole nation

of the Jews affected it : Rom. x. 3, ' Going about to establish their own righteousness,' ' compassing sea and land' to make out a righteousness of their own, as the Pharisees did to make proselytes.

The papists follow their steps, and dispute for justification by the merit of works, and find out another key of works of supererogation, to unlock heaven's gate, than what ever the Scripture informed us of. It is from hence also that men are so ready to make faith as a work the cause of our justification. Man foolishly thinks he hath enough to set up himself after he hath proved bankrupt, and lost all his estate. This imagination is born with us, and the best Christians may find some sparks of it in themselves, when there are springings up of joy in their hearts upon the more close performance of one duty than of another, as if they had wiped off their scores, and given God a satisfaction for their former neglects. ' We have forsaken all, and followed thee,' was the boast of his disciples. ' What shall we have, therefore?' was a branch of this root, Mat. xix. 27. Eternal life is a gift, not by any obligation of right, but an abundance of goodness; it is owing not to the dignity of our works, but the magnificent bounty of the divine nature, and must be sued for by the title of God's promise, not by the title of the creature's services. We may observe,

3. How insufficient are some assents to divine truth, and some expressions of affection to Christ, without the practice of Christian precepts. This man addressed to Christ with a profound respect, acknowledging him more than an ordinary person, with a more reverential carriage than we read any of his disciples paid to him in the days of his flesh; he fell down at his feet, kissed his knees, as the custom was when they would testify the great respect they had to any eminent person, especially to their Rabbins. All this some think to be included in the word *γυνυμνήσας*, ver. 17. He seems to acknowledge him the Messiah by giving him the title of *good*, a title they did not give to their doctors of the chair;\* he breathes out his opinion that he was able to instruct him beyond the ability of the law; he came with a more than ordinary affection to him, and expectation of advantage from him, evident by his departing sad when his expectations were frustrated by his own perversity; it was a sign he had a high esteem of him, from whom he could not part without marks of his grief. What was the cause of his refusing the instructions he pretended such an affection to receive? He had possessions in the world. How soon do a few drops of worldly advantage quench the first sparks of an ill-grounded love to Christ! How vain is a complimentary and cringing devotion, without a supreme preference of God, and valuation of Christ above every outward allurements? We may observe this,

4. We should never admit anything to be ascribed to us which is proper to God. ' Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God.' If you do not acknowledge me God, ascribe not to me the title of good. It takes off all those titles which fawning flatterers give to men: *Mighty, Invincible* to princes, *Holiness* to the pope. We call one another good, without considering how evil; and wise, without considering how foolish; mighty, without considering how weak; and knowing, without considering how ignorant. No man but hath more of wickedness than goodness, of ignorance than knowledge, of weakness than strength. God is a jealous God of his own honour, he will not have the creature share with him in his royal titles. It is a part of idolatry to give men the titles which are due to God; a kind of a worship of the creature together with the Creator. Worms will not stand out, but assault Herod in his purple when he usurps the pre-

\* Lightfoot *in loc.*

rogative of God, and prove stiff and invincible vindicators of their Creator's honour when summoned to arms by the Creator's word, Acts xii. 22, 23.

The observation which I intend to prosecute is this,

*Doct.* Pure and perfect goodness is only the royal prerogative of God; goodness is a choice perfection of the divine nature.

This is the true and genuine character of God. He is good, he is goodness, good in himself, good in his essence, good in the highest degree, possessing whatsoever is comely, excellent, desirable; the highest good, because the first good; whatsoever is perfect goodness is God, whatsoever is truly goodness in any creature is a resemblance of God.\* All the names of God are comprehended in this one of good. All gifts, all variety of goodness, are contained in him as one common good. He is the efficient cause of all good by an overflowing goodness of his nature. He refers all things to himself as the end for the representation of his own goodness. 'Truly God is good,' Ps. lxxiii. 1. Certainly, it is an undoubted truth; it is written in his works of nature, and his acts of grace: Exod. xxxiv. 6, 'He is abundant in goodness.'

And everything is a memorial, not of some few sparks, but of his 'great goodness,' Ps. cxlv. 7. This is often celebrated in the Psalms, and men invited more than once to sing forth the praises of it, Ps. cvii. 8, 15, 21, 31. It may better be admired than sufficiently spoken of, or thought of, as it merits. It is discovered in all his works, as the goodness of a tree in all its fruits; it is easy to be seen, and more pleasant to be contemplated. In general,

1. All nations in the world have acknowledged God good: τὸ Ἀγαθὸν was one of the names the Platonists expressed him by, and *good* and *God* are almost the same words in our language. All as readily consented in the notion of his goodness as in that of his deity. Whatsoever divisions or disputes there were among them in the other perfections of God, they all agreed in this without dispute, saith Synesius.† One calls him *Venus*, in regard of his loveliness.‡ Another calls him *Εἰρῆα*, love, as being the band which ties all things together. No perfection of the divine nature is more eminently nor more speedily visible in the whole book of the creation than this. His greatness shines not in any part of it where his goodness doth not as gloriously glisten. Whatsoever is the instrument of his work, as his power; whatsoever is the orderer of his work, as his wisdom: yet nothing can be adored as the motive of his work but the goodness of his nature. This only could induce him to resolve to create. His wisdom then steps in to dispose the methods of what he resolved, and his power follows to execute what his wisdom hath disposed, and his goodness designed. His power in making, and his wisdom in ordering, are subservient to his goodness; and this goodness, which is the end of the creation, is as visible to the eyes of men, as legible to the understanding of men, as his power in forming them, and his wisdom in tuning them. And as the book of creation, so the records of his government must needs acquaint them with a great part of it, when they have often beheld him stretching out his hand to supply the indigent, relieve the oppressed, and punish the oppressors, and give them in their distresses what might 'fill their hearts with food and gladness.' It is this the apostle means by his Godhead, Rom. i. 20, 21, which he links with his eternity and power, as clearly seen in the things that are made, as in a pure glass. 'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' The *Godhead*, which comprehends the whole nature

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

† Empedocles.

‡ Hesiod.

of God as discoverable to his creatures, was not known, yea, was impossible to be known, by the works of creation. There had been nothing then reserved to be manifested in Christ. But his *goodness*, which is properly meant there by his Godhead, was as clearly visible as his power. The apostle upbraids them with their unthankfulness, and argues their inexcusableness, because the arm of his power in creation made no due impressions of fear upon their spirits, nor the beams of his goodness wrought in them sufficient sentiments of gratitude. Their not glorifying God was a contempt of the former, and their not being thankful was a slight of the latter. God is the object of honour as he is powerful, and the object of thankfulness properly as he is bountiful.

All the idolatry of the heathens is a clear testimony of their common sentiment of the goodness of God, since the more eminently useful any person was in some advantageous invention for the benefit of mankind, they thought he merited a rank in the number of their deities. The Italians esteemed Pythagoras a god, because he was *Φιλανθρώπιτατος* ;\* to be good and useful was an approximation to the divine nature ; hence it was, that when the Lystrians saw a resemblance of the divine goodness in the charitable and miraculous cure of one of their crippled citizens, presently they mistook Paul and Barnabas for gods, and inferred from thence their right to divine worship, inquiring into nothing else but the visible character of their goodness and usefulness, to capacitate them for the honour of a sacrifice. Acts xiv. 8–11. Hence it was that they adored those creatures that were a common benefit, as the sun and moon, which must be founded upon a pre-existent notion not only of the being, but of the bounty and goodness of God, which was naturally implanted in them, and legible in all God's works, and the more beneficial anything was to them, and the more sensible advantages they received from it, the higher station they gave it in the rank of their idols, and bestowed upon it a more solemn worship. An absurd mistake, to think everything that was sensibly good to them to be God, clothing himself in such a form to be adored by them ; and upon this account the Egyptians worshipped God under the figure of an ox, and the East Indians in some parts of their country deify a heifer, intimating the goodness of God as their nourisher and preserver in giving them corn, whereof the ox is an instrument in serving for ploughing and preparing the ground.

2. The notion of goodness is inseparable from the notion of a God.

We cannot own the existence of God, but we must confess also the goodness of his nature ; hence the apostle gives to his goodness the title of his Godhead, as if goodness and Godhead were convertible terms. Rom. i. 20. As it is indissolubly linked with the being of a deity, so it cannot be severed from the notion of it ; we as soon undeify him by denying him good, as by denying him great ; *optimus, maximus*, the best, greatest, was the name whereby the Romans entitled him. His nature is as good as it is majestic ; so doth the psalmist join them : 'I will declare thy greatness ; they shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness,' Ps. cxlv. 6, 7. They considered his goodness before his greatness, in putting *optimus* before *maximus*. Greatness without sweetness is an unruly and affrighting monster in the world, like a vast turbulent sea casting out mire and dirt. Goodness is the brightness and loveliness of our majestic Creator. To fancy a God without it, is to fancy a miserable, scanty, narrow-hearted, savage God, and so an unlovely and horrible being ; for he is not a God that is not good, he is not a God that is not the highest good. Infinite goodness is more necessary to, and more straitly joined with, an infinite Deity, than infinite power,

\* Iamblych. Vit. Pythag. lib. i. col. 6, p. 43.

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

I. What this goodness is.

II. Some propositions concerning the nature of it.

III. That God is good.

IV. The manifestation of it in creation, providence, and redemption.

V. The use.

I. What this goodness is.

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

1. We mean by this, the goodness of his essence, or the perfection of his nature. God is thus good, because his nature is infinitely perfect, he hath all things requisite to the completing of a most perfect and sovereign being. All good meets in his essence, as all water meets in the ocean. Under this notion all the attributes of God, which are requisite to so illustrious a being, are comprehended. All things that are have a goodness of being in them, derived to them by the power of God as they are creatures. So the devil is good, as he is a creature of God's making ; he hath a natural goodness, but not a moral goodness. When he fell from God, he retained his natural goodness as a creature, because he did not cease to be, he was not reduced to that nothing from whence he was drawn ; but he ceased to be morally good, being stripped of his righteousness by his apostasy. As a creature, he was God's work ; as a creature, he remains still God's work ; and therefore, as a creature, remains still good in regard of his created being. The more of being anything hath, the more of this sort of natural goodness it hath ; and so the devil hath more of this natural goodness than men have, because he hath more marks of the excellency of God upon him, in regard of the greatness of his knowledge, and the extent of his power, the largeness of his capacity, and the acuteness of his understanding, which are natural perfections belonging to the nature of an angel, though he hath lost his moral perfections. God is sovereignly and infinitely good in this sort of goodness. He is unsearchably perfect, Job. xi. 7 ; nothing is wanting to his essence that is necessary to the perfection of it ; yet this is not that the Scripture expresseth under the term of goodness, but a perfection of God's nature as related to us, and which he poureth forth upon all his creatures, as goodness which flows from this natural perfection of the Deity.



2. Nor is it the same with the blessedness of God, but something flowing from his blessedness. Were he not first infinitely blessed and full in himself, he could not be infinitely good and diffusive to us; had he not an infinite abundance in his own nature, he could not be overflowing to his creatures.

Had not the sun a fulness of light in itself, and the sea a vastness of water, the one could not enrich the world with its beams, nor the other fill every creek with its waters.

3. Nor is it the same with the holiness of God. The holiness of God is the rectitude of his nature, whereby he is pure, and without spot in himself. The goodness of God is the efflux of his will, whereby he is beneficial to his creatures. The holiness of God is manifest in his rational creatures, but the goodness of God extends to all the works of his hands. His holiness beams most in his law, his goodness reacheth to everything that had a being from him: Ps. cxlv. 9, 'The Lord is good to all.' And though he be said in the same psalm, verse 17, to be 'holy in all his works,' it is to be understood of his bounty, bountiful in all his works, the Hebrew word signifying both holy and liberal, and the margin of the Bible reads it 'merciful' or 'bountiful.'

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

5. By goodness is meant the bounty of God. This is the notion of goodness in the world; when we say a good man, we mean either a holy man in his life, or a charitable and liberal man in the management of his goods. A righteous man and a good man are distinguished: Rom. v. 7, 'For scarcely for a *righteous* man will one die; yet for a *good* man one would even dare to die.' For an innocent man, one as innocent of the crime as himself would scarce venture his life; but for a good man, a liberal tender-hearted man, that had been a common good in the place where he lived, or had done another as great a benefit as life itself amounts to, a man out of gratitude might dare to die. The goodness of God is his inclination to deal well and

\* Lombard, lib. iv. distinct 46, p. 286.

bountifully with his creatures.\* It is that whereby he wills there should be something besides himself for his own glory. God is good in himself, and to himself, *i. e.* highly amiable to himself; and therefore some define it a perfection of God, whereby he loves himself and his own excellency; but as it stands in relation to his creatures, it is that perfection of God, whereby he delights in his works, and is beneficial to them. God is the highest goodness, because he doth not act for his own profit, but for his creatures' welfare, and the manifestation of his own goodness. He sends out his beams, without receiving any addition to himself, or substantial advantage from his creatures. It is from this perfection that he loves whatsoever is good, and that is, whatsoever he hath made, for 'every creature of God is good,' 1 Tim. iv. 4. Every creature hath some communications from him, which cannot be without some affection to them; every creature hath a foot-step of divine goodness upon it: God therefore loves that goodness in the creature, else he would not love himself. God hates no creature; no, not the devils and damned, as creatures; he is not an enemy to them, as they are the works of his hands.† He is properly an enemy, that doth simply and absolutely wish evil to another; but God doth not absolutely wish evil to the damned; that justice that he inflicts upon them, the deserved punishment of their sin, is part of his goodness (as shall afterward be shewn).

This is the most pleasant perfection of the divine nature. His creating power amazes us, his conducting wisdom astonisheth us, his goodness, as furnishing us with all conveniencies, delights us, and renders both his amazing power and astonishing wisdom delightful to us.

As the sun, by effecting things, is an emblem of God's power, by discovering things to us, is an emblem of his wisdom, but by refreshing and comforting us, is an emblem of his goodness; and without this refreshing virtue it communicates to us, we should take no pleasure in the creatures it produceth, nor in the beauties it discovers. As God is great and powerful, he is the object of our understanding; but as good and bountiful, he is the object of our love and desire.

6. The goodness of God comprehends all his attributes. All the acts of God are nothing else but the effluxes of his goodness, distinguished by several names, according to the objects it is exercised about. As the sea, though it be one mass of water, yet we distinguish it by several names, according to the shores it washeth and beats upon, as the British and German Ocean, though all be one sea. When Moses longed to see his glory, God tells him, he would give him a prospect of his goodness: Exod. xxxiii. 19, 'I will make all my goodness to pass before thee.' His goodness is his glory and God-head, as much as is delightfully visible to his creatures, and whereby he doth benefit man. 'I will cause my goodness,' or comeliness, as Calvin renders it, 'to pass before thee:' What is this but the train of all his lovely perfections springing from his goodness? The whole catalogue of mercy, grace, long-suffering, abundance of truth, Exod. xxxiv. 6, summed up in this one word. All are streams from this one fountain; he could be none of this were he not first good. When it confers happiness without merit, it is grace; when it bestows happiness against merit, it is mercy; when he bears with provoking rebels, it is long-suffering; when he performs his promise, it is truth; when it meets with a person to whom it is not obliged, it is grace; when he meets with a person in the world, to which he hath obliged himself by promise, it is truth;‡ when it commiserates a distressed person, it is pity; when it supplies an indigent person, it is bounty; when it succours an

\* Coccei, Sum. p. 50.

† Cajetan, in Secund Secundæ, qu. 34. art. 3.

‡ Herle upon Wisdom, cap. v. p. 41, 42.

innocent person, it is righteousness; and when it pardons a penitent person, it is mercy,—all summed up in this one name of goodness. And the psalmist expresseth the same sentiment in the same words: Ps. cxlv. 7–9, ‘They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works.’ He is first good, and then compassionate. Righteousness is often in Scripture taken, not for justice, but charitableness. This attribute, saith one,\* is so full of God, that it doth deify all the rest, and verify the adorableness of him. His wisdom might contrive against us, his power bear too hard upon us; one might be too hard for an ignorant, and the other too mighty for an impotent creature; his holiness would scare an impure and guilty creature, but his goodness conducts them all for us, and makes them all amiable to us. Whatever comeliness they have in the eye of a creature, whatever comfort they afford to the heart of a creature, we are obliged for all to his goodness. This puts all the rest upon a delightful exercise, this makes his wisdom design for us, and this makes his power to act for us. This veils his holiness from affrighting us, and this spirits his mercy to relieve us.† All his acts towards man are but the workmanship of this. What moved him at first to create the world out of nothing, and erect so noble a creature as man, endowed with such excellent gifts? Was it not his goodness? What made him separate his Son to be a sacrifice for us, after we had endeavoured to raze out the first marks of his favour? Was it not a strong bubbling of goodness? What moves him to reduce a fallen creature to the due sense of his duty, and at last bring him into an eternal felicity? Is it not only his goodness? This is the captain attribute that leads the rest to act; this attends them, and spirits them all in his ways of acting. This is the complement and perfection of all his works; had it not been for this, which set all the rest on work, nothing of his wonders had been seen in creation, nothing of his compassions had been seen in redemption.

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

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

\* Ingelo, Bentivolio, et Uran, book iv. p. 260, 261.

† Daille, Melange, part ii. p. 704, 705.

‡ Ficini, Epist. lib. xi. epist. 30.

being one and the same, is formally and equally God and good. 'Αυτά-γαθον, good of himself, was one of the names the Platonists gave him. He is essentially good in his own nature, and not by any outward action which follows his essence. He is an independent being, and hath nothing of goodness or happiness from anything without him, or anything he doth act about. If he were not good by his essence, he could not be eternally good, he could not be the first good, he would have something before him, from whence he derived that goodness wherewith he is possessed; nor could he be perfectly good, for he could not be equally good to that from whom he derived his goodness. No star, no splendid body that derives light from the sun, doth equal that sun by which it is enlightened.

Hence his goodness must be infinite, and circumscribed by no limits. The exercise of his goodness may be limited by himself, but his goodness, the principle, cannot; for since his essence is infinite, and his goodness is not distinguished from his essence, it is infinite also. If it were limited, it were finite: he cannot be bounded by anything without him; if so, then he were not God, because he would have something superior to him, to put bars in his way. If there were anything to fix him, it must be a good or evil being: good it cannot be, for it is the property of goodness to encourage goodness, not to bound it; evil it cannot be, for then it would extinguish goodness, as well as limit it; it would not be content with the circumscribing it without destroying it; for it is the nature of every contrary to endeavour the destruction of its opposite. He is essentially good by his own essence, therefore good of himself, therefore eternally good, and therefore abundantly good.

2. God is the prime and chief goodness. Being good *per se*, and by his own essence, he must needs be the chief goodness, in whom there can be nothing but good, from whom there can proceed nothing but good, to whom all good whatsoever must be referred as the final cause of all good. As he is the chief being, so he is the chief good. And as we rise by steps from the existence of created things, to acknowledge one supreme being, which is God, so we mount by steps from the consideration of the goodness of created things, to acknowledge one infinite ocean of sovereign goodness, whence the streams of created goodness are derived. When we behold things that partake of goodness from another, we must acquiesce in one that hath goodness by participation from no other, but originally from himself, and therefore supremely in himself above all other things; so that as nothing greater and more majestic can be imagined, so also nothing better and more excellent can be conceived than God. Nothing can add to him, or make him better than he is, nothing can detract from him to make him worse, nothing can be added to him, nothing can be severed from him. No created good can render him more excellent; no evil from any creature can render him less excellent: Ps. xvi. 2, our 'goodness extends not to him;' wickedness may hurt a man, as we are, and our righteousness may profit the son of man; but 'if we be righteous, what give we to him, or what receives he at our hands?' Job xxxv. 7, 8. As he hath no superior in place above him, so being chief of all, he cannot be made better by any inferior to him. How can he be made better by any, that hath from himself all that he hath? The goodness of a creature may be changed, but the goodness of the Creator is immutable. He is always like himself, so good that he cannot be evil, as he is so blessed, that he cannot be miserable.

Nothing is good but God, because nothing is of itself but God; as all things being from nothing are nothing in comparison of God, so all things being from nothing are scanty and evil in comparison of God. If anything

had been *ex Deo*, God being the matter of it, it had been as good as God is ; but since the principle whence all things were drawn was nothing, though the efficient cause by which they were extracted from nothing was God, they are as nothing in goodness, and not estimable in comparison of God : Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee,' &c. God is all good, every creature hath a distinct variety of goodness. God distinctly pronounced every day's work in the creation good. Food communicates the goodness of its nourishing virtue to our bodies, flowers the goodness of their odours to our smell, every creature a goodness of comeliness to our sight, plants the goodness of healing qualities for our cure, and all derive from themselves a goodness of knowledge objectively to our understandings. The sun by one sort of goodness warms us, metals enrich us, living creatures sustain us, and delight us by another ; all those have distinct kinds of goodness, which are eminently summed up in God, and are all but parts of his immense goodness. It is he that enlightens us by his sun, nourisheth us by bread : Mat. iv. 4, 'It is not by bread alone that we live, but by the word of God.' It is all but his own supreme goodness, conveyed to us through those varieties of conduit pipes. God is all good ; other things are good in their kind, as a good man, a good angel, a good tree, a good plant, but God hath a good of all kinds eminently in his nature. He is no less all-good, than he is almighty, and all-knowing ; as the sun contains in it all the light and more light than is in all the clearest bodies in the world, so doth God contain in himself all the good, and more good, than is in the richest creatures. Nothing is good but as it resembles him, as nothing is hot but as it resembles fire, the prime subject of heat.

God is omnipotent, therefore no good can be wanting to him. If he were destitute of any which he could have, he were not almighty. He is so good, that there is no mixture of anything, which can be called not good in him ; everything besides him wants some good which others have. Nothing can be so evil as God is good. There can be no evil, but there is some mixture of good with it, no nature so evil, but there is some spark of goodness in it : but God is a good which hath no taint of evil ; nothing can be so supreme an evil, as God is supreme goodness.

He is only good without capacity of increase ; he is all good, and un-mixedly good—none good but God ; a goodness like the sun, that hath all light and no darkness. That is the second thing, he is the supreme and chief goodness.

3. This goodness is communicative. None so communicatively good as God. As the notion of God includes goodness, so the notion of goodness includes diffusiveness ; without goodness he would cease to be a deity, and without diffusiveness he would cease to be good. The being good is necessary to the being of God, for goodness is nothing else in the notion of it, but a strong inclination to do good ; either to find or make an object, wherein to exercise itself, according to the propension of its own nature, and it is an inclination of communicating itself, not for its own interest, but the good of the object it pitcheth upon. Thus God is good by nature, and his nature is not without activity, he acts conveniently to his own nature : Ps. cxix. 68, 'Thou art good, and dost good.' And nothing accrues to him by the communications of himself to others, since his blessedness was as great before the frame of any creature, as ever it was since the erecting of the world, so that the goodness of Christ himself increaseth not the lustre of his happiness : Ps. xvi. 2, 'My goodness extends not to thee.' He is not of a niggardly and envious nature ; he is too rich to have any cause to envy, and too good to have any will to envy ; he is as liberal as he is rich, according

to the capacity of the object about which his goodness is exercised. The divine goodness being the supreme goodness, is goodness in the highest degree of activity ; not an idle, enclosed, pent-up goodness, as a spring shut up, or a fountain sealed, bubbling up within itself, but bubbling out of itself ; a fountain of gardens to water every part of his creation : ' He is as ointment poured forth,' Cant. i. 3. Nothing spreads itself more than oil, and takes up a larger place wheresoever it drops. It may be no less said of the goodness of God, as it is of the fulness of Christ, Eph. i. 23, ' He fills all in all.' He fills rational creatures with understanding, sensitive nature with vigour and motion, the whole world with beauty and sweetness. Every taste, every touch of a creature, is a taste and touch of divine goodness. Divine goodness offers itself in one spark in this creature, in another spark in the other creature, and altogether make up a goodness inconceivable by any creature. The whole mass and extracted spirit of it is infinitely short of the goodness of the divine nature, imperfect shadows of that goodness which is in himself.

Indeed, the more excellent anything is, the more nobly it acts. How remotely doth light, that excellent brightness of the creation, disperse itself ! How doth that glorious creature which God hath set in the heavens, spread its wings over heaven and earth, roll itself about the world, cast its beams upward and downward, insinuate into all corners, pierce the depths, and shoot up its rays into the heights, encircle the higher and lower creatures in its arms, reach out its communications to influence everything under the earth, as well as dart its beams of light and heat on things above or upon the earth : Ps. xix. 6, ' Nothing is hid from it ;' not from its power, nor from its sweetness. How communicative also is water, a necessary and excellent creature ! How active is it in a river to nourish the living creatures engendered in its womb ; refresheth every shore it runs by, promotes the propagation of fruits for the nourishment, and bestows a verdure upon the ground for the delight of man ; and where it cannot reach the higher ground in its substance, it doth by its vapours, mounted up and concocted by the sun, and gently distilled upon the earth, for the opening its womb to bring forth its fruits. God is more prone to communicate himself than the sun to spread his wings, or the earth to mount up its fruits, or the water to multiply living creatures. Goodness is his nature. Hence were there internal communications of himself from eternity, diffusions of himself without himself in time in the creation of the world, like a full vessel running over. He created the world that he might impart his goodness to something without him, and diffuse larger measures of his goodness after he had laid the first foundation of it in its being, and therefore he created several sorts of creatures that they might be capable of various and distinct measures of his liberality, according to the distinct capacities of their nature, but imparted most to the rational creature, because that is only capable of an understanding to know him, and will to embrace him. He is the highest goodness, and therefore a communicative goodness, and acts excellently according to his nature.

4. God is necessarily good. None is necessarily good but God ; he is as necessarily good, as he is necessarily God. His goodness is as inseparable from his nature as his holiness. He is good by nature, not only by will, as he is holy by nature, not only by will : he is good in his nature and good in his actions, and as he cannot be bad in his nature, so he cannot be bad in his communications ; he can no more act contrary to this goodness in any of his actions, than he can un-God himself. It is not necessary that God should create a world ; he was at his own choice whether he would create or

no ; but when he resolves to make a world, it is necessary that he should make it good, because he is goodness itself, and cannot act against his own nature ; he could not create anything without goodness in the very act. The very act of creation, or communicating being to anything without himself, is in itself an act of goodness as well as an act of power ; had he not been good in himself, nothing could have been endued with any goodness by him. In the act of giving being he is liberal, the being he bestows is a displaying his own liberality ; he could not confer what he needs not, and which could not be deserved, without being bountiful. Since what was nothing could not merit to be brought into being, the very act of giving to nothing a being was an act of choice goodness.

He could not create anything without goodness as the motive, and the necessary motive. His goodness could not necessitate him to make the world, but his goodness could only move him to resolve to make a world ; he was not bound to erect and fashion it because of his goodness, but he could not frame it without his goodness as the moving cause.

He could not create anything, but he must create it good. It had been inconsistent with the supreme goodness of his nature to have created only murderous, ravenous, injurious creatures ; to have created a bedlam rather than a world. A mere heap of confusion would have been as inconsistent with his divine goodness as with his divine wisdom.

Again, when his goodness had moved him to make a creature, his goodness would necessarily move him to be beneficial to his creature ; not that this necessity results from any merit in the creature which he had framed, but from the excellency and diffusiveness of his own nature, and his own glory, the end for which he formed it, which would have been obscure, yea, nothing, without some degrees of his bounty. What occasion of acknowledgments and praise could the creature have for its being, if God had given him only a miserable being, while it was innocent in action ? The goodness of God would not suffer him to make a creature, without providing conveniences for it, so long as he thought good to maintain its being, and furnishing it with that which was necessary to answer that end for which he created it ; and his own nature would not suffer him to be unkind to his rational creature while he was innocent. It had been injustice to inflict evil upon the creature that had not offended, and had no relation to an offending creature ; the nature of God could not have brought forth such an act. And therefore some\* say that God, after he had created man, could not presently annihilate him, and take away his life and being. As a sovereign he might do it, as almighty he was able to do it, as well as create him, but in regard of his goodness he could not morally do it ; for had he annihilated man as soon as ever he had made him, he had not made man for himself, and for his own glory, to be loved, worshipped, sought, and acknowledged by him ; he would not then have been the end of man ; he had created him in vain, and the world in vain, which he assures us he did not, Isa. xlv. 18, 19. And certainly, if the gifts of God be without repentance, man could not have been annihilated after his creation without repentance in God, without any cause, had not sin entered into the world. If God did not say to man, after sin had made its entrance into the world, ' Seek ye me in vain,' he could not, because of his goodness, have said so to man in his innocence. As God is necessarily *mind*, so he is necessarily *will* ; as he is necessarily knowing, so he is necessarily loving. He could not be blessed if he did not know himself, and his own perfection ; nor good if he did not delight in himself and his own perfections. And

\* Cocceii, Sum. Theolog. p. 21.

this goodness, whereby he delights in himself, is the source of his delight in his creatures, wherein he sees the footsteps of himself. If he loves himself, he cannot but love the resemblance of himself, and the image of his own goodness. He loves himself, because he is the highest goodness and excellency, and loves everything as it resembles himself, because it is an efflux of his own goodness ; and as he doth necessarily love himself, and his own excellency, so he doth necessarily love anything that resembles that excellency, which is the primary object of his esteem. But,

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

God indeed is necessarily good, *affectivè*, in regard of his nature ; but freely good, *effectivè*, in regard of the effluxes of it to this or that particular subject he pitcheth on. He is not necessarily communicative of his goodness, as the sun of his light, or a tree of its cooling shade, that chooseth not its objects, but enlightens all indifferently, without any variation or distinction ; this were to make God of no more understanding than the sun, to shine not where it pleaseth, but where it must. He is an understanding agent, and hath a sovereign right to choose his own subjects. It would not be a supreme goodness, if it were not a voluntary goodness. It is agreeable to the nature of the highest good to be absolutely free, to dispense his goodness in what methods and measures he pleaseth, according to the free determinations of his own will, guided by the wisdom of his mind, and regulated by the holiness of his nature. He is not to 'give an account of any of his matters,' Job xxxiii. 13 ; 'He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion,' Rom. ix. 15. And he will be good to whom he will be good ; when he doth act, he cannot but act well ; so it is necessary ; yet he may act this good or that good to this or that degree ; so it is free. As it is the perfection of his nature, it is necessary ; as it is the communication of his bounty, it is voluntary. The eye cannot but see if it be open, yet it may glance upon this or that colour, fix upon this or that object, as it is conducted by the will. God necessarily loves himself, because he is good, yet not by constraint, but freedom, because his affection to himself is from a knowledge of himself ; he necessarily loves his own image, because it is his image, yet freely, because not blindly, but from motions of understanding and will. What necessity could there be upon him to resolve to communicate his goodness ? It could not be to make himself better by it ; for he

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



had a goodness incapable of any addition ; he confers a goodness on his creatures, but reaps not a harvest of goodness to his own essence from his creatures. What obligation could there be from the creature to confer a goodness on him to this or that degree, for this or that duration ? If he had not created a man nor angel, he had done them no wrong ; if he had given them only a simple being he had manifested a part of his goodness, without giving them a right to challenge any more of him ; if he had taken away their beings after a time when he had answered his end, he had done them no injury ; for what law obliged him to enrich them, and leave them in that being wherein he had invested them, but his sole goodness ? Whatever sparks of goodness any creature hath are the free effusions of God's bounty, the offspring of his own inclination to do well, the simple favour of the donor, not purchased, not merited by the creature. God is as unconstrained in his liberty, in all his communications, as infinite in his goodness, the fountain of them.

6. This goodness is communicative with the greatest pleasure. Moses desired to see his glory, God assures him he should see his goodness, *Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19*, intimating that his goodness is his glory, and his glory his delight also. He sends not forth his blessings with an ill will ; he doth not stay till they are squeezed from him ; he 'prevents men with his blessings of goodness,' *Ps. xxi. 3* ; he is most delighted when he is most diffusive, and his pleasure in bestowing is larger than his creatures' in possessing ; he is not covetous of his own treasures ; he lays up his goodness in order to laying it out with a complacency wholly divine. The jealousy princes have of their subjects makes them sparing of their gifts, for fear of giving them materials for rebellion. God's foresight of the ill use men would make of his benefits damped him not in bestowing his largesses. He is incapable of envy ; his own happiness can no more be diminished than it can be increased. None can overtop him in goodness, because nothing hath any good, but what is derived from him ; his gifts are without repentance. Sorrow hath no footing in him, who is infinitely happy as well as infinitely good. Goodness and envy are inconsistent. How unjustly then did the devil accuse God ! What God gives out of goodness he gives with joy and gladness. He did not only will that we should be, but rejoice that he had brought us into being. 'He rejoiced in his works,' *Ps. civ. 21*. And his Wisdom stood by him, 'delighting in the habitable parts of the earth,' *Prov. viii. 31*. He beheld the world after its creation with a complacency, and still governs it with the same pleasure wherewith he reviewed it. Infinite cheerfulness attends infinite goodness. He would not give if he had not a pleasure that others should enjoy his goodness ; since he is better than anything, and more communicative than anything, he is more joyful in giving out than the sun can be to run its race in pouring forth light. He is said only to repent and grieve, when men answer not the obligations and ends of his goodness, which would be their own felicity as well as his glory. Though he doth not force greater degrees of his goodness upon those that neglect it, yet he denies them not to those that solicit him for it. It is always greater pleasure to him to impart upon the importunities of the creatures, than it is to a mother to reach out her breast to her crying and longing infant. He is not wearied by the solicitations of men, he is pleased with their prayers, because he is pleased with the imparting of his own goodness. He seems to be in travail with it, longing to be delivered of it into the lap of his creature. He is as much delighted with petitions for his liberality in bestowing his best goodness, as princes are weary of the craving of their subjects. None can be so desirous to squeeze those that are under

them, as God is delighted to enlarge his hand towards them. It is the nature of his goodness to be glad of men's solicitations for it, because they are significant valuations of it, and therefore fit occasions for him to bestow it. Since he doth not delight in the unhappiness of any of his creatures, he certainly delights in what may conduce unto their felicity. He doth with the same delight multiply the effects of his goodness, where his wisdom sees it convenient, as he beheld the first fruits of his goodness, with a complacency upon the laying the topstone of the creation.

7. The displaying of this goodness was the motive and end of all his works of creation and providence.\* God being infinitely wise, could not act without the highest reason, and for the highest end. The reason that induced him to create, must be of as great an eminency as himself; the motive could not be taken from without him, because there was nothing but himself in being; it must be taken therefore from within himself, and from some one of those most excellent perfections whereby we conceive him. But upon the exact consideration of all of them, none can seem to challenge that honour of being the motive of them, to resolve the setting forth any work but his own goodness. This being the first thing manifest in his creation, seems to be the first thing moving him to a resolution to create. Wisdom may be considered as directing, power considered as acting; but it is natural to reflect upon goodness as moving the one to direct, the other to act. Power was the principle of his action, wisdom the rule of his action, goodness the motive of his action; principle and rule are awakened by the motive, and subservient to the end. That which is the most amiable perfection in the divine nature, and that which he first took notice of as the footsteps of them in the distinct view of every day's work, and the general view of the whole frame, seems to claim the best right to be entitled the motive and end of his creation of things.

God could have no end but himself, because there was nothing besides himself. Again, the end of every agent is that which he esteems good, and the best good for that kind of action. Since nothing is to be esteemed good but God, nothing can be the ultimate end of God but himself and his own goodness. What a man wills chiefly is his end; but God cannot will any other thing but himself as his end, because there is nothing superior to himself in goodness. He cannot will anything, that supremely serves himself and his own goodness as his end; for if he did, that which he wills, must be superior to himself in goodness, and then he is not God; or inferior to them in goodness, and then he would not be righteous, in willing that which is a lower good before a higher. God cannot will anything as his end of acting but himself, without undefying himself. God's will being infinitely good, cannot move for anything but what is infinitely good; and therefore whatsoever God made, he made for himself, Prov. xvi. 4, that whatsoever he made might bear a badge of this perfection upon it, and be a discovery of his wonderful goodness; for the making things for himself doth not signify any indigence in God, that he made anything to increase his excellency (for that is capable of no addition), but to manifest his excellency. God possessing everything eminently in himself, did not create the world for any need he had of it; finite things were unable to make any accession to that which is infinite. Man indeed builds a house to be a shelter to him against wind and weather, and makes clothes to secure him from cold, and plants gardens for his recreation and health. God is above all those little helps; he did not make the world for himself in such a kind, but for himself, *i. e.* the manifestation of himself, and the riches of his nature; not to make himself

\* Amyrald, Moral, tom. i. p. 260.

blessed, but to discover his own blessedness to his creatures, and communicate something of it to them. He did not garnish the world with so much bounty, that he might live more happily than he did before; but that his rational creatures might have fit conveniencies. As the end for which God demands the performance of our duty is not for his own advantage, but for our good, Deut. x. 13, so the end why he conferred upon us the excellency of such a being, was for our good, and the discovery of his goodness to us. For had not God created the world, he had been wholly unknown to any but himself; he produced creatures that he might be known; as the sun shines not only to discover other things, but to be seen itself in its beauty and brightness. God would create things, because he would be known in his glory and liberality; hence is it that he created intellectual creatures, because without them the rest of the creation could not be taken notice of; it had been in some sort in vain; for no nature lower than an understanding nature was able to know the marks of God in the creation, and acknowledge him as God. In this regard, God is good above all creatures, because he intends only to communicate his goodness in creation, not to acquire any goodness or excellency from them, as men do in their framing of things. God is all, and is destitute of nothing, and therefore nothing accrues to him by the creation, but the acknowledgment of his goodness. This goodness, therefore, must be the motive and end of all his works.

### III. The third thing, that God is good.

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

2. He is the cause of all created goodness, he must therefore himself be the supreme good. What good is in the heavens, is the product of some being above the earth; and those varieties of goodness in the earth, and several creatures, are somewhere in their fulness and union. That, therefore, which possess all those scattered goodnesses in their fulness, must be all good, all that good which is displayed in creatures, therefore sovereignly best. Whatsoever natural or moral goodness there is in the world, in angels, or men, or inferior creatures, is a line drawn from that centre, the bubblings of that fountain. God cannot but be better than all, since the goodness that is in creatures is the fruit of his own. If he were not good, he could produce no good; he could not bestow what he had not. If the creature be good, as the apostle says 'every creature' is, 1 Tim. iv. 4, he must needs be better than all, because they have nothing but what is derived to them

from him ; and much more goodness than all, because finite beings are not capable of receiving into them, and containing in themselves, all that goodness which is in an infinite being. When we search for good in creatures, they come short of that satisfaction which is in God, Ps. iv. 6. As the certainty of a first principle of all things is necessarily concluded from the being of creatures, and the upholding and sustaining power and virtue of God is concluded from the mutability of those things in the world ; whence we infer, that there must be some stable foundation of those tottering things, some firm hinge upon which those changeable things do move, without which there would be no stability in the kinds of things, no order, no agreement, or union among them ; so from the goodness of everything, and their usefulness to us, we must conclude him good, who made all those things. And since we find distinct goodnesses in the creature, we must conclude that one principle whence they did flow, excels in the glory of goodness. All those little glimmerings of goodness which are scattered in the creatures, as the image in the glass, represent the face, posture, motion of him whose image it is, but not in the fulness of life and spirit, as in the original ; it is but a shadow at the best, and speaks something more excellent in the copy. As God hath an infiniteness of being above them, so he hath a supremacy of goodness beyond them. What they have, is but a participation from him ; what he hath, must be infinitely super-eminent above them. If anything be good by itself, it must be infinitely good, it would set itself no bounds ; we must make as many gods as particulars of goodness in the world ; but being good by the bounty of another, that from whence they flow must be the chief goodness. It is God's excellency and goodness, which like a beam pierceth all things.\* He decks spirits with reason, endues matter with form, furnisheth everything with useful qualities.

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

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

(1.) The goodness of God is not impaired by suffering sin to enter into the world, and man to fall thereby. It is rather a testimony of God's goodness that he gave man an ability to be happy, than any charge against his goodness that he settled man in a capacity to be evil. God was first a benefactor to man, before man could be a rebel against God. May it not be inquired, whether it had not been against the wisdom of God to have made a rational creature with liberty, and not suffer him to act according to the nature he was endowed with, and to follow his own choice for some time ? Had it been wisdom to frame a free creature, and totally to restrain that creature from following its liberty ? Had it been goodness, as it were, to force the creature to be happy against its will ? God's goodness furnished Adam with a power to stand ; was it contrary to his goodness to leave Adam to a free use of that power ? To make a creature, and not let that creature act according to the freedom of his nature, might have been thought to have been a blot upon his wisdom, and a constraint upon the creature, not to make use of that freedom of his nature which the divine goodness had bestowed upon him. To what purpose did God make a law to govern his rational creature, and yet resolve that creature should not have his choice, whether he would obey it or no ? Had he been really constrained to observe it, his observation of it could no more have been called obedience, than the acts of brutes, that have a kind of natural constraint upon them by the instinct of their

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

nature, can be called obedience; in vain had God endowed a creature with so great and noble a principle as liberty. Had it been goodness in God, after he had made a reasonable creature, to govern him in the same manner as he did brutes, by a necessary instinct? It was the goodness of God to the nature of men and angels to leave them in such a condition to be able to give him a voluntary obedience, a nobler offering than the whole creation could present him with; and shall this goodness be undervalued, and accounted mean, because man made an ill use of it, and turned it into wantonness? As the unbelief of man doth not diminish the redeeming grace of God, Rom. iii. 3, so neither doth the fall of man lessen the creating goodness of God. Besides, why should the permission of sin be thought more a blemish to his goodness than the providing a way of redemption for the destroying the works of sin and the devil be judged the glory of it, whereby he discovered a goodness of grace that surpassed the bounds of nature? If this were a thing that might seem too obscure, or deface the goodness of God, in the permission of the fall of angels and Adam, it was in order to bring forth a greater goodness in a more illustrious pomp to the view of the world: Rom. xi. 32, 'God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.' But if nothing could be alleged for the defence of his goodness in this, it were most comely for an ignorant creature not to impeach his goodness, but adore him in his proceedings, in the same language the apostle doth: ver. 33, '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!'

(2.) Nor is his goodness prejudiced by not making all things the equal subjects of it.

[1.] It is true all things are not subjects of an equal goodness. The goodness of God is not so illustriously manifested in one thing as another. In the creation he hath dropped goodness upon some, in giving them beings and sense; and poured it upon others, in endowing them with understanding and reason. The sun is full of light, but it hath a want of sense; brutes excel in the vigour of sense, but they are destitute of the light of reason; man hath a mind and reason conferred on him, but he hath neither the acuteness of mind nor the quickness of motion equal with an angel. In providence also he doth give abundance, and opens his hand to some, to others he is more sparing; he gives greater gifts of knowledge to some, while he lets others remain in ignorance; he strikes down some, and raiseth others; he afflicts some with a continual pain, while he blesseth others with an uninterrupted health; he hath chosen one nation wherein to set up his gospel sun, and leaves another benighted in their own ignorance. Known was God in Judea, they were a peculiar people alone of all the nations of the earth, Deut. xiv. 2. He was not equally good to the angels; he held forth his hand to support some in their happy habitation, while he suffered others to sink in irreparable ruin; and he is not so diffusive here of his goodness to his own as he will be in heaven. Here their sun is sometimes clouded, but there all clouds and shades will be blown away and melted into nothing; instead of drops here, there will be above rivers of life. Is any creature destitute of the open marks of his goodness, though all are not enriched with those signal characters which he vouchsafes to others? He that is unerring pronounced everything good distinctly in its production, and the whole good in its universal perfection, Gen. i. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31. Though he made not all things equally good, yet he made nothing evil; and though one creature, in regard of its nature, may be better than another, yet an inferior creature, in regard of its usefulness in the order of

the creation, may be better than a superior. The earth hath a goodness in bringing forth fruits, and the waters in the sea a goodness in multiplying food. That any of us have a being, is goodness; that we have not so healthful a being as others, is unequal, but not unjust, goodness. He is good to all, though not in the same degree: 'The whole earth is full of his mercy,' Ps. cxix. 64. A good man is good to his cattle, to his servants; he makes a provision for all, but he bestows not those floods of bounty upon them that he doth upon his children. As there are various gifts, but one Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 4, so there are various distributions, but from one goodness; the drops as well as the fuller streams are of the same fountain, and relish of the nature of it; and though he do not make all men partake of the riches of his grace after the corruption of their nature, is his goodness disgraced hereby, or doth he merit the title of cruelty? Will any diminish the goodness of a father for his not setting up his son after he hath foolishly and wilfully proved bankrupt, or not rather admire his liberality in giving him so large a stock to trade with, when he first set him up in the world?

[2.] The goodness of God to creatures is to be measured by their distinct usefulness to the common end. It were better for a toad or serpent to be a man, *i.e.* better for the creature itself, if it were advanced to a higher degree of being, but not better for the universe. He could have made every pebble a living creature, and every living creature a rational one; but that he made everything as we see, it was a goodness to the creature itself; but that he did not make it of a higher elevation in nature, was a part of his goodness to the rational creature. If all were rational creatures, there would have been wanting creatures of an inferior nature for their conveniency; there would have wanted the manifestation of the variety and fulness of his goodness. Had all things in the world been rational creatures, much of that goodness which he hath communicated to rational creatures would not have appeared. How could man have shewed his skill in taming and managing creatures more mighty than himself? What materials would there have been to manifest the goodness of God bestowed upon the reasonable creatures for framing excellent works and inventions? Much of the goodness of God hath lain wrapped up from sense and understanding. All other things partake not of so great a goodness as man; yet they are so subservient to that goodness poured forth on man, that little of it could have been seen without them. Consider man, every member in his body hath a goodness in itself; but a greater goodness as referred to the whole, without which the goodness of the more noble part would not be manifested. The head is the most excellent member, and hath greater impressions of divine goodness upon it, in regard that it is the organ of understanding. Were every member of the body a head, what a deformed monster would man be! If he were all head, where would be feet for motion and arms for action? Man would be fit only for thought, and not for exercise. The goodness of God in giving man so noble a part as the head, could not be known without a tongue, whereby to express the conception of his mind, and without feet and hands whereby to act much of what he conceives and determines, and execute the resolves of his will. All those have a goodness in themselves, an honour, a comeliness from the goodness of God, 1 Cor. xii. 22, 23; but not so great a goodness as the nobler part. Yet if you consider them in their functions, and refer them to that excellent member which they serve, their inferior goodness is absolutely necessary to the goodness of the other, without which the goodness of the head and understanding would lie in obscurity, be insignificant to the whole world, and in a great measure to the person himself that wants such members.

[3.] The goodness of God is more seen in this inequality. If God were equally good to all, it would destroy commerce, unity, the links of human society, damp charity, and render that useless which is one of the noblest and delightfulest duties to be exercised here. It would cool prayer, which is excited by wants, and is a necessary demonstration of the creature's dependence on God. But in this inequality, every man hath enough in his enjoyments for praise, and in his wants matter for his prayer. Besides, the inequality of the creature is the ornament of the world. What pleasure could a garden afford if there were but one sort of flowers, or one sort of plants? Far less than when there is variety to please the sight and every other sense.

Again, the freedom of divine goodness, which is the glory of it, is evident hereby. Had he been alike good to all, it would have looked like a necessary, not a free act; but by the inequality, it is manifest that he doth not do it by a natural necessity, as the sun shines, but by a voluntary liberty, as being the entire lord and free disposer of his own goods; and that it is the gift of the pleasure of his will, as well as the efflux of his nature; that he hath not a goodness without wisdom, but a wisdom as rich as his bounty.

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

[5.] God ought to be allowed the free disposal of his own goodness. Is not God the lord of his own gifts; and will you not allow him the privilege of having some more peculiar objects of his love and pleasure, which you allow without blame to man, and use yourself without any sense of a crime? Is a prince esteemed good, though he be not equally bountiful to all his servants, nor equally gracious in pardoning all his rebels? and shall the goodness of the great Sovereign of the world be impeached, notwithstanding those mighty distributions of it, because he will act according to his own wisdom and pleasure, and not according to men's fancies and humours? Must purblind reason be the judge and director how God shall dispose of his own, rather than his own infinite wisdom and sovereign will? Is God less good because there are numberless nothings which he is able to bring into being? He could create a world of more creatures than he hath done. Doth he therefore wish evil to them by letting them remain in that nothing from whence he could draw them? No; but he denies that good to them which he is able, if he pleased, to confer upon them.

If God doth not give that good to a creature which it wants by his own demerit, can he be said to wish evil to it, or only to deny that goodness which the creature hath forfeited,\* and which is at God's liberty to retain or disperse? Though God cannot but love his own image where he finds

\* Camero, p. 30.

it, yet when this image is lost, and the devil's image voluntarily received, he may choose whether he will manifest his goodness to such a one or no. Will you not account that man liberal, that distributes his alms to a great company, though he rejects some. Much more will you account him good, if he rejects none that implore him, but dispenseth his doles to every one upon their petition. And is he not good because he will not bestow a farthing upon those that address not themselves to him? God is so good, that he denies not the best good to those that seek him. He hath promised life and happiness to them that do so. Is he less good because he will not distribute his goodness to those that despise him? Though he be good, yet his wisdom is the rule of dispensing his goodness.

[6.] The severe punishment of offenders, and the afflictions he inflicts upon his servants, are no violations of his goodness. The notion of God's vindictive justice is as naturally inbred and implanted in the mind of man as that of his goodness, and those two sentiments never shocked one another. The heathen never thought him bad because he was just, nor unrighteous because he was good. God being infinitely good, cannot possibly intend or act anything but what is good. 'Thou art good, and thou dost good,' Ps. cxix. 68; *i. e.* whatsoever thou dost is good, whatsoever it be, pleasant or painful to the creature. Punishments themselves are not a moral evil in the person that inflicts, though they are a natural evil in the person that suffers them.\* In ordering punishment to the wicked, good is added to evil; in ordering impunity to the wicked, evil is added to evil. To punish wickedness is right, therefore good; to leave men uncontrolled in their wickedness is unrighteous, and therefore bad. But again, shall his justice in some few judgments in the world impeach his goodness, more than his wonderful patience to sinners is able to silence the calumnies against him? Is not his hand fuller of gracious doles than of dreadful thunderbolts? Doth he not oftener seem forgetful of his justice, when he pours upon the guilty the streams of his mercy, than to be forgetful of his goodness when he sprinkles in the world some drops of his wrath?

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

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

\* Boetius.



because he is exact in justice, and punisheth that which makes a disorder in his government? And is it a diminution of the divine goodness to punish that which makes a disorder in the world? As wisdom without goodness would be a serpentine craft, and issue in destruction, so goodness without justice would be impotent indulgence, and cast things into confusion. When Abel's blood cried out for vengeance against Cain, it spake a good thing; Christ's blood, speaking better things than the blood of Abel, implies that Abel's blood spake a good thing; the comparative implies a positive, Heb. xii. 24. If it were the goodness of that innocent blood to demand justice, it could not be a badness in the Sovereign of the world to execute it. How can God sustain the part of a good and righteous judge, if he did not preserve human society? And how would it be preserved without manifesting himself by public judgments against public wrongs? Is there not as great a necessity that goodness should have instruments of judgment, as that there should be prisons, bridewells, and gibbets in a good commonwealth? Did not the thunderbolts of God sometimes roar in the ears of men, they would sin with a higher hand than they do, fly more in the face of God, make the world as much a moral as it was at first a natural chaos. The ingenuity of men would be damped if there were not something to work upon their fears to keep them in their due order. Impunity of the nocent person is worse than any punishment. It is a misery to want medicines for the cure of a sharp disease, and a mark of goodness in a prince to consult for the security of the political body, by cutting off a gangrened and corrupting member. And what prince would deserve the noble title of good, if he did not restrain by punishment those evils which impair the public welfare? Is it not necessary that the examples of sin, whereby others have been encouraged to wickedness, should be made examples of justice, whereby the same persons, and others, may be discouraged from what before they were greedily inclined unto? Is not a hatred of what is bad and unworthy, as much a part of divine goodness, as a love to what is excellent and bears a resemblance to himself? Could he possibly be accounted God, that should bear the same degree of affection to a prodigious vice as to a sublime virtue, and should behave himself in the same manner of carriage to the innocent and culpable? Could you account him good if he did always with pleasure behold evil, and perpetually suffer the oppressions of the innocent under unpunished wickedness? How should we know the goodness of the divine nature, and his affection to the goodness of his creature, if he did not by some acts of severity witness his implacable aversion against sin, and his care to preserve the good government of the world? If corrupted creatures should always be exempt from the effects of his indignation, he would declare himself not to be infinitely good, because he would not be really righteous. No man thinks it a natural vice in the sun, by the power of its scorching heat, to dry up and consume the unwholesome vapours of the air; nor are the demonstrations of divine justice any blots upon his goodness, since they are both for the defence and glory of his holiness, and for the preservation of the beauty and order of the world.

Secondly, Is it not part of the goodness of God to make laws, and annex threatenings; and shall it be an impeachment of his goodness to support them? The more severe laws are made for deterring evil, the better is that prince accounted in making such provision for the welfare of the community. The design of laws, and the design of upholding the honour of those laws by the punishment of offenders, is to promote goodness, and restrain evil. The execution of those laws must be therefore pursuant to the same design of goodness which first settled them. Would it not be contrary to goodness,

to suffer that which was designed for the support of goodness to be scorned and slighted? It would neither be prudence nor goodness, but folly and vice, to let laws, which were made to promote virtue, be broken with impunity. Would not this be to weaken virtue, and give a new life and vigour to vice? Not only the righteousness of the law itself, but the wisdom of the lawgiver, would be exposed to contempt, if the violations of it remained uncontrolled, and the violence offered by men passed unpunished. None but will acknowledge the divine precepts to be the image of the righteousness of God, and beneficial for the common good of the world: Rom. vii. 12, 'The law is holy, just, and good,' and so is every precept of it. The law was for no other end but to keep the creature in subjection to and dependence on God; this dependence could not be preserved without a law, nor that law be kept in reputation without a penalty; nor would that penalty be significant without an execution. Every law loseth the nature of a law, without a penalty; and the penalty loseth its vigour, without the infliction of it. How can those laws attain their end, if the transgressions of them be not punished? Would not the wickedness of men's hearts be encouraged by such a kind of uncomely goodness? and all the threatenings be to no other end than to engender vain and fruitless fears in the minds of men? Is it good for the majesty of God to suffer itself to be trampled on by his vassals; to suffer men, by their rebellion, to level his law with the wickedness of their own hearts, and, by impunity, slight his own glory, and encourage their disobedience? Who would give any man, any prince, any father that should do so, the name of a good governor? If it were a fruit of divine goodness to make laws, is it contrary to goodness to support the honour of them? It is every whit as rational, and as good, to vindicate the honour of his laws by justice, as at first to settle them by authority; as much goodness to vindicate it from contempt, as at first to enact it. As it is as much wisdom to preserve a law as at first to frame it, shall his precepts be thought by him unworthy of a support, that were not thought by him unworthy to be made? The same reason of goodness that led him to enjoin them, will lead him to revenge them. Did evil appear odious to him while he enacted his law; and would not his own goodness, as well as his wisdom, appear odious to him if he did never execute it? Would it not be a denial of his own goodness, to be led by the foolish and corrupt judgment of his creatures, and slight his own law, because his rebels spurn at it? Since he valued it before they could actually condemn it, would he not misjudge his own law and his own wisdom, discount from the true value of them, condemn his own acts, censure his precepts as unrighteous, and therefore evil and injurious, remove the differences between good and evil, look upon vice as virtue, and wickedness as righteousness, if he thought his commands unworthy of a vindication? How can there be any support to the honour of his precepts, without sometimes executing the severity of his threatenings?

And, as to his threatenings of punishment for the breach of his laws, are they not designed to discourage wickedness, as the promises of reward were designed to encourage goodness? Hath he not multiplied the one to scare men from sin, as well as the other to allure men to obedience? Is not the same truth engaged to support the one as well as the other? And how could he be abundant in goodness, if he were not abundant in truth? Both are linked together, Exod. xxxiv. 6: if he neglected his truth, he would be out of love with his own goodness, since it cannot be manifested in performing the promises to the obedient, if it be not also manifested in executing his threatenings upon the rebellious. Had not God annexed threatenings to his laws, he would have had no care of his own goodness. The order

between God and the creature, wherein the declaration of his goodness consisted, might have been easily broken by his creature; man would have freed himself from subjection to God, been unaccountable to him. Had this consisted with that infinite goodness whereby he loves himself, and loves his creatures? As, therefore, the annexing threatenings to his law was a part of his goodness, the execution of them is so far from being a blemish, that it is the honour of his goodness. The rewards of obedience, and the punishment of disobedience, refer to the same end, viz., the due manifestation of the valuation of his own law, the glorifying his own goodness, which enjoined so beneficial a law for man, and the support of that goodness in the creatures, which, by that law, he demands righteously and kindly of them.

Thirdly, Hence it follows, that not to punish evil would be a want of goodness to himself. The goodness of God is an indulgent goodness in a way of wisdom and reason, not a fond goodness in a way of weakness and folly. Would it not be a weakness, always to bear with the impenitent? a want of expressing a goodness to goodness itself? Would not goodness have more reason to complain for a want of justice to rescue it, than men have reason to complain for the exercise of justice in the vindication of it? If God established all things in order, with infinite wisdom and goodness, and God silently behold for ever this order broken, would he not either charge himself with a want of power, or a want of will, to preserve the marks of his own goodness? Would it be a kindness to himself to be careless of the breaches of his own orders? His throne would shake, yea, sink from under him, if justice, whereby he sentenceth, and judgment, whereby he executes his sentence, were not the supports of it: 'Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne,' Ps. lxxxix. 14, **מִכּוֹן**, the stability or foundation of thy throne, so Ps. cxii. 2. Man would forget his relation to God, God would be unknown to be sovereign of the world, were he careless of the breaches of his own order: Ps. ix. 16, 'The Lord is known by his judgments which he executes.' Is it not a part of his goodness to preserve the indispensable order between himself and his creatures? His own sovereignty, which is good, and the subjection of the creature to him as sovereign, which is also good: the one would not be maintained in its due place, nor the other restrained in due limits without punishment. Would it be a goodness in him to see goodness itself trampled upon constantly, without some time or other appearing for the relief of it? Is it not a goodness to secure his own honour, to prevent further evil? Is it not a goodness to discourage men by judgments, sometimes from a contempt and ill use of his bounty, as well as sometimes patiently to bear with them, and wait upon them for a reformation? Must God be bad to himself, to be kind to his enemies? And shall it be accounted an unkindness and a mark of evil in him not to suffer himself to be always outraged and defied? The world is wronged by sin, as well as God is injured by it. How could God be good to himself, if he righted not his own honour; or be a good governor of the world, if he did not sometimes witness against the injuries it receives sometimes from the works of his hands? Would he be good to himself, as a God, to be careless of his own honour? or good, as the rector of the world, and be regardless of the world's confusion?

That God should give an eternal good to that creature that declines its duty, and despiseth his sovereignty, is not agreeable to the goodness of his wisdom, or that of his righteousness; it is a part of God's goodness to love himself: would he love his sovereignty, if he saw it daily slighted, without sometimes discovering how much he values the honour of it? Would he have any esteem for his own goodness if he beheld it trampled upon, without

any will to vindicate it? Doth mercy deserve the name of cruelty because it pleads against a creature that hath so often abused it, and hath refused to have any pity exercised towards it, in a righteous and regular way? Is sovereignty destitute of goodness because it preserves its honour against one that would not have it reign over him? Would he not seem, by such a regardlessness, to renounce his own essence, undervalue and undermine his own goodness, if he had not an implacable aversion to whatsoever is contrary to it? If men turn grace into wantonness, is it not more reasonable he should turn his grace into justice?

All his attributes, which are parts of his goodness, engage him to punish sin; without it, his authority would be vilified, his purity stained, his power derided, his truth disgraced, his justice scorned, his wisdom slighted; he would be thought to have dissembled in his laws, and be judged, according to the rules of reason, to be void of true goodness.

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

\* Zarnovecius, De Satisfact. part i. cap. i. p. 3, 4.

† Suarez, vol. i. De Deo, lib. iii. cap. 7, p. 146.

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

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

2dly, A goodness in the execution of them. They are good, as they shew God disaffected to evil, and conduce to the glory of his holiness, and deter others from presumptuous sins: Lev. x. 3, 'I will be glorified in all that draw near unto me;' in his judgment upon Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, for offering strange fire.

By them God preserves the excellent footsteps of his own goodness in his creation and his law, and curbs the licentiousness of men, and contains them within the bounds of their duty. 'Thy judgments are good,' saith the psalmist, Ps. cxix. 39, *i. e.* thy judicial proceedings upon the wicked; for he desires God there to turn away, by some signal act, the reproach the wicked cast upon him. Can there be anything more miserable than to live in a world full of wickedness, and void of the marks of divine goodness and justice to repress it? Were there not judgments in the world, men would forget God, be insensible of his government of the world, neglect the exercises of natural and Christian duties; religion would be at its last gasp, and expire among them, and men would pretend to break God's precepts by God's authority. Are they not good, then, as they restrain the creature from further evils? affright others from the same crimes which

\* Cressel, Antholog. Decad. ii. p. 162.

they were inclinable to commit? He strikes some, to reform others that are spectators; as Apollonius tamed pigeons by beating dogs before them. Punishments are God's gracious warnings to others, not to venture upon those crimes which they see attended with such judgments. The censures of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were to be wrought into plates for a covering of the altar, to abide there as a memento to others, not to approach to the exercise of the priestly office, without an authoritative call from God, Num. xvi. 38, 40; and those judgments exercised in the former ages of the world, were intended by divine goodness for warnings, even in evangelical times. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, to prevent men from apostasy. That use Christ himself makes of it, in the exhortation against turning back, Luke xvii. 32, 33. And Ps. lviii. 10, 'The righteous shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.' When God shall drench his sword in the blood of the wicked, the righteous shall take occasion from thence to purify themselves, and reform their ways, and look to the paths of their feet. Would not impunity be hurtful to the world, and men receive encouragement to sin, if severities sometimes did not bridle them from the practice of their inclinations? Sometimes the sinner himself is reformed, and sometimes removed from being an example to others. Though thunder be an affrighting noise, and lightning a scaring flash, yet they have a liberal goodness in them, in shattering and consuming those contagious vapours which burden and infect the air, and thereby render it more clear and healthful.

Again, there are few acts of divine justice upon a people, but are, in the very execution of them, attended with demonstrations of his goodness to others. He is a protector of his own, while he is a revenger on his enemies; when he rides upon his horses in anger against some, his chariots are 'chariots of salvation' to others, Hab. iii. 8. Terror makes way for salvation: the overthrow of Pharaoh, and the strength of his nation, completed the deliverance of the Israelites. Had not the Egyptians met with their destruction, the Israelites had unavoidably met with their ruin, against all the promises God had made to them, and to the defamation of his former justice in the former plagues upon their oppressors. The death of Herod was the security of Peter, and the rest of the maliced Christians. The gracious deliverance of good men is often occasioned by some severe stroke upon some eminent persecutor; the destruction of the oppressor is the rescue of the innocent.

Again, where is there a judgment but leaves more criminals behind than it sweeps away, that deserved to be involved in the same fate with the rest? More Egyptians were left behind, to possess and enjoy the goodness of their fruitful land, than they were that were hurried into another world by the overflowing waves. Is not this a mark of goodness as well as severity?

Again, is it not a goodness in him not to pour out judgments according to the greatness of his power; to go gradually to work with those whom he might in a moment blow to destruction with one breath of his mouth?

Again, he sometimes exerciseth judgments upon some, to form a new generation for himself; he destroyed an old world, to raise a new one more righteous—as a man pulls down his own buildings, to erect a sounder and more stately fabric.

To sum up what hath been said in this particular: How could God be a friend to goodness, if he were not an enemy to evil? How could he shew his enmity to evil, without revenging the abuse and contempt of his goodness? God would rather have the repentance of a sinner than his punishment; but the sinner would rather expose himself to the severest frowns of

God, than pursue those methods wherein he hath settled the conveyances of his kindness. 'You will not come to me, that you might have life,' saith Christ. How is eternity of punishment inconsistent with the goodness of God? Nay, how can God be good without it? If wickedness always remain in the nature of man, is it not fit the rod should always remain on the back of man? Is it a want of goodness that keeps an incorrigible offender in chains, in a bridewell? While sin remains, it is fit it should be punished. Would not God else be an enemy to his own goodness, and shew favour to that which doth abuse it, and is contrary to it? He hath threatened eternal flames to sinners, that he might the more strongly excite them to a reformation of their ways, and a practice of his precepts.

In those threatenings he hath manifested his goodness; and can it be bad in him to defend what his goodness hath commanded, and execute what his goodness hath threatened? His truth is also a part of his goodness; for it is nothing but his goodness performing that which it obliged him to do. That is the first thing; severe judgments in the world are no impeachments of his goodness.

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

As for afflictions, they are marks of a greater measure of fatherly goodness than he discovers to those that live in an uninterrupted prosperity, who are not dignified with that glorious title of sons, as those are that he chasteneth, Heb. xii. 6, 7. Can any question the goodness of the father that corrects his child to prevent his vice and ruin, and breed him up to virtue and honour? It would be a cruelty in a father leaving his child without chastisement, to leave him to that misery an ill education would reduce him to. 'God judges us that we might not be condemned with the world,' 1 Cor. xi. 32. Is it not a greater goodness to separate us from the world to happiness by his scourge, than to leave us to the condemnation of the world for our sins? Is it not a greater goodness to make us smart here, than to see us scorched hereafter? As he is our shepherd, it is no part of his enmity or ill will to us, to make us feel sometimes the weight of his shepherd's crook, to reduce us from our straggling. The 'visiting our transgressions with rods, and our iniquities with stripes,' is one of the articles of the covenant of grace, wherein the greatest lustre of his goodness appears, Ps. lxxxix. 32, 33. The advantage and gain of our afflictions is a greater testimony of his goodness to us, than the pain can be of his unkindness; the smart is well recompensed by the accession of clearer graces.

It is rather a high mark of his goodness, than an argument for the want

of it, that he treats us as his children, and will not suffer us to run into that destruction we are more ambitious of, than the happiness he hath prepared for us, and by afflictions he fits us for the partaking of, by imparting his holiness together with the inflicting his rod, Heb. xii. 10. That is the third thing, God is good.

IV. The fourth thing is, the manifestation of this goodness in creation, redemption, and providence.

1. In creation. This is apparent from what hath been said before, that no other attribute could be the motive of his creating, but his goodness. His goodness was the cause that he made anything, and his wisdom was the cause that he made everything in order and harmony; he pronounced everything good, *i. e.* such as became his goodness to bring forth into being; and rested in them more as they were stamps of his goodness, than as they were marks of his power, or beams of his wisdom; and if all creatures were able to answer to this question, what that was which created them, the answer would be, almighty power, but employed by the motion of infinite goodness.\* All the varieties of creatures are so many apparitions of this goodness. Though God be one, yet he cannot appear as a God, but in variety. As the greatness of power is not manifest but in variety of works, and an acute understanding not discovered but in variety of reasonings, so an infinite goodness is not so apparent as in variety of communications.

(1.) The creation proceeds from goodness. It is the goodness of God to extract such multitude of things from the depths of nothing. Because God is good, things have a being. If he had not been good, nothing could have been good, nothing could have imparted that which it possessed not, nothing but goodness could have communicated to things an excellency, which before they wanted. Being is much more excellent than nothing. By this goodness therefore the whole creation was brought out of the dark womb of nothing; this formed their natures, this beautified them with several ornaments and perfections, whereby everything was enabled to act for the good of the common world. God did not create things because he was a living being, but because he was a good being. No creature brought forth anything in the world merely because it is, but because it is good, and by a communicated goodness fitted for such a production. If God had been the creating principle of things, only as he was a living being, or as he was an understanding being, then all things should have partaken of life and understanding, because all things were to bear some characters of the Deity upon them. If by understanding solely God were the Creator of all things, all things should have borne the mark of the Deity upon them, and should have been more or less understanding; but he created things as he was good, and by goodness he renders all things more or less like himself; hence everything is accounted more noble, not in regard of its being, but in regard of the beneficialness of its nature. The being of things was not the end of God in creating, but the goodness of their being. God did not rest from his works, because they were his works, *i. e.* because they had a *being*, but because they had a *good* being, Gen. i. 31; because they were naturally useful to the universe. Nothing was more pleasing to him, than to behold those shadows and copies of his own goodness in his works.

(2.) Creation was the first act of goodness without himself. When he was alone from eternity, he contented himself with himself, abounding in his own blessedness, delighting in that abundance.† He was incomprehen-

\* Cusan, p. 228

† Petav. Theolog. Dogmat. tom. i. p. 402.



sively\* rich in the possession of an unstained felicity. This creation was the first efflux of his goodness without himself, for the work of creation cannot be called a work of mercy;† mercy supposeth a creature miserable, but that which hath no being is subject to no misery; for to be miserable, supposeth a nature in being, and deprived of that good which belongs to the pleasure and felicity of nature; but since there was no being, there could be no misery. The creation, therefore, was not an act of mercy, but an act of sole goodness; and therefore it was the speech of an heathen, that when God first set upon the creation of the world, he transformed himself into love and goodness: 'Εἰς ἔργα μεταβλῆθαι τὸν θεὸν ἐκλόντα δημιουργεῖν.‡ This led forth and animated his power, the first moment it drew the universe out of the womb of nothing. And,

(3.) There is not one creature but hath a character of his goodness. The whole world is a map to represent, and a herald to proclaim, this perfection. It is as difficult not to see something of it in every creature with the eye of our minds, as it is not to see the beams of the shining sun with those of our bodies. 'He is good to all,' Ps. cxlv. 9, he therefore is good in all; not a drop of the creation, but is a drop of his goodness.

These are the colours worn upon the heads of every creature. As in every spark the light of the fire is manifested, so doth every grain of the creation wear the visible badges of this perfection. In all the lights, the Father of lights hath made the riches of goodness apparent; no creature is silent in it, it is legible to all nations in every work of his hands; that as it is said of Christ, Ps. xl. 7, 'In the volume of thy book it is written of me;' in the volume of the book of the Scripture it is written of me, and my goodness in redemption; so it may be said of God in the volume of the book of the creature, it is written of me and my goodness in creation. Every creature is a page in this book, whose 'line is gone through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world,' Ps. xix. 4, though indeed the less goodness in some is obscured by the more resplendent goodness he hath imparted to others. What an admirable piece of goodness is it to communicate life to a fly! How should we stand gazing upon it, till we turn our eye inwards, and view our own frame, which is much more ravishing!

But let us see the goodness of God in the creation of man.

(1.) In the being and nature of man. God hath with a liberal hand conferred upon every creature the best being it was capable of, in that station and order, and conducing to that end and use in the world he intended it for; but when you have run over all the measures of goodness God hath poured forth upon other creatures, you will find a greater fulness of it in the nature of man, whom he hath placed in a more sublime condition, and endowed with choicer prerogatives than other creatures. He was made but 'little lower than the angels,' and much more loftily 'crowned with glory and honour' than other creatures, Ps. viii. 5. Had it not been for divine goodness, this excellent creature had lain wrapped up in the abyss of nothing; or, if he had called it out of nothing, there might have been less of skill and less of goodness displayed in the forming of it, and a lesser kind of being imparted to it, than what he hath conferred.

[1.] How much of goodness is visible in his body? God drew out some part of the dust of the ground, and copied out this perfection, as well as that of his power, on that mean matter, by erecting it into the form of man, quickening that earth by the inspiration of a living soul, Gen. ii. 7. Of this matter he composed an excellent body in regard of the majesty of the

\* Qu. 'incomprehensibly?'—Ed.

† Pherecydes.

‡ Lessius de Perfect. div. p. 100.

face, erectness of his stature, and grace of every part. How neatly hath he wrought this tabernacle of clay, this earthly house, as the apostle calls it! 2 Cor. v. 1; a 'curious wrought' piece of needle-work, a comely artifice, Ps. cxxxix. 15; an embroidered case for an harmonious lute. What variety of members, with a due proportion, without confusion, beautiful to sight, excellent for use, powerful for strength! It hath eyes to conduct its motion, to serve in matter for the food and delight of the understanding; ears to let in the pleasure of sounds, to convey intelligence of the affairs of the world, and the counsels of heaven to a more noble mind; it hath a tongue to express and sound forth what the learned inhabitant in it thinks; and hands to act what the inward counsellor directs; and feet to support the fabric. It is tempered with a kindly heat and an oily moisture for motion, and endued with conveyances for air to qualify the fury of the heat, and nourishment to supply the decays of moisture. It is a cabinet fitted by divine goodness for the enclosing a rich jewel; a palace made of dust, to lodge in it the viceroy of the world; an instrument disposed for the operations of the nobler soul, which he intended to unite to that refined matter. What is there in the situation of every part, in the proportion of every member, in the usefulness of every limb and string to the offices of the body, and service of the soul—what is there in the whole structure, that doth not inform us of the goodness of God?

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

[3.] Besides this, he did not only make man so noble a creature in his frame, but he made him after his own image in holiness. He imparted to him a spark of his own comeliness, in order to a communion with himself in happiness, had man stood his ground in his trial, and used those faculties well, which had been the gift of his bountiful Creator. He made man after his image, after his own image, Gen. i. 26, 27; that as a coin bears the image of the prince, so did the soul of man the image of God; not the image of angels, though the speech be in the plural number, 'Let *us* make man.' It is not to a creature, but to a creator; let *us* that are his makers, make

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

(2.) As to the life of man in this world, God by an immense goodness copied out in him the whole creation, and made him an abridgment of the higher and lower world; a little world in a greater one; the link of the two worlds, of heaven and earth, as the spiritual and corporeal natures are united in him, the earth in the dust of his body, and the heavens in the crystal of his soul. He hath the upper springs of the life of angels in his reason, and the nether springs of the life of animals in his sense. God displayed those virtues in man, which he had discovered in the rest of the lower creation; but besides the communication which he had with earth in his nature, God gave him a participation with heaven in his spirit. A mere bodily being he hath given to the heavens, earth, elements; a vegetative life, or a life of growth, he hath vouchsafed to the plants of the ground. He hath stretched out his liberality more to animals and beasts by giving them sense. All these hath his goodness linked in man, being, life, sense, with a richer dole than any of those creatures have received in a rational intellectual life, whereby he approacheth to the nature of angels. This some of the Jews understood. Gen. ii. 7, God 'breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul,' רֵיחַ חַיִּים breath of *lives* in the Hebrew; not one sort of life, but that variety of lives which he had imparted to other creatures. All the perfections scattered in other creatures do unitedly meet in man; so that Philo might well call him every creature, the model of the whole creation; his soul is heaven, and his body is earth.\* So that the immensity of his goodness to man, is as great as all that goodness you behold in sensitive and intelligible things.

(3.) All this was free goodness. God eternally possessed his own felicity in himself, and had no need of the existence of anything without himself for his satisfaction. Man before his being could have no good qualities, to invite God to make him so excellent a fabric; for being nothing, he was as unable to allure and merit, as to bring himself into being; nay, he created a multitude of men, who he foresaw would behave themselves in as ungrateful a

\* Eugubin. lib. v. cap. ix.

manner as if they had not been his creatures, but had bestowed that rich variety upon themselves without the hand of a superior benefactor.

How great is this goodness, that hath made us models of the whole creation, tied together heaven and earth in our nature, when he might have ranked us among the lower creatures of the earth, made us mere bodies as the stones, or mere animals as the brutes, and denied us those capacious souls, whereby we might both know him and enjoy him ! What could man have been more, unless he had been the original, which was impossible ? He could not be greater than to be an image of the Deity, an epitome of the whole creation. Well may we cry out with the psalmist, Ps. viii. 1, 4, ' O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name,' the name of thy goodness ' in all the earth !' how more particularly in man : ' What is man, that thou art mindful of him ?' What is a little clod of earth and dust, that thou shouldst ennoble him with so rich a nature, and engrave upon him such characters of thy immense being ?

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

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

God crowned the earth with his goodness to gratify man, gave man a right to serve himself of the delightful creatures he had provided, Gen. i. 28-30 ; yea, and after man had forfeited all by sin, and God had washed again the creature in a deluge, he renews the creation, and delivers it again into the hand of man, binding all creatures to pay a respect to him, and

recognise him as their lord, either spontaneously or by force, Gen. ix. 2, 3, and commissions them all to fill the heart of man with 'food and gladness.' And he loves all creatures as they conduce to the good of, and are serviceable to, his prime creature which he set up for his own glory; and therefore when he loves a person he loves what belongs to him. He takes care of Jacob and his cattle; of penitent Nineveh and their cattle, Jonah iv. 11; as when he sends judgments upon men he destroys their goods.

[2.] God richly furnished the world for man. He did not only erect a stately palace for his habitation, but provided all kind of furniture as a mark of his goodness for the entertainment of his creature man. He arched over his habitation with a bespangled heaven, and floored it with a solid earth, and spread a curious wrought tapestry upon the ground where he was to tread, and seemed to sweep all the rubbish of the chaos to the two uninhabitable poles. When at the first creation of the matter the waters covered the earth, and rendered it uninhabitable for man, God drained them into the proper channels he had founded for them, and set a bound that they might not pass over, they they turn not again to cover the earth, Gen. i. 9. They fled and hasted away to their proper stations, Ps. civ. 7-9, as if they were ambitious to deny their own nature, and content themselves with an imprisonment, for the convenient habitation of him who was to be appointed lord of the world. He hath set up standing lights in the heaven to direct our motion, and to regulate the seasons; the sun was created that man might see to 'go forth to his labour,' Ps. civ. 22, 23; both sun and moon, though set in the heaven, were formed to 'give light' on the earth, Gen. i. 15, 17. The air is his aviary, the sea and rivers his fish-ponds, the valleys his granary, the mountains his magazine. The first afford man creatures for nourishment, the other metals for perfection; the animals were created for the support of the life of man, the herbs of the ground were provided for the maintenance of their lives, and gentle dews and moistening showers, and in some places slimy floods, appointed to render the earth fruitful, and capable to offer to man and beast what was fit for their nourishment. He hath peopled every element with a variety of creatures both for necessity and delight; all furnished with useful qualities for the service of man. There is not the most despicable thing in the whole creation, but it is endued with a nature to contribute something for our welfare, either as food to nourish us when we are healthful, or as medicine to cure us when we are distempered, or as a garment to clothe us when we are naked, and arm us against the cold of the seasons, or as a refreshment when we are weary, or as a delight when we are sad; all serve for necessity or ornament, either to spread our table, beautify our dwellings, furnish our closets, or store our wardrobes: Ps. civ. 24, 'The whole earth is full of his riches.' Nothing but by the rich goodness of God is exquisitely accommodated in the numerous breed of things, immediately or mediately, for the use of man; all in the issue conspire together to render the world a delightful residence for man. And therefore all the living creatures were brought by God to attend upon man after his creation, to receive a mark of his dominion over them by the imposition of their names, Gen. ii. 19, 20. He did not only give variety of sense to man, but provided variety of delightful objects in the world for every sense: the beauties of light and colours for our eye, the harmony of sounds for our ear, the fragrantcy of odours for our nostrils, and a delicious sweetness for our palates; some have qualities to pleasure all, everything a quality to pleasure one or other. He doth not only present those things to our view, as rich men do in ostentation their goods; he makes us the enjoyers as well as the spectators, and gives us the use as

well as the sight, and therefore he hath not only given us the sight, but the knowledge of them. He hath set up a sun in the heavens to expose their outward beauty and conveniences to our sight, and the candle of the Lord is in us to expose their inward qualities and conveniences to our knowledge, that we might serve ourselves of and rejoice in all his furniture wherewith he hath garnished the world, and have wherewithal to employ the inquisitiveness of our reason, as well as gratify the pleasure of our sense. And particularly, God provided for man a delightful mansion-house, a place of more special beauty and curiosity, the garden of Eden, a delightful paradise, a model of the beauties and pleasures of another world, wherein he had placed whatsoever might contribute to the felicity of a rational and animal life, the life of a creature composed of mire and dust, of sense and reason, Gen. ii. 9. Besides the other delicacies consigned in that place to the use of man, there was a tree of life provided to maintain his being, and nothing denied in the whole compass of that territory but one tree, that of the knowledge of good and evil, which was no mark of an ill will in his Creator to him, but a reserve of God's absolute sovereignty, and a trial of man's voluntary obedience. What blur was it to the goodness of God, to reserve one tree for his own propriety, when he had given to man in all the rest such numerous marks of his rich bounty and goodness? What Israel after man's fall enjoyed sensibly, Nehemiah calls 'great goodness,' Neh. ix. 25. How inexpressible, then, was that goodness manifested to innocent man, when so small a part of it indulged to the Israelites, after the curse upon the ground, is called, as truly it merits, such great goodness! How can we pass through any part of this great city, and cast our eyes upon the well furnished shops, stored with all kinds of commodities, without reflections upon this goodness of God, starting up before our eyes in such varieties, and plainly telling us, that he hath accommodated all things for our use, suited things both to supply our need, content a reasonable curiosity, and delight us in our aims at, and passage to, our supreme end!

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

*First*, In the fitting the law to the nature of man. It was rather below than above his strength; he had an integrity in his nature to answer the righteousness of the precept: Eccles. vii. 29, 'God created man upright;' his nature was suited to the law, and the law to his nature; it was not above his understanding to know it, nor his will to embrace it, nor his passions to be regulated by it. The law and his nature were like two exact straight lines, touching one another in every part when joined together. God exacted no more by his law than what was written by nature in his heart. He had a knowledge, by creation, to observe the law of his creation, and he fell not for want of a righteousness in his nature. He was enabled for more than was commanded him, but wilfully indisposed to less than he was able to perform. The precepts were easy; not only becoming the authority of a sovereign to exact, but the goodness of a father to demand, and the ingenuity of a creature and a son to pay: 1 John v. 3, 'His commands are not grievous;' the observance of them had filled the spirit of man with an extraordinary contentment. It had been no less a pleasure, and a delightful satisfaction, to have kept the law in a created state, than it

is to keep it in some measure in a renewed state. The renewed nature finds a suitableness in the law to kindle a delight, Ps. i. 2. It could not then have anywise shook the nature of an upright creature, nor have been a burden too heavy for his shoulders to bear. Though he had not a grace given him above nature, yet he had not a law given him that surmounted his nature. It did not exceed his created strength, and was suited to the dignity and nobility of a rational nature. It was a just law, Rom. vii. 12, and therefore not above the nature of the subject that was bound to obey it; and had it been impossible to be observed, it had been unrighteous to be enacted. It had not been a matter of divine praise; and that seven times a day, as it is Ps. cxix. 164, 'Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments.' The law was so righteous that Adam had every whit as much reason to bless God in his innocence, for the righteousness of it, as David had, with the relics of enmity against it. His goodness shines so much in his law as merits our praise of him, as he is a sovereign lawgiver, as well as a gracious benefactor in the imparting to us a being.

*Secondly*, In fitting it for the happiness of man, for the satisfaction of his soul, which finds a 'reward in' the very act of 'keeping it.' 'Great peace' in the 'loving it,' Ps. cxix. 165, for the preservation of human society, wherein consists the eternal felicity of man. It had been inconsistent with divine goodness to enjoin man anything that should be oppressive and uncomfortable. Bitterness cannot come from that which is altogether sweet; goodness would not have obliged the creature to anything but what is not only free from damaging him, but wholly conducing to his welfare, and perfective of his nature. Infinite wisdom could not order anything but what was agreeable to infinite goodness. As his laws are the most rational, as being the contrivance of infinite wisdom, so they are the best, as being the contrivance of infinite goodness. His laws are not only the acts of his sovereign authority, but the effluxes of his loving-kindness, and the conductors of man to an enjoyment of a greater bounty. He minds as well the promotion of his creatures' felicity, as the asserting his own authority; as good princes makes laws for their subjects' benefit, as well as their own honour. What was said of a more difficult and burdensome law, long after man's fall, may much more be said of the easy law of nature in the state of man's innocence, that it was for our good, Deut. x. 12, 13. He never pleaded with the Israelites for the observation of his commands upon the account of his authority, so much as upon the score of their benefit by them, Deut. iv. 40.

And when his precepts were broken, he seems sometimes to be more grieved for men's impairing their own felicity by it, than for their violating his authority: Isa. xlviii. 18, 'O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river.' Goodness cannot prescribe a thing prejudicial; whatsoever it enjoins is beneficial to the spiritual and eternal happiness of the rational creature; this was both the design of the law given and the end of the law. Christ in his answer to the young man's question refers him to the moral law, which was the law of nature in Adam, as that whereby eternal life was to be gained, which evidenceth that, when the law was first given as the covenant of works, it was for the happiness of man; and the end of giving it was, that man might have eternal life by it; there would else be no strength or truth in that answer of Christ to that ruler. And therefore Stephen calls the law given by Moses, which was the same with the law of nature in Adam, Acts vii. 38, 'the living oracles.' He enjoined men's services to them, not simply for his own glory, but his glory in men's welfare. As if there were any being better than him-

self, his goodness and righteousness would guide him to love that better than himself, because it is good and righteous to love that best which is most amiable; so if there were any that could do us more good, and shower down more happiness upon us than himself, he would be content we should obey that as sovereign, and steer our course according to his laws: 1 Kings xviii. 21, 'If God be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.' If the observance of the precepts of Baal be more beneficial to you, if you can advance your nature by his service, and gain a more mighty crown of happiness than by mine, follow him with all my heart. I never intended to enjoin you anything to impair, but increase your happiness. The chief design of God, in his law, is the happiness of the subject; and obedience is intended by him, as a means for the attaining of happiness, as well as preserving his own sovereignty. This is the reason why he wished that Israel had walked in his ways: 'That their time might have endured for ever,' Ps. lxxxi. 13-16. And by the same reason this was his intendment in his law given to man, and his covenant made with man at the creation, that he might be fed with the finest part of his bounty, and be satisfied with honey out of the eternal Rock of ages, to paraphrase his expression there. The goodness of God appears, further,

*Thirdly*, In engaging man to obedience by promises and threatenings. A threatening is only mentioned, Gen. ii. 17, but a promise is implied. If eternal death were fixed for transgression, eternal life was thereby designed for obedience. And that it was so, the answer of Christ to the ruler evidenceth that the first intendment of the precept was the eternal life of the subject, ordered to obey it.

First, God might have acted, in settling his law, only as a sovereign. Though he might have dealt with man upon the score of his absolute dominion over him as his creature, and signified his pleasure upon the right of his sovereignty, threatening only a penalty if man transgressed, without the promising a bountiful acknowledgment of his obedience by a reward as a benefactor, yet he would treat with man in gentle methods, and rule him in a tract of sweetness as well as sovereignty; he would preserve the rights of his dominion in the authority of his commands, and honour the condescensions of his goodness in the allurements of a promise. He that might have solely demanded a compliance with his will, would kindly article with him, to oblige him to observe him, out of love to himself as well as duty to his Creator; that he might have both the interest of avoiding the threatened evil to affright him, and the interest of attaining the promised good to allure him to obedience. How doth he value the title of benefactor above that of a Lord, when he so kindly solicits, as well as commands, and engageth to reward that obedience which he might have absolutely claimed as his due, by enforcing fears of the severest penalty! His sovereignty seems to stoop below itself for the elevation of his goodness; and he is pleased to have his kindness more taken notice of than his authority. Nothing imported more condescension than his bringing forth his law in the nature of a covenant, whereby he seems to humble himself, and veil his superiority, to treat with man as his equal, that the very manner of his treatment might oblige him, in the richest promises he made to draw him, and the startling threatenings he pronounced to link him to his obedience. And therefore it is observable, that when, after the transgression of Adam, God comes to deal with him, he doth not do it in that thundering rigour which might have been expected from an enraged sovereign, but in a gentle examination: Gen. iii. 11, 'Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?' To the woman he said no more than



'What is this that thou hast done?' ver. 13. And in the Scripture we find, when he cites the Israelites before him for their sin, he expostulates with them, not so much upon the absolute right he had to challenge their obedience, as upon the equity and reasonableness of his law, which they had transgressed, that by the same argument of sweetness wherewith he would attract them to their duty, he might shame them after their offence. Isa. i. 2, Ezek. xviii. 25.

Secondly, By the threatenings he manifests his goodness, as well as by his promises. He promises, that he might be a rewarder; and threatens, that he might not be a punisher: the one is to elevate our hope, and the other to excite our fear—the two passions whereby the nature of man is managed in the world. He imprints upon man sentiments of a misery by sin in his thundering commination, that he might engage him the more to embrace and be guided by the motives of sweetness in his gracious promises. The design of them was to preserve man in his due bounds, that God might not have occasion to blow upon him the flames of his justice; to suppress those irregular passions, which the nature of man (though created without any disorder) was capable of entertaining upon the appearance of suitable objects; and to keep the waves from swelling upon any turning wind, that so man, being modest in the use of the goodness God had allowed him, might still be capable of fresh streams of divine bounty, without ever falling under his righteous wrath for any transgression. What a prospect of goodness is in this proceeding, to disclose man's happiness to be as durable as his innocence; and set before a rational creature the extremest misery due to his crime, to affright him from neglecting his Creator, and making unworthy returns to his goodness! What could be done more by goodness to suit that passion of fear which was implanted in the nature of man, than to assure him he should not degenerate from the righteousness of his nature, and violate the authority of his Creator, without falling from his own happiness, and sinking into the most deplorable calamity?

Thirdly, The reward he promised, manifests yet further his goodness to man. It was his goodness to intend a reward to man. No necessity could oblige God to reward man, had he continued obedient in his created state. For in all rewards which are truly merited, besides some kind of equality to be considered between the person doing service and the person rewarding, and also between the act performed and the reward bestowed, there must also be considered the condition of the person doing the service, that he is not obliged to do it as a duty, but is at his own choice whether to offer it or no. But man being wholly dependent on God in his being and preservation, having nothing of his own but what he had received from the hands of divine bounty, 1 Cor. iv. 7, his service was due by the strongest obligation to God. But there was no natural engagement on God to return a reward to him; for man could return nothing of his own, but that only which he had received from his Creator. It must be pure goodness that gives a gracious reward for a due debt, to receive his own from man and return more than he had received. A divine reward doth far surmount the value of a rational service.

It was therefore a mighty goodness to stipulate with man, that upon his obedience he should enjoy an immortality in that nature. The article on man's part was obedience, which was necessarily just, and founded in the nature of man.\* He had been unjust, ungrateful, and violated all laws of righteousness, had he committed any act unworthy of one that had been so great a subject of divine liberality; but the article on God's part of giving a per-

\* Amyrald, Dissert., p. 637, 638.

petual blessedness to innocent man, was not founded upon rules of strict justice and righteousness, for that would have argued God to be a debtor to man ; but that God cannot be to the work of his hands, that had received the materials of his being and acting from him, as the vessel doth from the potter. But this was founded only on the goodness of the divine nature, whereby he cannot but be kind to an innocent and holy creature. The nature of God inclined him to it by the rules of goodness, but the service of man could not claim it by the rules of justice without a stipulation ; so that the covenant whereby God obliged himself to continue the happiness of man upon the continuance of his obedience, in the original of it, springs from pure goodness, though the performance of it upon fulfilling the condition required in the creature, was founded upon the rules of righteousness and truth, after divine goodness had brought it forth.

God did create man for a reward and happiness. Now God's implanting in the nature of man a desire after happiness, and some higher happiness than he had in creation invested him in, doth evidence that God did not create man only for his own service, but for his attaining a greater happiness. All rational creatures are possessed with a principle of seeking after good, the highest good, and God did not plant in man this principle in vain. It had not been goodness to put this principle in man, if he had designed never to bestow a happiness on man for his obedience. This had been repugnant to the goodness and wisdom of God ; and the Scripture doth very emphatically express the felicity of man to be the design of God in first forming him and moulding a creature, as well as working him a new creature : 2 Cor. v. 1, 5, ' He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God.' He framed this earthly tabernacle for a residence in an eternal habitation, and a better habitation than an earthly paradise. What we expect in the resurrection, that very same thing God did in creation intend us<sup>for</sup> ; but since the corruption of our natures, we must undergo a dissolution of our bodies, and may have just reason of a despondency, since sin hath seemed to change the course of God's bounty, and brought us under a curse. He hath given us the earnest of his Spirit, as an assurance that he will perform that very self-same thing, the conferring that happiness upon renewed creatures, for which he first formed man in creation, when he compacted his earthly tabernacle of the dust of the ground, and reared it up before him.

Fourthly, It was a mighty goodness that God should give man an eternal reward. That an eternity of reward was promised, is implied in the death that was threatened upon transgression. Whatsoever you conceive the threatened death to be, either for nature or duration, upon transgression ; of the same nature and duration you must suppose the life to be, which is implied upon his constancy in his integrity. As sin would render him an eternal object of God's hatred, so his obedience would render him an eternally amiable object to his Creator, as the standing angels are preserved and confirmed in an entire felicity and glory. Though the threatening be only expressed by God, Gen. ii. 17, yet the other is implied, and might easily be concluded from it by Adam ; and one reason why God only expressed the threatening, and not the promise, was, because man might collect some hopes and expectations of a perpetual happiness from that image of God which he beheld in himself, and for the large provision he had made for him in the world, and the commission given him to increase and multiply, and to rule as a lord over his other works ; whereas he could not so easily have imagined himself capable of being exposed to such an extraordinary calamity as an eternal death, without some signification of it from God. It is easily concludable, that eternal life was supposed to be promised, to be conferred upon

him if he stood, as well as eternal death to be inflicted on him if he rebelled.\* Now this eternal life was not due to his nature, but it was a pure beam and gift of divine goodness; for there was no proportion between man's service in his innocent estate, and a reward so great both for nature and duration. It was a higher reward than can be imagined either due to the nature of man, or upon any natural right claimable by his obedience. All that could be expected by him was but a natural happiness, not a supernatural. As there was no necessity upon the account of natural righteousness, so there was no necessity upon the account of the goodness of God to elevate the nature of man to a supernatural happiness, merely because he created him; for though it be necessary for God, when he would create, in regard of his wisdom, to create for some end, yet it was not necessary that end should be a supernatural end and happiness, since a natural blessedness had been sufficient for man. And though God, in creating angels and men intellectual and rational creatures, did make them necessary for himself and his own glory, yet it was not necessary for him to order either angels or men to such a felicity as consists in a clear vision, and so high a fruition of himself; for all other things are made by him for himself, and yet not for the vision of himself. God might have created man only for a natural happiness, according to the perfection of his natural faculties, and dealt bountifully with him, if he had never intended him a supernatural blessedness and an eternal recompence; but what a largeness of goodness is here, to design man in his creation for so rich a blessedness as an eternal life, with the fruition of himself! He hath not only given to man all things which are necessary, but designed for man that which the poor creature could not imagine. He garnished the earth for him, and garnished him for an eternal felicity, had he not, by slighting the goodness of God, stripped himself of the present, and forfeited his future blessedness.

2. The second thing is the manifestation of this goodness in redemption. The whole gospel is nothing but one entire mirror of divine goodness. The whole of redemption is wrapt up in that one expression of the angel's song, Luke ii. 14, 'Good will towards man.' The angels sang but one song before, which is upon record, but the matter of it seems to be the wisdom of God chiefly in creation: Job xxxviii. 7, compare ver. 5, 6, 8, 9. The angels are there meant by the morning stars. The visible stars of heaven were not distinctly formed when the foundations of the earth were laid; and the title of the sons of God verifies it, since none but creatures of understanding are dignified in Scripture with that title. There they celebrate his wisdom in creation; here his goodness in redemption, which is the entire matter of the song.

(1.) Goodness was the spring of redemption. All and every part of it owes only to this perfection the appearance of it in the world. This only excited wisdom to bring forth from so great an evil as the apostasy of man, so great a good as the recovery of him. When man fell from his created goodness, God would evidence that he could not fall from his infinite goodness, that the greatest evil could not surmount the ability of his wisdom to contrive, nor the riches of his bounty to present us a remedy for it. Divine goodness would not stand by a spectator, without being reliever of that misery man had plunged himself into; but by astonishing methods it would recover him to happiness, who had wrested himself out of his hands, to fling himself into the most deplorable calamity; and it was the greater, since it surmounted those natural inclinations, and those strong provocations which he had to shower down the power of his wrath. What could be the

\* Suarez, *De Gratia*, vol. i. p. 126, 127.

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

(2.) It was a pure goodness. He was under no obligation to pity our misery and repair our ruins; he might have stood to the terms of the first covenant, and exacted our eternal death, since we had committed an infinite transgression. He was under no tie to put off the robes of a judge for the bowels of a father, and erect a mercy-seat above his tribunal of justice.\* The reparation of man hath no necessary connection with his creation. It follows not that because goodness had extracted us from nothing by a mighty power, that it must lift us out of wilful misery by a mighty grace. Certainly that God, who had no need of creating us, had far less need of redeeming us; for since he created one world, he could have as easily destroyed it and reared another. It had not been unbecoming the divine goodness or wisdom to have let man perpetually wallow in that sink wherein he had plunged himself, since he was criminal by his own will, and therefore miserable by his own fault; nothing could necessitate this reparation. If divine goodness could not be obliged by the angelical dignity to repair that nature, he is further from any obligation by the meanness of man to repair human nature. There was less necessity to restore man than to restore the fallen angels. What could man do to oblige God to a reparation of him? Since he could not render him a recompence for his goodness manifested in his creation, he must be much more impotent to render him a debtor for the redemption of him from misery. Could it be a salary for anything we had done? Alas! we are so far from meriting it, that by our daily demerits we seem ambitious to put a stop to any further effusions of it. We could not have complained of him if he had left us in the misery we had courted, since he was bound by no law to bestow upon us the recovery we wanted. When the apostle speaks of the gospel of redemption, he giveth it the title of the 'gospel of the blessed God,' 1 Tim. i. 11. It was the gospel of God abounding in his own blessedness, which received no addition by man's redemption. If he had been blessed by it, it had been a goodness to himself as well as to the creature. It was not an indigent goodness, needing the receiving anything from us; but it was a pure goodness, streaming out of itself, without bringing anything into itself for the perfection of it. There was no good-

\* Rada, Controvers. part iii. p. 363.

ness in us to be the motive of his love, but his goodness was the fountain of our benefit.

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

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

(5.) Hence we may consider the height of this goodness in redemption to exceed that in creation. He gave man a being in creation, but did not draw him from inexpressible misery by that act. His liberality in the gospel doth infinitely surpass what we admire in the works of nature. His goodness in the latter is more astonishing to our belief, than his goodness in creation is visible to our eye. There is more of his bounty expressed in that one verse, 'So God loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,' John iii. 16, than there is in the whole volume of the world. It is an incomprehensible *so*; a *so* that all the angels in heaven cannot analyse, and few comment upon or understand the dimensions of this *so*. In creation, he formed an innocent creature of the dust of the ground; in redemption, he restores a rebellious creature by the blood of his Son; it is greater than that goodness manifested in creation.

[1.] In regard of the difficulty of effecting it. In creation, mere nothing was vanquished to bring us into being; in redemption, sullen enmity was

conquered for the enjoyment of our restoration. In creation, he subdued a nullity to make us creatures; in redemption, his goodness overcomes his omnipotent justice to restore us to felicity. A word from the mouth of goodness inspired the dust of men's bodies with a living soul, but the blood of his Son must be shed, and the laws of natural affection seem to be overturned, to lay the foundation of our renewed happiness. In the first, heaven did but speak and the earth was formed; in the second, heaven itself must sink to earth, and be clothed with dusty earth, to reduce man's dust to its original state.

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

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

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

*First*, A greater goodness than was expressed towards the standing angels. The Son of God did no more expose his life for the confirmation of those that stood, than for the restoration of those that fell. The death of Christ

was not for the holy angels, but for sinful man ; they needed the grace of God to confirm them, but not the death of Christ to restore or preserve them. They had a beloved holiness to be established by the powerful grace of God, but not any abominable sin to be expiated and blotted out by the blood of God. They had no debt to pay but that of obedience, but we had both a debt of obedience to the precepts, and a debt of suffering to the penalty after the fall. Whether the holy angels were confirmed by Christ or no, is a question. Some think they were, from Col. i. 20, where ' things in heaven ' are said to be ' reconciled ' ; but some think that place signifies no more than the reconciliation of things in heaven, if meant of the angels, to things on earth, with whom they were at enmity in the cause of their sovereign ; or by the reconciliation of things in heaven to God, is meant the glorified saints who were once in a state of sin, and whom the death of Christ upon the cross reached, though dead long before. But if angels were confirmed by Christ, it was by him not as a slain sacrifice, but as the sovereign head of the whole creation, appointed by God to gather all things into one, which some think to be the intendment of Eph. i. 10, where all things, as well those in heaven as those on earth, are said to be ' gathered together in one in Christ.' Where is a syllable in Scripture of his being crucified for angels, but only for sinners ? not for the confirmation of the one, but the reconciliation of the other, so that the goodness whereby God continued those blessed spirits in heaven through the effusions of his grace is a small thing to the restoring us to our forfeited happiness through the streams of divine blood. The preserving a man in life, is a little thing and a smaller benefit than the raising a man from death. The rescuing a man from an ignominious punishment, lays a greater obligation than barely to prevent him from committing a capital crime. The preserving a man standing upon the top of a steep hill is more easy than to bring a crippled and phthysical man from the bottom to the top. The continuance God gave to the angels, is not so signal a mark of goodness as the deliverance he gave to us, since they were not sunk into sin, nor by any crime fallen into misery.

*Secondly*, His goodness in redemption is greater than any goodness expressed to the fallen angels. It is the wonder of his goodness to us, that he was mindful of fallen man and careless of fallen angels, that he should visit man, wallowing in death and blood, with the day-spring from on high, and never turn the Egyptians' darkness of devils into a cheerful day. When they sinned, divine thunder dashed them into hell ; when man sinned, divine blood wafts the fallen creature from his misery. The angels wallow in their own blood for ever, while Christ is made partaker of our blood, and wallows in his blood, that we might not for ever corrupt in ours. They tumbled down from heaven, and divine goodness could not vouchsafe to catch them ; man tumbles down, and divine goodness holds out a hand drenched in the blood of him that was from the foundations of the world, to lift us up, Heb. ii. 16. He spared not those dignified spirits when they revolted, and spared not punishing his Son for dusty man when he offended, when he might as well for ever have let man lie in the chains wherein he had entangled himself, as them. We were as fit objects of justice as they, and they as fit objects of goodness as we ; they were not more wretched by their fall than we, and the poverty of our nature rendered us more unable to recover ourselves than the dignity of theirs did them ; they were his Reuben, his firstborn, they were his might and the beginning of his strength, yet those elder sons he neglected, to prefer the younger ; they were the prime and golden pieces of creation, not laden with gross matter, yet they lie under the ruins of their fall, while man, lead in comparison of them, is refined for another world.

They seemed to be fitter objects of divine goodness, in regard of the eminency of their nature above the human. One angel excelled in endowments of mind and spirit, vastness of understanding, greatness of power, all the sons of men ; they were more capable to praise him, more capable to serve him, and because of the acuteness of their comprehension, more able to have a due estimate of such a redemption, had it been afforded them ; yet that goodness which had created them so comely, would not lay itself out in restoring the beauty they had defaced. The promise was of bruising the serpent's head for us, not of lifting up the serpent's head with us ; their nature was not assumed, nor any command given them to believe or repent. Not one devil spared, not one apostate spirit recovered, not one of those eminent creatures restored ; every one of them hath only a prospect of misery, without any glimpse of recovery. They were ruined under one sin, and we repaired under many. All his redeeming goodness was laid out upon man : Ps. cxliv. 3, ' What is man, that thou takest knowledge of him ! and the son of man, that thou makest account of him ! ' making account of him above angels. As they fell without any tempting them, so God would leave them to rise without any assisting them. I know the schools trouble themselves to find out the reasons of this peculiarity of grace to man, and not to them, because the whole human nature fell, but only a part of the angelical ; the one sinned by a seduction, and the other by a sullenness, without any tempter. Every angel sinned by his own proper will, whereas Adam's posterity sinned by the will of the first man, the common root of all. God would deprive the devil of any glory in the satisfaction of his envious desire to hinder man from attainment and possession of that happiness which himself had lost. The weakness of man below the angelical nature might excite the divine mercy ; and since all things of the lower world were created for man, God would not lose the honour of his works, by losing the immediate end for which he framed them. And finally, because in the restoration of angels there would have been only a restoration of one nature, that was not comprehensive of the nature of inferior things. But after all such conjectures man must sit down, and acknowledge divine goodness to be the only spring, without any other motive. Since infinite wisdom could have contrived a way for redemption for fallen angels, as well as for fallen man, and restored both the one and the other, why might not Christ have assumed their nature as well as ours into the unity of the divine person, and suffered the wrath of God in their nature for them, as well as in his human soul for us ? It is as conceivable that two natures might have been assumed by the Son of God as well as three souls be in man distinct, as some think there are.

*Thirdly*, To enhance this goodness yet higher. It was a greater goodness to us than was for a time manifested to Christ himself. To demonstrate his goodness to man in preventing his eternal ruin, he would for a while withhold his goodness from his Son, by exposing his life as the price of our ransom ; not only subjecting him to the derisions of enemies, desertions of friends, and malice of devils, but to the inexpressible bitterness of his own wrath in his soul, as made an offering for sin.

The particle *so*, John iii. 16, seems to intimate this supremacy of goodness : ' He *so* loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.' He *so* loved the world, that he seemed for a time not to love his Son in comparison of it, or equal with it. The person to whom a gift is given is in that regard accounted more valuable than the gift or present made to him. Thus God valued our redemption above the worldly happiness of the Redeemer, and sentenceth him to an humiliation on earth, in order to our exaltation in heaven. He was desirous to hear him groaning, and see him bleeding, that



we might not groan under his frowns, and bleed under his wrath. He spared not him, that he might spare us; refused not to strike him, that he might be well pleased with us; drenched his sword in the blood of his Son, that it might not for ever be wet with ours, but that his goodness might for ever triumph in our salvation. He was willing to have his Son made man and die, rather than man should perish, who had delighted to ruin himself. He seemed to degrade him for a time from what he was.\* But since he could not be united to any but to an intellectual creature, he could not be united to any viler and more sordid creature than the earthly nature of man. And when this Son in our nature prayed that the cup might pass from him, goodness would not suffer it, to shew how it valued the manifestation of itself in the salvation of man, above the preservation of the life of so dear a person.

In particular, wherein this goodness appears.

1. The first resolution to redeem, and the means appointed for redemption, could have no other inducement but divine goodness. We cannot too highly value the merit of Christ; but we must not so much extend the merit of Christ as to draw a value to eclipse the goodness of God. Though we owe our redemption and the fruits of it to the death of Christ, yet we owe not the first resolutions of redemption, and the assumption of our nature, the means of redemption, to the merit of Christ. Divine goodness only, without the association of any merit, not only of man, but of the Redeemer himself, begat the first purpose of our recovery. He was singled out and predestinated to be our Redeemer, before he took our nature to merit our redemption. 'God sent his Son' is a frequent expression in the gospel of St John, John iii. 34, v. 24, xvii. 3. To what end did God send Christ but to redeem? The purpose of redemption, therefore, preceded the pitching upon Christ as the means and procuring cause of it, *i. e.* of our actual redemption, but not of the redeeming purpose; the end is always in intention before the means.† 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.' The love of God to the world was first in intention and the order of nature, before the will of giving his Son to the world. His intention of saving was before the mission of a Saviour, so that this affection rose not from the merit of Christ, but the merit of Christ was directed by this affection. It was the effect of it, not the cause. Nor was the union of our nature with his merited by him; all his meritorious acts were performed in our nature. The nature therefore wherein he performed it was not merited; that grace which was not, could not merit what it was. He could not merit that humanity which must be assumed before he could merit anything for us, because all merit for us must be offered in the nature which had offended. It is true Christ gave himself, but by the order of divine goodness; he that begat him pitched upon him, and called him to this great work, Heb. v. 5. He is therefore called 'the Lamb of God,' as being set apart by God to be a propitiating and appeasing sacrifice. He is 'the wisdom of God,' since from the Father he reveals the counsel and order of redemption. In this regard he calls God his God, in the prophet, Isa. xlix. 4, and in the evangelist, John xx. 17; though he was big with affection for the accomplishment, yet he came 'not to do his own will,' but the will of divine goodness. His own will it was too, but not principally, as being the first wheel in motion, but subordinate to the eternal will of divine bounty. It was by the will of God that he came, and by his will he drank the dreggy cup of bitterness. Divine justice 'laid upon him the iniquity of us all,' but divine goodness intended it for our rescue; divine goodness singled him out and

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

† Lessius.

set him apart, divine goodness [invited him to it, divine goodness commanded him to effect it, and put a law into his heart to bias him in the performing of it; divine goodness sent him, and divine goodness moved justice to bruise him; and after his sacrifice, divine goodness accepted him and caressed him for it. So earnest was it for our redemption, as to give out special and irreversible orders. Death was commanded to be endured by him for us, and life commanded to be imparted by him to us, John x. 16, 18. If God had not been the mover, but had received the proposal from another, he might have heard it, but was not bound to grant it. His sovereign authority was not under any obligation to receive another's sponson for the miserable criminal. As Christ is the head of man, so God is the head of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 3. He did nothing but by his direction, as he was not a mediator but by the constitution of divine goodness. As 'a liberal man deviseth liberal things,' Isa. xxxii. 8, so did a bountiful God devise a bountiful act, wherein his kindness and love as a Saviour appeared. He was possessed with the resolutions to manifest his goodness in Christ 'in the beginning of his way,' before he descended to the act of creation, Prov. viii. 22, 23. This intention of goodness preceded his making that creature man, who he foresaw would fall, and by his fall disjoint and entangle the whole frame of the world without such a provision.

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

(1.) It is a greater gift than worlds, or all things purchased by him. What was this gift but 'the image of his person, and the brightness of his glory?' Heb. i. 3. What was this gift, but one as rich as eternal blessed-

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

(2.) It was a greater gift, because it was his own Son, not an angel. It had been a mighty goodness to have given one of the lofty seraphims; a greater goodness to have given the whole corporation of those glorious spirits for us, those children of the Most High; but he gave that Son, whom he commands 'all the angels to worship,' Heb. i. 6, and all men to adore, and pay the lowest homage to, Ps. ii. 12; that Son that is to be honoured by us, as we honour the Father, John v. 23; that Son which was his delight, Prov. viii. 30, his *delights*, in the Hebrew, wherein all the delights of the Father were gathered in one, as well as of the whole creation, and not simply a Son, but an 'only begotten Son,' John iii. 16, upon which Christ lays the stress with an emphasis. He had but one Son in heaven or earth, one Son from an unviewable eternity, and that one Son he gave for a degenerate world; this Son he consecrated for evermore a priest, Heb. vii. 28. 'The word of the oath makes the Son;' the peculiarity of his Sonship heightens the goodness of the donor. It was no meaner a person that he gave to empty himself of his glory, to fulfil an obedience for us, that we might be rendered happy partakers of the divine nature. Those that know the natural affection of a father to a son must judge the affection of God the Father to the Son infinitely greater than the affection of an earthly father to the son of his bowels. It must be an unparalleled goodness to give up a son that he loved with so ardent an affection for the redemption of rebels; abandon a glorious son to a dishonourable death, for the security of those that had violated the laws of righteousness, and endeavoured to pull the sovereign crown from his head. Besides, being an only Son, all those affections centred in him, which in parents would have been divided among a multitude of children; so then, as it was a testimony of the highest faith and obedience in Abraham to offer up his only begotten son to God, Heb. xi. 17, so it was the triumph of divine goodness to give so great, so dear a person for so little a thing as man, and for such a piece of nothing and vanity as a sinful world.

(3.) And this Son given to rescue us by his death. It was a gift to us; for our sakes he descended from his throne, and dwelt on earth; for our

sakes he was made flesh, and infirm flesh ; for our sakes he was made a curse, and scorched in the furnace of his Father's wrath ; for our sakes he went naked, armed only with his own strength, into the lists of that combat with the devils that led us captive. Had he given him to be a leader for the conquest of some earthly enemies, it had been a great goodness to display his banners, and bring us under his conduct ; but he sent him to lay down his life in the bitterest and most inglorious manner, and exposed him to a cursed death for our redemption from that dreadful curse which would have broken us to pieces, and irreparably have crushed us. He gave him to us, to suffer for us as a man, and redeem us as a God ; to be a sacrifice to expiate our sin by translating the punishment upon himself, which was merited by us. Thus was he made low to exalt us, and debased to advance us, made poor to enrich us, 2 Cor. viii. 9, and eclipsed to brighten our sullied natures, and wounded that he might be a physician for our languishments ; he was ordered to taste the bitter cup of death, that we might drink of the rivers of immortal life and pleasures ; to submit to the frailties of the human nature, that we might possess the glories of the divine ; he was ordered to be a sufferer, that we might be no longer captives, and to pass through the fire of divine wrath, that he might purge our nature from the dross it had contracted. Thus was the righteous given for sin, the innocent for criminals, the glory of heaven for the dregs of earth, and the immense riches of a Deity expended to re-stock man.

(4.) And a Son that was exalted for what he had done for us by the order of divine goodness. The exaltation of Christ was no less a signal mark of his miraculous goodness to us than of his affection to him ; since he was obedient by divine goodness to die for us, his advancement was for his obedience to those orders. The name given to him above every name, Philip. ii. 8, 9, was a repeated triumph of this perfection. Since his passion was not for himself,—he was wholly innocent,—but for us who were criminal ; his advancement was not only for himself as redeemer, but for us as redeemed. Divine goodness centred in him, both in his cross and in his crown ; for it was for the ‘ purging our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high,’ Heb. i. 3. And the whole blessed society of principalities and powers in heaven admire this goodness of God, and ascribe to him honour, glory, and power for advancing the Lamb slain, Rev. v. 11–13. Divine goodness did not only give him to us, but gave him power, riches, strength, and honour for manifesting this goodness to us, and opening the passages for its fuller conveyances to the sons of men. Had not God had thoughts of a perpetual goodness, he would not have settled him so near him to manage our cause, and testified so much affection to him on our behalf. This goodness gave him to be debased for us, and ordered him to be enthroned for us. As it gave him to us bleeding, so it would give him to us triumphing ; that as we have a share by grace in the merits of his humiliation, we might partake also of the glories of his coronation ; that from first to last we may behold nothing but the triumphs of divine goodness to fallen man.

(5.) In bestowing this gift on us, divine goodness gives whole God to us. Whatsoever is great and excellent in the Godhead, the Father gives us by giving us his Son. The Creator gives himself to us in his Son Christ. In giving creatures to us, he gives the riches of earth ; in giving himself to us, he gives the riches of heaven, which surmount all understanding ; it is in this gift he becomes our God, and passeth over the title of all that he is, for our use and benefit, that every attribute in the divine nature may be claimed by us ; not to be imparted to us, whereby we may be deified, but employed for our welfare, whereby we may be blessed. He gave himself in creation to us,

in the image of his holiness, but in redemption he gave himself in the image of his person ; he would not only communicate the goodness without him, but bestow upon us the infinite 'goodness of his own nature, that that which was his own end and happiness might be our end and happiness, viz., himself.

By giving his Son, he hath given himself, and in both gifts he hath given all things to us. The Creator of all things is eminently all things : 'He hath given all things into the hands' of his Son, John iii. 35, and by consequence given all things into the hands of his redeemed creatures, by giving them him to whom he gave all things ; whatsoever we were invested in by creation, whatsoever we were deprived of by corruption, and more, he hath deposited in safe hands for our enjoyment ; and what can divine goodness do more for us ? What further can it give unto us than what it hath given, and in that gift designed for us ?

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

(1.) Man's first transgression. If we should rip up every vein of that first sin, should we find any want of wickedness to excite a just indignation ? What was there but ingratitude to divine bounty and rebellion against divine sovereignty ? The royalty of God was attempted, the supremacy of divine knowledge above man's own knowledge envied ; the riches of goodness, whereby he lived and breathed, slighted. There is a discontent with God upon an unreasonable sentiment, that God had denied a knowledge to him which was his right and due, when there should have been an humble acknowledgment of that unmerited goodness which had not only given him a being above other creatures, but placed him the governor and lord of those that were inferior to him. What alienation of his understanding was there from knowing God, and of his will from loving him ! A debauch of all his faculties ; a spiritual adultery, in preferring not only one of God's creatures, but one of his desperate enemies, before him, thinking him a wiser counsellor than infinite wisdom, and imagining him possessed with kinder affections to him than that God who had newly created him. Thus he joins in league with hell against heaven, with a fallen spirit against his bountiful benefactor, and enters into society with rebels, that, just before, commenced a war against his and their common sovereign. He did not only falter in, but cast off, the obedience due to his Creator, endeavoured to purloin his glory, and actually murdered all those that were virtually in his loins : Rom. v. 12, 'Sin entered into the world' by him, 'and death by sin, and passed upon all men,' taking them off from their subjection to God to be slaves to the damned spirits, and heirs of their misery ; and, after all this, he adds a foul imputation on God, taxing him as the author of his sin, and thereby stains the beauty of his holiness. But, notwithstanding all this, God stops not up the flood-gates of his goodness, nor doth he entertain fiery resolutions against man, but brings forth a healing promise, and sends not an angel upon commission to reveal it to him, but preaches it himself to this forlorn and rebellious creature, Gen. iii. 15.

(2.) Could there be anything in this fallen creature to allure God to the expression of his goodness ? Was there any good action in all his carriage that could plead for a re-admission of him to his former state ? Was there one good quality left that could be an orator to persuade divine goodness to such a gracious procedure ? Was there any moral goodness in man, after this debauch, that might be an object of divine love ? What was there in him that was not rather a provocation than an allurement ? Could you expect that any perfection in God should find a motive in this ungrateful

apostate, to open a mouth for him, and be an advocate to support him, and bring him off from a just tribunal? Or, after divine goodness had begun to pity and plead for man, is it not wonderful that it should not discontinue the plea, after it found man's excuse to be as black as his crime, Gen. iii. 12, and his carriage upon his examination to be as disobliging as his first revolt? It might well be expected that all the perfections in the divine nature would have entered into an association eternally to treat this rebel according to his deserts. What attractives were there in a silly worm, much less in such complete wickedness, inexcusable enmity, infamous rebellion, to design a redeemer for him, and such a person as the Son of God, to a fleshy body, an eclipse of glory, and an ignominious cross! The meanness of man was further from alluring God to do it than the dignity of angels.

(3.) Was there not a world of demerit in man to animate grace as well as wrath against him? We were so far from deserving the opening any streams of goodness, that we had merited floods of devouring wrath. What were all men, but enemies to God in a high manner? Every offence was infinite, as being committed against a being of infinite dignity; it was a stroke at the very being of God; a resistance of all his attributes; it would degrade him from the height and perfection of his nature; it would not, by its good will, suffer God to be God. If 'he that hates his brother is a murderer' of his brother, 1 John iii. 15, he that hates his Creator is a murderer of the Deity; and every 'carnal mind is enmity to God,' Rom. viii. 7: every sin envies him his authority by breaking his precept, and envies him his goodness by defacing the marks of it. Every sin comprehends in it more than men or angels can conceive; that God, who only hath the clear apprehensions of his own dignity, hath the sole clear apprehensions of sin's malignity. All men were thus by nature; those that sinned before the coming of the Redeemer had been in a state of sin; those that were to come after him would be in a state of sin by their birth, and be criminals as soon as ever they were creatures. All men, as well the glorified as those in the flesh, at the coming of the Redeemer, and those that were to be born after, were considered in a state of sin by God when he bruised the Redeemer for them; all were filthy and unworthy of the eye of God; all had employed the faculties of their souls, and the members of their bodies, which they enjoyed by his goodness, against the interest of his glory. Every rational creature had made himself a slave to those creatures over whom he had been appointed a lord; subjected himself as a servant to his inferior, and strutted as a superior against his liberal sovereign, and by every sin rendered himself more a child of Satan, and enemy of God, and more worthy of the curses of the law and the torments of hell. Was it not, now, a mighty goodness that would surmount those high mountains of demerit, and elevate such creatures by the depression of his Son? Had we been possessed of the highest holiness, a reward had been the natural effect of goodness. It was not possible that God should be unkind to a righteous and innocent creature; his grace would have crowned that which had been so agreeable to him; he had been a denier of himself had he numbered innocent creatures in the rank of the miserable. But, to be kind to an enemy, to run counter to the vastness of demerit in man, was a superlative goodness, a goodness triumphing above all the provocations of men and pleas of justice. It was an abounding goodness of grace: 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,' *ὑπερπερίσσευσεν*, Rom. v. 20. It swelled above the heights of sin, and triumphed more than all his other attributes.

(4.) Man was reduced to the lowest condition. Our crimes had brought us to the lowest calamity; we were brought to the dust, and prepared for

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

(5.) Every age multiplied provocations. Every age of the world proved more degenerate; the traditions, which were purer and more lively among Adam's immediate posterity, were more dark among his further descendants. Idolatry, whereof we have no marks in the old world before the deluge, was frequent afterwards in every nation; not only the knowledge of the true God was lost, but the natural reverential thoughts of a deity were expelled. Hence gods were dubbed according to men's humours; and not only human passions, but brutish vices, ascribed to them. As by the fall we were become less than men, so we would fancy God no better than a beast, since beasts were worshipped as gods, Rom. i. 21; yea, fancied God no better than a devil, since that destroyer was worshipped instead of the Creator, and a homage paid to the powers of hell that ruined them, which was due to the goodness of that benefactor who had made them and preserved them in the world. The vilest creatures were deified; reason was debased below common sense; and men adored one end of a log, while they warmed themselves with the other, Isa. xlv. 14, 16, 17, as if that which was ordained for the kitchen were a fit representation for God in the temple. Thus were the natural notions of a deity depraved; the whole world drenched in idolatry; and though the Jews were free from that gross abuse of God, yet they were sunk also into loathsome superstitions, when the goodness of God brought in his designed Redeemer and redemption into the world.

(6.) The impotence of man enhanceth this goodness. Our own eye did scarce pity us, and it was impossible for our own hands to relieve us; we were insensible of our misery, in love with our death; we courted our chains, and the noise of our fettering lusts were our music, 'serving diverse lusts and pleasures,' Tit. iii. 3. Our lusts were our pleasures; Satan's yoke was as delightful to us to bear as to him to impose. Instead of being his opposers in his attempts against us, we were his voluntary seconds, and every whit as willing to embrace, as he was to propose, his ruining temptations. As no man can recover himself from death, so no man can recover himself from wrath; he is as unable to redeem as to create himself; he might as soon have stripped himself of his being, as put an end to his misery; his captivity would have been endless, and his chains remediless, for anything he could do to knock them off, and deliver himself; he was too much in love with the sink of sin to leave wallowing in it, and under too powerful a hand to cease frying in the flames of wrath. As the law could not be obeyed by man, after a corrupt principle had entered into him, so neither could justice be satisfied by him after his transgression. The sinner was indebted, but bankrupt; as he was unable to pay a mite of that obedience he owed to the precept, because of his enmity, so he was unable to satisfy what he owed to the penalty, because of his feebleness. He was as much without love to observe the one, as 'without strength' to bear the other. He could not, because of his enmity, 'be subject to the law,' Rom. viii. 7; or compensate for his sin, because he was 'without strength,' Rom.

v. 6. His strength to offend was great, but to deliver himself a mere nothing. Repentance was not a thing known by man after the fall, till he had hopes of redemption ; and if he had known and exercised it, what compensation are the tears of a malefactor for an injury done to the crown, and attempting the life of his prince ? How great was divine goodness, not only to pity men in this state, but to provide a redeemer for them ! ' O Lord, my strength and my redeemer,' said the psalmist, Ps. xix. 14. When he found out a redeemer for our misery, he found out a strength for our impotency.

To conclude this ; behold the goodness of God, when we had thus unhandsomely dealt with him, had nothing to allure his goodness, multitudes of provocations to incense him, were reduced to a condition as low as could be, fit to [be] the matter of his scoffs, and the sport of divine justice, and so weak that we could not repair our own ruins ; then did he open a fountain of fresh goodness in the death of his Son, and sent forth such delightful streams as, in our original creation, we could never have tasted ; not only overcame the resentments of a provoked justice, but magnified itself by our lowness, and strengthened itself by our weakness. His goodness had before created an innocent, but here it saves a malefactor ; and sends his Son to die for us, as if the Holy of holies were the criminal, and the rebel the innocent. It had been a pompous goodness, to have given him as a king ; but a goodness of greater grandeur, to expose him as a sacrifice for slaves and enemies. Had Adam remained innocent, and proved thankful for what he had received, it had been great goodness to have brought him to glory ; but to bring filthy and rebellious Adam to it, surmounts, by unexpressible degrees, that sort of goodness he had experimented before ; since it was not from a light evil, a tolerable curse unawares brought upon us, but from the yoke we had willingly submitted to, from the power of darkness we had courted, and the furnace of wrath we had kindled for ourselves. What are we, dead dogs, that he should behold us with so gracious an eye ? This goodness is thus enhanced, if you consider the state of man in his first transgression, and after.

4. This goodness further appears in the high advancement of our nature, after it had so highly offended. By creation we had an affinity with animals in our bodies, with angels in our spirits, with God in his image ; but not with God in our nature, till the incarnation of the Redeemer. Adam, by creation, was the son of God, Luke iii. 38 ; but his nature was not one with the person of God. He was his son as created by him, but had no affinity to him by virtue of union with him ; but now man doth not only see his nature in multitudes of men on earth, but by an astonishing goodness, beholds his nature united to the Deity in heaven. That as he was the son of God by creation, he is now the brother of God by redemption ; for with such a title doth that person, who was the Son of God as well as the Son of man, honour his disciples, John xx. 17 ; and because he is of the same nature with them, ' he is not ashamed to call them brethren,' Heb. ii. 11.

Our nature, which was infinitely distant from and below the Deity, now makes one person with the Son of God. What man sinfully aspired to, God hath graciously granted, and more. Man aspired to a likeness in knowledge, and God hath granted him an affinity in union. It had been astonishing goodness to angelize our natures ; but in redemption divine goodness hath acted higher, in a sort to deify our natures. In creation, our nature was exalted above other creatures on earth ; in our redemption, our nature is exalted above all the host of heaven. We were higher than the beasts, as creatures, but ' lower than the angels,' Ps. viii. 5 ; but by the incarnation of



the Son of God our nature is elevated many steps above them. After it had sunk itself by corruption below the bestial nature, and as low as the diabolical, the 'fulness of the Godhead dwells in our nature bodily,' Col. ii. 9; but never in the angels angelically. The Son of God descended to dignify our nature, by assuming it; and ascended with our nature, to have it crowned above those standing monuments of divine power and goodness. That person that descended in our nature into the grave, and in the same nature was raised up again, is in that same nature set at the right hand of God in heaven, 'far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named,' Eph. i. 20, 21. Our refined clay, by an indissoluble union with this divine person, is honoured to sit for ever upon a throne above all the tribes of seraphims and cherubims; and the person that wears it is the head of the good angels, and the conqueror of the bad: the one are put under his feet, and the other commanded to adore him 'that purged our sins in our nature,' Heb. i. 3, 6. That divine person in our nature receives adoration from the angels; but the nature of man is not ordered to pay any homage and adorations to the angels. How could divine goodness to man more magnify itself? As we could not have a lower descent than we had by sin, how could we have a higher ascent than by a substantial participation of a divine life in our nature in the unity of a divine person? Our earthly nature is joined to a heavenly person; our undone nature united to 'one equal with God,' Phil. ii. 6. It may truly be said, that man is God, which is infinitely more glorious for us, than if it could be said, man is an angel. If it were goodness to advance our innocent nature above other creatures, the advancement of our degenerate nature above angels deserves a higher title than mere goodness. It is a more gracious act, than if all men had been transformed into the pure spiritual nature of the loftiest cherubins.

5. This goodness is manifest in the covenant of grace made with us, whereby we are freed from the rigour of that of works. God might have insisted upon the terms of the old covenant, and required of man the improvement of his original stock; but God hath condescended to lower terms, and offered man more gracious methods, and mitigated the rigour of the first by the sweetness of the second.

(1.) It is goodness, that he should condescend to make another covenant with man. To stipulate with innocent and righteous Adam for his obedience, was a stoop of his sovereignty; though he gave the precept as a sovereign Lord, yet in his covenanting he seems to descend to some kind of equality with that dust and ashes with whom he treated. Absolute sovereigns do not usually covenant with their people, but exact obedience and duty without binding themselves to bestow a reward; and if they intend any, they reserve the purpose in their own breasts, without treating their subjects with a solemn declaration of it. There was no obligation on God to enter into the first covenant; much less, after the violation of the first, to the settlement of a new. If God seemed in some sort to equal himself to man in the first, he seemed to descend below himself in treating with a rebel upon more condescending terms in the second. If his covenant with innocent Adam was a stoop of his sovereignty, this with rebellious Adam seems to be a stripping himself of his majesty in favour of his goodness; as if his happiness depended upon us, and not ours upon him. It is a 'humiliation of himself to behold the things in heaven,' the glorious angels, as well as 'things on earth,' mortal men, Ps. cxiii. 6; much more to bind himself in gracious bonds to the glorious angels, and much more if to rebel man. In the first covenant, there was much of sovereignty as well as good-

ness ; in the second, there is less of sovereignty and more of grace. In the first, there was a righteous man for a holy God ; in the second, a polluted creature for a pure and provoked God. In the first, he holds the sceptre in his hand to rule his subjects ; in the second, he seems to lay by his sceptre to court and espouse a beggar. In the first, he is a Lord ; in the second, a husband, Hosea ii. 18–20, and binds himself upon gracious conditions to become a debtor. How should this goodness fill us with an humble astonishment, as it did Abraham, when he ‘fell on his face,’ when he heard God speaking of making a covenant with him ! Gen. xvii. 2, 3. And if God speaking to Israel out of the fire, and making them to hear his voice out of heaven, that he might instruct them, was a consideration whereby Moses would heighten their admiration of divine goodness, and engage their affectionate obedience to him, Deut. iv. 32, 36, 40, how much more admirable is it for God to speak so kindly to us through the pacifying blood of the covenant, that silenced the terrors of the old, and settled the tenderness of the new !

(2.) His goodness is seen in the nature and tenor of the new covenant. There are in this richer streams of love and pity. The language of one was, *Die if thou sin ; that of the other, Live if thou believest.\** The old covenant was founded upon the obedience of man ; the new is not founded upon the inconstancy of man’s will, but the firmness of divine love, and the valuable merit of Christ. The head of the first covenant was human and mutable ; the head of the second is divine and immutable. The curse due to us by the breach of the first, is taken off by the indulgence of the second, Rom. viii. 1 ; we are by it snatched from the jaws of the law, to be wrapped up in the bosom of grace,—‘For you are not under the law, but under grace,’ Rom. vi. 14,—from the curse and condemnation of the law to the sweetness and forgiveness of grace. Christ bore the one, ‘being made a curse for us,’ Gal. iii. 13, that we might enjoy the sweetness of the other. By this we are brought from mount Sinai, the mount of terror, to mount Zion, the mount of sacrificing, the type of the great sacrifice, Heb. xii. 18, 22. That covenant brought in death upon one offence, this covenant offers life after many offences, Rom. v. 16, 17. That involved us in a curse, and this enricheth us with a blessing. The breaches of that expelled us out of paradise, and the embracing of this admits us into heaven. This covenant demands and admits of that repentance, whereof there was no mention in the first ; that demanded obedience, not repentance upon a failure, and though the exercises of it had been never so deep in the fallen creature, nothing of the law’s severity had been remitted by any virtue of it. Again, the first covenant demanded exact righteousness, but conveyed no cleansing virtue upon the contracting any filth. The first demands a continuance in the righteousness conferred in creation ; the second imprints a gracious heart in regeneration. ‘I will pour clean water upon you, I will put a new spirit within you,’ was the voice of the second covenant, not of the first. Again, as to pardon ; Adam’s covenant was to punish him, not to pardon him, if he fell. That threatened death upon transgression, this remits it ; that was an act of divine sovereignty, declaring the will of God, this is an act of divine grace, passing an act of oblivion on the crimes of the creature ; that, as it demanded no repentance upon a failure, so it promised no mercy upon guilt ; that convened our sin, and condemned us for it, this clears our guilt, and comforts us under it. The first covenant related us to God as a judge, every transgression against it forfeited his indulgence as a father ; the second delivers us from God as a condemning judge, to bring us under

\* Turretine, ser. p. 33.

his wing as an affectionate father. In the one, there was a dreadful frown to scare us ; in the other, a healing wing to cover and relieve us. Again, in regard of righteousness. That demanded our performance of a righteousness in and by ourselves and our own strength ; this demands our acceptance of a righteousness higher than ever the standing angels had. The righteousness of the first covenant was the righteousness of a man ; the righteousness of the second is 'the righteousness of a God, 2 Cor. v. 21. Again, in regard of that obedience it demands, it exacts not of us, as a necessary condition, the perfection of obedience, but the sincerity of obedience ; an uprightness in our intention, not an unspottedness in our action ; an integrity in our aims, and an industry in our compliance with divine precepts, Gen. xvii. 1, 'Walk before me, and be thou perfect,' *i. e.* sincere. What is hearty in our actions is accepted, and what is defective is overlooked, and not charged upon us, because of the obedience and righteousness of our surety. The first covenant rejected all our services after sin—the services of a person under the sentence of death are but dead services ; this accepts our imperfect services after faith in it. That administered no strength to obey, but supposed it ; this supposeth our inability to obey, and confers some strength for it, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' Again, in regard of the promises. The old covenant had good, but the new hath 'better promises,' Heb. viii. 6 of justification after guilt, and sanctification after filth, and glorification at last of the whole man. In the first there was provision against guilt, but none for the removal of it ; provision against filth, but none for the cleansing of it ; promise of happiness implied, but not so great a one as that 'life and immortality' in heaven, 'brought to light by the gospel,' 2 Tim. i. 10. Why said to be 'brought to light by the gospel ?' Because it was not only buried upon the fall of man under the curses of the law, but it was not so obvious to the conceptions of man in his innocent state. Life, indeed, was implied to be promised upon his standing, but not so glorious an immortality disclosed to be reserved for him if he stood. As it is a covenant of better promises, so a covenant of sweeter comforts, comforts more choice and comforts more durable. 'An everlasting consolation and a good hope' are the fruits of grace, *i. e.* the covenant of grace, 2 Thess. ii. 16. In the whole there is such a love disclosed, as cannot be expressed. The apostle leaves it to every man's mind to conceive it, if he could, 'what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God,' 1 John iii. 1. It instates us in such a manner of the love of God, as he bears to his Son, the image of his person : 'That the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me,' John xvii. 23.

(3.) This goodness appears in the choice gift of himself which he hath made over in this covenant. You know how it runs in Scripture, 'I will be their God and they shall be my people,' Jer. xxxii. 38 ; a propriety in the Deity is made over by it. As he gave the blood of his Son to seal the covenant, so he gave himself as the blessing of the covenant : 'He is not ashamed to be called their God,' Heb. xi. 16. Though he be environed with millions of angels, and presides over them in an inexpressible glory, he is not ashamed of his condescensions to man, and to pass over himself as the propriety of his people, as well as to take them to be his. It is a diminution of the sense of the place, to understand it of God as creator. What reason was there for God to be ashamed of the expressions of his power, wisdom, goodness, in the works of his hands ? But we might have reason to think there might be some ground in God to be ashamed in making himself over in a

deed of gift to a mean worm and a filthy rebel ; this might seem a disparagement to his majesty ; but God is not ashamed of a title so mean, as the God of his despised people—a title below those others of the ‘ Lord of hosts,’ ‘ glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders,’ ‘ riding on the wings of the wind,’ ‘ walking in the circuits of heaven.’ He is no more ashamed of this title of being our God, than he is of those other that sound more glorious ; he would rather have his greatness veil to his goodness, than his goodness be confined by his majesty. He is not only our God, but our God as he is the God of Christ. He is not ashamed to be our propriety, and Christ is not ashamed to own his people in a partnership with him in this propriety : John xx. 17, ‘ I ascend to my God, and your God.’ This of God’s being our God, is the quintessence of the covenant, the soul of all the promises. In this he hath promised whatsoever is infinite in him, whatsoever is the glory and ornament of his nature, for our use ; not a part of him, or one single perfection, but the whole vigour and strength of all. As he is not a God without infinite wisdom, and infinite power, and infinite goodness, and infinite blessedness, &c, so he passes over in this covenant all that which presents him as the most adorable being to his creatures. He will be to them as great, as wise, as powerful, as good as he is in himself. And the assuring us in this covenant to be our God, imports also that he will do as much for us as we would do for ourselves, were we furnished with the same goodness, power, and wisdom. In being our God, he testifies it is all one, as if we had the same perfections in our own power to employ for our use ; for, he being possessed with them, it is as much as if we ourselves were possessed with them for our own advantage, according to the rules of wisdom, and the several conditions we pass through for his glory ; but this must be taken with a relation to that wisdom which he observes in his proceedings with us as creatures, and according to the several conditions we pass through for his glory. Thus God’s being ours, is more than if all heaven and earth were ours besides ; it is more than if we were fully our own, and at our own disposal ; it makes all things that God hath ours, 1 Cor. iii. 22, and therefore not only all things he hath created, but all things that he can create ; not only all things that he hath contrived, but all things that he can contrive ; for in being ours, his power is ours, his possible power as well as his active power, his power whereby he can effect more than he hath done ; and his wisdom, whereby he can contrive more than he hath done, so that if there were need of employing his power to create many worlds for our good, he would not stick at it ; for if he did, he would not be our God in the extent of his nature, as the promise intimates. What a rich goodness and a fulness of bounty is there in this short expression, as full as the expression of a God can make it to be intelligible to such creatures as we are !

(4.) This goodness is further manifest in the confirmation of the covenant. His goodness did not only condescend to make it for our happiness, after we had made ourselves miserable, but further condescended to ratify it in the solemnest manner for our assurance, to overrule all the despondencies unbelief could raise up in our souls. The reason why he confirmed it by an oath was to shew the immutability of his glorious counsel, not to tie himself to keep it ; for his word and promise is in itself as immutable as his oath. They were ‘ two immutable things,’ his word and his oath, one as unchangeable as the other ; but for the strength of our consolation, that it might have no reason to shake and totter, he would condescend as low as was possible for a God to do for the satisfaction of the dejected creature, Heb. vi. 17, 18. When the first covenant was broken, and it was impossible for man to fulfil the terms of it, and mount to happiness thereby, he makes another. And as if

we had reason to distrust him in the first, he solemnly ratifies it in a higher manner than he had done in the other, and swears by himself that he will be true to it, not so much out of an election of himself as the object of the oath. 'Because he could not swear by a greater, he swears by himself,' ver. 13; whereby the apostle clearly intimates that divine goodness was raised to such a height for us, that if there had been anything more sacred than himself, or that could have punished him if he had broken it, that he would have sworn by, to silence any diffidence in us, and confirm us in the reality of his intentions. Now if it were a mighty mark of goodness for God to stoop to a covenanting with us, it was more for a sovereign to bind himself so solemnly to be our debtor in a promise, as well as he was our sovereign in the precept, and stoop so low in it to satisfy the distrusts of that creature that deserved for ever to lie soaking in his own ruins for not believing his bare word. What absolute prince would ever stoop so low as to article with rebellious subjects, whom he could in a moment set his foot upon and crush, much less countenance a causeless distrust of his goodness by the addition of his oath, and thereby bind his own hands, which were unconfined before, and free to do what he pleased with them!

(5.) This goodness of God is remarkable also in the condition of this covenant, which is faith. This was the easiest condition in its own nature that could be imagined, no difficulty in it but what proceeds from the pride of man's nature and the obstinacy of his will. It was not impossible in itself, it was not the old condition of perfect obedience; it had been mighty goodness to set us up again upon our old stock, and restore us to the tenor and condition of the covenant of works, or to have required the burdensome ceremonies of the law. Nor is it an exact knowledge he requires of us; all men's understandings being of a different size, they had not been capable of this. It was the most reasonable condition in regard of the excellency of the things proposed, and the effects following upon it, nay, it was necessary. It had been a want of goodness to himself and his own honour; he had cast that off had he not insisted on this condition of faith, it being the lowest he could condescend to with a *salvo* for his glory. And it was a goodness to us; it is nothing else he requires, but a willingness to accept what he hath contrived and acted for us. And no man can be happy against his will; without this belief at least, man could never voluntarily have arrived to his happiness. The goodness of God is evidenced in that,

[1.] First, It is an easy condition, not impossible.

*First*, It was not the condition of the old covenant. The condition of that was an entire obedience to every precept with a man's whole strength, without any flaw or crack; but the condition of the evangelical covenant is a sincere though weak faith. He hath suited this covenant to the misery of man's fallen condition; he considers our weakness, and that we are but dust, and therefore exacts not of us an entire but a sincere obedience. Had God sent Christ to expiate the crime of Adam, restore him to his paradise estate, and repair in man the ruined image of holiness, and after this to have renewed the covenant of works for the future, and settled the same condition in exacting a complete obedience for the time to come, divine goodness had been above any accusation, and had deserved our highest admiration in the pardon of former transgressions, and giving out to us our first stock. But divine goodness took larger strides; he had tried our first condition, and found his mutable creature quickly to violate it. Had he demanded the same now, it is likely it had met with the same issue as before in man's disobedience and fall; we should have been 'as men,' as Adam, 'transgressing the covenant,' Hos. vi. 7, and then we must have lain groaning under

our disease and wallowing in our blood, unless Christ had come to die for the expiation of our new crimes, for every transgression had been a violation of that covenant, and a forfeiture of our right to the benefits of it. If we had broke it but in one tittle, we had rendered ourselves incapable to fulfil it for the future ; that one transgression had stood as a bar against the pleas of after obedience. But God hath wholly laid that condition aside to us, and settled that of faith, more easy to be performed and to be renewed by us. It is infinite grace in him that he will accept of faith in us, instead of that perfect obedience he required of us in the covenant of works.

*Secondly*, It is easy; not like the burdensome ceremonies appointed under the law. He exacts not now the legal obedience, expensive sacrifices, troublesome purifications and abstinences, that 'yoke of bondage,' Gal. v. 1, which they were 'not able to bear,' Acts xv. 10. He treats us not as servants, or children in their nonage, under the elements of the world, nor requires those innumerable bodily exercises that he exacted of them ; he demands not thousands of lambs and rivers of oil, but he requires a sincere confession and repentance in order to our absolution ; an unfeigned faith in order to our blessedness and elevation to a glorious life. He requires only that we should believe what he saith, and have so good an opinion of his goodness and veracity as to persuade ourselves of the reality of his intentions, confide in his word, and rely upon his promise, cordially embrace his crucified Son, whom he hath set forth as the means of our happiness, and have a sincere respect to all the discoveries of his will. What can be more easy than this, though some in the days of the apostles, and others since, have endeavoured to introduce a multitude of legal burdens, as if they envied God the expressions of his goodness, or thought him guilty of too much remissness in taking off the yoke, and treating man too favourably.

*Thirdly*, Nor is it a clear knowledge of every revelation that is the condition of this covenant. God in his kindness to man hath made revelations of himself, but his goodness is manifested in obliging us to believe him, not fully to understand him. He hath made them by sufficient testimonies as clear to our faith as they are incomprehensible to our reason. He hath revealed a trinity of persons in their distinct offices in the business of redemption, without which revelation of a trinity we could not have a right notion and scheme of redeeming grace. But since the clearness of men's understanding is sullied by the fall, and hath lost its wings to fly up to a knowledge of such sublime things as that of the Trinity, and other mysteries of the Christian religion, God hath manifested his goodness in not obliging us to understand them, but to believe them, and hath given us reason enough to believe it to be his revelation (both from the nature of the revelation itself, and the way and manner of propagating it, which is wholly divine, exceeding all the methods of human art), though he hath not extended our understandings to a capacity to know them, and render a reason of every mystery. He did not require of every Israelite, or of any of them that were stung by the fiery serpents, that they should understand, or be able to discourse of the nature and qualities of that brass of which that serpent upon the pole was made, or by what art that serpent was formed, or in what manner the sight of it did operate in them for their cure ; it was enough that they did believe the institution and precept of God, and that their own cure was assured by it. It was enough if they cast their eyes upon it according to the direction. The understandings of men are of several sizes and elevations, one higher than another. If the condition of this covenant had been a greatness of knowledge, the most acute men had only enjoyed the benefits of it. But it is faith, which is as easy to be performed by the ignorant and simple

as by the strongest and most towering mind. It is that which is within the compass of every man's understanding. God did not require that every one within the verge of the covenant should be able to discourse of it to the reasons of men. He required not that every man should be a philosopher, or an orator, but a believer. What could be more easy than to lift up the eye to the brazen serpent, to be cured of a fiery sting? What could be more facile than a glance, which is done without any pain and in a moment? It is a condition may be performed by the weakest as well as the strongest. Could those that were bitten in the most vital part cast up their eyes, though at the last gasp, they would arise to health, by the expulsion of the venom.

[2.] As it is easy, so it is reasonable. 'Repent and believe' is that which is required by Christ and the apostles for the enjoyment of the kingdom of heaven. It is very reasonable that things so great and glorious, so beneficial to men, and revealed to them by so sound an authority, and an unerring truth, should be believed. The excellency of the thing disclosed could admit of no lower a condition than to be believed and embraced. There is a sort of faith that is a natural condition in everything. All religion in the world, though never so false, depends upon a sort of it; for unless there be a belief of future things, there would never be a hope of good or a fear of evil, the two great hinges upon which religion moves. In all kinds of learning, many things must be believed before a progress can be made. Belief of one another is necessary in all acts of human life, without which human society would be unlinked and dissolved. What is that faith that God requires of us in this covenant, but a willingness of soul to take God for our God, Christ for our mediator and the procurer of our happiness? Rev. xxii. 17. What prince could require less, upon any promise he makes his subjects, than to be believed as true, and depended on as good? That they should accept his pardon, and other gracious offers, and be sincere in their allegiance to him, avoiding all things that may offend him, and pursuing all things that may please him. Thus God, by so small and reasonable a condition as faith, lets in the fruits of Christ's death into our soul, and wraps us up in the fruition of all the privileges purchased by it. So much he hath condescended in his goodness, that upon so slight a condition we may plead his promise, and humbly challenge, by virtue of the covenant, those good things he hath promised in his word. It is so reasonable a condition, that if God did not require it in the covenant of grace, the creature were obliged to perform it; for the publishing any truth from God naturally calls for credit to be given it by the creature, and an entertainment of it in practice. Could you offer a more reasonable condition yourselves, had it been left to your choice? Should a prince proclaim a pardon to a profligate wretch, would not all the world cry shame of him if he did not believe it upon the highest assurances; and if ingenuity did not make him sorry for his crimes, and careful in the duty of a subject, surely the world would cry shame of such a person.

[3.] It is a necessary condition.

*First*, Necessary for the honour of God. A prince is disparaged if his authority in his law, and if his graciousness in his promises, be not accepted and believed. What physician would undertake a cure, if his precepts may not be credited? It is the first thing in the order of nature that the revelation of God should be believed, that the reality of his intentions in inviting man to the acceptance of those methods he hath prescribed for their attaining their chief happiness should be acknowledged. It is a debasing notion of God, that he should give a happiness purchased by divine blood

to a person that hath no value for it, nor any abhorrency of those sins that occasioned so great a suffering, nor any will to avoid them. Should he not vilify himself, to bestow a heaven upon that man that will not believe the offers of it, nor walk in those ways that leads to it; that walks so as if he would declare that there were no truth in his word, nor holiness in his nature? Would not God by such an act verify a truth in the language of their practice, viz., that he were both false and impure, careless of his word, and negligent of his holiness? As God was so desirous to ensure the consolation of believers, that if there had been a greater being than himself to attest, and for him to be responsible to, for the confirmation of his promise, he would willingly have submitted to him, and have made him the umpire: Heb. vi. 19, 'He swore by himself, because he could not swear by a greater;' by the same reason, had it stood with the majesty and wisdom of God to stoop to lower conditions in this covenant for the reducing of man to his duty and happiness, he would have done it; but his goodness could not take lower steps, with the preservation of the rights of his majesty and the honour of his wisdom. Would you have had him wholly submitted to the obstinate will of a rebellious creature, and be ruled only by his terms? Would you have had him receive men to happiness, after they had heightened their crimes by a contempt of his grace, as well as of his creating goodness, and have made them blessed under the guilt of their crimes without an acknowledgment? Should he glorify one that will not believe what he hath revealed, nor repent of what himself hath committed, and so save a man after a repeated unthankfulness to the most immense grace that ever was, or can be discovered and offered, without a detestation of his ingratitude, and a voluntary acceptance of his offers? It is necessary for the honour of God that man should accept of his terms, and not give laws to him, to whom he is obnoxious as a guilty person, as well as subject as a creature.

Again, it was very equitable and necessary for the honour of God, that since man fell by an unbelief of his precept and threatening, he should not rise again without a belief of his promise, and casting himself upon his truth in that, since he had vilified the honour of his truth in the threatening. Since man in his fall would lean to his own understanding against God, it is fit that, in his recovery, the highest powers of his soul, his understanding and will, should be subjected to him in an entire resignation. Now, whereas knowledge seems to have a power over its object, faith is a full submission to that which is the object of it. Since man intended a glorying in himself, the evangelical covenant directs its whole battery against it, that men may glory in nothing but divine goodness, 1 Cor. i. 29-31. Had man performed exact obedience by his own strength, he had had something in himself as the matter of his glory. And though after the fall grace made itself illustrious in setting him up upon a new stock, yet had the same condition of exact obedience been settled in the same manner, man would have had something to glory in, which is struck off wholly by faith; whereby man in every act must go out of himself, for a supply, to that mediator which divine goodness and grace hath appointed.

*Secondly,* It is necessary for the happiness of man. That can be no contenting condition wherein the will of man doth not concur. He that is forced to the most delicious diet, or to wear the bravest apparel, or to be stored with abundance of treasure, cannot be happy in those things without an esteem of them and delight in them. If they be nauseous to him, the indisposition of his mind is a dead fly in those boxes of precious ointment. Now faith being a sincere willingness to accept of Christ and to come to God by him, and repentance being a detestation of that which made man's



separation from God, it is impossible he could be voluntarily happy without it. Man cannot attain and enjoy a true happiness without an operation of his understanding about the object proposed, and the means appointed to enjoy it. There must be a knowledge of what is offered, and of the way of it, and such a knowledge as may determine the will to affect that end and embrace those means ; which the will can never do till the understanding be fully persuaded of the truth of the offerer, and the goodness of the proposal itself, and the conveniency of the means for the attaining of it. It is necessary in the nature of the thing, that what is revealed should be believed to be a divine revelation. God must be judged true in the promising justification and sanctification, the means of happiness ; and if any man desires to be partaker of those promises, he must desire to be sanctified ; and how can he desire that which is the matter of those promises, if he wallow in his own lusts, and desire to do so, a thing repugnant to the promise itself ? Would you have God force man to be happy against his will ? Is it not very reasonable he should demand the consent of his reasonable creature to that blessedness he offers him ? The new covenant is a marriage covenant, Hosea ii. 16, 19, 20, which implies a consent on our parts, as well as a consent on God's part ; that is no marriage that hath not the consent of both parties. Now faith is our actual consent, and repentance and sincere obedience are the testimonies of the truth and reality of this consent.

(6.) Divine goodness is eminent in his methods of treating with men to embrace this covenant. They are methods of gentleness and sweetness ; it is a wooing goodness and a bewailing goodness. His expressions are with strong motions of affection ; he carrieth not on the gospel by force of arms ; he doth not solely menace men into it, as worldly conquerors have done ; he doth not, as Mahomet, plunder men's estates, and wound their bodies, to imprint a religion on their souls ; he doth not erect gibbets, and kindle faggots, to scare men to an entering into covenant with him. What multitudes might he have raised by his power as well as others ! What legions of angels might he have rendezvoused from heaven, to have beaten men into a profession of the gospel ! Nor doth he only interpose his sovereign authority in the precept of faith, but useth rational expostulations to move men voluntarily to comply with his proposals : Isa. i. 18, ' Come now, saith the Lord, let us reason together.' He seems to call heaven and earth to be judge, whether he had been wanting in any reasonable ways of goodness, to overcome the perversity of the creature : Isa. i. 2, ' Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, I have nourished and brought up children.' What various encouragements doth he use, agreeable to the nature of men, endeavouring to persuade them with all tenderness not to despise their own mercies, and be enemies to their own happiness ! He would allure us by his beauty, and win us by his mercy. He uses the arms of his own excellency, and our necessity, to prevail upon us ; and this after the highest provocations. When Adam had trampled upon his creating goodness, it was not crushed ; and when man had cast it from him, it took the higher rebound. When the rebel's provocation was fresh in his mind, he sought him out with a promise in his hand, though Adam fled from him out of enmity as well as fear, Gen. iii. 10 ; and when the Jews had outraged his Son, whom he loved from eternity, and made the Lord of heaven and earth bow down his head like a slave on the cross, yet in that place where the most horrible wickedness had been committed, must the gospel be preached. The law must ' go forth out of that Sion,' and the apostles must not stir from thence, till they have received the promise of the Spirit, and published the word of grace in that ungrateful city, whose inhabitants yet swelled with indignation against the Lord of life, and

the doctrine he had preached among them, Luke xxiv. 47. He would overlook their indignities out of tenderness to their souls, and expose the apostles to the peril of their lives, rather than expose his enemies to the fury of the devil, Acts i. 4, 5.

[1.] How affectionately doth he invite men ! What multitudes of alluring promises, and pressing exhortations, are there everywhere sprinkled in the Scripture, and in such a passionate manner, as if God were solely concerned in our good, without a glance on his own glory ! How tenderly doth he woo flinty hearts, and express more pity to them than they do to themselves ! With what affection do his bowels rise up to his lips in his speech in the prophet ! Isa. li. 4, 'Hearken to me, O my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation' ; 'my people' ! 'my nation' ! Melting expressions of a tender God, soliciting a rebellious people to make their retreat to him. He never emptied his hand of his bounty, nor divested his lips of those charitable expressions. He sent Noah to move the wicked of the old world to an embracing of his goodness, and frequent prophets to the provoking Jews ; and as the world continued, and grew up to a taller stature in sin, he stoops more in the manner of his expressions. Never was the world at a higher pitch of idolatry than at the first publishing the gospel, yet when we should have expected him to be a punishing, he is a beseeching, God. The apostle fears not to use the expression for the glory of divine goodness : 2 Cor. v. 20, 'We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us.' The beseeching voice of God is in the voice of the ministry, as the voice of the prince is in that of the herald. It is as if divine goodness did kneel down to a sinner with wringed hands and blubbered cheeks, entreating him not to force him to re-assume a tribunal of justice in the nature of a judge, since he would treat with man upon a throne of grace in the nature of a father ; yea, he seems to put himself into the posture of the criminal, that the offending creature might not feel the punishment due to a rebel. It is not the condescension, but the interest, of a traitor to creep upon his knees in sackcloth to his sovereign to beg his life ; but it is a miraculous goodness in the sovereign to creep in the lowest posture to the rebel, to importune him not only for an amity to him, but a love to his own life and happiness. This he doth not only in his general proclamations, but in his particular wooings, those inward courtings of his Spirit, soliciting them with more diligence (if they would observe it) to their happiness, than the devil tempts them to the ways of their misery. As he was first in Christ, reconciling the world, when the world looked not after him, so he is first in his Spirit, wooing the world to accept of that reconciliation when the world will not listen to him. How often doth he flash up the light of nature and the light of the word in men's hearts, to move them not to lie down in sparks of their own kindling, but to aspire to a better happiness, and prepare them to be subject to a higher mercy, if they would improve his present entreaties to such an end ! And what are his threatenings designed for, but to move the wheel of our fears, that the wheel of our desire and love might be set on motion for the embracing his promise ? They are not so much the thunders of his justice as the loud rhetoric of his good will, to prevent men's misery under the vials of wrath. It is his kindness to scare men by threatenings, that justice might not strike them with the sword. It is not the destruction, but the preserving reformation that he aims at ; he hath 'no pleasure in the death of the wicked ;' this he confirms by his oath, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. His threatenings are gracious expostulations with them : 'Why will ye die, O house of Israel ?' They are like the noise a favourable officer makes in the street, to warn the criminal he comes to seize upon to make his escape ; he never used his

justice to crush men, till he had used his kindness to allure them. All the dreadful descriptions of a future wrath, as well as the lively descriptions of the happiness of another world, are designed to persuade men. The honey of his goodness is in the bowels of those roaring lions; such pains doth Goodness take with men, to make them candidates for heaven.

[2.] How readily doth he receive men when they do return! We have David's experience for it, Ps. xxxii. 5: 'I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.' A sincere look from the creature draws out his arms, and opens his bosom; he is ready with his physic to heal us upon a resolution to acquaint him with our disease, and by his medicines prevents the putting our resolution into a petition. The psalmist adds a *Selah* to it, as a special note of thankfulness for divine goodness. He doth not only stand ready to receive our petitions while we are speaking, but 'answers us before we call,' Isa. lvi. 24; listening to the motions of our hearts, as well as to the supplications of our lips. He is the true Father, that hath a quicker pace in meeting than the prodigal hath in returning, who would not have his embraces and caresses interrupted by his confession, Luke xv. 20-22. The confession follows, doth not precede, the father's compassion. How doth he rejoice in having an opportunity to express his grace, when he hath prevailed with a rebel to throw down his arms and lie at his feet, and this because 'he delights in mercy,' Micah vii. 18; he delights in the expressions of it from himself, and the acceptance of it by his creature.

[3.] How meltingly doth he bewail man's wilful refusal of his goodness! It is a mighty goodness to offer grace to a rebel, a mighty goodness to give it him after he hath a while stood off from the terms; an astonishing goodness to regret and lament his wilful perdition. He seems to utter those words in a sigh, Ps. lxxxi. 13, 'Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my way!' It is true, God hath not human passions, but his affections cannot be expressed otherwise in a way intelligible to us; the excellency of his nature is above the passions of men, but such expressions of himself manifest to us the sincerity of his goodness, and that, were he capable of our passions, he would express himself in such a manner as we do. And we find incarnate goodness bewailing with tears and sighs the ruin of Jerusalem, Luke xix. 42. By the same reason that when a sinner returns there is joy in heaven, upon his obstinacy there is sorrow on earth; the one is as if a prince should clothe all his court in triumphant scarlet upon a rebel's repentance, and the other, as if a prince should put himself and his court in mourning for a rebel's obstinate refusal of a pardon, when he lies at his mercy. Are not, now, these affectionate invitations and deep bewailings of their perversity high testimonies of divine goodness? Do not the unwearied repetitions of gracious encouragements deserve a higher name than that of mere goodness? What can be a stronger evidence of the sincerity of it than the sound of his saving voice in our enjoyments, the motion of his Spirit in our hearts, and his grief for the neglect of all? These are not testimonies of any want of goodness in his nature to answer us, or willingness to express it to his creature. Hath he any mind to deceive us, that thus entreats us? The majesty of his nature is too great for such shifts; or, if it were not, the despicableness of our condition would render him above the using any. Who would charge that physician with want of kindness, that freely offers his sovereign medicine, importunes men by the love they have to their health to take it, and is dissolved into tears and sorrow when he finds it rejected by their peevish and conceited humour?

(7.) Divine goodness is eminent in the sacraments he hath affixed to this

covenant, especially in the Lord's Supper. As he gave himself in his Son, so he gives his Son in the sacrament ; he doth not only give him as a sacrifice upon the cross for the expiation of our crimes, but as a feast upon the table for the nourishment of our souls. In the one he was given to be offered, in this he gives him to be partaken of, with all the fruits of his death ; under the image of the sacramental signs, every believer doth eat the flesh and drink the blood of the great Mediator of the covenant. The words of Christ, Mat. xxvi. 26, 28, ' This is my body ' and ' This is my blood,' are true to the end of the world. This is the most delicious viand of heaven, the most exquisite dainty food God can feed us with ; the delight of the Deity, the admiration of angels. A feast *with* God is great, but a feast *on* God is greater. Under those signs that body is presented ; that which was conceived by the Spirit, inhabited by the Godhead, bruised by the Father to be our food, as well as our propitiation, is presented to us on the table. That blood which satisfied justice, washed away our guilt on the cross, and pleads for our persons at the throne of grace ; that blood which silenced the curse, pacified heaven, and purged earth, is given to us for our refreshment. This is the bread sent from heaven, the true manna ; the cup is the ' cup of blessing,' and therefore a cup of goodness, 1 Cor. x. 16. It is true, bread doth not cease to be bread, nor the wine cease to be wine ; neither of them lose their substance, but both acquire a sanctification by the relation they have to that which they represent, and give a nourishment to that faith that receives them. In those God offers us a remedy for the sting of sin, and troubles of conscience ; he gives us, not the blood of a mere man, or the blood of an incarnate angel, but of God blessed for ever, a blood that can secure us against the wrath of heaven, and the tumults of our consciences,—a blood that can wash away our sins, and beautify our souls,—a blood that hath more strength than our filth, and more prevalency than our accuser,—a blood that secures us against the terrors of death, and purifies us for the blessedness of heaven. The goodness of God complies with our senses, and condescends to our weakness ; he instructs us by the eye, as well as by the ear ; he lets us see, and taste, and feel him, as well as hear him ; he veils his glory under earthly elements, and informs our understanding in the mysteries of salvation by signs familiar to our senses ; and, because we cannot with our bodily eyes behold him in his glory, he presents him to the eyes of our minds in elements, to affect our understandings in the representations of his death. The body of Christ crucified is more visible to our spiritual sense than the visible deity could be visible in his flesh upon earth, and the power of his body and blood is as well experimented in our souls as the power of his divinity was seen by the Jews in his miraculous actions in his body in the world. It is the goodness of God to mind us frequently of the great things Christ hath purchased ; that as himself would not let them be out of his mind, to communicate them to us, so he would give us means to preserve them in our minds, to adore him for them, and request them of him ; whereby he doth evidence his own solicitousness that we should not be deprived, by our own forgetfulness, of that grace Christ hath purchased for us ; it was to remember the Redeemer, and ' shew his death till he came,' 1 Cor. xi. 25, 26.

[1.] His goodness is seen in the end of it, which is a sealing the covenant of grace. The common nature and end of sacraments is to seal the covenant they belong to, and the truths of the promises of it.\* The legal sacraments of circumcision and the passover sealed the legal promises and the covenant in the Judaical administration of it ; and the evangelical sacraments

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

seal the evangelical promises, as a ring confirms the contract of marriage and a seal the articles of a compact; by the same reason circumcision is called a 'seal of the righteousness of faith,' Rom. iv. 11. Other sacraments may have the same title; God doth attest that he will remain firm in his promise, and the receiver attests he will remain firm in his faith. In all reciprocal covenants there are mutual engagements, and that which serves for a seal on the part of the one, serves for a seal also on the part of the other; God obligeth himself to the performance of the promise, and man engageth himself to the performance of his duty. The thing confirmed by this sacrament is the perpetuity of this covenant in the blood of Christ; whence it is called 'the New Testament,' or covenant 'in the blood of Christ,' Luke xxii. 20. In every repetition of it, God, by presenting, confirms his resolution to us of sticking to this covenant for the merit of Christ's blood; and the receiver, by eating the body and drinking the blood, engageth himself to keep close to the condition of faith, expecting a full salvation and a blessed immortality upon the merit of the same blood alone. This sacrament could not be called the New Testament or covenant if it had not some relation to the covenant; and what it can be but this I do not understand. The covenant itself was confirmed by the death of Christ, Heb. ix. 15, and thereby made unchangeable both in the benefits to us and the condition required of us; but he seals it to our sense in a sacrament to give us strong consolation; or rather the articles of the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, agreed on from eternity, were accomplished on Christ's part by his death, on the Father's part by his resurrection; Christ performed what he promised in the one, and God acknowledged the validity of it, and performs what he had promised in the other. The covenant of grace, founded upon this covenant of redemption, is sealed in the sacrament; God owns his standing to the terms of it, as sealed by the blood of the Mediator, by presenting him to us under those signs, and gives us a right upon faith to the enjoyment of the fruits of it; as the right of a house is made over by the delivery of the key, and the right of land translated by the delivery of a turf; whereby he gives us assurance of his reality, and a strong support to our confidence in him. Not that there is any virtue and power of sealing in the elements themselves, no more than there is in a turf, to give an infeoffment in a parcel of land; but as the power of the one is derived from the order of the law, so the confirming power of the sacrament is derived from the institution of God; as the oil wherewith kings were anointed did not of itself confer upon them that royal dignity, but it was a sign of the investiture into office, ordered by divine institution. We can with no reason imagine that God intended them as naked signs or pictures, to please our eyes with the image of them, to represent their own figures to our eyes, but to confirm something to our understanding by the efficacy of the Spirit accompanying them.\* They convey to the believing receiver what they represent, as the great seal of a prince, fixed to the parchment, doth the pardon of the rebel, as well as its own figure. Christ's death, and the grace of the covenant, is not only signified, but the fruits and merit of that death communicated also. Thus doth divine goodness evidence itself, not only in making a gracious covenant with us, but fixing seals to it; not to strengthen his own obligation, which stood stronger than the foundations of heaven and earth, upon the credit of his word, but to strengthen our weakness, and support our security, by something which might appear more formal and solemn than a bare word. By this, the divine goodness provides against our spiritual faintings, and shews us, by real signs, as well as verbal declara-

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

tions, that the covenant sealed by the blood of Christ is unalterable ; and thereby would fortify and mount our hopes to degrees in some measure suitable to the kindness of the covenant and the dignity of the Redeemer's blood. And it is yet a further degree of his goodness, that he hath appointed us so often to celebrate it, whereby he shews how careful he is to keep up our tottering faith, and preserve us constant in our obedience ; obliging himself to the performance of his promise, and obliging us to the payment of our duty.

[2.] His goodness is seen in the sacrament, in giving us in it an union and communion with Christ. There is not only a *commemoration* of Christ dying, but a *communication* of Christ living. The apostle strongly asserts it by way of interrogation : 1 Cor. x. 16, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' In the cup there is a communication of the blood of Christ, a conveyance of a right to the merits of his death, and the blessedness of his life. We are not less by this made one body with Christ, than we are by baptism, 1 Cor. xii. 13 ; and put on Christ living in this, as well as in baptism, Gal. iii. 27 ; that as his taking our infirm flesh was a real incarnation, so the giving us his flesh to eat is a mystical incarnation in believers, whereby they become one body with him as crucified, and one body with him as risen ; for if Christ himself be received by faith in the word, Col. ii. 6, he is no less received by faith in the sacrament. When the Holy Ghost is said to be received, the graces or gifts of the Holy Ghost are received ; so when Christ is received, the fruits of his death are really partaken of. The Israelites that ate the sacrifices did 'partake of the altar,' 1 Cor. x. 18, *i. e.* had a communion with the God of Israel, to whom they had been sacrificed ; and those that 'ate of the sacrifices' offered to idols, had a 'fellowship with devils,' to whom those sacrifices were offered, ver. 20. Those that partake of the sacraments in a due manner, have a communion with that God to whom it was sacrificed, and a communion with that body which was sacrificed to God ; not that the substance of that body and blood is wrapped up in the elements, or that the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, but as they represent him, and by virtue of the institution are in estimation himself, his own body and blood, by the same reason as he is called 'Christ our passover,' 1 Cor. v. 7, he may be called Christ our supper ; for as they are so reckoned to an unworthy receiver, as if they were the real body and blood of Christ, because by his not discerning the Lord's body in it, or making light of it as common bread, he is judged 'guilty of the body and blood of Christ,' guilty of treating him in as base a manner as the Jews did when they crowned him with thorns, 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29 ; by the same reason they must be reckoned to a worthy receiver as the very body and blood of Christ ; so that as the unworthy receiver 'eats and drinks damnation,' the worthy receiver eats and drinks salvation. It would be an empty mystery, and unworthy of an institution by divine goodness, if there were not some communion with Christ in it. There would be some kind of deceit in the precept, 'Take, eat and drink, this is my body and blood,' if there were not a conveyance of spiritual vital influences to our souls ; for the natural end of eating and drinking is the nourishment and increase of the body, and preservation of life, by that which we eat and drink. The infinite wise, gracious, and true God, would never give us empty figures without accomplishing that which is signified by them, and suitable to them. How great is this goodness of God ! He would have his Son in us, one with us, straitly joined to us, as if we were his proper flesh and blood. In the incarnation, divine goodness united him to our nature ; in the sacrament it doth in a sort unite

him with his purchased privileges to our persons ; we have not a communion with a part or a member of his body, or a drop of his blood, but with his whole body and blood, represented in every part of the elements. The angels in the heaven enjoy not so great a privilege ; they have the honour to be under him as their head, but not that of having him for their food ; they behold him, but they do not taste him ; and certainly that goodness that hath condescended so much to our weakness, would impart it to us in a very glorious manner were we capable of it ; but because a man cannot behold the light of the sun in its full splendour by reason of the infirmities of his eyes, he must behold it by the help of a glass, and such a communication through a coloured and opaque glass, is as real from the sun itself, though not so glorious, but more shrouded and obscure. It is the same light that shines through that medium, as spreads itself gloriously in the open air, though the one be masked and the other open-faced.

To conclude this ; by the way we may take notice of the neglect of this ordinance. If it be a token of divine goodness to appoint it, it is no sign of our estimation of divine goodness to neglect it. He that values the kindness of his friend will accept of his invitation, if there be not some strong impediments in the way, or so much familiarity with him that his refusal upon a light occasion would not be unkindly taken. But though God put on the disposition of a friend to us, yet he loseth not the authority of a sovereign ; and the humble familiarity he invites us to, doth not diminish the condition and duty of a subject. A sovereign prince would not take it well, if a favourite should refuse the offered honour of his table. The viands of God are not to be slighted. Can we live better upon our poor pittance than upon his dainties ? Did not divine goodness condescend in it to the weakness of our faith, and shall we conceit our faith stronger than God thinks it ? If he thought fit by those seals to make a deed of gift to us, shall we be so unmannerly to him, and such enemies to the security he offers us over and above his word, as not to accept it ? Are we unwilling to have our souls inflamed with love, our hearts filled with comfort, and armed against the attempts of our enemies ? It is true there is a guilt of the body and blood of Christ contracted by a slightness in the manner of attending ; is it not also contracted by a refusal and neglect ? What is the language of it ? If it speaks not the death of Christ in vain, it speaks the institution of this ordinance as the remembrance of his death to be a vanity, and no mark of divine goodness. Let us therefore put such a value upon divine goodness in this affair, as to be willing to receive the conveyances of his love, and fresh engagements of our duty ; the one is due from us to the kindness of our friend, and the other belongs to our duty as his subjects.

(8.) By this redemption God restores us to a more excellent condition than Adam had in innocence. Christ was sent by divine goodness, not only to restore the life Adam's sin had stripped us of, but to give it more abundantly than Adam's standing could have conveyed it to us : John x. 10, ' I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' More abundantly for strength, more abundantly for duration, a life abounding with greater felicity and glory ; the substance of those better promises of the new covenant than what attended the old. There are fuller streams of grace by Christ than flowed to Adam, or could flow from Adam. As Christ never restored any to health and strength while he was in the world, but he gave them a greater measure of both than they had before, so there is the same kindness, no question, manifested in our spiritual condition. Adam's life might have preserved us, but Adam's death could not have rescued either himself or his posterity ; but in our redemption we have a

redeemer, who hath died to expiate our sins, and so crowned with life to save, Rom. v. 10, and for ever preserve our persons. 'Because I live, ye shall live also,' John xiv. 19, so that by redeeming goodness the life of a believer is as perpetual as the life of the redeemer Christ. Adam, though innocent, was under the danger of perishing; a believer, though culpable, is above the fears of mutability. Adam had a holiness in his nature, but capable of being lost; by Christ believers have a holiness bestowed, not capable of being rifled, but which will remain till it be at last fully perfected. Though they have a power to change in their nature, yet they are above an actual final change, by the indulgence of divine grace. Adam stood by himself; believers stand in a root impossible to be shaken or corrupted. By this means 'the promise is sure to all the seed,' Rom. iv. 16. Christ is a stronger person than Adam, who can never break covenant with God, and the truth of God will never break covenant with him. We are united to a more excellent head than Adam. Instead of a root merely human, we have a root divine, as well as human. In him, we had the righteousness of a creature merely human; in this, we have a righteousness divine, the righteousness of God-man; the stock is no longer in our hands, but in the hands of one that cannot embezzle it, or forfeit it. Divine goodness hath deposited it strongly for our security. The stamp we receive by the divine goodness from the second Adam is more noble than that we should have received from the first, had he remained in his created state. Adam was formed of the dust of the earth, and the new man is formed by the incorruptible seed of the word. And at the resurrection the body of man shall be endued with better qualities than Adam had at creation; they shall be like that glorious body, which is in heaven in union with the person of the Son of God, Phil. iii. 21. Adam at the best had but an earthly body, but the Lord from heaven hath a heavenly body, the image of which shall be borne by the redeemed ones, as they have borne the image of the earthly, 1 Cor. xv. 47-49. Adam had the society of beasts; redeemed ones expect by divine goodness in redemption a commerce with angels; as they are reconciled to them by his death, they shall certainly come to converse with them at the consummation of their happiness. As they are made of one family, so they will have a peculiar intimacy. Adam had a paradise, and redeemed ones a heaven provided for them, a happier place with a richer furniture. It is much to give so complete a paradise to innocent Adam, but more to give heaven to an ungrateful Adam, and his rebellious posterity. It had been abundant goodness to have restored us to the same condition in that paradise, from whence we were ejected; but a super-abundant goodness to bestow upon us a better habitation in heaven, which we could never have expected. How great is that goodness, when by sin we were fallen to be worse than nothing, that he should raise us to be more than what we were! That restored us, not to the first step of our creation, but to many degrees of elevation beyond it; not only restores us, but prefers us; not only striking off our chains, to set us free, but clothing us with a robe of righteousness, to render us honourable; not only quenching our hell, but preparing a heaven; not regarnishing an earthly, but providing a richer palace. His goodness was so great that, after it had rescued us, it would not content itself with the old furniture, but makes all new for us in another world: a new wine to drink; a new heaven to dwell in; a more magnificent structure for our habitation. Thus bath goodness prepared for us a straiter union, a stronger life, a purer righteousness, an unshaken standing, and a fuller glory, all more excellent than was within the compass of innocent Adam's possession.

(9.) This goodness in redemption extends itself to the lower creation. It



takes in not only man, but the whole creation, except the fallen angels, and gives a participation of it to insensible creatures ; upon the account of this redemption the sun and all kind of creatures were preserved, which otherwise had sunk into destruction upon the sin of man, and ceased from their being, as man had utterly ceased from his happiness : Col. i. 17, ' By him all things consist.' The fall of man brought not only a misery upon himself, but a vanity upon the creature ; the earth groaned under a curse for his sake. They were all created for the glory of God, and the support of man in the performance of his duty, who was obliged to use them for the honour of him that created them both. Had man been true to his obligations, and used the creatures for that end, to which they were dedicated by the Creator, as God would have then rejoiced in his works, so his works would have rejoiced in the honour of answering so excellent an end. But when man lost his integrity, the creatures lost their perfection ; the honour of them was stained when they were debased to serve the lusts of a traitor, instead of supporting the duty of a subject, and employed in the defence of the vices of men against the precepts and authority of their common sovereign. This was a vilifying the creature, as it would be a vilifying the sword of a prince, which is for the maintenance of justice, to be used for the murder of an innocent ; and a dishonouring a royal mansion, to make it a storehouse for a dunghill. Had those things the benefit of sense, they would groan under this disgrace, and rise up in indignation against them that offered them this affront, and turned them from their proper end. When sin entered, the heavens, that were made to shine upon man, and the earth, that was made to bear and nourish an innocent creature, were now subjected to serve a rebellious creature. And as a man turned against God, so he made those instruments against God, to serve his enmity, luxury, sensuality. Hence the creatures are said to groan : Rom. viii. 21, ' The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.' They would really groan, had they understanding to be sensible of the outrage done them.

' The whole creation.' It is the pang of universal nature, the agony of the whole creation, to be alienated from the original use for which they were intended, and be disjointed from their end, to serve the disloyalty of a rebel. The drunkard's cup, the glutton's table, the adulterer's bed, and the proud man's purple, would groan against the abuser of them. But when all the fruits of redemption shall be completed, the goodness of God shall pour itself upon the creatures, ' deliver them from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God ' ; they shall be reduced to their true end, and returned in their original harmony. As the creation doth passionately groan under its vanity, so it doth ' earnestly expect and wait for its deliverance at the time of the manifestation of the sons of God,' ver. 19. The manifestation of the sons of God is the attainment of the liberty of the creature. They shall be freed from the vanity under which they are enslaved. As it entered by sin, it shall vanish upon the total removal of sin. What use they were designed for in paradise, they will have afterwards, except that of the nourishment of men, who shall be as angels, neither eating nor drinking. The glory of God shall be seen and contemplated in them. It can hardly be thought that God made the world to be, a little moment after he had reared it, sullied by the sin of man, and turned from its original end, without thoughts of a restoration of it to its true end, as well as man to his lost happiness. The world was made for man. Man hath not yet enjoyed the creature in the first intention of them ; sin made an interruption in that fruition. As redemption restores man to his true end, so it restores the creatures to their true use. The restoration of the world to its beauty and

order was the design of the divine goodness in the coming of Christ, as it is intimated in Isa. xi. 6-9. As he 'came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it,' so he came not to destroy the creatures, but to repair them; to restore to God the honour and pleasure of the creation, and restore to the creatures their felicity, in restoring their order. The fall corrupted it, and the full redemption of men restores it. The last time is called not a time of destruction, but a 'time of restitution, and that 'of all things,' Acts iii. 21; of universal nature, the main part of the creation at least. All those things which were the effects of sin will be abolished; the removal of the cause beats down the effect. The disorder and unruliness of the creature, arising from the venom of man's transgression, all the fierceness of one creature against another, shall vanish. The world shall be nothing but an universal smile. Nature shall put on triumphant vestments. There shall be no affrighting thunders, choking mists, venomous vapours, or poisonous plants; it would not else be a restitution of all things. They are now subject to be wasted by judgments for the sin of their possessor, but the perfection of man's redemption shall free them from every misery. They have an advancement at the present, for they are under a more glorious head, as being the possession of Christ, the heavenly Adam, much superior to the first, as it is the glory of a person to be a servant to a prince, rather than a peasant. And afterwards they shall be elevated to a better state, sharing in man's happiness, as well as they did in his misery, as servants are interested in the good fortune of their master, and bettered by his advance in his prince's favour. As man in his first creation was mutable and liable to sin, so the creatures were liable to vanity; but as man by grace shall be freed from the mutability, so shall the creatures be freed from the fears of an invasion by the vanity that sullied them before. The condition of the servants shall be suited to that of their lord, for whom they were designed. Hence all creatures are called upon to rejoice upon the perfection of salvation, and the appearance of Christ's royal authority in the world, Ps. xcvi. 11, 12, xcvi. 7, 8. If they were to be destroyed, there would be no ground to invite them to triumph. Thus doth divine goodness spread its kind arms over the whole creation.

3. The third thing is the goodness of God in his government. That goodness that despised not their creation, doth not despise their conduct. The same goodness that was the head that framed them, is the helm that guides them; his goodness hovers over the whole frame, either to prevent any wild disorders unsuitable to his creating end, or to conduct them to those ends which might illustrate his wisdom and goodness to his creatures. His goodness doth no less incline him to provide for them, than to frame them. It is the natural inclination of man to love what is purely the birth of his own strength or skill. He is fond of preserving his own inventions, as well as laborious in inventing them. It is the glory of a man to preserve them, as well as to produce them. God loves everything which he hath made, which love could not be without a continued diffusiveness to them, suitable to the end for which he made them. It would be a vain goodness, if it did not interest itself in managing the world, as well as erecting it. Without his government, everything in the world would jumble against one another. The beauty of it would be more defaced, it would be an unruly mass, a confused chaos rather than a κόσμος, a comely world. If divine goodness respected it when it was as nothing, it would much more respect it when it was something by the sole virtue of his power and good will to it, without any motive from anything else than himself, because there was nothing else but himself. But since he sees his own stamp in things without himself in

the creature, which is a kind of motive or moving object to divine goodness to preserve it, when there was nothing without himself that could be any motive to him to create it; as when God hath created a creature, and it falls into misery, that misery of the creature, though it doth not necessitate his mercy, yet meeting with such an affection as mercy in his nature, is a moving object to excite it; as the repentance of Nineveh drew forth the exercise of his pity and preserving goodness. Certainly since God is good, he is bountiful; and if bountiful, he is provident. He would seem to envy and malign his creatures, if he did not provide for them, while he intends to use them. But infinite goodness cannot be affected with envy; for all envy implies a want of that good in ourselves, which we regard with so evil an eye in another. But God being infinitely blessed, hath not the want of any good, that can be a rise to such an uncomely disposition. The Jews thought that divine goodness extended only to them in an immediate and particular care, and left all other nations and things to the guidance of angels. But the psalmist, Ps. cvii., a psalm calculated for the celebration of this perfection, in the continued course of his providence throughout all ages of the world, ascribes to divine goodness immediately all the advantages men meet with. He helps them in their actions, presides over their motions, inspects their several conditions, labours day and night in a perpetual care of them. The whole life of the world is linked together by divine goodness. Everything is ordered by him in the place where he hath set it, without which the world would be stripped of that excellency it hath by creation.

(1.) First, This goodness is evident in the care he hath of all creatures. There is a peculiar goodness to his people; but this takes not away his general goodness to the world. Though a master of a family hath a choicer affection to those that have an affinity to him in nature, and stand in a nearer relation, as his wife, children, servants; yet he hath a regard to his cattle, and other creatures he nourisheth in his house. All things are not only before his eyes, but in his bosom; he is the nurse of all creatures, supplying their wants, and sustaining them from that nothing they tend to. Ps. civ. 24, 'The earth is full of his riches,' not a creek or cranny but partakes of it. Abundant goodness daily hovers over it, as well as hatched it. The whole world swims in the rich bounty of the Creator, as the fish do in the largeness of the sea, and birds in the spaciousness of the air.\* The goodness of God is the river that waters the whole earth. As a lifeless picture casts its eye upon every one in the room, so doth a living God upon everything in the world. And as the sun illuminates all things which are capable of partaking of its light, and diffuseth its beams to all things which are capable of receiving them, so doth God spread his wings over the whole creation, and neglects nothing wherein he sees a mark of his first creating goodness.

His goodness is seen,

[1.] In preserving all things. Ps. xxxvi. 6, 'O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.' Not only man, but beasts, and beasts as well as men; man, as the most excellent creature, and beasts as being serviceable to man, and instruments of his worldly happiness. He continues the species of all things, concurs with them in their distinct offices, and quickens the womb of nature. He visits man every day, and makes him feel the effects of his providence, in 'giving him fruitful seasons, and filling his heart with food and gladness,' Acts xiv. 17, as witnesses of his liberality and kindness to man. 'The earth is visited and watered by the river of God. He settles the furrows of the earth, and makes it soft with showers,' that the corn may

\* Gulielmus Parasien, p. 184.

be nourished in its womb, and spring up to maturity. 'He crowns the year with his goodness, and his paths drop fatness. The little hills rejoice on every side; the pastures are clothed with flocks, and the valleys are covered over with corn,' as the psalmist elegantly, Ps. lxxv. 9, 10, and Ps. cvii. 35, 36. He waters the ground by his showers, and preserves the little seed from the rapine of animals. He draws not out 'the evil arrows of famine,' as the expression is, Ezek. v. 16. Every day shines with new beams of his divine goodness. The vastness of this city, and the multitudes of living souls in it, is an astonishing argument. What streams of nourishing necessities are daily conveyed to it! Every mouth hath bread to sustain it, and among all the number of poor in the bowels and skirts of it, how rare is it to hear of any starved to death for want of it! Every day he 'spreads a table' for us, and that with varieties, and 'fills our cups,' Ps. xxiii. 5. He shortens not his hand, nor withdraws his bounty; the increase of one year by his blessing, restores what was spent by the former. He is the 'strength of our life,' Ps. xxvii. 1, continuing the vigour of our limbs, and the health of our bodies; secures us from 'terrors by night, and the arrows of diseases that fly by day,' Ps. xci. 5; 'sets a hedge' about our estates, Job. i. 10, and defends them against the attempts of violence; preserves our houses from flames that might consume them, and our persons from the dangers that lie in wait for them; watcheth over us 'in our goings out, and our comings in,' Ps. cxxi. 8, and waylays a thousand dangers we know not of; and employs the most glorious creatures in heaven, in the service of mean men upon earth, Ps. xci. 11, not by a faint order, but a pressing charge over them, to 'keep them in all his ways.' Those that are his immediate servants before his throne, he sends to minister to them that were once his rebels. By an angel he conducted the affairs of Abraham, Gen. xxiv. 7; and by an angel secured the life of Ishmael, Gen. xxi. 17. Glorious angels for mean man, holy angels for impure man, powerful angels for weak man. How, in the midst of great dangers, doth his sudden light dissipate our great darkness, and create a deliverance out of nothing! How often is he found a present help in time of trouble! When all other assistance seems to stand at a distance, he flies to us beyond our expectations, and raises us up on the sudden from the pit of our dejectedness, as well as that of our danger, exceeding our wishes, and shooting beyond our desires as well as our deserts. How often, in a time of confusion, doth he preserve an indefensible place from the attacks of enemies, like a spark in the midst of a tempestuous sea! The rage falls upon other places round about them, and by a secret efficacy of divine goodness is not able to touch them. He hath peculiar preservations for his Israel in Egypt, and his Lots in Sodom, his Daniels in the lions' dens, and his children in a fiery furnace. He hath a tenderness for all, but a peculiar affection to those that are in covenant with him.

[2.] The goodness of God is seen in taking care of the animals and inanimate things. Divine goodness embraceth in its arms the lowest worm as well as the loftiest cherubim; he provides food for the crying raven, Ps. cxlvii. 9, and a prey for the appetite of the hungry lion, Ps. civ. 21; 'He opens his hand, and fills with good those innumerable creeping things, both small and great beasts; they are all waiters upon him, and all are satisfied by their bountiful master,' Ps. civ. 25-28. They are better provided for by the hand of heaven than the best favourite is by an earthly prince; for 'they are filled with good.' He hath made channels in the wildest deserts for the watering of beasts, and trees for the nests and habitations of birds, ver. 10, 12, 17. As a lawgiver to the Jews, he took care that the poor beast should not be abused by the cruelty of man; he provided for the ease

of the labouring beast in that command of the Sabbath wherein he provided for his own service ; the cattle was to do no work on it, Exod. xx. 10. He ordered that the mouth of the ox should not be muzzled while it trod out the corn, Deut. xxv. 4, it being the manner of those countries to separate the corn from the stalk by that means, as we do in this by thrashing ; regarding it as a part of cruelty to deprive the poor beast of tasting, and satisfying itself with that which he was so officious by his labour to prepare for the use of man. And when any met with a nest of young birds, though they might take the young to their use, they were forbidden to seize upon the dam, that she might not lose the objects of her affection and her own liberty in one day, Deut. xxii. 6.

And see how God enforceth this precept with a threatening of a shortness of life, if they transgressed it ! ver. 7, 'Thou shalt let the dam go, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.' He would revenge the cruelty to dumb creatures with the shortness of the oppressor's life ; nor would he have cruelty used to creatures that were separated for his worship ; he therefore provides that a cow or an ewe and their young ones should not be killed for sacrifice in one day, Lev. xxii. 28 : all which precepts, say the Jews, are to teach men mercifulness to their beasts ; so much doth divine goodness bow down itself to take notice of those mean creatures which men have so little regard to, but for their own advantage ; yea, he is so good, that he would have worship declined for a time in favour of a distressed beast ; the helping a sheep, or an ox, or an ass out of a pit was indulged them even on the Sabbath day, a day God had peculiarly sanctified and ordered for his service, Mat. xii. 11, Luke xiv. 5. In this case he seems to remit for a time the rights of the Deity for the rescue of a mere animal. His goodness extends not only to those kind of creatures that have life, but to the insensible ones ; he clothes the grass, and arrays the lilies of the field with a greater glory than Solomon had upon his throne, Mat. vi. 28, 29 ; and such care he had of those trees which bore fruit for the maintenance of man or beast, that he forbids any injury to be offered to them, and bars the rapine and violence which by soldiers used to be practised, Deut. xx. 19, though it were to promote the conquest of their enemy. How much goodness is it that he should think of so small a thing as man ! How much more that he should concern himself in things that seem so petty as beasts and trees ! Persons seated in a sovereign throne think it a debasing of their dignity to regard little things ; but God, who is infinitely greater in majesty above the mightiest potentate, and the highest angel, yet is so infinitely good as to employ his divine thoughts about the meanest things. He who possesses the praises of angels, leaves not off the care of the meanest creatures ; and that majesty that dwells in a pure heaven, and an unconceivable light, stoops to provide for the ease of those creatures that lie and lodge in the dirt and dung of the earth. How should we be careful not to use those unmercifully which God takes such care of in his law, and not to distrust that goodness that opens his hand so liberally to creatures of another rank !

[3.] The goodness of God is seen in taking care of the meanest rational creatures, as servants and criminals. He provided for the liberty of slaves, and would not have their chains continue longer than the seventh year, unless they would voluntarily continue under the power of their masters ; and that upon pain of his displeasure, and the withdrawing his blessing, Deut. xv. 18 ; and though by the laws of many nations masters had an absolute power of life and death over their servants, yet God provided that no member should be lamed, not an eye, no, nor a tooth struck out, but the

master was to pay for his folly and fury the price of the liberty of his servants, Exod. xxi. 26, 27. He would not suffer the abused servant to be any longer under the power of that man, that had not humanity to use him as one of the same kindred and blood with himself. And though those servants might be never so wicked, yet when unjustly afflicted, God would interest himself as their guardian in their protection and delivery. And when a poor slave had been provoked by the severity of his master's fury to turn fugitive from him, he was by divine order not to be delivered up again to his master's fury, but dwell in that city and with that person to whom he had fled for refuge, Deut. xxiii. 15, 16. And when public justice was to be administered upon the lesser sort of criminals, the goodness of God ordered the number of blows not to exceed forty, and left not the fury of man to measure out the punishment to excess, Deut. xxv. 3. And in any just quarrel against a provoking and injuring enemy, he ordered them not to ravage with the sword till they had summoned a rendition of the place, Deut. xx. 10. And as great a care he took of the poor, that they should have the gleanings both of the vineyard and field, Lev. xix. 10, xxiii. 22, and not be forced to pay usury for the money lent them, Exod. xxii. 25.

[4.] His goodness is seen in taking care of the wickedest persons. 'The earth is full of his goodness,' Ps. xxxiii. 5. The wicked as well as the good enjoy it; they that dare lift up their hands against heaven in the posture of rebels, as well as those that lift up their eyes in the condition of suppliants. To do good to a criminal far surmounts that goodness that flows down upon an innocent object. Now God is not only good to those that have some degrees of goodness, but to those that have the greatest degrees of wickedness, to men that turn his liberality into affronts of him, and have scarce an appetite to anything but the violation of his authority and goodness. Though upon the fall of Adam we have lost the pleasant habitation of paradise, and the creatures made for our use are fallen from their original excellency and sweetness, yet he hath not left the world utterly incommodious for us, but yet stores it with things not only for the preservation, but delight of those that make their whole lives invectives against this good God. Manna fell from heaven for the rebellious as well as for the obedient Israelites. Cain as well as Abel, and Esau as well as Jacob, had the influence of his sun, and the benefits of his showers. The world is yet a kind of paradise to the veriest beasts among mankind; the earth affords its riches, the heavens its showers, and the sun its light to those that injure and blaspheme him: Mat. v. 45, 'He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.' The wickedest breathe in his air, walk upon his earth, and drink of his water as well as the best. The sun looks with as pleasant and bright an eye upon a rebellious Absalom as a righteous David; the earth yields its plants and medicines to one as well as to the other; it is seldom that he deprives any of the faculties of their souls, or any members of their bodies. God distributes his blessings where he might shoot his thunders, and darts his light on those who deserve an eternal darkness, and presents the good things of the earth to those that merit the miseries of hell; for 'the earth and the fulness thereof is the Lord's, Ps. xxiv. 1; everything in it is his in propriety, ours in trust; it is *his* corn, *his* wine, Hosea ii. 8; he never divested himself of the propriety, though he grants us the use; and by those good things he supports multitudes of wicked men, not one or two, but the whole shoal of them in the world; for he is 'the Saviour of all men,' 1 Tim. iv. 10, *i. e.* is the preserver of all men. And as he created them, when he foresaw they would be wicked, so he provides for them when he beholds them in their ungodliness. The ingrati-

tude of man stops not the current of his bounty, nor tires his liberal hand ; howsoever unprofitable and injurious men are to him, he is liberal to them ; and his goodness is the more admirable by how much the more the unthankfulness of men is provoking ; he sometimes affords to the worst a greater portion of these earthly goods ; they often swim in wealth when others pine away their lives in poverty. And the silkworm yields its bowels to make purple for tyrants, while the oppressed scarce have from the sheep wool enough to cover their nakedness ; and though he furnished men with those good things upon no other account than what princes do when they nourish criminals in a prison till the time of their execution, it is a mark of his goodness. Is it not the kindness of a prince to treat his rebels deliciously ? to give them the liberty of the prison, and the enjoyment of the delights of the place, rather than to load their legs with fetters, and lodge them in a dark and loathsome dungeon, till he orders them for their crime to be conducted to the scaffold or gibbet ? Since God is thus kind to the vilest men, whose meanness by reason of sin is beyond that of any other creature, as to shoot such rays of goodness upon them, how unexpressible would be the expressions of his goodness if the divine image were as pure and bright upon them, as it was upon innocent Adam !

(2.) His goodness is evident in the preservation of human society. It belongs to his power that he is able to do it, but to his goodness that he is willing to do it.

[1.] This goodness appears, in prescribing rules for it. The moral law, *Exod. xx. 1, 2*, consists but of ten precepts, and there are more of them ordered for the support of human society than for the adoration and honour of himself : four for the rights of God, and six for the rights of man, and his security in his authority, relations, life, goods, and reputation ; superiors not to be dishonoured, life not to be invaded, chastity not to be stained, goods not to be filched, good name not to be cracked by false witnesses, nor anything belonging to our neighbour to be coveted. And in the whole Scripture, not only that which was calculated for the Jews, but compiled for the whole world, he hath fixed rules for the ordering all relations ; magistrates and subjects, parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, rich and poor, find their distinct qualifications and duties. There would be a paradisiacal state, if men had a goodness to observe what God hath had a goodness to order, for the strengthening the sinews of human society. The world would not groan under oppressing tyrants, nor princes tremble under discontented subjects, or mighty rebels ; children would not be provoked to anger by the unreasonableness of their parents, nor parents sink under grief by the rebellion of their children ; masters would not tyrannize over the meanest of their servants, nor servants invade the authority of their masters.

[2.] The goodness of God in the preserving human society, is seen in setting a magistracy to preserve it. Magistracy is from God in its original, the charter was drawn up in paradise. Civil subordination must have been, had man remained in innocence ; but the charter was more explicitly renewed and enlarged at the restoration of the world after the deluge, and given out to man under the broad seal of heaven : *Gen. ix. 6*, ' Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' The command of shedding the blood of a murderer was a part of his goodness, to secure the lives of those that bore his image. Magistrates are ' the shields of the earth,' but ' they belong to God,' *Ps. xlvii. 9*. They are fruits of his goodness in their original and authority. Were there no magistracy, there would be no government, no security to any man under his own vine and fig-tree ; the

world would be a den of wild beasts preying upon one another, every one would do what seems good in his eyes. The loss of government is a judgment God brings upon a nation, when men become as the fishes of the sea, to devour one another, because they have no ruler over them, Hab. i. 14. Private dissensions will break out into public disorders and combustions.

[3.] The goodness of God, in the preservation of human society, is seen in the restraints of the passions of men. He sets bounds to the passions of men, as well as to the rollings of the sea, Ps. lxx. 7, 'He stilleth the noise of the waves, and the tumults of the people.' Though God hath erected a magistracy to stop the breaking out of those floods of licentiousness which swell in the hearts of men, yet if God should not hold stiff reins on the necks of those tumultuous and foaming passions, the world would be a place of unruly confusion, and hell triumph upon earth. A crazy state would be quickly broke in pieces by boisterous nature. The tumults of a people could no more be quelled by the force of man, than the rage of the sea by a puff of breath; without divine goodness, neither the wisdom nor watchfulness of the magistrates, nor the industry of officers, could preserve a state. The laws of men would be too slight to curb the lusts of men, if the goodness of God did not restrain them by a secret hand, and interweave their temporal security with observance of those laws. The sons of Belial did murmur when Saul was chosen king; and that they did no more was the goodness of God, for the preservation of human society. If God did not restrain the impetuousness of men's lusts, they would be the entire ruin of human society; their lusts would render them as bad as beasts, and change the world into a savage wilderness.

[4.] The goodness of God is seen, in the preservation of human society, in giving various inclinations to men, for public advantage. If all men had an inclination to one science or art, they would all stand idle spectators of one another; but God hath bestowed various dispositions and gifts upon men, for the promoting the common good, that they may not only be useful to themselves, but to society. He will have none idle, none unuseful, but every one acting in a due place, according to their measures, for the good of others.

[5.] The goodness of God is seen in the witness he bears against those sins that disturb human society. In those cases he is pleased to interest himself in a more signal manner, to cool those that make it their business to overturn the order he hath established for the good of the earth. He doth not so often in this world punish those faults committed immediately against his own honour, as those that put the world into a hurry and confusion; as a good governor is more merciful to crimes against himself than those against his community. It is observed that the most turbulent seditious persons in a state come to most violent ends; as Korah, Adonijah, Zimri. Ahithophel draws Absalom's sword against David and Israel, and the next is, he twists a halter for himself. Absalom heads a party against his father, and God, by a goodness to Israel, hangs him up, and prevents not its safety by David's indulgence, and a future rebellion, had life been spared by the fondness of his father. His providence is more evident in discovering disturbers, and the causes that move them; in defeating their enterprises, and digging the contrivers out of their caverns and lurking-holes. In such cases God doth so act, and use such methods, that he silenceth any creature from challenging any partnership with him in the discovery. He doth more severely in this world correct those actions that unlink the mutual assistance between man and man, and the charitable and kind correspondence he would have kept up. The sins for which 'the



wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience' in this world, are of this sort, Col. iii. 5, 6. And when princes will be oppressing the people, God will be 'pouring contempt on the princes, and set the poor on high from affliction,' Ps. cvii. 40, 41. An evidence of God's care and kindness in the preserving human society, is those strange discoveries of murders, though never so clandestine and subtilely committed, more than of any other crime among men. Divine care never appears more than in bringing those hidden and injurious works of darkness to light, and a due punishment.

[6.] His goodness is seen in ordering mutual offices to one another against the current of men's passions. Upon this account, he ordered in his laws for the government of the Israelites, that a man should reduce the wandering beast of his enemy to the hand of his rightful proprietor, though he were a provoking enemy; and also help the poor beast, that belonged to one that hated him, when he saw him sink under his burden, Exod. xxiii. 4, 5. When mutual assistance was necessary, he would not have men considered as enemies, or considered as wicked, but as of the same blood with ourselves, that we might be serviceable to one another for the preservation of life and goods.

[7.] His goodness is seen in remitting something of his own right, for the preserving a due dependence and subjection. He declines the right he had to the vows of a minor, or one under the power of another, waiving what he might challenge by the voluntary obligation of his creature, to keep up the due order between parents and children, husbands and wives, superiors and inferiors. Those that were under the power of another, as a child under his parents, or a wife under her husband, if they had vowed a vow unto the Lord which concerned his honour and worship, it was void without the approbation of that person under whose charge they were, Num. xxx. 3, 4, &c. Though God was the Lord of every man's goods, and men but his stewards, and though he might have taken to himself what another had offered by a vow, since whatsoever could be offered was God's own, though it was not the party's own who offered it, yet God would not have himself adored by his creature to the prejudice of the necessary ties of human society. He lays aside what he might challenge by his sovereign dominion, that there might not be any breach of that regular order which was necessary for the preservation of the world. If divine goodness did not thus order things, he would not do the part of a rector of the world. The beauty of the world would be much defaced, it would be a confused mass of men and women, or rather beasts and bedlams. Order renders every city, every nation, yea, the whole earth beautiful. This is an effect of divine goodness.

(3.) His goodness is evident in encouraging anything of moral goodness in the world. Though moral goodness cannot claim an eternal reward, yet it hath been many times rewarded with a temporal happiness. He hath often signally rewarded acts of honesty, justice, and fidelity, and punished the contrary by his judgments, to deter man from such an unworthy practice, and encourage others to what was comely and of a general good report in the world. Ahab's humiliation put a demurrer to God's judgments intended against him, and some ascribe the great victories and success of the Romans, to that justice which was observed among themselves. Baruch was but an amanuensis to the prophet Jeremiah to write his prophecy, and very despondent of his own welfare, Jer. xlv. 13. God upon that account provides for his safety, and rewards the industry of his service with the security of his person. He was not a statesman, to declare against the corrupt counsels of them that sat at the helm; nor a prophet, to declare against their profane practices, but the prophet's scribe; and as he writes in God's service the

prophecies revealed to the prophet, God writes his name in the roll of those that were designed for preservation in that deluge of judgments which were to come upon that nation. Epicurus complained of the administration of God, that the virtuous moralist had not sufficient smiles of divine favour, nor the swinish sensualist frowns of divine indignation. But what if they have not always that confluence of outward wealth and pleasures, but remain in the common level ! Yet they have the happiness and satisfaction of a clear reputation, the esteem of men, and the secret applause of their enemies, besides the inward ravishments upon an exercise of virtue, and the commendatory subscription of their own hearts, a dainty the vicious man knows not of ; they have an inward applause from God as a reward of divine goodness, instead of those racks of conscience upon which the profane are sometimes stretched. He will not let the worst men do him any service (though they never intended in the act of service him, but themselves) without giving them their wages. He will not let them hit him in the teeth, as if he were beholden to them. If Nebuchadnezzar be the instrument of God's judgments against Tyrus and Israel, he will not only give him that rich city, but a richer country, Egypt, the granary of her neighbours, a wages above his work. In this is divine goodness eminent, since in the most moral actions, as there is something beautiful, so there is something mixed, hateful to the infinitely exact holiness of the divine nature ; yet he will not let that which is pleasing to him go unrewarded, and defeat the expectations of men, as men do with those they employ, when, for one flaw in an action, they deny them the reward due for the other part. God encouraged and kept up morality in the cities of the Gentiles, for the entertainment of a further goodness in the doctrine of the gospel, when it should be published among them.

(4.) Divine goodness is eminent in providing a Scripture as a rule to guide us, and continuing it in the world. If man be a rational creature, governable by a law, can it be imagined there should be no revelation of that law to him ? Man, by the light of reason, must needs confess himself to be in another condition than he was by creation, when he first came out of the hands of God ; and can it be thought that God should keep up the world under so many sins against the light of nature, and bestow so many providential influences to invite men to return to him, and acquaint no men in the world with the means of that return ? Would he exact an obedience of men, as their consciences witness he doth, and furnish them with no rules to guide them in the darkness, they cannot but acknowledge that they have contracted ? No ; divine goodness hath otherwise provided. This Bible we have, is his word and rule ! Had it been a falsity and imposture, would that goodness that watches over the world have continued it so long ? That goodness that overthrew the burdensome rites of Moses, and expelled the foolish idolatry of the Pagans, would have discovered the imposture of this, had it not been a transcript of his own will. Whatever mistakes he suffers to remain in the world, what goodness had there been to suffer this anciently among the Jews, and afterwards to open it to the whole world, to abuse men in religion and worship, which so nearly concerned himself and his own honour, that the world should be deceived by the devil, without a remedy, in the morning of its appearance ! It hath been honoured and admired by some heathens when they have cast their eyes upon it, and their natural light made them behold some footsteps of a divinity in it. If this, therefore, be not a divine prescript, let any that deny it bring as good arguments for any book else, as can be brought for this. Now, the publishing this is an argument of divine goodness ; it is designed to win the affections of beggarly man, to be espoused to a God of eternal blessedness and immense

riches. It speaks words in season ; no doubts but it resolves, no spiritual distemper but it cures, no condition but it hath a comfort to suit it. It is a garden which the hand of divine bounty hath planted for us. In it he condescends to shadow himself in those expressions that render him in some manner intelligible to us. Had God wrote in a loftiness of style suitable to the greatness of his majesty, his writing had been as little understood by us, as the brightness of his glory can be beheld by us. But he draws phrases from our affairs to express his mind to us ! He incarnates himself in his word to our minds, before his Son was incarnate in the flesh to the eyes of men. He ascribes to himself eyes, ears, hands, that we might have, from the consideration of ourselves and the whole human nature, a conception of his perfections ; he assumes to himself the members of our bodies, to direct our understandings in the knowledge of his Deity. This is his goodness !

Again, though the Scripture was written upon several occasions, yet, in the dictating of it, the goodness of God cast his eye upon the last ages of the world : 1 Cor. x. 11, ' They are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.' It was given to the Israelites, but divine goodness intended it for the future Gentiles. The old writings of the prophets were thus designed, much more the later writings of the apostles. Thus did divine goodness think of us, and prepare his records for us, before we were in the world ; these he hath written plain for our instruction, and wrapped up in them what is necessary for our salvation. It is clear to inform our understanding, and rich to comfort us in our misery ; it is a light to guide us, and a cordial to refresh us ; it is a lamp to our feet, and a medicine for our diseases ; a purifier of our filth, and a restorer of us in our faintings. He hath by his goodness sealed the truth of it, by his efficacy on multitudes of men ; he hath made it the ' word of regeneration,' James i. 18. Men, wilder and more monstrous than beasts, have been tamed and changed by the power of it. It hath raised multitudes of dead men from a grave fuller of horror than any earthly one. Again, goodness was in all ages sending his letters of advice and counsel from heaven, till the canon of Scripture was closed. Sometimes he wrote to chide a froward people, sometimes to cheer up an oppressed and disconsolate people, according to the state wherein they were, as we may observe by the several seasons wherein parts of Scripture were written. It was his goodness that he first revealed anything of his will after the fall ; it was a further degree of goodness, that he would add more cubits to its stature ; before he would lay aside his pencil, it grew up to that bulk wherein we have it. And his goodness is further seen in the preserving it. He hath triumphed over the powers that opposed it, and shewed himself good in the instruments that propagated it ; he hath maintained it against the blasts of hell, and spread it in all languages against the obstructions of men and devils. The sun of his word is by his kindness preserved in our horizon, as well as the sun in the heavens. How admirable is divine goodness ! He hath sent his Son to die for us, and his written word to instruct us, and his Spirit to edge it for an entrance into our souls. He hath opened the womb of the earth to nourish us, and sent down the records of heaven to direct us in our pilgrimage ; he hath provided the earth for our habitation while we are travellers, and sent his word to acquaint us with a felicity at the end of our journey, and the way to attain in another world what we want in this, viz., a happy immortality.

(5.) His goodness in his government is evident, in conversions of men. Though his work be wrought by his power, yet his power was first solicited by his goodness. It was his rich goodness that he would employ his power

to pierce the scales of a heart as hard as those of the leviathan. It was this that opened the ears of men to hear him, and draws them from the hurry of worldly cares, and the charms of sensual pleasures; and, which is the top of all, the imposture and cheats of their own hearts. It is this that sends a spark of his wrath into men's consciences, to put them to a stand in sin, that he might not send down a shower of brimstone eternally to consume their persons. This it was that first shewed you the excellency of the Redeemer, and brought you to taste the sweetness of his blood, and find your security in the agonies of his death. It is his goodness to call one man and not another, to turn Paul in his course, and lay hold of no other of his companions. It is his goodness to call any, when he is not bound to call one.

[1.] It is his goodness to pitch upon mean and despicable men in the eye of the world; to call this poor publican, and overlook that proud Pharisee; this man that sits upon a dunghill, and neglect him that glisters in his purple. His majesty is not enticed by the lofty titles of men; nor, which is more worth, by the learning and knowledge of men. 'Not many wise, not many mighty,' 1 Cor. i. 26-28; not many doctors, not many lords, though some of them; but his goodness condescends to the 'base things of the world, and things which are despised.' 'The poor receive the gospel,' Mat. xi. 5, when those that are more acute, and furnished with a more apprehensive reason, are not touched by it.

[2.] The worst men. He seizeth sometimes upon men most soiled, and neglects others that seem more clean and less polluted. He turns men in their course in sin, that by their infernal practices have seemed to have gone to school to hell, and to have sucked in the sole instructions of the devil. He lays hold upon some, when they are most under actual demerit, and snatcheth them as firebrands out of the fire; as upon Paul, when fullest of rage against him; and shoots a beam of grace, where nothing could be justly expected but a thunderbolt of wrath. It is his goodness to visit any, when they lie putrefying in their loathsome lusts; to draw near to them who have been guilty of the greatest contempt of God, and the light of nature,—the murdering Manassehs, persecuting Sauls, Christ-crucifying Jews, persons in whom lusts had had a peaceable possession and empire for many years.

[3.] His goodness appears in converting men possessed with the greatest enmity against him, while he was dealing with them. All were in such a state, and framing contrivances against him, when divine goodness knocked at the door, Col. i. 21. He looked after us, when our backs were turned upon him, and sought us when we slighted him, and were a 'gainsaying people,' Rom. x. 21; when we had shaken off his convictions, and contended with our Maker, and mustered up the powers of nature against the alarms of conscience; struggled like wild bulls in a net, and blunted those darts which stuck in our souls. Not a man that is turned to him, but had lifted up the heel against his gospel-grace, as well as made light of his creating goodness. Yet it hath employed itself about such ungrateful wretches, to polish those knotty and rugged pieces for heaven; and so invincibly, that he would not have his goodness defeated by the fierceness and rebellion of the flesh, though the thing was more difficult in itself (if anything may be said to have a difficulty to omnipotency) than to make a stone live, or to turn a straw into a marble pillar. The malice of the flesh makes a man more unfit for the one, than the nature of the straw unfits it for the other.

[4.] His goodness appears in turning men, when they were pleased with

their own misery, and unable to deliver themselves ; when they preferred a hell before him, and were in love with their own vileness ; when his call was our torment, and his neglect of us had been accounted our felicity. Was it not a mighty goodness to keep the light close to our eyes, when we endeavoured to blow it out, and the corrosive near to our hearts, when we endeavoured to tear it off, being more fond of our disease than the remedy ? We should have been scalded to death with the Sodomites, had not God laid his good hand upon us, and drawn us from the approaching ruin we affected, and were loath to be freed from. And had we been displeased with our state, yet we had been as unable spiritually to raise ourselves from sin to grace, as to raise ourselves naturally from nothing to being. In this state we were when his goodness triumphed over us, when he put a hook into our nostrils, to turn us in order to our salvation, and drew us out of the pit which we had digged, when he might have left us to sink under the rigours of his justice we had merited. Now this goodness in conversion is greater than that in creation ; as in creation there was nothing to oppose him, so there was nothing to disoblige him. Creation was terminated to the good of a mutable nature, and conversion tends to a supernatural good. God pronounced all creatures good at first, and man among the rest, but did not pronounce any of them, or man himself, his portion, his inheritance, his *segullah*, his house, his diadem. He speaks slightly of all those things which he made, the noblest heavens as well as the lowest earth, in comparison of a true convert : Isa. lxvi. 1, 2, 'All those things hath my hand made, and all those things have been ; but to this man will I look, to him that is of a contrite spirit.' It is more goodness to give the espousing grace of the covenant than the completing glory of heaven. As it is more for a prince to marry a beggar, than only to bring her to live deliciously in his courts ; all other benefits are of a meaner strain, if compared with this ; there is little less of goodness in imparting the holiness of his nature, than imputing the righteousness of his Son.

(6.) The divine goodness doth appear in answering prayers. He delights to be familiarly acquainted with his people, and to hear them call upon him. He indulgeth them a free access to him, and delights in every address of an upright man, Prov. xv. 8. The wonderful efficacy of prayer depends not upon the nature of our petitions, or the temper of our soul, but the goodness of God, to whom we address. Christ establisheth it upon this bottom ; when he exhorts to ask in his name, he tells them the spring of all their grants is the Father's love : John xvi. 26, 27, 'I say not, I will pray the Father for you : for the Father himself loves you.' And since it is of itself incredible that a majesty exalted above the cherubims should stoop so low as to give a miserable and rebellious creature admittance to him, and afford him a gracious hearing, and a quick supply, Christ ushers in the promise of answering prayer with a note of great assurance : Luke xi. 9, 10, 'I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.' I, that know the mind of my Father, and his good disposition, assure you your prayer shall not be in vain. Perhaps you will not be so ready of yourselves to imagine so great a liberality ; but take it upon my word ; it is true, and so you will find it. And his bounty travails as it were in birth, to give the greatest blessings upon our asking rather than the smallest. Ver. 13, 'Your heavenly Father shall give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him,' which in Mat. vii. 11 is called 'good things.' Of all the good and rich things divine goodness hath in its treasury, he delights to give the best upon asking, because God doth act so as to manifest the greatness of his bounty and magnificence to men ; and therefore is delighted when men, by their petitioning him, own such a

liberal disposition in him, and put him upon the manifesting it. He would rather you should ask the greatest things heaven can afford, than the trifles of this world; because his bounty is not discovered in meaner gifts, he loves to have an opportunity to manifest his affection above the liberality and tenderness of worldly fathers. He doth more wait to give in a way of grace than we to beg, Isa. xxx. 18, and therefore 'will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you.' He stands expecting your suits, and employs his wisdom in pitching upon the fittest seasons, when the manifestation of his goodness may be most gracious in itself, and the mercy you want most welcome to you; as it follows, 'for the Lord is a God of judgment.' He chooseth the time wherein his doles may be most acceptable to his suppliants: Isa. xlix. 8, 'In an acceptable time have I heard thee.' He often opens his hand while we are opening our lips, and his blessings meet our petitions at the first setting out upon their journey to heaven: Isa. lxxv. 24, 'While they are yet speaking, I will hear.' How often do we hear a secret voice within us while we are praying, saying, Your prayer is granted, as well as hear a voice behind us while we are erring, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it!' And his liberality exceeds often our desires as well as our deserts, and gives out more than we had the wisdom or confidence to ask. The apostle intimates it in that doxology, Eph. iii. 20, 'Unto him who is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think.' This power would not have been so strong an argument of comfort if it were never put in practice; he is more liberal than his creatures are craving. Abraham petitioned for the life of Ishmael, and God promiseth him the birth of Isaac, Gen. xvii. 18, 19. Isaac asks for a child, and God gives him two, Gen. xxv. 21, 22. Jacob desires food to eat and raiment to put on; God confines not his bounty within the narrow limits of his petition, but instead of a staff wherewith he passed Jordan, makes him repass it with two bands, Gen. xxviii. 20. David asked life of God, and he gave him life and a crown to boot, Ps. xxi. 2-5. The Israelites would have been contented with a free life in Egypt, they only cried to have their chains struck off; God gave them that, and adopts them to be his peculiar people, and raises them into a famous state. It is a wonder that God should condescend so much, that he should hear prayers so weak, so cold, so wandering, and gather up our sincere petitions from the dung of our distractions and diffidence. David vents his astonishment at it: Ps. xxxi. 21, 22, 'Blessed be God, for he hath shewed me marvellous kindness. I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thy eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication.' How do we wonder at the goodness of a petty man in granting our desires! how much more should we at the humility and goodness of the most sovereign Majesty of heaven and earth!

(6.) The goodness of God is seen in bearing with the infirmities of his people, and accepting imperfect obedience. Though Asa had many blots in his scutcheon, yet they are overlooked, and this note set upon record by divine goodness, that his heart was perfect towards the Lord all his days: 1 Kings xv. 14, 'But the high places were not removed; nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days.' He takes notice of a sincere, though chequered obedience, to reward it, which could claim nothing but a slight from him if he were extreme to mark what is done amiss. When there is not an opportunity to work, but only to will, he accepts the will as if it had passed into work and act. 'He sees no iniquity in Jacob,' Num. xxiii. 21; *i. e.* he sees it not so as to cast off a respect to their persons and the acceptance of their services. His omniscience knows their sins, but his goodness doth not reject their persons. He is of so good a disposition, that

he delights in a weak obedience of his servants, not in the imperfection, but in the obedience: Ps. xxxvii. 23, 'He delights in the way of a good man,' though he sometimes slips in it. He accepts a poor man's pigeon as well as a rich man's ox. He hath a bottle for the tears, and a book for the services of the upright, as well as for the most perfect obedience of angels, Ps. lvi. 8. He preserves their tears as if they were a rich and generous wine, as the vine-dresser doth the expressions of the grape.

(8.) The goodness of God is seen in afflictions and persecutions. If it be good for us to be afflicted, for which we have the psalmist's vote, Ps. cxix. 71, then goodness in God is the principal cause and orderer of the afflictions. It is his goodness to snatch away that whence we fetch supports for our security, and encouragements for our insolence against him. He takes away the thing which we have some value for, but such as his infinite wisdom sees inconsistent with our true happiness. It is no ill will in the physician to take away the hurtful matter the patient loves, and prescribe bitter potions, to advance that health which the other impaired; nor any mark of unkindness in a friend to wrest a sword out of a madman's hand, wherewith he was about to stab himself, though it was beset with the most orient pearls. To prevent what is evil is to do us the greatest good. It is a kindness to prevent a man from falling down a precipice, though it be with a violent blow that lays him flat upon the ground at some distance from the edge of it. By afflictions he often snaps asunder those chains which fettered us, and quells those passions which ravaged us. He sharpens our faith, and quickens our prayers; he brings us into the secret chamber of our own heart, which we had little mind before to visit by a self-examination. It is such a goodness that he will vouchsafe to correct man in order to his eternal happiness, that Job makes it one part of his astonishment: Job vii. 17, 'What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? that thou shouldst set thy heart upon him? and that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?' His strokes are often the magnifyings and exaltings of men. He sets his heart upon man while he inflicts the smart of his rod. He shews thereby what a high account he makes of him, and what a special affection he bears to him. When he might treat us with more severity after the breach of his covenant, and make his jealousy flame out against us in furious methods, he will not destroy his relation to us, and leave us to our own inclinations, but deal with us as a father with his children; and when he takes this course with us, it is when it cannot be avoided without ruin. His goodness would not suffer him to do it if our badness did not force him to it: Jer. ix. 7, 'I will melt them, and try them, for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?' What other course can I take but this according to the nature of man? The goldsmith hath no other way to separate the dross from the metal but by melting it down. And when the impurities of his people necessitate him to this proceeding, he 'sits as a refiner,' Mal. iii. 3. He watches for the purifying the silver, not for his own profit as the goldsmith, but out of a care of them, and good will to them. As himself speaks, Isa. xlviii. 10, 'I have refined thee, but not with silver,' or, as some read it, 'not for silver.' As when he scatters his people abroad for their sin, he will not leave them without his presence for their sanctuary, Ezek. xi. 16. He would by his presence with them supply the place of ordinances, or be an ark to them in the midst of the deluge. His hand that struck them is never without a goodness to comfort them and pity them. When Jacob was to go into Egypt, which was to prove a furnace of affliction to his offspring, God promises to 'go down' with him, and to 'bring him up again,' Gen. xlv. 4; a promise not only made to

Jacob in his person, but to Jacob in his posterity. He returned not out of Egypt in his person, but as the father of a numerous posterity. He that would go down with their root, and afterwards bring up the branches, was certainly with them in all their oppressions. I will go down with thee. Down! saith one.\* What a word is that for a Deity! Into Egypt, idolatrous Egypt! What a place is that for his holiness! Yet, oh the goodness of God! he never thinks himself low enough to do his people good, nor any place too bad for his society with them. So when he had sent away into captivity the people of Israel by the hand of the Assyrian, his bowels yearn after them in their affliction. Isa. lii. 4, 5, 'The Assyrian oppressed them without cause,' *i. e.* without a just cause in the conqueror to inflict so great an evil upon them, but not without cause from God, whom they had provoked. 'Now, therefore, what have I here? saith the Lord.' What do I here? I will not stay behind them. What do I longer here? For I will redeem again those jewels the enemy hath carried away. That chapter is a prophecy of redemption. God shews himself so good to his people in their persecutions, that he gives them occasion to glorify him in the very fires, as the divine order is, Isa. xxiv. 15, 'Wherefore glorify the Lord in the fires.'

(9.) The goodness of God is seen in temptations. In those he takes occasion to shew his care and watchfulness, as a father uses the distress of a child as an opportunity for manifesting the tenderness of his affection. God is at the beginning and end of every temptation; he measures out both the quality and quantity. He exposeth them not to temptation beyond the ability he hath already granted them, or will at the time, or afterwards multiply in them; 1 Cor. x. 13. He hath promised his people that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against them; that 'in all things' they shall be 'more than conquerors through him that loved them;' that the most raging malice of hell shall not wrest them out of his hands. His goodness is not less in performing than it was in promising. And as the care of his providence extends to the least as well as the greatest, so the watchfulness of his goodness extends to us in the least as well as in the greatest temptation.

[1.] The goodness of God appears in shortening temptations. None of them can go beyond their appointed times, Dan. xi. 35. The strong blast Satan breathes cannot blow, nor the waves he raises rage one minute beyond the time God allows them; when they have done their work, and come to the period of their time, God speaks the word, and the wind and sea of hell must obey him, and retire into their dens. The more violent temptations are, the shorter time doth God allot them. The assaults Christ had at the time of his death were of the most pressing and urging nature. The powers of darkness were all in arms against him, the reproaches and scorns put upon him questioning his Sonship were very sharp, yet a little before his sufferings, he calls it but an hour: Luke xxii. 53, 'This is your hour and the power of darkness.' A short time that men and devils were combined against him, and the time of temptation that is to come upon all the world for their trial, is called but an hour, Rev. iii. 10. In all such attempts, the greatness of the rage is a certain prognostic of the shortness of the season, Rev. xii. 12.

[2.] The goodness of God appears in strengthening his people under temptations. If he doth not restrain the arm of Satan from striking, he gives us a sword to manage the combat, and a shield to bear off the blow, Eph. vi. 16, 17. If he obscures his goodness in one part, he clears and brightens it

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



in another. He either binds the strong man that he shall not stir, or gives us armour to render us victorious. If we fall, it is not for want of provision from him, but for want of our 'putting on the armour of God,' ver. 11, 13. When we have not a strength by nature, he gives it us by grace. He often quells those passions within, which would join hands with and second the temptation without. He either qualifies the temptation suitably to the force we have, or else supplies us with a new strength to make the temptation he intends to let loose against us. He knows we are but dust, and his goodness will not have us unequally matched. The Jews that in Antiochus his time were under great temptation to apostasy, by reason of the violence of their persecutions, were 'out of weakness made strong' for the combat, Heb. xi. 34. The Spirit came more strongly upon Samson when the Philistines most furiously and confidently assaulted him. His Spirit is sent to strengthen his people before the devil is permitted to tempt them: Mat. iv. 2, 'Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit.' *Then*; when? When the Spirit had, in an extraordinary manner, descended upon him, Mat. iii. 16, then, and not before. As the angels appeared to Christ after his temptation to minister to him, so they appeared to him before his passion, the time of the strongest powers of darkness, to strengthen him for it. He is so good, that when he knows our potsherd strength too weak, he furnisheth our recruits from his own omnipotence: Eph. vi. 10, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' He doth, as it were, breathe in something of his own almightiness, to assist us in our wrestling against principalities and powers, and make us capable to sustain the violent storms of the enemies.

[3.] The goodness of God is seen in temptations, in giving great comforts in or after them. The Israelites had a more immediate provision of manna from heaven when they were in the wilderness. We read not that the Father spake audibly to the Son, and gave him so loud a testimony, that he was his 'beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased,' till he was upon the brink of strong temptations, Mat. iii. 17; nor sent angels to minister immediately to his person till after his success, Mat. iv. 11. Job never had such evidences of divine love till after he had felt the sharp strokes of Satan's malice; he had heard of God before by the hearing of the ear, but afterwards is admitted into greater familiarity, Job xlii. 5. He had more choice appearances, clearer illuminations, and more lively instructions. And though his people fall into temptation, yet after their rising they have more signal marks of his favour than others have, or themselves before they fell. Peter had been the butt of Satan's rage in tempting him to deny Christ, and he had shamefully complied with the temptation, yet to him particularly must the first news of the Redeemer's resurrection be carried by God's order in the mouth of an angel: Mark xvi. 7, 'Go your ways, tell his disciples, and Peter.' We have the greatest communion with God after a victory; the most refreshing truths after the devil hath done his worst. God is ready to furnish us with strength in a combat, and cordials after it.

[4.] The goodness of God is seen in temptations in discovering and advancing inward grace by this means. The issue of a temptation of a Christian is often like that of Christ's, the manifesting a greater vigour of the divine nature in affections to God and enmity to sin. Spices perfume not the air with their scent till they are invaded by the fire; the truth of grace is evidenced by them. The assault of an enemy revives and actuates that strength and courage which is in a man, perhaps unknown to himself as well as others till he meets with an adversary. Many seem good, not that they are so in themselves, but for want of a temptation. This many times verifies a virtue which was owned upon trust before, and discovers that we had

more grace than we thought we had. The solicitations of Joseph's mistress cleared up his chastity. We are many times under temptation, as a candle under the snuffer; it seems to be out, but presently burns the clearer. Afflictions are like those clouds which look black and eclipse the sun from the earth, but yet when they drop refresh that ground they seem to threaten, and multiply the grain on the earth to serve for our food; and so our troubles, while they wet us to the skin, wash much of that dust from our graces which in a clearer day had been blown upon us. Too much rest corrupts; exercise teacheth us to manage our weapons; the spiritual armour would grow rusty without opportunity to furbish it up. Faith receives a new heart by every combat and by every victory; like a fire, it spreads itself further, and gathers strength by the blowing of the wind. While the gardener commands his servant to shake the tree, he intends to fasten its roots and settle it firmer in its place; and is this an ill-will to the plant?

[5.] His goodness is seen in temptations, in preventing sin which we were likely to fall into. Paul's thorn in the flesh was to prevent the pride of his spirit, and let out the windiness of his heart, 2 Cor. xii. 7, lest it should be exalted above measure. The goodness of God makes the devil a polisher, while he intends to be a destroyer. The devil never works but suitably to some corruption lurking in us; divine goodness makes his fiery darts a means to discover, and so to prevent, the treachery of that perfidious inmate in our own hearts. Humility is a greater benefit than a putrefying pride. If God brings us into a wilderness to be tempted of the devil, it is to bring down our loftiness, to starve our carnal confidence, and expel our rusting security, Deut. viii. 2. We many times fly under a temptation to God, from whom we sat too loose before. Is it not goodness to use those means that may drive us into his own arms? It is not a want of goodness to soap the garment, in order to take away the spots. We have reason to bless God for the assaults from hell, as well as pure mercies from heaven; and it is a sin to overlook the one as well as the other, since divine goodness shines in both.

[6.] The goodness of God is seen in temptations, in fitting us more for his service. Those whom God intends to make choice instruments in his service, are first seasoned with strong temptations, as timber reserved for the strong beams of a building is first exposed to sun and wind, to make it more compact for its proper use. By this men are brought to answer the end of their creation, the service of God, which is their proper goodness. Peter was after his foil by a temptation more courageous in his Master's cause than before, and the more fitted to strengthen his brethren. Thus the goodness of God appears in all parts of his government.

V. I shall now come to the use.

First, Of instruction.

1. If God be so good, how unworthy is the contempt and abuse of his goodness!

(1.) The contempt and abuse of divine goodness is frequent and common. It began in the first ages of the world, and commenced a few moments after the creation; it hath not to this day diminished its affronts. Adam began the dance, and his posterity have followed him. The injury was directed against this, when he entertained the seducer's notion of God's being an envious Deity, in not indulging such a knowledge as he might have afforded him: 'God doth know that you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,' Gen. iii. 5. The charge of envy is utterly inconsistent with pure goodness. What was the language of this notion so easily entertained by Adam, but that the tempter was better than God, and the nature of God as base and

sordid as the nature of a devil ! Satan paints God with his own colours, represents him as envious and malicious as himself. Adam admires, and believes the picture to be true, and hangs it up as a beloved one in the closet of his heart. The devil still drives on the same game, fills men's hearts with the same sentiments, and by the same means he murdered our first parents, he redoubles the stabs to his posterity. Every violation of the divine law is a contempt of God's goodness, as well as his sovereignty, because his laws are the products both of the one and the other. Goodness animates them, while sovereignty enjoins them. God hath commanded nothing but what doth conduce to our happiness. All disobedience implies that his law is a snare to entrap us, and make us miserable, and not an act of kindness to render us happy, which is a disparagement to this perfection, as if he had commanded what would promote our misery, and prohibited what would conduce to our blessedness. To go far from him, and walk after vanity, is to charge him with our iniquity, and unrighteousness, baseness, and cruelty in his commands ; God implies it by his speech : Jer. ii. 5, ' What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and walked after vanity ? ' As if, like a tyrant, he had consulted cruelty in the composure of them, and designed to feast himself with the blood and misery of his creatures. Every sin is in its own nature a denial of God to be the chiefest good and happiness, and implies that it is no great matter to lose him ; it is a forsaking him as the fountain of life, and a preferring a cracked and empty cistern as the chief happiness before him, Jer. ii. 13. Though sin is not so evil as God is good, yet it is the greatest evil, and stands in opposition to God as the greatest good. Sin disorders the frame of the world, it endeavoured to frustrate all the communications of divine goodness in creation, and to stop up the way of any further streams of it to his creatures.

(2.) The abuse and contempt of the divine goodness is base and disingenuous. It is the highest wickedness, because God is the highest goodness, pure goodness, that cannot have anything in him worthy of our contempt. Let men injure God under what notion they will, they injure his goodness, because all his attributes are summed up in this one, and all, as it were, deified by it ; for whatsoever power or wisdom he might have, if he were destitute of this, he were not God. The contempt of his goodness implies him to be the greatest evil, and worst of beings. Badness, not goodness, is the proper object of contempt. As respect is a propension of mind to something that is good, so contempt is an alienation of the mind from something as evil, either simply or supposedly evil in its nature, or base or unworthy in its action towards that person that contemns it. As men desire nothing but what they apprehend to be good, so they slight nothing but what they apprehend to be evil. Since nothing therefore is more contemned by us than God, nothing more spurned at by us than God, it will follow that we regard him as the most loathsome and despicable being, which is the greatest baseness. And our contempt of him is worse than that of devils ; they injure him under the inevitable strokes of his justice, and we slight him when we are surrounded with the expressions of his bounty. They abuse him under vials of wrath, and we under a plenteous liberality. They malice him, because he inflicts on them what is hurtful ; and we despise him, because he commands what is profitable, holy, and honourable in its own nature, though not in our esteem. They are not under those high obligations as we ; they abuse his creating, and we his redeeming, goodness. He never sent his Son to shed a drop of blood for their recovery ; they can expect nothing but the torment of their persons, and the destruction of their

works. But we abuse that goodness, that would rescue us since we are miserable, as well as that righteousness which created us innocent. How base is it to use him so ill, that is not once or twice, but a daily, hourly benefactor to us; whose rain drops upon the earth for our food, and whose sun shines upon the earth for our pleasure, as well as profit; such a benefactor as is the true proprietor of what we have, and thinks nothing too good for them that think everything too much for his service! How unworthy is it to be guilty of such base carriage towards him, whose benefits we cannot want nor live without! How disingenuous both to God and ourselves, to 'despise the riches of his goodness,' that are designed to 'lead us to repentance,' Rom. ii. 4, and by that to happiness! And more heinous are the sins of renewed men upon this account, because they are against his goodness, not only offered to them, but tasted by them; not only against the notion of goodness, but the experience of goodness, and the relished sweetness of choicest bounty.

(3.) God takes this contempt of his goodness heinously. He never upbraids men with anything in Scripture, but with the abuse of the good things he hath vouchsafed them, and the unmindfulness of the obligations arising from them. This he bears with the greatest regret and indignation. Thus he upbraids Eli with the preference of him to the priesthood, above other families, 1 Sam. ii. 28; and David, with his exaltation to the crown of Israel, 2 Sam. xii. 7-9, when they abused those honours to carelessness and licentiousness. All sins offend God, but sins against his goodness do more disparage him; and therefore his fury is the greater by how much the more liberally his benefits have been dispensed. It was for abuse of divine goodness, as soon as it was tasted, that some angels were hurled from their blessed habitation and more happy nature. It was for this Adam lost his present enjoyments and future happiness; for the abuse of God's goodness in creation. For the abuse of God's goodness, the old world fell under the fury of the flood; and for the contempt of the divine goodness in redemption, Jerusalem, once the darling city of the infinite monarch of the world, was made an Aeldama, a field of blood. For this cause it is that candlesticks have been removed, great lights put out, nations overturned, and ignorance hath triumphed in places bright before with the beams of heaven. God would have little care of his own goodness, if he always prostituted the fruits of it to our contempt. Why should we expect he should always continue that to us, which he sees we will never use to his service? When the Israelites would dedicate the gifts of God to the service of Baal, then he would return, and take away his corn and his wine, and make them know by the loss that those things were his in dominion which they abused, as if they had been sovereign lords of them, Hosea ii. 8, 9. Benefits are entailed upon us no longer than we obey: 'If you forsake the Lord, he will do you hurt, after he hath done you good,' Josh. xxiv. 20. While we obey, his bounty shall shower upon us; and when we revolt, his justice shall consume us. Present mercies abused are no bulwarks against impendent judgments. God hath curses as well as blessings, and they shall light more heavy when his blessings have been more weighty. Justice is never so severe as when it comes to right goodness, and revenge its quarrel for the injuries received.

A convenient inquiry may be here, How God's goodness is contemned or abused?

(1.) By a forgetfulness of his benefits. We enjoy the mercies, and forget the donor; we take what he gives, and pay not the tribute he deserves; the Israelites 'forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt,' Ps. cvi. 21. We send God's mercies, where we would have God

send our sins, into the land of forgetfulness ; and write his benefits, where himself will write the names of the wicked, in the dust, which every wind defaceth. The remembrance soon wears out of our minds, and we are so far from remembering what we had before, that we scarce think of that hand that gives, the very instant wherein his benefits drop upon us. Adam basely forgot his benefactor, presently after he had been made capable to remember him, and reflect upon him ; the first remark we hear of him, is of his forgetfulness, not a syllable of his thankfulness. We forget those souls he hath lodged in us, to acknowledge his favours to our bodies ; we forget that image wherewith he beautified us ; and that Christ he exposed as a criminal to death for our rescue, which is such an act of goodness as cannot be expressed by the eloquence of the tongue, or conceived by the acuteness of the mind. Those things which are so common, that they cannot be invisible to our eyes, are unregarded by our minds ; our sense prompts our understanding, and our understanding is deaf to the plain dictates of our sense. We forget his goodness in the sun, while it warms us, and his showers while they enrich us ; in the corn while it nourisheth us, and the wine while it refresheth us : Hosea ii. 8, ' She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil.' She that might have read my hand in every bit of bread, and every drop of drink, did not consider this. It is an injustice to forget the benefits we receive from man ; it is a crime of a higher nature to forget those dispensed to us by the hand of God, who gives us those things that all the world cannot furnish us with, without him. The inhabitants of Troas will condemn us, who worshipped mice, in a grateful remembrance of the victory they had made easy for them, by gnawing their enemies' bow-strings. They were mindful of the courtesy of animals, though unintended by those creatures ; and we are regardless of the fore-meditated bounty of God. It is in God's judgment a brutishness beyond that of a stupid ox, or a duller ass : Isa. i. 3, ' The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider.' The ox knows his owner that pastures him, and the ass his master that feeds him ; but man is not so good as to be like to them, but so bad as to be inferior to them ; he forgets him that sustains him, and spurns at him, instead of valuing him for the benefits conferred by him. How horrible is it, that God should lose more by his bounty, than he would do by his parsimony ! If we had blessings more sparingly, we should remember him more gratefully. If he had sent us a bit of bread in a distress by a miracle, as he did to Elijah by the ravens, it would have stuck longer in our memories, but the sense of daily favours soonest wears out of our minds, which are as great miracles as any in their own nature, and the products of the same power ; but the wonder they should beget in us, is obscured by their frequency.

(2.) The goodness of God is contemned by an impatient murmuring. Our repinings proceed from an inconsideration of God's free liberality, and an ungrateful temper of spirit. Most men are guilty of this. It is implied in the commendation of Job under his pressures : chap. i. 22, ' In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly,' as if it were a character peculiar to him, whereby he verified the elogy God had given of him before, verse 8, that there was ' none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man.' What is implied by the expression, but that scarce a man is to be found without unjust complaints of God, and charging him under their crosses with cruelty, when in the greatest they have much more reason to bless him for his bounty in the remainder ? Good men have not been innocent. Baruch complains of God for adding grief to his sorrow, not furnishing him

with those great things he expected, whereas he had matter of thankfulness in God's gift of his life as a prey, Jer. xlv. 3, 4. But his master chargeth God in a higher strain : Jer. xx. 7, 'O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived ; I am in derision daily.' When he met with reproach instead of success in the execution of his function, he quarrels with God, as if he had a mind to cheat him into a mischief, when he had more reason to bless him for the honour of being employed in his service. Because we have not what we expect, we slight his goodness in what we enjoy. If he cross us in one thing, he might have made us successful in more ; if he take away some things, he might as well have taken away all. The unmerited remainder, though never so little, deserves our acknowledgments more than the deserved loss can justify our repining. And for that which is snatched from us, there is more cause to be thankful, that we have enjoyed it so long, than to murmur that we possess it no longer. Adam's sin implies a repining ; he imagined God had been short in his goodness, in not giving him a knowledge he foolishly conceived himself capable of, and would venture a forfeiture of what already had been bountifully bestowed upon him. Man thought God had envied him, and ever since, man studies to be even with God, and envies him the free disposal of his own doles. All murmuring, either in our own cause or others', charges God with a want of goodness, because there is a want of that, which he foolishly thinks would make himself or others happy. The language of this sin is, that man thinks himself better than God, and if it were in his power, would express a more plentiful goodness than his Maker. As man is apt to think himself 'more pure than God,' Job iv. 17, so of a kinder nature also than an infinite goodness. The Israelites are a wonderful example of this contempt of divine goodness ; they had been spectators of the greatest miracles, and partakers of the choicest deliverance ; he had solicited their redemption from captivity, and when words would not do, he came to blows for them ; musters up his judgments against their enemies, and at last, as the Lord of hosts, and God of battles, totally defeats their pursuers, and drowns them and their proud hopes of victory in the Red Sea. Little account was made of all this by the redeemed ones. 'They lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation,' and launch into greater unworthiness, instead of being thankful for the breaking their yoke ; they are angry with him, that he had done so much for them ; they repented that ever they had complied with him for their own deliverance, and had a regret that they had been brought out of Egypt ; they were angry that they were free men, and that their chains had been knocked off ; they were more desirous to return to the oppression of their Egyptian tyrants, than have God for their governor and caterer, and be fed with his manna. 'It was well with us in Egypt, why came we forth out of Egypt?' which is called a 'despising the Lord,' Num. xi. 18, 20. They were so far from rejoicing in the expectation of the future benefits promised them, that they murmured that they had not enjoyed less ; they were so sottish, as to be desirous to put themselves into the irons whence God had delivered them ; they would seek a remedy in that Egypt, which had been the prison of their nation, and under the successors of that Pharaoh, who had been the invader of their liberties ; they would snatch Moses from the place where the Lord, by an extraordinary providence, hath established him, Num. xvi. 3, 9, 10, 11 ; they would stone those that minded them of the goodness of God to them, and thereupon of their crime and their duty ; they rose against their benefactors, and murmured against God, that had strengthened the hands of their deliverers ; they despised the manna he had sent them, and despised the pleasant land he intended them, Ps. cvi. 24 :

all which was a high contempt of God and his unparalleled goodness and care of them. All murmuring is an accusation of divine goodness.

(3.) By unbelief and impenitency. What is the reason we come not to him when he calls us, but some secret imagination that he is of an ill nature, means not as he speaks, but intends to mock us, instead of welcoming us ? When we neglect his call, spurn at his bowels, slight the riches of his grace, as it is a disparagement to his wisdom to despise his counsel, so it is to his goodness, to slight his offers, as though you could make better provision for yourselves than he is able or willing to do. It disgraceth that which is designed to the praise of the glory of his grace, and renders God cruel to his own Son, as being an unnecessary shedder of his blood. As the devil, by his temptation of Adam, envied God the glory of creating goodness, so unbelief envies God the glory of his redeeming grace. It is a bidding defiance to him, and challenging him to muster up the legions of his judgments, rather than have sent his Son to suffer for us, or his Spirit to solicit us. Since the sending his Son was the greatest act of goodness that God could express, the refusal of him must be the highest reproach of that liberality God designed to commend to the world in so rare a gift ; the ingratitude in this refusal must be as high in the rank of sins, as the person slighted is in the rank of beings, or rank of gifts. Christ is a gift, Rom. v. 16, the royalest gift, an unparalleled gift, springing from unconceivable treasures of goodness, John iii. 16. What is our turning our backs upon this gift but a low opinion of it ? As though the richest jewel of heaven were not so valuable as a swinish pleasure on earth, and deserved to be treated at no other rate than if mere offals had been presented to us. The plain language of it is, that there were no gracious intentions for our welfare in this present ; and that he is not as good in the mission of his Son as he would induce us to imagine. Impenitence is also an abuse of this goodness, either by presumption, as if God would entertain rebels that bid defiance against him, with the same respect that he doth his prostrate and weeping suppliants ; that he will have the same regard to the swine as to the children, and lodge them in the same habitation ; or it speaks a suspicion of God as a deceitful master, one of a pretended, not a real, goodness ; that makes promises to mock men, and invitations to delude them ; that he is an implacable tyrant, rather than a good Father ; a rigid, not a kind being, delightful\* only to mark our faults, and overlook our services.

(4.) The goodness of God is condemned by a distrust of his providence. As all trust in him supposeth him good, so all distrust of him supposeth him evil ; either without goodness to support his power, or without power to display his goodness. Job seems to have a spice of this in his complaint, chap. xxx. 20, ' I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me ; I stand up, and thou regardest me not.' It is a fume of the serpent's venom, first breathed into man, to suspect him of cruelty, severity, regardlessness, even under the daily evidences of his good disposition ; and it is ordinary not to believe him when he speaks, nor credit him when he acts ; to question the goodness of his precepts, and misinterpret the kindness of his providence, as if they were designed for the supports of a tyranny, and the deceit of the miserable. Thus the Israelites thought their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, and the placing them in security in the wilderness, was intended only to pound them up for a slaughter, Num. xiv. 3. Thus they defiled the lustre of divine goodness, which they had so highly experimented, and placed not that confidence in him which was due to so frequent a benefactor, and thereby ' crucified ' the rich kindness of God, as Genebrard translates the word

\* That is, ' delighting,' or ' full of delight.'—ED.

'limited,' Ps. lxxviii. 41. It is also a jealousy of divine goodness, when we seek to deliver ourselves from our straits by unlawful ways, as though God had not kindness enough to deliver us without committing evil. What! did God make a world, and all creatures in it, to think of them no more, not to concern himself in their affairs? If he be good, he is diffusive, and delights to communicate himself; and what subjects should there be for it but those that seek him and implore his assistance? It is an indignity to divine bounty to have such mean thoughts of it, that it should be of a nature contrary to that of his works, which, the better they are, the more diffusive they are. Doth a man distrust that the sun will not shine any more, or the earth not bring forth its fruit? Doth he distrust the goodness of an approved medicine for the expelling his distemper? If we distrust those things, should we not render ourselves ridiculous and sottish? And if we distrust the Creator of those things, do we not make ourselves contemnners of his goodness? If his caring for us be a principal argument to move us to cast our care upon him,—as it is 1 Peter v. 7, 'Casting your care upon him, for he cares for you,'—then, if we cast not our care upon him, it is a denial of his gracious care of us; as if he regarded not what becomes of us.

(5.) We do contemn or abuse his goodness by omissions of duty. These sometimes spring from injurious conceits of God, which end in desperate resolutions. It was the crime of a good prophet in his passion, 2 Kings vi. 33, 'This evil is of the Lord, Why should I wait on the Lord any longer?' God designs nothing but mischief to us, and we will seek him no longer. And the complaint of those in Malachi, chap. iii. 14, is of the same nature, 'Ye have said, it is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?' We have all this while served a hard master, not a benefactor, and have not been answered with advantages proportionable to our services; we have met with a hand too niggardly to dispense that reward which is due to the largeness of our offerings. When men will not lift up their eyes to heaven, and solicit nothing but the contrivance of their own brain, and the industry of their own heads, they disown divine goodness, and approve themselves as their own gods, and the spring of their own prosperity. Those that run not to God in their necessity, to crave his support, deny either the arm of his power, or the disposition of his will, to sustain and deliver them; they must have very mean sentiments, or none at all, of this perfection, or think him either too empty to fill them, or too churlish to relieve them; that he is of a narrow and contracted temper, and that they may sooner expect to be made better and happier by anything else than by him. And, as we contemn his goodness by a total omission of those duties which respect our own advantage and supply, as prayer, so we contemn him as the chiefest good, by an omission of the due manner of any act of worship, which is designed purely for the acknowledgment of him. As every omission of the material part of a duty is a denial of his sovereignty as commanding it, so every omission of the manner of it, not performing it with a due esteem and valuation of him, a surrender of all the powers of our souls to him, is a denial of him as the most amiable object. But certainly to omit those addresses to God, which his precept enjoins and his excellency deserves, speaks this language, that they can be well enough, and do well enough, without God, and stand in no need of his goodness to maintain them. The neglect or refusal in a malefactor to supplicate for his pardon, is a wrong to, and contempt of, the prince's goodness; either implying that he hath not a goodness in his nature worthy of an address, or that he scorns to be obliged to him for any exercise of it.

(6.) The goodness of God is contemned or abused in relying upon our



services to procure God's good will to us. As, when we stand in need either of some particular mercy, or special assistance; when pressures are heavy, and we have little hopes of ease in an ordinary way; when the devotions in course have not prevailed for what we want, we engage ourselves by extraordinary vows and promises to God, hereby to open that goodness which seems to be locked up from us.\* Sometimes, indeed, vows may proceed from a sole desire to engage ourselves to God, from a sense of the levity and inconstancy of our spirits; binding ourselves to God by something more sacred and inviolable than a common resolution. But many times the vowing the building of a temple, endowing an hospital, giving so much in alms, if God will free them from a fit of sickness, and spin out a thread of their lives a little longer, as hath been frequent among the Romanists, arises from an opinion of laziness, and a selfishness in the divine goodness; that it must be squeezed out by some solemn promises of return to him before it will exercise itself to take their parts. Popular vows are often the effects of an ignorance of the free and bubbling nature of this perfection of the generousness and royalty of divine goodness, as if God were of a mean and mechanic temper, not to part with anything unless he were in some measure paid for it, and of so bad a nature as not to give passage to any kindness to his creature without a bribe. It implies also, that he is of an ignorant, as well as contracted, goodness; that he hath so little understanding, and so much weakness of judgment, as to be taken with such trifles and ceremonial courtships and little promises; and meditated only low designs, in imparting his bounty. It is just as if a malefactor should speak to a prince, Sir, if you will but bestow a pardon upon me, and prevent the death I have merited for this crime, I will give you this rattle. All vows made with such a temper of spirit to God, are as injurious and abusive to his goodness as any man will judge such an offer to be to a majestic and gracious prince; as if it were a trading, not a free and royal goodness.

(7.) The goodness of God is abused, when we give up our souls and affections to those benefits we have from God; when we make those things God's rivals, which were sent to woo us for him, and offer those affections to the presents themselves which they were sent to solicit for the master. This is done when either we place our trust in them, or glue our choicest affections to them. This charge God brings against Jerusalem, the trusting in her own beauty, glory, and strength, though it was a comeliness put upon her by God, Ezek. xvi. 14, 15. When a little sunshine of prosperity breaks out upon us, we are apt to grasp it with so much eagerness and closeness, as if we had no other foundation to settle ourselves upon, no other being that might challenge from us our sole dependence. And the love of ourselves, and of creatures, above God, is very natural to us, 2 Tim. iii. 2, 4, 'lovers of themselves,' and 'lovers of pleasure more than of God.' Self-love is the root, and the love of pleasures the top branch, that mounts its head highest against heaven. It is for the love of the world that the dangers of the sea are passed over, that men descend into the bowels of the earth, pass nights without sleep, undertake suits without intermission, wade through many inconveniences, venture their souls, and condemn God: in those things men glory, and foolishly grow proud by them, and think themselves safe and happy in them.† Now, to love ourselves above God, is to own ourselves better than God, and that we transcend him in an amiable goodness. Or if we love ourselves equal with God, it at least manifests that we think God no better than ourselves, and think ourselves our own chief good, and deny anything above us to outstrip us in

\* Amyrald, Moral. tom. iv. p. 291.

† Cressol, Antholog. part ii. p. 29.

goodness, whereby to deserve to be the centre of our affections and actions. And to love any other creature above him, is to conclude some defect in God, that he hath not so much goodness in his own nature as that creature hath to complete our felicity, that God is a slighter thing than that creature. It is to account God, what all things in the world are, an imaginary happiness, a goodness of clay; and then what God is, a supreme goodness. It is to value the goodness of a drop above that of the spring, and the goodness of the spark above that of the sun; as if the bounty of God were of a less alloy than the advantages we immediately receive from the hands of a silly worm. By how much the better we think a creature to be, and place our affections chiefly upon it, by so much the more deficient and indigent we conclude God; for God wants so much in our conception, as the other thing hath goodness above him in our thoughts. Thus is God lessened below the creature, as if he had a mixture of evil in him, and were capable of an imperfect goodness. He that esteems the sun that shines upon him, the clothes that warm him, the food that nourisheth him, or any other benefit, above the donor, regards them as more comely and useful than God himself, and behaves himself as if he were more obliged to them than to God, who bestowed those advantageous qualities upon them.

(8.) The divine goodness is condemned in sinning more freely upon the account of that goodness, and employing God's benefits in a drudgery for our lusts. This is a treachery to his goodness, to make his benefits serve for an end quite contrary to that for which he sent them; as if God had been plentiful in his blessings, to hire them to be more fierce in their rebellions, and fed them to no other purpose but that they might more strongly kick against him. This is the fruit which corrupt nature produceth. Thus the Egyptians, who had so fertile a country, proved unthankful to the Creator, by adoring the meanest creatures, and putting the sceptre of the monarch of the world into the hands of the sottishest and cruellest beasts. And the Romans multiply their idols as God multiplied their victories. This is also the complaint of God concerning Israel, Hos. ii. 8, 'She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.' They ungratefully employed the blessings of God in the worship of an idol, against the will of the donor. So in Hos. x. 1, 'According to the multitude of his fruit, he hath increased the altars: according to the goodness of his land, they have made goodly images.' They followed their own inventions with the strength of my outward blessings. As their wealth increased, they increased the ornaments of their images, so that what were before of wood and stone they advanced to gold and silver. And the like complaint you may see, Ezek. xvi. 17. Thus,

[1.] The benefits of God are abused to pride, when men, standing upon a higher ground of outward prosperity, vaunt it loftily above their neighbours,—the common fault of those that enjoy a worldly sunshine,—which the apostle observes in his direction to Timothy, 1 Tim. v. 17, 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded.' It is an ill use of divine blessings, to be filled by them with pride and wind. Also,

[2.] When men abuse plenty to ease; because they have abundance, spend their time in idleness; and make no other use of divine benefits, than to trifle away their time, and be utterly useless to the world.

[3.] When they also abuse peace and other blessings to security; as they which would not believe the threatenings of judgment and the storm coming from a far country, because the Lord was in Sion, and her king in her,—Jer. viii. 19, 'Is not the Lord in Sion, is not her king in her?'—

thinking they might continue their progress in their sin, because they had the temple, the seat of the divine glory, Sion, and the promise of an everlasting kingdom to David; abusing the promise of God to presumption and security, and turning the grace of God into wantonness.

[4.] Again, when they abuse the bounty of God to sensuality and luxury, misemploying the provisions God gives them in resolving to live like beasts, when by a good improvement of them they might attain the life of angels. Thus is the light of the sun abused to conduct them, and the fruits of the earth abused to enable them, to their prodigious debauchery; 'as we do,' saith one, 'with the Thames, which brings us in provision, and we soil it with our rubbish.'\* The more God sows his gifts, the more we sow our cockle and darnel. Thus we make our outward happiness the most unhappy part of our lives, and by the strength of divine blessings exceed all laws of reason and religion too.

How unworthy a carriage is this, to use the expressions of divine goodness as occasions of a greater outrage and affront of him! When we stab his honour by those instruments he puts into our hands to glorify him; as if a favourite should turn that sword into the bowels of his prince, where-with he knighted him, and a servant enriched by a lord should hire by that wealth murderers to take away his life. How brutish is it, the more God courts us with his blessings, the more to spurn at him with our feet; like the mule, that lifts up its heel against the dam as soon as ever it hath sucked her! We never beat God out of our hearts, but by his own gifts; he receives no blows from men, but by those instruments he gave them to promote their happiness. While man is an enjoyer, he makes God a loser by his own blessings, inflames his rebellion by those benefits which should kindle his love, and runs from him by the strength of those favours which should endear the donor to him. 'Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?' is the expostulation, Deut. xxxii. 6. Divine goodness appears in the complaint of the abuse of it, in giving them titles below their crime, and complaining more of their being unfaithful to their own interest than enemies to his glory. 'Foolish and unwise' in neglecting their own happiness, a charge below the crime, which deserved to be 'abominable, ungrateful people to a prodigy.' All this carriage towards God is as if a man should knock the surgeon on the head as soon as he hath set and bound up his dislocated members. So God compares the ungrateful behaviour of the Israelites against him: Hosea vii. 15, 'Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me:' a metaphor taken from a surgeon that applies corroborating plasters to a broken limb.

(9.) We condemn the goodness of God in ascribing our benefits to other causes than divine goodness. Thus Israel ascribed her felicity, plenty, and success to her idols, as rewards which her lovers had given her, Hosea ii. 5, 12. And this charge Daniel brought home upon Belshazzar: Dan. v. 23, 'Thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, and brass, and iron; and the God in whose hand is thy breath, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.' The God who hath given success to the arms of thy ancestors, and conveyed by their hands so large a dominion to thee, thou hast not honoured in the same rank with the sordidest of thy idols. It is the same case when we own him not as the author of any success in our affairs, but by an overweening conceit of our own sagacity, applaud and admire ourselves, and overlook the hand that conducted us, and brought our endeavours to a good issue. We eclipse the glory of divine goodness by setting the

\* Young, of Affliction, p. 34.

crown that is due to it upon the head of our own industry : a sacrilege worse than Belshazzar's drinking of wine, with his lords and concubines, in the sacred vessels pilfered from the temple, as in that place of Daniel. This was the proud vaunt of the Assyrian conqueror, for which God threatens to punish the fruit of his stout heart : Isa. x. 12-14, 'By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom ; for I am prudent : and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man.' Not a word of divine goodness and assistance in all this, but applauding his own courage and conduct. This is a robbing of God to set up ourselves, and making divine goodness a footstool to ascend into his throne. And as it is unjust, so it is ridiculous, to ascribe to ourselves or instruments the chief honour of any work ; as ridiculous as if a soldier after a victory should erect an altar to the honour of his sword, or an artificer offer sacrifices to the tools whereby he completed some excellent and useful invention : a practice that every rational man would disdain where he should see it. It is a discarding any thoughts of the goodness of God, when we imagine that we chiefly owe anything in this world to our own industry or wit, to friends or means, as though divine goodness did not open its hand to interest itself in our affairs, support our ability, direct our counsels, and mingle itself with anything we do. God is the principal author of any advantage that accrues to us, of any wise resolution we fix upon, or any proper way we take to compass it ; no man can be wise in opposition to God, act wisely or well without him ; his goodness inspires men with generous and magnificent counsels, and furnisheth them with fit and proportionable means ; when he withdraws his hand, men's heads grow foolish, and their hands feeble ; folly and weakness drops upon them, as darkness upon the world upon the removal of the sun. It is an abuse of divine goodness not to own it, but erect an idol in its place. Ezra was of another mind, when he ascribed to the good hand of God the providing ministers for the temple, and not to his own care and diligence, Ezra viii. 18 ; and Nehemiah, the success he had with the king in the behalf of his nation, and not solely to his favour with the prince, or the arts he used to please him, Neh. ii. 8.

2. The second information is this : if God be so good, it is a certain argument that man is fallen from his original state. It is the complaint of man sometimes, that other creatures have more of earthly happiness than men have, live freer from cares and trouble, and are not racked with that solicitousness and anxiety as man is, have not such distempers to embitter their lives. It is a good ground for man to look into himself, and consider whether he hath not, some ways or other, disobliged God more than other creatures can possibly do. We often find that the creatures men have need of in this state do not answer the expectation of man. 'Cursed be the ground for thy sake,' Gen. iii. 17. A fruitful land is made barren, thorns and thistles triumph upon the face of the earth instead of good fruit. Is it like that goodness which is as infinite as his power, and knows no more limits than his almightiness, should imprint so many scars upon the world, if he had not been heinously provoked by some miscarriage of his creature ? Infinite goodness could never move infinite justice to inflict punishment upon creatures, if they had not highly merited it. We cannot think that any creature was blemished with a principle of disturbance as it came first out of the hand of God. All things were certainly settled in a due order and dependence upon one another ; nothing could be ungrateful, and unuseful to man by the original law of their creation ; if there had, it had not been goodness, but evil and baseness, that had created the world.

When we see, therefore, the course of nature overturned, the order divine goodness had placed disturbed, and the creatures pronounced good and useful to man employed as instruments of vengeance against him, we must conclude some horrible blot upon human nature, and very odious to a God of infinite goodness, and that this blot was dashed upon man by himself, and his own fault; for it is repugnant to the infinite goodness of God to put into the creature a sinning nature, to hurry him into sin, and then punish him for that which he had impressed upon him. The goodness of God inclines him to love goodness wherever he finds it, and not to punish any that have not deserved it by their own crimes. The curse we therefore see the creatures groan under, the disorders in nature, the frustrating the expectations of man in the fruits of the earth and plentiful harvests, the trouble he is continually exposed to in the world, which tethers down his spirit from more generous employments, shews that man is not what he was when divine goodness first erected him, but hath admitted into his nature something more uncomely in the eye of God, and so heinous that it puts his goodness sometimes to a stand, and makes him lay aside the blessings his hand was filled with, to take up the arms of vengeance wherewith to fight against the world. Divine goodness would have secured his creatures from any such invasions, and never used those things against man, which he designed in the first frame for man's service, were there not some detestable disorder risen in the nature of man, which makes God withhold his liberality, and change the dispensations of his numerous benefits into legions of judgments. The consideration of the divine goodness, which is a notion that man naturally concludes to be inseparable from the Deity, would, to an unbiassed reason, verify the history of those punishments settled upon man in the third chapter of Genesis, and make the whole seem more probable to reason at the first relation. This instruction naturally flows from the doctrine of divine goodness. If God be so good, it is a certain argument that man is fallen from his original state.

3. The third information is this, if God be infinitely good, there can be no just complaint against God if men be punished for abusing his goodness. Man had nothing, nay, it was impossible he could have anything, from infinite goodness to disoblige him, but to engage him. God never did, nay, never could, draw his sword against man till man had slighted him, and affronted him by the strength of his own bounty. It is by this God doth justify his severest proceedings against men, and very seldom charges them with any else as the matter of their provocations: Hosea ii. 3, 'Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax.' And in Ezekiel xvi., after he had drawn out a bill of complaint against them, and inserted only an abuse of his benefits as a justification of what he intended to do, he concludes, verse 27, 'Behold, therefore, I have stretched out my hand over thee, and diminished thy ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee.' When men suffer, they suffer justly; they were not constrained by any violence, or forced by any necessity, nor provoked by any ill usage, to turn head against God, but broke the bands of the strongest obligations and most tender allurements. What man, what devil, can justly blame God for punishing them, after they had been so intolerably bold as to fly in the face of that goodness that had obliged them, by giving them beings of a higher elevation than to inferior creatures, and furnishing them with sufficient strength to continue in their first habitation? Man seems to have less reason to accuse God of rigour than devils, since after his unreasonable revolt, a more express goodness than that which created him

hath solicited him to repentance, courted him by melting promises and expostulations, added undeniable arguments of bounty, and drawn out the choicest treasures of heaven in the gift of his Son, to prevail over men's perversity. And yet man, after he might arrive to the height and happiness of an angel, will be fond of continuing in the meanness and misery of a devil; and more strongly link himself to the society of the damned spirits, wherein by his first rebellion he had incorporated himself. Who can blame God for vindicating his own goodness from such desperate contempts, and the extreme ingratitude of man? If God be good, it is our happiness to adhere to him; if we depart from him, we depart from goodness; and if evil happen to us, we cannot blame God, but ourselves, for our departure.\* Why are men happy? Because they cleave to God. Why are men miserable? Because they recede from God. It is then our own fault that we are miserable; God cannot be charged with any injustice if we be miserable, since his goodness gave means to prevent it, and afterwards added means to recover us from it, but all despised by us. The doctrine of divine goodness justifies every stone laid in the foundation of hell, and every spark in that burning furnace, since it is for the abuse of infinite goodness that it was kindled.

4. The fourth information: here is a certain argument, both for God's fitness to govern the world, and his actual government of it.

(1.) This renders him fit for the government of the world, and gives him a full title to it. This perfection doth the psalmist celebrate throughout the 107th Psalm, where he declares God's works of providence, ver. 8, 15, 21, 32. Power without goodness would deface, instead of preserving. Ruin is the fruit of rigour without kindness; but God, because of his infinite and immutable goodness, cannot do anything unworthy of himself, and uncomely in itself, or destructive to any moral goodness in the creature. It is impossible he should do anything that is base, or act anything but for the best, because he is essentially and naturally, and therefore necessarily, good. As a good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, so a good God cannot produce evil acts; no more than a pure beam of the sun can engender so much as a mite of darkness, or infinite heat produce any particle of cold. As God is so much light that he can be no darkness, so he is so much good that he can have no evil; and because there is no evil in him, nothing simply evil can be produced by him. Since he is good by nature, all evil is against his nature, and God can do nothing against his nature. It would be a part of impotence in him to will that which is evil; and therefore the misery man feels, as well as the sin whereby he deserves that misery, are said to be from himself: Hosea xiii. 9, 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.' And though God sends judgments upon the world, we have shewn these to be intended for the support and vindication of his goodness. And Hezekiah judged no otherwise, when, after the threatening of the devastation of his house, the plundering his treasures, and captivity of his posterity, he replies, 'Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken,' Isa. xxxix. 8. God cannot act anything that is base and cruel, because his goodness is as infinite as his power, and his power acts nothing but what his wisdom directs, and his goodness moves him to. Wisdom is the head in government, omniscience the eye, power the arm, and goodness the heart and spirit in them, that animates all.

(2.) As goodness renders him fit to govern the world, so God doth actually govern the world. Can we understand his perfection aright, and yet imagine that he is of so morose a disposition as to neglect the care of his creatures? that his excellency, which was displayed in framing the world, should with-

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

draw and wrap up itself in his own bosom, without looking out and darting itself out in the disposal of them? Can that which moved him first to erect a world, suffer him to be unmindful of his own work? Would he design first to display it in creation, and afterwards obscure the honour of it? That cannot be entitled an infinite, permanent goodness, which should be so indifferent as to let the creatures tumble together as they please, without any order, after he had moulded them in his hand. If goodness be diffusive and communicative of itself, can it consist with the nature of it to extend itself to the giving the creatures being, and then withdraw and contract itself, not caring what becomes of them? It is the nature of goodness, after it hath communicated itself, to enlarge its channels. That fountain that springs up in a little hollow part of the earth, doth in a short progress increase its streams, and widen the passages through which it runs. It would be a blemish to divine goodness if he did desert what he made, and leave things to wild confusions, which would be if a good hand did not manage them and a good mind preside over them. This is the lesson intended to us by all his judgments, 'That the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men,' Dan. iv. 17. If he doth not actually govern the world, he must have devolved it somewhere, either to men or angels; not to men, who naturally want a goodness and wisdom to govern themselves, much more to govern others exactly. And besides the misinterpretations of actions, they are liable to the want of patience to bear with the provocations of the world; since some of the best at one time in the world, and in the greatest example of meekness and sweetness, would have kindled a fire in heaven to have consumed the Samaritans, for no other affront than a non-entertainment of their Master and themselves, Luke ix. 54. Nor hath he committed the disposal of things to angels, either good or bad; though he useth them as instruments in his government, yet they are not the principal pilots to steer the world. *Bad* angels certainly are not; they would make continual ravages, meditate ruin, never defeat their own counsels, which they manage by the wicked as their instruments in the world, nor fill their spirits with disquiet and restlessness when they are engaged in some ruinous design, as often is experienced. Nor hath he committed it to the *good* angels, who, for aught we know, are not more numerous than the evil ones are; but besides, we can scarcely think their finite nature capable of so much goodness as to bear the innumerable debaucheries, villanies, blasphemies vented in one year, one week, one day, one hour, throughout the world. Their zeal for their Creator might well be supposed to move them to testify their affection to him, in a constant and speedy righting of his injured honour upon the heads of the offenders. The evil angels have too much cruelty, and would have no care of justice, but take pleasure in the blood of the most innocent as well as the most criminal. And the good angels have too little tenderness to suffer so many crimes. Since the world, therefore, continues without those floods of judgments which it daily merits, since, notwithstanding all the provocations, the order of it is preserved, it is a testimony that an infinite goodness holds the helm in his hands, and spreads its warm virtues over it.

5. The fifth information is this: Hence we may infer the ground of all religion, it is the perfection of goodness. As the goodness of God is the lustre of all his attributes, so it is the foundation and link of all true religious worship. The natural religion of the heathens was introduced by the consideration of divine goodness, in the being he had bestowed upon them, and the provisions that were made for them. Divine bounty was the motive to erect altars, and present sacrifices, though they mistook the object of

their worship, and offered the dues of the Creator to the instruments whereby he conveyed his benefits to them. And you find that the religion instituted by him among the Jews, was enforced upon them by the consideration of their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, the preservation of them in the wilderness, and the infeofing them in a land flowing with milk and honey. Every act of bounty and success the heathens received, moved them to appoint new feasts, and repeat their adorations of those deities they thought the authors and promoters of their victories and warfare. The devil did not mistake the common sentiment of the world in divine service, when he alleged to God, Job i. 9, that 'Job did not fear him for nought,' *i. e.* worship him for nothing. All acts of devotion take their rise from God's liberality, either from what they have, or from what they hope. Praise speaks the possession, and prayer the expectation of some benefit from his hand. Though some of the heathens made fear to be the prime cause of the acknowledgment and worship of a deity, yet surely something else besides and beyond this established so great a thing as religion in the world; an ingenious religion could never have been born into the world without a notion of goodness, and would have gasped its last as soon as this notion should have expired in the minds of men. What encouragement can fear of power give, without sense of goodness? Just as much as thunder hath, to invite a man to the place where it is like to fall and crush him. The nature of fear is to drive from, and the nature of goodness to allure to, the object. The divine thunders, prodigies, and other armies of his justice in the world, which are the marks of his power, could conclude in nothing but a slavish worship. Fear alone would have made men blaspheme the Deity; instead of serving him, they would have fretted against him; they might have offered him a trembling worship, but they could never have in their minds thought him worthy of an adoration; they would rather have secretly complained of him, and cursed him in their heart, than inwardly have admired him. The issue would have been the same which Job's wife advised him to, when God withdrew his protection from his goods and body, 'Curse God and die,' Job ii. 9. It is certainly the common sentiment of men, that he that acts cruelly and tyrannically is not worthy of an integrity to be retained towards him in the hearts of his subjects; but Job fortifies himself against this temptation from his bosom friend, by the consideration of the good he had received from God, which did more deserve a worship from him than the present evil had reason to discourage it. Alas! what is only feared, is hated, not adored. Would any seek to an irreconcilable enemy? Would any person affectionately list himself in the service of a man void of all good disposition? Would any distressed person put up a petition to that prince who never gave any experiment of the sweetness of his nature, but always satiated himself with the blood of the meanest criminals? All affection to service is rooted up, when hopes of receiving good are extinguished. There could not be a spark of that in the world, which is properly called religion, without a notion of goodness. The existence of God is the first pillar, and the goodness of God in rewarding, the next, upon which coming to him (which includes all acts of devotion) is established: Heb. xi. 6, 'He that comes unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' If either of those pillars be not thought to stand firm, all religion falls to the ground. It is this as the most agreeable motive, that the apostle James uses to encourage men's approach to God, because 'he gives liberally, and upbraideth not,' James i. 5. A man of a kind heart and bountiful hand, shall have his gate thronged with suppliants, who sometimes would be willing to lay down their lives. 'For a good man one would even



dare to die ;' when one of a niggardly or tyrannical temper shall be destitute of all free and affectionate applications. What eyes would be lifted up to heaven, what hands stretched out, if there were not a knowledge of goodness there to enliven their hopes of speeding in their petitions ? Therefore Christ orders our prayers to be directed to God as a *Father*, which is a title of tenderness, as well as a *Father in heaven*, a mark of his greatness ; the one to support our confidence, as well as the other to preserve our distance. God could not be ingenuously adored and acknowledged, if he were not liberal as well as powerful. The goodness of God is the foundation of all ingenuous religion, devotion, and worship.

6. The sixth instruction : The goodness of God renders God amiable. His goodness renders him beautiful, and his beauty renders him lovely, both are linked together : Zech. ix. 17, 'How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty.' This is the most powerful attractive, and masters the affections of the soul ; it is goodness only, supposed or real, that is thought worthy to demerit\* our affections to anything. If there be not a reality of this, or at least an opinion and estimation of it in an object, it would want a force and vigour to allure our will. This perfection of God is the loadstone to draw us, and the centre for our spirits to rest in.

(1.) This renders God amiable to himself. His goodness is his Godhead, Rom. i. 20. By his Godhead is meant his goodness : if he loves his Godhead for itself, he loves his goodness for itself. He would not be good if he did not love himself ; and if there were anything more excellent, and had a greater goodness than himself, he would not be good if he did not love that greater goodness above himself ; for not only a hatred of goodness is evil, but an indifferent or cold affection to goodness hath a tincture of evil in it. If God were not good, and yet should love himself in the highest manner, he would be the greatest evil, and do the greatest evil in that act ; for he would set his love upon that which is not the proper object of such an affection, but the object of aversion. His own infinite excellency and goodness of his nature renders him lovely and delightful to himself ; without this, he could not love himself in a commendable and worthy way, and becoming the purity of a deity. And he cannot but love himself for this : for as creatures, by not loving him as the supreme good, deny him to be the chiefest good, so God would deny himself and his own goodness, if he did not love himself, and that for his goodness ; but the apostle tells us, 2 Tim. ii. 13, that God 'cannot deny himself.' Self-love upon this account is the only prerogative of God, because there is not anything better than himself, that can lay any just claim to his affections. He only ought to love himself, and it would be an injustice in him to himself if he did not. He only can love himself for this : an infinite goodness ought to be infinitely loved, but he only being infinite, can only love himself according to the due merit of his own goodness. He cannot be so amiable to any man, to any angel, to the highest seraphim, as he is to himself, because he is only capable, in regard of his infinite wisdom, to know the infiniteness of his own goodness. And no creature can love him as he ought to be loved, unless it had the same infinite capacity of understanding to know him, and of affection to embrace him. This first renders God amiable to himself.

(2.) It ought therefore to render him amiable to us. What renders him lovely to his own eye, ought to render him so to ours ; and since by the shortness of our understandings we cannot love him as he merits, yet we should be induced, by the measures of his bounty, to love him as we can. If this do not present him lovely to us, we own him rather a devil than a

\* Qu. 'merit'?—ED.

God. If his goodness moved him to frame creatures, his goodness moved him also to frame creatures for himself and his own glory. It is a mighty wrong to him not to look with a delightful eye upon the marks of it, and return an affection to God in some measure suitable to his liberality to us. We are descended as low as brutes, if we understand him not to be the perfect good; and we are descended as low as devils, if our affections are not attracted by it.

[1.] If God were not infinitely good, he could not be the object of supreme love. If he were finitely good, there might be other things as good as God, and then God in justice could not challenge our choicest affections to him, above anything else. It would be a defect of goodness in him to demand it, because he would despoil that which were equally good with him of its due and right to our affections, which it might claim from us upon the account of its goodness. God would be unjust to challenge more than was due to him, for he would claim that chiefly to himself, which another had a lawful share in. Nothing can be supremely loved, that hath not a triumphant excellency above all other things. Where there is an equality of goodness, neither can justly challenge a supremacy, but only an equality of affection.

[2.] This attribute of goodness renders him more lovely than any other attribute. He never requires our adoration of him so much as the strongest or wisest, but as the best of beings. He uses this chiefly to constrain and allure us. Why would he be feared or worshipped, but because 'there is forgiveness with him'? Ps. cxxx. 4. It is for his goodness' sake that he is sued to by his people in distress: Ps. xxv. 7, 'For thy goodness' sake, O Lord.' Men may be admired because of their knowledge, but they are affected because of their goodness. The will, in all the variety of objects it pursues, centres in this one thing of good as the term of its appetite. All things are beloved by men because they have been bettered by them, or because they expect to be the better for them. Severity can never conquer enmity and kindle love. Were there nothing but wrath in the Deity, it would make him be feared, but render him odious, and that to an innocent nature. As the spouse speaks of Christ, Cant. v. 10, 11, so we may of God. Though she commends him for his head, the excellency of his wisdom; his eyes, the extent of his omniscience; his hands, the greatness of his power; and his legs, the swiftness of his motions and ways to and for his people; yet the 'sweetness of his mouth,' in his gracious words and promises, closes all, and is followed with nothing but an exclamation that 'he is altogether lovely,' verse 16. His mouth, in pronouncing pardon of sin, and justification of the person, presents him most lovely. His power to do good is admirable, but his will to do good is amiable. This puts a gloss upon all his other attributes. Though he had knowledge to understand the depth of our necessities, and power to prevent them or rescue us from them, yet his knowledge would be fruitless and his power useless, if he were of a rigid nature, and not touched with any sentiments of kindness.

(3.) This goodness, therefore, lays a strong obligation upon us. It is true he is lovely in regard of his absolute goodness, or the goodness of his nature, but we should hardly be persuaded to return him an affection without his relative goodness, his benefits to his creatures. We are obliged by both to love him.

[1.] By his absolute goodness, or the goodness of his nature. Suppose a creature had drawn its original from something else, wherein God had no influx, and had never received the least mite of a benefit from him, but from some other hand, yet the infinite excellency and goodness of his nature would merit the love of that creature, and it would act sordidly and disin-

generously, if it did not discover a mighty respect for God. For, what ingenuity could there be in a rational creature, that were possessed with no esteem for any nature filled with unbounded goodness and excellency, though he had never been obliged to him for any favour? That man is accounted odious and justly despicable by man, that reproaches and disesteems, nay, that doth not value a person of a high virtue in himself, and an universal goodness and charity to others, though himself never stood in need of his charity, and never had any benefit conveyed from his hands, nor ever saw his face, or had any commerce with him; a value of such a person is but a just due to the natural claim of virtue. And indeed, the first object of love is God in the excellency of his own nature, as the first object of love in marriage is the person; the portion is a thing consequent upon it. To love God only for his benefits, is to love ourselves first, and him secondarily; to love God for his own goodness and excellency, is a true love of God, a love of him for himself. That flaming fire in his own breast, though we have not a spark of it, hath a right to kindle one in ours to him.

[2.] By his relative goodness, or that of his benefits. Though the excellency of his own nature, wherein there is a combination of goodness, must needs ravish an apprehensive mind, yet a reflection upon his imparted kindness, both in the beings we have from him, and the support we have by him, must enhance this estimation. When the excellency of his nature and the expressions of his bounty are in conjunction, the excellency of his own nature renders him estimable in a way of justice, and the greatness of his benefits renders him valuable in a way of gratitude. The first ravisheth, and the other allures and melts; he hath enough in his nature to attract, and sufficient in his bounty to engage our affections. The excellency of his nature is strong enough in itself to blow up our affections to him, were there not a malignity in our hearts, that represents him under the notion of an enemy; therefore, in regard of our corrupt state, the consideration of divine largesses comes in for a share in the elevation of our affections. For indeed, it is a very hard thing for a man to love another, though never so well qualified, and of an eminent virtue, while he believes him to be his enemy, and one that will severely handle him, though he hath before received many good turns from him. The virtue, valour, and courtesy of a prince, will hardly make him affected by those against whom he is in arms, and that are daily pilfered by his soldiers, unless they have hopes of a reparation from him, and future security from injuries. Christ, in the repetition of the command to 'love God with all our mind, with all our heart, and with all our soul,' *i. e.* with such an ardency, above all things which glitter in our eye, or can be created by him, considers him as *our* God, Mat. xxii. 37. And the psalmist considers him as one that had kindly employed his power for him in the eruption of his love: Ps. xviii. 1, 'I will love thee, O Lord, my strength!' And so in Ps. cxvi. 1, 'I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.' An esteem of the benefactor is inseparable from gratitude for the received benefits; and should not, then, the unparalleled kindness of God advance him in our thoughts, much more than slighter courtesies do a created benefactor in ours! It is an obligation on every man's nature, to answer bounty with gratitude, and goodness with love. Hence you never knew any man, nor can the records of eternity produce any man or devil, that ever hated any person, or anything as good in itself; it is a thing absolutely repugnant to the nature of any rational creature. The devils hate not God because he is good, but because he is not so good to them as they would have him, because he will not unlock their chains, turn them into liberty, and restore them to happiness, *i. e.* because he will not

desert the rights of abused goodness. But how should we send up flames of love to that God, since we are under his direct beams, and enjoy such plentiful influences! If the sun is comely in itself, yet it is more amiable to us by the light we see, and the warmth we feel.

*First*, The greatness of his benefits have reason to affect us with a love to him. The impress he made upon our souls when he extracted us from the darkness of nothing, the comeliness he hath put upon us by his own breath, the care he took of our recovery when we had lost ourselves, the expense he was at for our regaining our defaced beauty, the gift he made of his Son, the affectionate calls we have heard to overmaster our corrupt appetites, move us to repentance, and make us disaffect our beloved misery; the loud sound of his words in our ears, and the more inward knockings of his Spirit in our heart, the offering us the gift of himself, and the everlasting happiness he courts us to, besides those common favours we enjoy in the world, which are all the streams of his rich bounty,—the voice of all is loud enough to solicit our love, and the merit of all ought to be strong enough to engage our love: 'There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky,' Deut. xxxiii. 26.

*Secondly*, The unmeritedness of them doth enhance this. It is but reason to love him who hath loved us first, 1 John iv. 19. Hath he placed his delight upon any, when they were nothing, and after they were sinful; and shall he set his delight upon such vile persons, and shall not we set our love upon so excellent an object as himself? How base are we, if his goodness doth not constrain us to affect him, who hath been so free in his favour to us, who have merited the quite contrary at his hands! If 'his tender mercies are all over his works,' Ps. cxlv. 9, he ought, for it, to be esteemed by all his works that are capable of a rational estimation.

*Thirdly*, Goodness in creatures makes them estimable; much more should the goodness of God render him lovely to us. If we love a little spark of goodness in this or that creature, if a drop be so delicious to us, shall not the immense sun of goodness, the ever-flowing fountain of all, be much more delightful? The original excellency always outstrips what is derived from it. If so mean and contracted an object as a little creature deserves estimation for a little mite communicated to it, so great and extended a goodness as is in the Creator much more merits it at our hands. He is good after the infinite methods of a deity. A weak resemblance is lovely, much more amiable then must be the incomprehensible original of that beauty. We love creatures for what we think to be good in them, though it may be hurtful. And shall we not love God, who is a real and unblemished goodness, and from whose hand are poured out all those blessings, that are conveyed to us by second causes? The object that delights us, the capacity we have to delight in it, are both from him; our love therefore to him should transcend the affection we bear to any instruments he moves for our welfare. 'Among the gods there is none like thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works,' Ps. lxxxvi. 8. Among the pleasantest creatures there is none like the Creator, nor any goodness like unto his goodness. Shall we love the food that nourisheth us, and the medicine that cures us, and the silver whereby we furnish ourselves with useful commodities? Shall we love a horse or dog, for the benefits we have by them? And shall not the spring of all those draw our souls after it, and make us aspire to the honour of loving and embracing him who hath stored every creature with that which may pleasure us? But instead of endeavouring to parallel our affection with his kindness, we endeavour to make our disingenuity as extensive and towering as his divine goodness.

*Fourthly*, This is the true end of the manifestation of his goodness, that he might appear amiable, and have a return of affection. Did God display his goodness only to be thought of, or to be loved? It is the want of such a return that he hath usually aggravated from the benefits he hath bestowed upon men. Every thought of him should be attended with a motion suitable to the excellency of his nature and works. Can we think those nobler spirits, the angels, look upon themselves, or those frames of things in the heavens and earth, without starting some practical affection to him for them? Their knowledge of his excellency and works cannot be a lazy contemplation. It is impossible their wills and affections should be a thousand miles distant from their understandings in their operations. It is not the least part of his condescending goodness to court in such methods the affections of us worms, and manifest his desire to be beloved by us. Let us give him, then, that affection he deserves, as well as demands, and which cannot be withheld from him without horrible sacrilege. There is nothing worthy of love besides him. Let no fire be kindled in our hearts but what may ascend directly to him.

7. The seventh instruction is this : This renders God a fit object of trust and confidence. Since none is good but God, none can be a full and satisfactory ground or object of confidence but God. As all things derive their beings, so they derive their helpfulness to us from God ; they are not therefore the principal objects of trust, but that goodness alone that renders them fit instruments of our support ; they can no more challenge from us a stable confidence than they can a supreme affection. It is by this the psalmist allures men to trust in him : Ps. xxxiv. 8, 'Taste and see how good the Lord is.' What is the consequence? 'Blessed is the man that trusts in thee.' The voice of divine goodness sounds nothing more intelligibly, and a taste of it produceth nothing more effectually than this. As the vials of his justice are to make us fear him, so the streams of his goodness are to make us rely on him. As his patience is designed to broach our repentance, so his goodness is most proper to strengthen our assurance in him. That goodness which surmounted so many difficulties, and conquered so many motions, that might be made against any repeated exercise of it, after it had been abused by the first rebellion of man ; that goodness that, after so much contempt of it, appeared in such a majestic tenderness, and threw aside those impediments which men had cast in the way of divine inclinations : this goodness is the foundation of all reliance upon God. Who is better than God? And, therefore, who more to be trusted than God? As his power cannot act anything weakly, so his goodness cannot act anything unbecomingly, and unworthy of his infinite majesty. And here consider,

(1.) Goodness is the first motive of trust. Nothing but this could be the encouragement to man, had he stood in a state of innocence, to present himself before God ; the majesty of God would have constrained him to keep his due distance, but the goodness of God could only hearten his confidence ; it is nothing else now that can preserve the same temper in us in our lapsed condition. To regard him only as the judge of our crimes, will drive us from him ; but only the regard of him as the donor of our blessings, will allure us to him. The principal foundation of faith is not the word of God, but God himself, and God as considered in this perfection. As the goodness of God in his invitations, and providential blessings, 'leads us to repentance,' Rom. ii. 4, so by the same reason the goodness of God, by his promises, leads us to reliance. If God be not first believed to be good, he would not be believed at all in anything that he speaks or swears. If you were not satisfied in the goodness of a man, though he should swear a thousand

times, you would value neither his word nor oath as any security. Many times, where we are certain of the goodness of a man, we are willing to trust him without his promise. This divine perfection gives credit to the divine promises; they of themselves would not be a sufficient ground of trust, without an apprehension of his truth; nor would his truth be very comfortable, without a belief of his good will, whereby we are assured, that what he promises to give he gives liberally, free, and without regret. The truth of the promiser makes the promise credible, but the goodness of the promiser makes it cheerfully relied on. In Ps. lxxiii., Asaph's penitential psalm for his distrust of God, he begins the first verse with an assertion of this attribute, ver. 1, 'Truly God is good to Israel,' and ends with this fruit of it, ver. 28, 'I will put my trust in the Lord God.' It is a mighty ill-nature that receives not with assurance the dictates of infinite goodness (that cannot deceive or frustrate the hopes we conceive of him), that is unconceivably more abundant in the breast and inclinations of the promiser, than expressible in the words of his promise. All true faith works by love, Gal. v. 6, and therefore necessarily includes a particular eyeing of this excellency in the divine nature, which renders him amiable, and is the motive and encouragement of a love to him. His power indeed is a foundation of trust, but his goodness is the principal motive of it. His power without good will would be dangerous, and could not allure affection; and his good will without power would be useless; and though it might merit a love, yet could not create a confidence: both in conjunction are strong grounds of hope, especially since his goodness is of the same infinity with his wisdom and power; and that he can be no more wanting in the effusions of this upon them that seek him, than in his wisdom to contrive, or his power to effect his designs and works.

(2.) This goodness is more the foundation and motive of trust under the gospel than under the law. They under the law had more evidences of divine power, and their trust eyed that much; though there was an eminency of goodness in the frequent deliverances they had, yet the power of God had a more glorious dress than his goodness, because of the extraordinary and miraculous ways whereby he brought those deliverances about. Therefore in the catalogue of believers, in Heb. xi., you shall find the power of God to be the centre of their rest and trust; and their faith was built upon the extraordinary marks of divine power, which were frequently visible to them. But under the gospel, goodness and love was intended by God to be the chief object of trust; suitable to the excellency of that dispensation, he would have an exercise of more ingenuity in the creatures. Therefore it is said, Hosea iii. 5, a promise of gospel times, 'They shall fear God and his goodness in the latter days,' when they shall return to 'seek the Lord, and David their king.' It is not said, they shall fear God and his power, but the Lord and his goodness, or the Lord for his goodness. Fear is often, in the Old Testament, taken for faith, or trust. This divine goodness, the object of faith, is that goodness discovered in David their king, the Messiah, or Jesus. God in this dispensation recommends his goodness and love, and reveals it more clearly than other attributes, that the soul might have more prevailing and sweeter attractives to confide in him.

(3.) A confidence in him gives him the glory of his goodness. Most nations, that had nothing but the light of nature, thought it a great part of the honour that was due to God to implore his goodness, and cast their cares upon it. To do good is the most honourable thing in the world, and to acknowledge a goodness in a way of confidence, is as high an honour as we can give to it, and a great part of gratitude for what it hath already

expressed. Therefore we find often that an acknowledgment of one benefit received was attended with a trust in him for what they should in the future need : Ps. lvi. 13, 'Thou hast delivered my soul from death, wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling?' So 2 Cor. i. 10. And they who have been most eminent for their trust in him, have had the greatest elogies and commendations from him. As a diffidence doth disparage this perfection, thinking it meaner and shallower than it is, so confidence highly honours it. We never please him more than when we trust in him : Ps. cxlvii. 11, 'The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy.' He takes it for an honour to have this attribute exalted by such a carriage of his creature. He is no less offended when we think his heart straitened, as if he were a parsimonious God, than when we think his arm shortened, as if he were an impotent and feeble God.

Let us therefore make this use of his goodness, to hearten our faith. When we are scared by the terrors of his justice, when we are dazzled by the arts of his wisdom, and confounded by the splendour of his majesty, we may take refuge in the sanctuary of his goodness ; this will encourage us, as well as astonish us ; whereas the consideration of his other attributes would only amaze us, but can never refresh us, but when they are considered marching under the conduct and banners of this. When all the other perfections of the divine nature are looked upon in conjunction with this excellency, each of them send forth ravishing and benign influences upon the applying creature. It is more advantageous to depend upon divine bounty than our own cares ; we may have better assurance upon this account in his cares for us than in ours for ourselves. Our goodness for ourselves is finite, and besides, we are too ignorant ; his goodness is infinite, and attended with an infinite wisdom ; we have reason to distrust ourselves, not God. We have reason to be at rest under that kind influence we have so often experimented ; he hath so much goodness that he can have no deceit ; his goodness in making the promise, and his goodness in working the heart to a reliance on it, are grounds of trust in him : Ps. cxix. 49, 'Remember thy word to thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' If his promise did not please him, why did he make it ? If reliance on the promise did not please him, why did his goodness work it ? It would be inconsistent with his goodness to mock his creature, and it would be the highest mockery to publish his word, and create a temper in the heart of his supplicant suited to his promise, which he never intended to satisfy. He can as little wrong his creature as wrong himself, and therefore can never disappoint that faith which in his own methods casts itself into the arms of his kindness, and is his own workmanship, and calls him author. That goodness that imparted itself so freely in creation, will not neglect those nobler creatures that put their trust in him. This renders God a fit object for trust and confidence.

8. The eighth instruction : This renders God worthy to be obeyed and honoured. There is an excellency in God to allure, as well as sovereignty to enjoin, obedience. The infinite excellency of his nature is so great, that if his goodness had promised us nothing to encourage our obedience, we ought to prefer him before ourselves, devote ourselves to serve him, and make his glory our greatest content ; but much more when he hath given such admirable expressions of his liberality, and stored us with hopes of richer and fuller streams of it. When David considered the absolute goodness of his nature, and the relative goodness of his benefits, he presently expresseth an ardent desire to be acquainted with the divine statutes, that he might make ingenious returns in a dutiful observance : Ps. cxix. 68,

'Thou art good, and thou dost good, teach me thy statutes.' As his goodness is the original, so the acknowledgment of it is the end of all, which cannot be without an observance of his will. His goodness requires of us an ingenious, not a servile obedience.

And this is established upon two foundations.

(1.) Because the bounty of God hath laid upon us the strongest obligations. The strength of an obligation depends upon the greatness and numerousness of the benefits received. The more excellent the favours are, which are conferred upon any person, the more right hath the benefactor to claim an observance from the person bettered by him. Much of the rule and empire, which hath been in several ages conferred by communities upon princes, hath had its first spring from a sense of the advantages they have received by them, either in protecting them from their enemies, or rescuing them from an ignoble captivity; in enlarging their territories, or increasing their wealth. Conquest hath been the original of a constrained, but beneficence always the original of a voluntary and free subjection.\* Obedience to parents is founded upon their right, because they are instrumental in bestowing upon us being and life; and because this of life is so great a benefit, the law of nature never dissolves this obligation of obeying, and honouring parents; it is as long-lived as the law of nature, and hath an universal practice, by the strength of that law in all parts of the world. And those rightful chains are not unlocked, but by that which unties the knot between soul and body. Much more hath God a right to be obeyed and revered, who is the principal benefactor, and moved all those second causes to impart to us what conduced to our advantage. The just authority of God over us, results from the superlativeness of his blessings he hath poured down upon us, which cannot be equalled, much less exceeded by any other. As therefore upon this account he hath a claim to our choicest affections, so he hath also to our most exact obedience; and neither one nor other can be denied him, without a sordid and disingenuous ingratitude. God therefore aggravates the rebellion of the Jews, from the cares he had in the bringing them up, Isa. ii. 2, and the miraculous deliverance from Egypt, Jer. xi. 7, 8, implying that those benefits were strong obligations to an ingenuous observance of him.

(2.) It is established upon this, that God can enjoin the observance of nothing but what is good. He may, by the right of his sovereign dominion, command that which is indifferent in its own nature; as in positive laws, the not eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which had not been evil in itself, set aside the command of God to the contrary; and likewise in those ceremonial laws he gave the Jews. But in regard of the transcendent goodness and righteousness of his nature, he will not, he cannot command anything that is evil in itself, or repugnant to the true interest of his creature; and God never obliged the creature to anything, but what was so free from damaging it, that it highly conduced to its good and welfare; and therefore it is said, 1 John v. 3, 'that his commands are not grievous,' not grievous in their own nature, nor grievous to one possessed with a true reason. The command given to Adam in paradise was not grievous in itself, nor could he ever have thought it so, but upon a false supposition instilled into him by the tempter. There is a pleasure results from the law of God to a holy rational nature, a sweetness tasted both by the understanding and by the will, for they both 'rejoice the heart, and enlighten the eyes' of the mind, Ps. xix. 8. God being essentially wisdom and goodness, cannot deviate from that goodness in any orders he gives the

\* Amyrald, Dissert. p. 65.



creature ; whatsoever he enacts, must be agreeable to that rule, and therefore he can will nothing, but what is good and excellent, and what is good for the creature ; for since he hath put originally into man a natural instinct to desire that which is good, he would never enact anything for the creatures' observance, that might control that desire imprinted by himself, but what might countenance that impression of his own hand,\* for if God did otherwise, he would contradict his own natural law, and be a deluder of his creatures, if he impressed upon them desires one way, and ordered directions another. The truth is, all his moral precepts are comely in themselves, and they receive not their goodness from God's positive command, but that command supposeth their goodness. If everything were good because God loves it, or because God wills it, *i. e.* that God's loving it, or willing it, made that good which was not good before, then, as Camero well argues somewhere, God's goodness would depend upon his loving himself. He was good because he loved himself, and was not good till he loved himself ; whereas indeed God's loving himself doth not make him good, but supposeth him good. He was good in the order of nature, before he loved himself, and his being good was the ground of his loving himself, because, as was said before, if there were anything better than God, God would love that ; for it is inconsistent with the nature of God, and infinite goodness, not to love that which is good, and not to love that supremely which is the supreme good. Further to understand it, you may consider, if the question be asked, Why God loves himself ? you would think it a reasonable answer to say, Because he is good. But if the question be asked, why God is good, you would think that answer, because he loves himself, would be destitute of reason ; but the true answer would be, because his nature is so, and he could not be God if he were not good. Therefore God's goodness is in order of our conception before his self-love, and not his self-love before his goodness. So the moral things God commands are good in themselves before God commands them ; and such, that if God should command the contrary, it would openly speak him evil and unrighteous. Abstract from Scripture, and weigh things in your own reason ; could you conceive God good if he should command a creature not to love him ? Could you preserve the notion of a good nature in him if he did command murder, adultery, tyranny, and cutting of throats ? You would wonder to what purpose he made the world, and framed it for society, if such things were ordered that should deface all comeliness of society. The moral commands given in the word appeared of themselves very beautiful to mere reason, that had no knowledge of the written law ; they are good, and because they are so, his goodness had moved his sovereign authority strictly to enjoin them. Now this goodness, whereby he cannot oblige a creature to any thing that is evil, speaks him highly worthy of our observance, and our disobedience to his law to be full of unconceivable malignity ; that is the last thing.

The second use is a use of comfort. He is a good without mixture, good without weariness, none good but God, none good purely, none good inexhaustibly but God ; because he is good, we may upon our speaking expect his instruction : ' Good is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in his way,' Ps. xxv. 8. His goodness makes him stoop to be the tutor to those worms that lie prostrate before him ; and though they are sinners full of filth, he drives them not from his school, nor denies them his medicines, if they

\* As a heathen, Maximus Tyrius, Dissert. xxii. p. 220, οὐ γὰρ θεμὺς διὰ βούλησθαι ἀλλὰ τι ἢ τὸ κάλλιστον.

apply themselves to him as a physician. He is good in removing the punishment due to our crimes, and good in bestowing benefits, not due to our merits; because he is good, penitent believers may expect forgiveness: Ps. lxxvii. 5, 'Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive.' He acts not according to the rigour of the law, but willingly grants his pardon to those that fly into the arms of the mediator; his goodness makes him more ready to forgive, than our necessities make us desirous to enjoy. He charged not upon Job his impatient expressions in cursing the day of his birth; his goodness passed that over in silence; and extols him for speaking the thing that is right, right in the main (Job xlii. 7, when he charges his friends for 'not speaking of him the thing that is right, as his servant Job had done'). He is so good, that if we offer the least thing sincerely, he will graciously receive it; if we have not a lamb to offer, a pigeon or turtle shall be accepted upon his altar; he stands not upon costly presents, but sincerely tendered services. All conditions are sweetened by it; whatsoever any in the world enjoy is from a redundancy of this goodness, but whatsoever a good man enjoys is from a propriety in this goodness.

1. Here is comfort in our addresses to him. If he be a fountain and sea of goodness, he cannot be weary of doing good, no more than a fountain or sea are of flowing. All goodness delights to communicate itself. Infinite goodness hath then an infinite delight in expressing itself; it is a part of his goodness not to be weary of shewing it. He can never then be weary of being solicited for the effusions of it. If he rejoices over his people to do them good, he will rejoice in any opportunities offered to him to honour his goodness, and gladly meet with a fit object for it. He therefore delights in prayer. Never can we so delight in addressing as he doth in imparting. He delights more in our prayers than we can ourselves. Goodness is not pleased with shyness. To what purpose did his immense bounty bestow his Son upon us, but that we should be 'accepted both in our persons and petitions'? Eph. i. 6. 'His eyes are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry,' Ps. xxxiv. 15. He fixes the eye of his goodness upon them, and opens the ears of his goodness for them; he is pleased to behold them, and pleased to listen to them, as if he had no pleasure in anything else. He loves to be sought to, to give a vent to his bounty: Job xxii. 21, 'Acquaint thyself with God, and thereby good shall come unto thee.' The word signifies to *accustom* ourselves to God. The more we accustom ourselves in speaking, the more he will accustom himself in giving. He loves not to keep his goodness close under lock and key, as men do their treasures. If we knock, he opens his exchequer, Mat. vii. 7. His goodness is as flexible to our importunities as his power is invincible by the arm of a silly worm. He thinks his liberality honoured by being applied to, and your address to be a recompence for his expense. There is no reason to fear, since he hath so kindly invited us, but he will as heartily welcome us. The nature of goodness is to compassionate and communicate, to pity and relieve, and that with a heartiness and cheerfulness. Man is weary of being often solicited, because he hath a finite, not a bottomless goodness. He gives sometimes to be rid of his suppliant, not to encourage him to a second approach. But every experience God gives us of his bounty is a motive to solicit him afresh, and a kind of obligation he hath laid upon himself to renew it, 1 Sam. xvii. 37. It is one part of his goodness that it is boundless and bottomless; we need not fear the wasting of it, nor any weariness in him to bestow it. The stock cannot be spent, and infinite kindness can never become niggardly; when we have enjoyed it, there is still an infinite ocean in him to refresh us, and as full streams as ever to supply us. What

an encouragement have we to draw near to God ! We run in our straits to those that we think have most good will, as well as power to relieve and protect us. The oftener we come to him, and the nearer we approach to him, the more of his influences we shall feel. As the nearer the sun, the more of its heat insinuates itself into us. The greatness of God, joined with his goodness, hath more reason to encourage our approach to him than our flight from him, because his greatness never goes unattended with his goodness ; and if he were not so good, he would not be so great in the apprehensions of any creature. How may his goodness in the great gift of his Son encourage us to apply to him, since he hath set him as a day's-man between himself and us, and appointed him an advocate to present our requests for us, and speed them at the throne of grace, and he never leaves till divine goodness subscribes a *fiat* to our believing and just petitions.

2. Here is comfort in afflictions. What can we fear from the conduct of infinite goodness ? Can his hand be heavy upon those that are humble before him ? They are the hands of infinite power indeed, but there is not any motion of it upon his people but is ordered by a goodness as infinite as his power, which will not suffer any affliction to be too sharp or too long. By what ways soever he conveys grace to us here, and prepares us for glory hereafter, they are good ; and those are the good things he hath chiefly obliged himself to give : Ps. lxxxiv. 11, ' Grace and glory will he give, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' This David comforted himself with in that which his devout soul accounted the greatest calamity, ver. 2, his absence from the courts and house of God. Not an ill will, but a good will directs his scourge ; he is not an idle spectator of our combats ; his thoughts are fuller of kindness than ours in any case can be of trouble. And because he is good, he wills the best good in everything he acts, in exercising virtue or correcting vice. There is no affliction without some apparent mixtures of goodness. When he speaks how he had smitten Israel, Jer. ii. 30, he presently adds, ver. 31, ' Have I been a wilderness to Israel ? a land of darkness ? ' Though he led them through a desert, yet he was not a desert to them ; he was no land of darkness to them. While they marched through a land of barrenness, he was a caterer to provide them manna, and a place of broad rivers and streams. How often hath divine goodness made our afflictions our consolations, our diseases our medicines, and his gentle strokes reviving cordials ! How doth he provide for us above our deserts, even while he doth punish us beneath our merits ! Divine goodness can no more mean ill, than divine wisdom can be mistaken in its end, or divine power overruled in its actions. ' Charity thinks no evil,' 1 Cor. xiii. 5. Charity in the stream doth not, much less doth charity in the fountain. To be afflicted by a hand of goodness hath something comfortable in it, when to be afflicted by an evil hand is very odious. Elijah, who was loath to die by the hand of a whorish, idolatrous Jezebel, was very desirous to ' die by the hand of God,' 1 Kings xix. 2-4. He accounted it a misery to have died by her hand, who hated him, and had nothing but cruelty, and therefore fled from her, when he wished for death as a desirable thing by the hand of that God who had been good to him, and could not but be good in whatsoever he acted.

3. The third comfort flowing from this doctrine of the goodness of God is, it is a ground of assurance of happiness. If God be so good that nothing is better, and loves himself as he is good, he cannot be wanting in love to those that resemble his nature and imitate his goodness. He cannot but love his own image of goodness ; wherever he finds it, he cannot but be bountiful to it ; for it is impossible there can be any love to any object with-

out wishing well to it and doing well for it. If the soul loves God as its chiefest good, God will love the soul as his pious servant. As he hath offered to him the highest allurements, so he will not withhold the choicest communications. Goodness cannot be a deluding thing; it cannot consist with the nobleness and largeness of this perfection to invite the creature to him, and leave the creature empty of him when it comes. It is inconsistent with this perfection to give the creature a knowledge of himself, and a desire of enjoyment larger than that knowledge, a desire to know and enjoy him perpetually, yet never intend to bestow an eternal communication of himself upon it. The nature of man was erected by the goodness of God, but with an enlarged desire for the highest good, and a capacity of enjoying it. Can goodness be thought to be deceitful, to frustrate its own work, be tried with its own effusions, to let a gracious soul groan under its burden, and never resolve to ease him of it, to see delightfully the aspirings of the creature to another state, and resolve never to admit him to a happy issue of those desires? It is not agreeable to this unconceivable perfection to be unconcerned in the longings of his creature, since their first longings were placed in them by that goodness, which is so free from mocking the creature or falling short of its well-grounded expectations or desires, that it infinitely exceeds them. If man had continued in innocence, the goodness of God without question would have continued him in happiness. And since he hath had so much goodness to restore man, would it not be dishonourable to that goodness to break his own conditions, and defeat the believing creature of happiness after it had complied with his terms? He is a believer's God in covenant, and is a God in the utmost extent of this attribute, as well as of any other, and therefore will not communicate mean and shallow benefits, but according to the grandeur of it, sovereign and divine, such as the gift of a happy immortality. Since he had no obligation upon him to make any promise but the sweetness of his own nature, the same is as strong upon him to make all the words of his grace good. They cannot be invalid in any one tittle of them, as long as his nature remains the same; and his goodness cannot be diminished without the impairing of his Godhead, since it is inseparable from it. Divine goodness will not let any man serve God for nought. He hath promised our weak obedience more than any man in his right wits can say it merits: Mat. x. 42, 'A cup of cold water shall not lose its reward.' He will manifest our good actions, as he gave so high a testimony to Job in the face of the devil his accuser. It will not only be the happiness of the soul but of the body, the whole man, since soul and body were in conjunction in the acts of righteousness; it consists not with the goodness of God to reward the one and to let the other lie in the ruins of its first nothing; to bestow joy upon the one for its being principal, and leave the other without any sentiments of joy, that was instrumental in those good works, both commanded and approved by God. He that had the goodness to pity our original dust, will not want a goodness to advance it; and if we put off our bodies, it is but afterwards to put them on repaired and fresher. From this goodness the upright may expect all the happiness their nature is capable of.

4. It is a ground of comfort in the midst of public dangers. This hath more sweetness in it to support us than the malice of enemies hath to deject us; because he is good, he is a 'strong hold in the day of trouble,' Nah. i. 7. If his goodness extends to all his creatures, it will much more extend to those that honour him; if the earth be full of his goodness, that part of heaven which he hath upon earth shall not be empty of it. He hath a goodness often to deliver the righteous, and a justice to put the wicked in

his stead, Prov. xi. 8. When his people have been under the power of their enemies, he hath changed the scene, and put the enemies under the power of his people; he hath clapped upon them the same bolts which they did upon his servants. How comfortable is this goodness that hath yet maintained us in the midst of dangers, preserved us in the mouth of lions, quenched kindled fire, hitherto rescued us from designed ruin subtilly hatched, and supported us in the midst of men very passionate for our destruction! How hath this watchful goodness been a sanctuary to us in the midst of an upper hell!

The third use is of exhortation.

1. How should we endeavour after the enjoyment of God as good! How earnestly should we desire him! As there is no other goodness worthy of our supreme love, so there is no other goodness worthy our most ardent thirst. Nothing deserves the name of a desirable good, but as it tends to the attainment of this. Here we must pitch our desires, which otherwise will terminate in nullities or unconceivable disturbances.

(1.) Consider, nothing but good can be the object of a rational appetite. The will cannot direct its motion to anything under the notion of evil, evil in itself, or evil to it; whatsoever courts it must present itself in the quality of a good in its own nature, or in its present circumstances to the present state and condition of the desire, it will not else touch or affect the will. This is the language of that faculty: Ps. iv. 6, 'Who will shew me any good?' And good is as inseparably the object of the will's motion, as truth is of the understanding's inquiry. Whatsoever a man would allure another to comply with, he must propose to the person under the notion of some beneficialness to him in point of honour, profit, or pleasure; to act after this manner is the proper character of a rational creature. And though that which is evil is often embraced, instead of that which is good, and what we entertain as conducing to our felicity proves our misfortune, yet that is from our ignorance, and not from a formal choice of it as evil, for what evil is chosen it is not possible to choose under the conception of evil, but under the appearance of good, though it be not so in reality. It is inseparable from the wills of all men to propose to themselves that which in the opinion and judgment of their understandings or imagination is good, though they often mistake and cheat themselves.

(2.) Since that good is the object of a rational appetite, the purest, best, and most universal good, such as God is, ought to be most sought after. Since good only is the object of a rational appetite, all the motions of our souls should be carried to the first and best good; a real good is most desirable; the greatest excellency of the creatures cannot speak them so, since by the corruption of man they are 'subjected to vanity,' Rom. viii. 20. God is the most excellent good, without any shadow; a real something, without that nothing which every creature hath in its nature, Isa. xl. 17. A perfect good can only give us content; the best goodness in the creature is but slender and imperfect, had not the venom of corruption infused a vanity into it; the make of it speaks it finite, and the best qualities in it are bounded, and cannot give satisfaction to a rational appetite, which bears in its nature an imitation of divine infiniteness, and therefore can never find an eternal rest in mean trifles. God is above the imperfection of all creatures; creatures are but drops of goodness, at best but shallow streams; God is like a teeming ocean, that can fill the largest as well as the narrowest creek. He hath an accumulating goodness; several creatures answer several necessities, but one God can answer all our wants; he hath an universal fulness,

to overtop our universal emptiness; he contains in himself the sweetness of all other goods, and holds in his bosom plentifully what creatures have in their natures sparingly. Creatures are uncertain goods; as they begin to exist, so they may cease to be; they may be gone with a breath, they will certainly languish if God blows upon them, Isa. xl. 24. The same breath that raised them, can blast them, but who can rifle God of the least part of his excellency? Mutability is inherent in the nature of every creature as a creature. All sublunary things are as gourds, that refresh us one moment with their presence, and the next fret us with their absence; like fading flowers strutting to-day, and drooping to-morrow, Isa. xl. 6. While we possess them, we cannot clip their wings that may carry them away from us, and may make us vainly seek what we thought we firmly held. But God is as permanent a good, as he is a real one; he hath wings to fly to them that seek him, but no wings to fly from them for ever, and leave them. God is an universal good. That which is good to one, may be evil to another; what is desirable by one, may be refused as inconvenient for another; but God being an universal, unstained good, is useful for all, convenient to the natures of all, but such as will continue in enmity against him. There is nothing in God can displease a soul that desires to please him: when we are darkness, he is a light to scatter it; when we are in want, he hath riches to relieve us; when we are in a spiritual death, he is a prince of life to deliver us; when we are defiled, he is holiness to purify us. It is in vain to fix our hearts anywhere but on him, in the desire of whom there is a delight, and in the enjoyment of whom there is an inconceivable pleasure.

(3.) He is to be most sought after, since all things else that are desirable had their goodness from him. If anything be desirable because of its goodness, God is much more desirable because of his, since all things are good by a participation, and nothing good but by his print upon it. As what being creatures have was derived to them by God, so what goodness they are possessed with, they were furnished with it by God. All goodness flowed from him, and all created goodness is summed up in him. The streams should not terminate our appetite, without aspiring to the fountain. If the waters in the channel, which receive mixture, communicate a pleasure, the taste of the fountain must be much more delicious. That original perfection of all things, hath an inconceivable beauty above those things it hath framed. Since those things live not by their own strength, nor nourish us by their own liberality, but by the word of God, Mat. iv. 4, that God that speaks them into life, and speaks them into usefulness, should be most ardently desired as the best. If the sparkling glory of the visible heavens delight us, and the beauty and bounty of the earth please and refresh us, what should be the language of our souls upon those views and tastes, but that of the psalmist: Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I can desire beside thee!' No greater good can possibly be desired, and no less good should be ardently desired. As he is the supreme good, so we should bear that regard to him as supremely, and above all to thirst for him. As he is good, he is the object of desire; as the choicest and first goodness, he is desirable with the greatest vehemency. 'Give me children, or else I die,' was an uncomely speech, Gen. xxx. 1. The one was granted, and the other inflicted; she had children, but the last cost her her life. But give me God, or I will not be content, is a gracious speech, wherein we cannot miscarry; all that God demands of us is, that we should long for him, and look for our happiness only in him. That is the first thing, endeavour after the enjoyment of God as good.

2. Often meditate on the goodness of God. What was man produced

for, but to settle his thoughts upon this? What should have been Adam's employment in innocence, but to read over all the lines of nature, and fix his contemplations on that good hand that drew them? What is man endued with reason for, above all other animals, but to take notice of this goodness spread over all the creatures, which they themselves, though they felt, could not have such a sense of, as to make answerable returns to their benefactor? Can we satisfy ourselves in being spectators of it and enjoyers of it, only in such a manner as the brutes are? The beasts behold things as well as we; they feel the warm beams of this goodness as well as we, but without any reflection upon the author of them. Shall divine blessings meet with no more from us but a brutish view and beholding of them? What is more just than to spend a thought upon him, who hath enlarged his hand in so many benefits to us? Are we indebted to any more than we are to him? Why should we send our souls to visit anything more than him in his works? That we are able to meditate on him, is a part of his goodness to us, who hath bestowed that capacity upon us; and if we will not, it is a great part of our ingratitude. Can anything more delightful enter into us, than that of the kind and gracious disposition of that God who first brought us out of the abyss of an unhappy nothing, and hath hitherto spread his wings over us? Where can we meet with a nobler object than divine goodness, and what nobler work can be practised by us than to consider it? What is more sensible in all the operations of his hands, than his skill as they are considered in themselves, and his goodness as they are considered in relation to us? It is strange that we should miss the thoughts of it, that we should look upon this earth, and everything in it, and yet overlook that which it is most full of, viz., divine goodness, Ps. xxxiii. 5. It runs through the whole web of the world; all is framed and diversified by goodness; it is one entire single goodness which appears in various garbs and dresses in every part of the creation. Can we turn our eyes inward, and send our eyes outward, and see nothing of a divinity in both, worthy of our deepest and serious thoughts! Is there anything in the world we can behold but we see his bounty, since nothing was made but was one way or other beneficial to us? Can we think of our daily food, but we must have some reflecting thoughts on our great caterer? Can the sweetness of the creature to our palate, obscure the sweetness of the provider to our minds? It is strange that we should be regardless of that, wherein every creature without us, and every sense within us and about us, is a tutor to instruct us! Is it not reason we should think of the times wherein we were nothing, and from thence run back to a never begun eternity, and view ourselves in the thoughts of that goodness, to be in time brought forth upon this stage, as we are at present. Can we consider but one act of our understandings, but one thought, one blossom, one spark of our souls mounting upwards, and not reflect upon the goodness of God to us, who, in that faculty that sparkles out rational thoughts, has advanced us to a nobler state, and endued us with a nobler principle, than all the creatures we see on earth, except those of our own rank and kind! Can we consider but one foolish thought, one sinful act, and reflect upon the guilt and filth of it, and not behold goodness in sparing us, and miracles of goodness in sending his Son to die for us for the expiation of it! This perfection cannot well be out of our thoughts, or at least it is horrible it should, when it is writ in every line of the creation, and in a legible rubric in bloody letters in the cross of his Son. Let us think with ourselves how often he hath multiplied his blessings, when we did deserve his wrath; how he hath sent one unexpected benefit upon the heel of another, to bring us with a swift pace the tidings of good will to us! How often hath he delivered

us from a disease that had the arrows of death in its hand, ready to pierce us! How often hath he turned our fears into joys, and our distempers into promoters of our felicity! How often hath he mated a temptation, sent seasonable supplies in the midst of a sore distress, and prevented many dangers which we could not be so sensible of, because we were in a great measure ignorant of them! How should we meditate upon his goodness to our souls in preventing some sins, in pardoning others, in darting upon us the knowledge of his gospel and of himself in the face of his Son Christ! This seems to stick much upon the spirit of Paul, since he doth so often sprinkle his epistles with the titles of the 'grace of God,' 'riches of grace,' 'unsearchable riches of God,' 'riches of glory,' and cannot satisfy himself with the extolling of it. Certainly we should bear upon our heart a deep and quick sense of this perfection; as it was the design of God to manifest it, so it would be acceptable to God for us to have a sense of it. A dull receiver of his blessing is no less nauseous to him, than a dull dispenser of his alms: 'He loves a cheerful giver,' 2 Cor. ix. 7. He doth himself what he loves in others; is cheerful in giving, and he loves we should be serious in thinking of him, and have a right apprehension and sense of his goodness.

(1.) A right sense of his goodness would dispose us to an ingenuous worship of God. It would damp our averseness to any act of religion. What made David so resolute and ready to 'worship towards his holy temple,' but the sense of his 'loving-kindness,' Ps. cxxxviii. 2. This would render him always in our mind a worthy object of our devotion, a stable prop of our confidence. We should then adore him when we consider him as 'our God,' and ourselves as 'the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand,' Ps. xcv. 7. We should send up prayers with strong faith and feeling, and praises with great joy and pleasure. The sense of his goodness would make us love him, and our love to him would quicken our adoration of him; but if we regard not this, we shall have no mind to think of him, no mind to act anything towards him. We may tremble at his presence, but not heartily worship him; we shall rather look upon him as a tyrant, and think no other affection due to him than what we reserve for an oppressor, viz., hatred and ill-will.

(2.) A sense of it will keep us humble. A sense of it would effect that for which itself was intended, viz., bring us to a repentance for our crimes, and not suffer us to harden ourselves against him. When we should deeply consider how he hath made the sun to shine upon us, and his rain to fall upon the earth for our support, the one to supple the earth, and the other to assist the juice of it to bring forth fruits, how would it reflect upon us our ill requitals, and make us hang down our heads before him in a low posture, pleasing to him and advantageous to ourselves! What would the first charge be upon ourselves but what Moses brings in his expostulation against the Israelites: Deut. xxxii. 6, 'Do I thus requite the Lord?' What, is this goodness for me, who am so much below him; for me, who have so much incensed him; for me, who have so much abused what he hath allowed? It would bring to remembrance the horror of our crimes, and set us a-blushing before him, when we should consider the multitudes of his benefits, and our unworthy behaviour, that hath not constrained him, even against the inclination of his goodness, to punish us. How little should we plead for a further liberty in sin, or palliate our former faults! When we set divine goodness in one column, and our transgressions in another, and compare together their several *items*, it would fill us with a deep consciousness of our own guilt, and divest us of any worth of our own in our approaches to him.



It would humble us, that we cannot love so obliging a God as much as he deserves to be loved by us ; it would make us humble before men. Who would be proud of a mere gift, which he knows he hath not merited ? How ridiculous would that servant be, that should be proud of a rich livery which is a badge of his service, not a token of his merit, but of his master's magnificence and bounty, which, though he wear this day, he may be stripped of to-morrow, and be turned out of his master's family !

(3.) A sense of the divine goodness would make us faithful to him. The goodness of God obligeth us to serve him, not to offend him. The freeness of his goodness should make us more ready to contribute to the advancement of his glory. When we consider the benefits of a friend proceed out of kindness to us, and not out of self-ends and vain applause, it works more upon us, and makes us more careful of the honour of such a person. It is a pure bounty God hath manifested in creation and providence, which could not be for himself, who, being blessed for ever, wanted nothing from us. It was not to draw a profit from us, but to impart an advantage to us : ' Our goodness extends not to him,' Ps. xvi. 2. ' The service of the benefactor is but a rational return for benefits, whence Nehemiah aggravates the sins of the Jews : Neh. ix. 35, ' They have not served thee in thy great goodness, that thou gavest them,' *i. e.* which thou didst freely bestow upon them. How should we dare to spend upon our lusts that which we possess, if we considered by whose liberality we came by it ? How should we dare to be unfaithful in the goods he hath made us trustees of ? A deep sense of divine goodness will ennoble the creature, and make it act for the most glorious and noble end. It would strike Satan's temptations dead at a blow. It would pull off the false mask and vizor from what he presents to us, to draw us from the service of our benefactor. We could not, with a sense of this, think him kinder to us than God hath and will be, which is the great motive of men, to join hands with him and turn their backs upon God.

(4.) A sense of the divine goodness would make us patient under our miseries. A deep sense of this would make us give God the honour of his goodness in whatsoever he doth, though the reason of his actions be not apparent to us, nor the event and issue of his proceedings foreseen by us. It is a stated case, that goodness can never intend ill, but designs good in all its acts, ' to them that love God,' Rom. viii. 28 ; nay, he always designs the best ; when he bestows anything upon his people, he sees it best they should have it ; and when he removes anything from them, he sees it best they should lose it. When we have lost a thing we loved, and refuse to be comforted, a sense of this perfection, which acts God in all, would keep us from misjudging our sufferings, and measuring the intention of the hand that sent them, by the sharpness of what we feel. What patient fully persuaded of the affection of the physician, would not value him, though that which is given to purge out the humours rack his bowels ? When we lose what we love, perhaps it was some outward lustre tickled our apprehensions, and we did not see the viper we would have harmed ourselves by ; but God seeing it, snatched it from us, and we mutter as if he had been cruel, and deprived us of the good we imagined, when he was kind to us, and freed us from the hurt we should certainly have felt. We should regard that, which in goodness he takes from us, at no other rate than some gilded poison and lurking venom. The sufferings of men, though upon high provocations, are often followed with rich mercies, and many times are intended as preparations for greater goodness. When God utters that rhetoric of his bowels, Hosea xi. 8, ' How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim ? I will not execute the fierceness of my anger !' he intended them mercy in their captivity, and would

prepare them by it to walk after the Lord. And it is likely the posterity of those ten tribes were the first that ran to God, upon the publishing the gospel in the places where they lived. He doth not take away himself, when he takes away outward comforts. While he snatches away the rattles we play with, he hath a breast in himself for us to suck. The consideration of his goodness would dispose us to a composed frame of spirit. If we are sick, it is goodness it is a disease, and not a hell; it is goodness that it is a cloud, and not a total darkness. What if he transfers from us what we have? He takes no more than what his goodness first imparted to us, and never takes so much from his people as his goodness leaves them. If he strips them of their lives, he leaves them their souls, with those faculties he furnished them with at first, and removes them from those houses of clay to a richer mansion. The time of our sufferings here, were it the whole course of our life, bears not the proportion of a moment to that endless eternity, wherein he hath designed to manifest his goodness to us. The consideration of divine goodness would teach us to draw a calm even from storms, and distil balsam from rods. If the reproofs of the righteous be 'an excellent oil,' Ps. cxli. 5, we should not think the corrections of a good God to have a less virtue.

(5.) A sense of the divine goodness would mount us above the world. It would damp our appetites after meaner things; we should look upon the world not as a god, but a gift from God, and never think the present better than the donor. We should never lie soaking in muddy puddles, were we always filled with a sense of the richness and clearness of this fountain wherein we might bathe ourselves. Little petty particles of good will give us no content, when we were sensible of such an unbounded ocean. Infinite goodness rightly apprehended, would dull our desires after other things, and sharpen them with a keener edge after that which is best of all. How earnestly do we long for the presence of a friend, of whose good will towards us we have full experience!

(6.) It would check any motions of envy. It would make us joy in the prosperity of good men, and hinder us from envying the outward felicity of the wicked. We should not dare with an evil eye to censure his good hand, Mat. xx. 15, but approve of what he thinks fit to do, both in the matter of his liberality, and the subjects he chooseth for it. Though, if the disposal were in our hands, we should not imitate him, as not thinking them subjects fit for bounty, yet since it is in his hands, we be to approve of his actions, and not to have an ill-will towards him for his goodness, or towards those he is pleased to make the subjects of it. Since all his doles are given to invite men to repentance, Rom. ii. 4, to envy them those goods God hath bestowed upon them, is to envy God the glory of his own goodness, and them the felicity those things might move them to aspire to. It is to wish God more contracted, and thy neighbour more miserable; but a deep sense of his sovereign goodness would make us rejoice in any marks of it upon others, and move us to bless him instead of censuring him.

(7.) It would make us thankful. What can be the most proper, the most natural reflection, when we behold the most magnificent characters he hath imprinted upon our souls, the conveniency of the members he hath compacted in our bodies, but a praise of him! Such motion had David upon the first consideration: Ps. cxxxix. 14, 'I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' What could be the most natural reflection, when we behold the rich prerogatives of our natures above other creatures, the provision he hath made for us for our delight in the beauties of heaven, for our support in the creatures on earth? What can reasonably be expected

from uncorrupted man, to be the first motion of his soul, but an extolling the bountiful hand of the invisible donor, whoever he be? This would make us venture at some endeavours of a grateful acknowledgment, though we should despair of rendering anything proportionable to the greatness of the benefit; and such an acknowledgment of our own weakness would be an acceptable part of our gratitude. Without a due and deep sense of divine goodness, our praise of it, and thankfulness for it, will be but cold, formal, and customary; our tongues may bless him, and our heart slight him. And this will lead us to the third exhortation;—

3. Which is that of thankfulness for divine goodness. The absolute goodness of God, as it is the excellency of his nature, is the object of praise; the relative goodness of God, as he is our benefactor, is the object of thankfulness. This was always a debt due from man to God; he had obligations in the time of his integrity, and was then to render it; he is not less, but more obliged to it in the state of corruption; the benefits being the greater, by how much the more unworthy he is of them by reason of his revolt. The bounty bestowed upon an enemy that merits the contrary ought to be received with a greater resentment than that bestowed on a friend who is not unworthy of testimonies of respect. Gratitude to God is the duty of every creature that hath a sense of itself; the more excellent being any enjoy, the more devout ought to be the acknowledgment. How often doth David stir up, not only himself, but summon all creatures, even the insensible ones, to join in the concert! Ps. cxlviii., he calls to the deeps, fire, hail, snow, mountains and hills, to bear a part in this work of praise; not that they are able to do it actively, but to shew that man is to call in the whole creation to assist him passively, and should have so much charity to all creatures, as to receive what they offer, and so much affection to God as to present to him what he receives from him.\* Snow and hail cannot bless and praise God, but man ought to praise God for those things, wherein there is a mixture of trouble and inconvenience, something to molest our sense, as well as something that improves the earth for fruit. This God requires of us, for this he instituted several offerings, and required a little portion of fruits to be presented to him as an acknowledgment they held the whole from his bounty. And the end of the festival days among the Jews was to revive the memory of those signal acts, wherein his power for them, and his goodness to them, had been extraordinarily evident. It is no more but our mouths to praise him, and our hand to obey him, that he exacts at our hands. He commands us not to expend what he allows us, in the erecting stately temples to his honour; all the coin he requires to be paid with for his expense, is the 'offering of thanksgiving,' Ps. l. 14; and this we ought to do as much as we can, since we cannot do it as much as he merits, for 'who can shew forth all his praise?' Ps. cvi. 2. If we have the fruit of his goodness, it is fit he should have the 'fruit of our lips,' Heb. xiii. 15. The least kindness should inflame our souls with a kindly resentment. Though some of his benefits have a brighter, some a darker, aspect towards us, yet they all come from this common spring: his goodness shines in all; there are the footsteps of goodness in the least, as well as the smiles of goodness in the greatest; the meanest, therefore, is not to pass without a regard of the author. As the glory of God is more illustrious in some creatures than in others, yet it glitters in all, and the lowest as well as the highest administers matter of praise; but they are not only little things, but the choicer favours he hath bestowed upon us. How much doth it deserve our acknowledgment, that he should contrive our recovery when we had plotted our ruin! that when he did from eternity

\* Qu. 'them'?—Ed.

behold the crimes wherewith we would incense him, he should not, according to the rights of justice, cast us into hell, but prize us at the rate of the blood and life of his only Son, in value above the blood of men and lives of angels ! How should we bless that God, that we have yet a gospel among us, that we are not driven into the utmost regions, that we can attend upon him in the face of the sun, and not forced to the secret obscurities of the night ! Whatsoever we enjoy, whatsoever we receive, we must own him as the donor, and read his hand in it. Rob him not of any praise to give to an instrument. No man hath wherewithal to do us good, nor a heart to do us good, nor opportunities of benefiting us, without him. When the cripple received the soundness of his limbs from Peter, he praised the hand that sent it, not the hand that brought it : Acts iii. 6, 8, he 'praised God.' When we want anything that is good, let the goodness of divine nature move us to David's practice, to 'thirst after God,' Ps. xlii. 1 ; and when we feel the motions of his goodness to us, let us imitate the temper of the same holy man : Ps. ciii. 2, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul ; and forget not all his benefits.' It is an unworthy carriage to deal with him as a traveller doth with a fountain, kneel down to drink of it when he is thirsty, and turn his back upon it, and perhaps never think of it more after he is satisfied.

4. And lastly, imitate this goodness of God. If his goodness hath such an influence upon us as to make us love him, it will also move us with an ardent zeal to imitate him in it. Christ makes this use from the doctrine of divine goodness : Mat. v. 44, 45, 'Do good to them that hate you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.' As holiness is a resemblance of God's purity, so charity is a resemblance of God's goodness ; and this our Saviour calls perfection : ver. 48, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' As God would not be a perfect God without goodness, so neither can any be a perfect Christian without kindness ; charity and love being the splendour and loveliness of all Christian graces, as goodness is the splendour and loveliness of all divine attributes. This, and holiness, are ordered in the Scripture to be the grand patterns of our imitation. Imitate the goodness of God in two things.

(1.) In relieving and assisting others in distress. Let our heart be as large in the capacity of creatures, as God's is in the capacity of a creator. A large heart from him to us, and a strait heart from us to others, will not suit. Let us not think any so far below us as to be unworthy of our care, since God thinks none, that are infinitely distant from him, too mean for his. His infinite glory mounts him above the creature, but his infinite goodness stoops him to the meanest works of his hands. As he lets not the transgressions of prosperity pass without punishment, so he lets not the distress of his afflicted people pass him without support. Shall God provide for the ease of beasts, and shall not we have some tenderness towards those that are of the same blood with ourselves, and have as good blood to boast of as runs in the veins of the mightiest monarch on earth ; and as mean and as little as they are, can lay claim to as ancient a pedigree as the stateliest prince in the world, who cannot ascend to ancestors beyond Adam ? Shall we glut ourselves with divine beneficence to us, and wear his livery only on our own backs, forgetting the afflictions of some dear Joseph, when God, who hath an unblemished felicity in his own nature, looks out himself to view and relieve the miseries of poor creatures ? Why hath God increased the doles of his treasures to some more than others ? Was it merely for themselves, or rather that they might have a bottom, to attain the honour of imitating him ? Shall we embezzle his goods to our own use, as if we

were absolute proprietors, and not stewards entrusted for others? Shall we make a difficulty to part with something to others, out of that abundance he hath bestowed upon any of us? Did not his goodness strip his Son of the glory of heaven for a time to enrich us? and shall we shrug when we are to part with a little to pleasure him? It is not very becoming for any to be backward in supplying the necessities of others with a few morsels, who have had the happiness to have had their greatest necessities supplied with his Son's blood. He demands not that we should strip ourselves of all for others, but of a pittance, something of superfluity, which will turn more to our account, that what is vainly and unprofitably consumed on our backs and bellies. If he hath given much to any of us, it is rather to lay aside part for the income of his service, else we would monopolise divine goodness to ourselves, and seem to distrust, under our present experiments, his future kindness, as though the last thing he gave us was attended with this language, Hoard up this, and expect no more from me; use it only to the glutting your avarice and feeding your ambition; which would be against the whole scope of divine goodness. If we do not endeavour to write after the comely copy he hath set us, we may provoke him to harden himself against us, and in wrath bestow that on the fire, or on our enemies, which his goodness hath imparted to us for his glory, and the supplying the necessities of poor creatures; and, on the contrary, he is so delighted with this kind of imitation of him, that a cup of cold water, when there is no more to be done, shall not be unrewarded.

(2.) Imitate God in his goodness, in a kindness to our worst enemies. The best man is more unworthy to receive anything from God than the worst can be to receive from us. How kind is God to those that blaspheme him, and gives them the same sun and the same showers that he doth to the best men in the world! Is it not more our glory to imitate God in doing good to those that hate us, than to imitate the men of the world in requiting evil, by a return of a sevenfold mischief? This would be a goodness which would vanquish the hearts of men, and render us greater than Alexanders and Cæsars, who did only triumph over miserable carcases; yea, it is to triumph over ourselves in being good against the sentiments of corrupt nature. Revenge makes us slaves to our passions as much as the offenders, and good returns render us victorious over our adversaries: 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,' Rom. xii. 21. When we took up arms against God, his goodness contrived not our ruin, but our recovery. This is such a goodness of God as could not be discovered in an innocent state. While man had continued in his duty, he could not have been guilty of an enmity, and God could not but affect him unless he had denied himself; so this, of being good to our enemies, could never have been practised in a state of rectitude, since where was a perfect innocence there could be no spark of enmity to one another. It can be no disparagement to any man's dignity to cast his influences on his greatest opposers, since God, who acts for his own glory, thinks not himself disparaged by sending forth the streams of his bounty on the wickedest persons, who are far meaner to him than those of the same blood can be to us. Who hath the worse thoughts of the sun for shining upon the earth, that sends up vapours to cloud it? It can be no disgrace to resemble God; if his hand and bowels be open to us, let not ours be shut to any.