

A DISCOURSE UPON THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.—EXOD. XV. 11.

THIS verse is one of the loftiest descriptions of the majesty and excellency of God in the whole Scripture.* It is a part of Moses's 'Επινίκιον, or triumphant song, after a great, and real, and a typical victory, in the womb of which all the deliverances of the church were couched. It is the first song upon holy record, and it consists of gratulatory and prophetic matter. It casts a look backward to what God did for them in their deliverance from Egypt; and a look forward, to what God shall do for the church in future ages. That deliverance was but a rough draught of something more excellent to be wrought towards the closing up of the world; when his plagues shall be poured out upon the antichristian powers, which should revive the same song of Moses in the church, as fitted so many ages before for such a scene of affairs, Rev. xv. 2, 3. It is observed therefore, that many words in this song are put in the future tense, noting a time to come; and the very first word, ver. 1, 'Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song;' שִׁיר shall sing; implying, that it was composed and calculated for the celebrating some greater action of God's, which was to be wrought in the world. Upon this account some of the Jewish rabbins, from the consideration of this remark, asserted the doctrine of the resurrection to be meant in this place;† that Moses and those Israelites should rise again to sing the same song, for some greater miracles God should work, and greater triumphs he should bring forth, exceeding those wonders at their deliverance from Egypt.

It consists of,‡ 1. A preface; ver. 1, 'I will sing unto the Lord.'

2. An historical narration of matter of fact; ver. 3, 4, 'Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the Red sea,' which he solely ascribes to God; ver. 6, 'Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy;' which he doth prophetically, as respecting something to be done in after times; or further, for the completing of that deliverance; or as others think, respecting their entering into Canaan, for the words in these two verses are put in the future tense. The manner of the deliverance is described, ver. 8, 'The floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the

* Trap. *in loc.*

† Manass. ben. Israel, de Resur. lib. i. cap. i. p. 7.

‡ Pareus in Exod. xv.

heart of the sea.' In the 9th verse he magnifies the victory from the vain-glory and security of the enemy: 'The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil,' &c. And ver. 16, 17, he prophetically describes the fruit of this victory in the influence it shall have upon those nations by whose confines they were to travel to the promised land: 'Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by the greatness of thy arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, which thou hast purchased.' The phrase of this and the 17th and 18th verses, seems to be more magnificent than to design only the bringing the Israelites to the earthly Canaan; but seems to respect the gathering his redeemed ones together, to place them in the spiritual sanctuary which he had established, wherein the Lord should reign for ever and ever, without any enemies to disturb his royalty; 'The Lord shall reign for ever and ever,' ver. 18. The prophet, in the midst of his historical narrative, seems to be in an ecstasy, and breaks out in a stately exaltation of God in the text.

'Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?' &c. Interrogations are in Scripture the strongest affirmations or negations. It is here a strong affirmation of the incomparableness of God, and a strong denial of the worthiness of all creatures to be partners with him in the degrees of his excellency. It is a preference of God before all creatures in holiness, to which the purity of creatures is but a shadow; in desert of reverence and veneration, he being 'fearful in praises.' The angels cover their faces when they adore him in his particular perfections.

'Amongst the gods.' Among the idols of the nations, say some; others say,* it is not to be found that the heathen idols are ever dignified with the title of *strong* or *mighty*, as the word translated *gods* doth import, and therefore understand it of the angels, or other potentates of the world; or rather inclusively, of all that are noted for and can lay claim to the title of strength and might upon the earth or in heaven. God is so great and majestic, that no creature can share with him in his praise.

'Fearful in praises.' Various are the interpretations of this passage. To be revered in praises; his praise ought to be celebrated with a religious fear. Fear is the product of his mercy as well as his justice: 'He hath forgiveness that he may be feared,' Ps. cxxx. 4. Or, fearful in praises; whom none can praise without amazement at the considerations of his works. None can truly praise him without being affected with astonishment at his greatness.† Or, fearful in praises;‡ whom no mortal can sufficiently praise, since he is above all praise. Whatsoever a human tongue can speak, or an angelical understanding think of the excellency of his nature and the greatness of his works, falls short of the vastness of the divine perfection. A creature's praises of God are as much below the transcendent eminency of God, as the meanness of a creature's being is below the eternal fulness of the Creator. Or rather, fearful, or terrible in praises; that is, in the matter of thy praise; and the learned Rivet concurs with me in this sense. The works of God celebrated in this song were terrible. It was the miraculous overthrow of the strength and flower of a mighty nation. His judgments were severe, as well as his mercy was seasonable. The word נֹרָא signifies glorious and illustrious, as well as terrible and fearful. No man can hear the praise of thy name, for those great judicial acts, without some astonishment at thy justice, the stream, and thy holiness the spring of those mighty works. This seems to be the sense of the following words, 'doing wonders.' Fearful in the matter of thy praise, they being wonders which thou hast done among us and for us.

* Rivet.

† Calvin.

‡ Munster.

‘Doing wonders.’ Congealing the waters by a wind, to make them stand like walls for the rescue of the Israelites, and melting them by a wind, for the overthrow of the Egyptians, are prodigies that challenge the greatest adorations of that mercy which delivered the one, and that justice which punished the other; and of the arm of that power whereby he effected both his gracious and his righteous purposes.

Doct. Whence observe, that the judgments of God upon his enemies, as well as his mercies to his people, are matter of praise. The perfections of God appear in both. Justice and mercy are so linked together in his acts of providence, that the one cannot be forgotten while the other is acknowledged. He is never so terrible as in the ‘assemblies of his saints,’ and the deliverance of them, Ps. lxxxix. 7. As the creation was erected by him for his glory, so all the acts of his government are designed for the same end. And his creatures deny him his due, if they acknowledge not his excellency, in whatsoever dreadful as well as pleasing garbs it appears in the world. His terror as well as his righteousness appears when he is a ‘God of salvation,’ Ps. lxxv. 5. ‘By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.’

But the expression I pitch upon in the text to handle is, *glorious in holiness*. He is magnified or honourable in holiness; so the word *יָאֲרִי* is translated, Isa. xlii. 21, ‘He will magnify the law and make it honourable.’ Thy holiness hath shone forth admirably in this last exploit against the enemies and oppressors of thy people. The holiness of God is his glory, as his grace is his riches; holiness is his crown, and his mercy is his treasure. This is the blessedness and nobleness of his nature; it renders him glorious in himself, and glorious to his creatures, that understand anything of this lovely perfection.

Doct. Holiness is a glorious perfection belonging to the nature of God, hence he is in Scripture styled often the Holy One, the Holy One of Jacob, the Holy One of Israel, and oftener entitled, Holy than Almighty, and set forth by this part of his dignity more than by any other. This is more affixed as an epithet to his name than any other; you never find it expressed, his *mighty name* or his *wise name*, but his *great name*, and most of all his *holy name*. This is his greatest title of honour; in this doth the majesty and venerableness of his name appear. When the sinfulness of Sennacherib is aggravated, the Holy Ghost takes the rise from this attribute, 2 Kings xix. 22, ‘Thou has lift up thine eyes on high, even against the Holy One of Israel;’ not against the wise, mighty, &c., but against the Holy One of Israel, as that wherein the majesty of God was most illustrious. It is upon this account he is called light, as impurity is called darkness; both in this sense are opposed to one another; he is a pure and unmixed light, free from all blemish in his essence, nature, and operations.

1. Heathens have owned it. Proclus calls him the undefiled governor, *Ἀχραντος ἡγεμῶν*, of the world. The poetical transformations of their false gods, and the extravagancies committed by them, was (in the account of the wisest of them) an unholy thing to report and hear.* And some† vindicate Epicurus from the atheism wherewith he was commonly charged, that he did not deny the being of God, but those adulterous and contentious deities the people worshipped, which were practices unworthy and unbecoming the nature of God; hence they asserted that virtue was an imitation of God, and a virtuous man bore a resemblance to God. If virtue were a copy from God, a greater holiness must be owned in the original; and when some of them

* *Οὐδὲ ἀκρόειν ὄσιον.* Ammon in Plut. de *Ἐ* apud Delphos, p. 393.

† Gassend, tom. i. Phys. sec. i. lib. iv. cap. ii. p. 289.

were at a loss how to free God from being the author of sin in the world, they ascribe the birth of sin to matter, and run into an absurd opinion, fancying it to be uncreated, that thereby they might exempt God from all mixture of evil, so sacred with them was the conception of God as a holy God.

2. The absurdest heretics have owned it.* The Manichees and Marcionites, that thought evil came by necessity, yet would salve God's being the author of it, by asserting two distinct eternal principles, one the original of evil, as God was the fountain of good; so rooted was the notion of this divine purity, that none would ever slander goodness itself with that which was so disparaging to it.

3. The nature of God cannot rationally be conceived without it. Though the power of God be the first rational conclusion drawn from the sight of his works, wisdom the next from the order and connection of his works, purity must result from the beauty of his works. That God cannot be deformed by evil, who hath made everything so beautiful in its time. The notion of a God cannot be entertained without separating from him whatsoever is impure and bespotting, both in his essence and actions. Though we conceive him infinite in majesty, infinite in essence, eternal in duration, mighty in power, and wise and immutable in his counsels, merciful in his proceedings with men, and whatsoever other perfections may dignify so sovereign a being; yet if we conceive him destitute of this excellent perfection, and imagine him possessed with the least contagion of evil, we make him but an infinite monster, and sully all those perfections we ascribed to him before; we rather own him a devil than a god. It is a contradiction to be God and to be darkness, or to have one mote of darkness mixed with his light. It is a less injury to him to deny his being, than to deny the purity of it; the one makes him no God, the other a deformed, unlovely, and a detestable God.

Plutarch said not amiss, that he should count himself less injured by that man, that should deny that there was such a man as Plutarch, than by him that should affirm that there was such a one indeed, but he was a debauched fellow, a loose and vicious person. It is a less wrong to discard any acknowledgments of his being, and to count him nothing, than to believe him to exist, but imagine a base and unholy deity; he that saith, God is not holy, speaks much worse than he that saith, There is no God at all.

Let these two things be considered:

1. If any, this attribute hath an excellency above his other perfections. There are some attributes of God we prefer, because of our interest in them, and the relation they bear to us; as we esteem his goodness before his power, and his mercy, whereby he relieves us, before his justice, whereby he punisheth us. As there are some we more delight in because of the goodness we receive by them, so there are some that God delights to honour because of their excellency.

(1.) None is sounded out so loftily, with such solemnity, and so frequently by angels that stand before his throne, as this. Where do you find any other attribute trebled in the praises of it, as this? Isa. vi. 3, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory;' and Rev. iv. 8, 'The four beasts rest not day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,' &c. His power of sovereignty as Lord of hosts, is but once mentioned, but with a ternal repetition of his holiness. Do you hear in any angelical song any other perfection of the divine nature thrice repeated? Where do we read of the crying out Eternal, eternal, eternal; or Faithful, faithful, faithful, Lord God of hosts! Whatsoever other attri-

* Petav. Theol. Dogmat. tom. i. lib. vi. cap. v. p. 415.

bute is left out, this God would have to fill the mouths of angels and blessed spirits for ever in heaven.

(2.) He singles it out to swear by: Ps. lxxxix. 35, 'Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David;' and Amos iv. 2, 'The Lord will swear by his holiness.' He twice swears by his holiness, once by his power, Isa. lxii. 8; once by all, when he swears by his name, Jer. xlv. 26. He lays here his holiness to pledge for the assurance of his promise, as the attribute most dear to him, most valued by him, as though no other could give an assurance parallel to it, in this concern of an everlasting redemption, which is there spoken of. He that swears, swears by a greater than himself. God having no greater than himself, swears by himself; and swearing here by his holiness seems to equal that single to all his other attributes, as if he were more concerned in the honour of it than of all the rest. It is as if he should have said, Since I have not a more excellent perfection to swear by than that of my holiness, I lay this to pawn for your security, and bind myself by that which I will never part with, were it possible for me to be stripped of all the rest. It is a tacit imprecation of himself, If I lie unto David, let me never be counted holy, or thought righteous enough to be trusted by angels or men. This attribute he makes most of.

(3.) It is his glory and beauty. Holiness is the honour of the creature,—sanctification and honour are linked together, 1 Thes. iv. 4,—much more is it the honour of God; it is the image of God in the creature, Eph. iv. 24. When we take the picture of a man, we draw the most beautiful part, the face, which is a member of the greatest excellency; when God would be drawn to the life, as much as can be, in the spirit of his creatures, he is drawn in this attribute, as being the most beautiful perfection of God, and most valuable with him. Power is his hand and arm, omniscience his eye, mercy his bowels, eternity his duration, his holiness is his beauty: 2 Chron. xx. 21, 'should praise the beauty of his holiness.' In Ps. xxvii. 4, David desires to 'behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his holy temple;' that is, the holiness of God manifested in his hatred of sin in the daily sacrifices. Holiness was the beauty of the temple; Isa. xlv. 11, 'Holy and beautiful house' are joined together, much more the beauty of God that dwelt in the sanctuary.

This renders him lovely to all his innocent creatures, though formidable to the guilty ones. A heathen philosopher could call it the beauty of the divine essence, and say, that God was not so happy by an eternity of life, as by an excellency of virtue.* And the angels' song intimate it to be his glory, Isa. vi. 3, 'The whole earth is full of thy glory;' that is, of his holiness in his laws and in his judgments against sin, that being the attribute applauded by them before.

(4.) It is his very life; so it is called, Eph. iv. 18, 'Alienated from the life of God;' that is, from the holiness of God, speaking of the opposite to it, the uncleanness and profaneness of the Gentiles. We are only alienated from that which we are bound to imitate; but this is the perfection always set out as the pattern of our actions, 'Be you holy, as I am holy;' no other is proposed as our copy; alienated from that purity of God, which is as much as his life, without which he could not live. If he were stripped of this, he would be a dead God, more than by the want of any other perfection. His swearing by it intimates as much; he swears often by his own life: 'As I live, saith the Lord;' so he swears by his holiness as if it were his life, and more his life than any other. Let me not live, or let me not be holy, are all one in his oath. His deity could not outlive the life of his purity.

* Plutarch, Eugeubin de Perenni. Phil. lib. vi. cap. vi.

2. As it seems to challenge an excellency above all his other perfections, so it is the glory of all the rest; as it is the glory of the Godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the Godhead; as his power is the strength of them, so his holiness is the beauty of them; as all would be weak without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them. Should this be sullied, all the rest would lose their honour and their comfortable efficacy; as at the same instant that the sun should lose its light, it would lose its heat, its strength, its generative and quickening virtue. As sincerity is the lustre of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendour of every attribute in the Godhead. His justice is a holy justice, his wisdom a holy wisdom, his arm of power a 'holy arm,' Ps. xcvi. 1, his truth or promise a 'holy promise,' Ps. cv. 42. *Holy and true* go hand in hand, Rev. vi. 10. 'His name,' which signifies all his attributes in conjunction, 'is holy,' Ps. ciii. 1. Yea, he is 'righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works,' Ps. cxlv. 17. It is the rule of all his acts, the source of all his punishments. If every attribute of the Deity were a distinct member, purity would be the form, the soul, the spirit to animate them. Without it, his patience would be an indulgence to sin, his mercy a fondness, his wrath a madness, his power a tyranny, his wisdom an unworthy subtilty. It is this gives a decorum to all. His mercy is not exercised without it, since he pardons none but those that have an interest by union in the obedience of a mediator, which was so delightful to his infinite purity. His justice, which guilty man is apt to tax with cruelty and violence in the exercise of it, is not acted out of the compass of this rule. In acts of man's vindictive justice, there is something of impurity, perturbation, passion, some mixture of cruelty; but none of these fall upon God in the severest acts of wrath. When God appears to Ezekiel in the resemblance of fire, to signify his anger against the house of Judah for their idolatry, 'from his loins downwards there was the appearance of fire; but from the loins upward the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber,' Ezek. viii. 2. His heart is clear in his most terrible acts of vengeance; it is a pure flame wherewith he scorseth and burns his enemies. He is holy in the most fiery appearance.

This attribute, therefore, is never so much applauded as when his sword hath been drawn, and he hath manifested the greatest fierceness against his enemies. The magnificent and triumphant expression of it in the text follows just upon God's miraculous defeat and ruin of the Egyptian army: 'The sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters.' Then it follows, 'Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness?' And when it was so celebrated by the seraphims, Isa. vi. 3, it was when 'the posts moved, and the house was filled with smoke,' ver. 4, which are signs of anger, Ps. xviii. 7, 8. And when he was about to send Isaiah upon a message of spiritual and temporal judgments, that he would 'make the heart of that people fat, and their ears heavy, and their eyes shut, waste their cities without inhabitant, and their houses without man, and make the land desolate,' ver. 9-12; and the angels, which here applaud him for his holiness, are the executioners of his justice, and here called seraphims, from burning or fiery spirits, as being the ministers of his wrath. His justice is part of his holiness, whereby he doth reduce into order those things that are out of order. When he is consuming men by his fury, he doth not diminish, but manifest purity: Zeph. iii. 5, 'The just Lord is in the midst of her, he will do no iniquity.' Every action of his is free from all tincture of evil. It is also celebrated with praise by the four beasts about the throne, when he appears in a covenant garb, with a rainbow about his throne, and yet with

thunderings and lightnings shot out against his enemies, Rev. iv. 8 compared with ver. 3, 5, to shew that all his acts of mercy, as well as justice, are clear from any stain.

This is the crown of all his attributes, the life of all his decrees, the brightness of all his actions. Nothing is decreed by him, nothing is acted by him, but what is worthy of the dignity, and becoming the honour, of this attribute.

For the better understanding this attribute, observe,

I. The nature of this holiness.

II. The demonstration of it.

III. The purity of his nature in all his acts about sin.

IV. The use of all to ourselves.

I. First, The nature of divine holiness.

In general.

The holiness of God *negatively* is a perfect and polluted freedom from all evil. As we call gold pure that is not imbedded by any dross, and that garment clean that is free from any spot, so the nature of God is estranged from all shadow of evil, all imaginable contagion.

Positively, it is the rectitude or integrity of the divine nature, or that conformity of it in affection and action to the divine will as to his eternal law, whereby he works with a becomingness to his own excellency, and whereby he hath a delight and complacency in everything agreeable to his will, and an abhorrency of everything contrary thereunto.

As there is no darkness in his understanding, so there is no spot in his will. As his mind is possessed with all truth, so there is no deviation in his will from it. He loves all truth and goodness, he hates all falsity and evil. In regard of his righteousness, he loves righteousness: Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness;' and 'hath no pleasure in wickedness,' Ps. v. 4. He values purity in his creatures, and detests all impurity, whether inward or outward. We may indeed distinguish the holiness of God from his righteousness in our conceptions.* Holiness is a perfection absolutely considered in the nature of God; righteousness, a perfection as referred to others, in his actions towards them and upon them.

In particular.

This property of the divine nature is,

1. First, An essential and necessary perfection. He is essentially and necessarily holy. It is the essential glory of his nature. His holiness is as necessary as his being, as necessary as his omniscience. As he cannot but know what is right, so he cannot but do what is just. His understanding is not as created understandings, capable of ignorance as well as knowledge; so his will is not as created wills, capable of unrighteousness as well as righteousness. There can be no contradiction or contrariety in the divine nature, to know what is right and to do what is wrong. If so, there would be a diminution of his blessedness; he would not be a God always blessed, 'blessed for ever,' as he is, Rom. ix. 5. He is as necessarily holy as he is necessarily God; as necessarily without sin as without change. As he was God from eternity, so he was holy from eternity. He was gracious, merciful, just in his own nature, and also holy, though no creature had been framed by him to exercise his grace, mercy, justice, or holiness upon.† If God had not created a world, he had in his own nature been almighty and able to create a world. If there never had been anything but himself, yet he had been omniscient, knowing everything that was within the verge and

* Martin, de Deo, p. 86.

† Turretin, de Satisfact., p. 28.

compass of his infinite power ; so he was pure in his own nature, though he never had brought forth any rational creature whereby to manifest this purity. These perfections are so necessary, that the nature of God could not subsist without them. And the acts of those *ad intra*, or within himself, are necessary ; for being omniscient in nature, there must be an act of knowledge of himself and his own nature. Being infinitely holy, an act of holiness in infinitely loving himself must necessarily flow from this perfection.* As the divine will cannot but be perfect, so it cannot be wanting to render the highest love to itself, to its goodness, to the divine nature, which is due to him. Indeed, the acts of those *ad extra* are not necessary but upon a condition. To love righteousness without himself, or to detest sin, or inflict punishment for the committing of it, could not have been had there been no righteous creature for him to love, no sinning creature for him to loathe and to exercise his justice upon as the object of punishment.

Some attributes require a condition to make the acts of them necessary. As it is at God's liberty whether he will create a rational creature or no ; but when he decrees to make either angel or man, it is necessary, from the perfection of his nature, to make them righteous. It is at God's liberty whether he will speak to man or no ; but if he doth, it is impossible for him to speak that which is false, because of his infinite perfection of veracity. It is at his liberty whether he will permit a creature to sin ; but if he sees good to suffer it, it is impossible but that he should detest that creature that goes cross to his righteous nature. His holiness is not solely an act of his will, for then he might be unholy as well as holy, he might love iniquity and hate righteousness, he might then command that which is good, and afterwards command that which is bad and unworthy ; for what is only an act of his will, and not belonging to his nature, is indifferent to him. As the positive law he gave to Adam of not eating the forbidden fruit was a pure act of his will ; he might have given him liberty to eat of it, if he had pleased, as well as prohibited him. But what is moral and good in its own nature is necessarily willed by God, and cannot be changed by him, because of the transcendent eminency of his nature and righteousness of his will ; as it is impossible for God to command his creature to hate him, or to dispense with a creature for not loving him ; for this would be to command a thing intrinsically evil, the highest ingratitude, the very spirit of all wickedness, which consists in the hating God. Yet though God be thus necessarily holy, he is not so by a bare and simple necessity, as the sun shines, or the fire burns ; but by a free necessity, not compelled thereunto, but inclined from the fulness of the perfection of his own nature and will, so as by no means he can be unholy, because he will not be unholy ; it is against his nature to be so.

2. God is only absolutely holy : 'There is none holy as the Lord,' 1 Sam. ii. 2. It is the peculiar glory of his nature. As there is none good but God, so none holy but God. No creature can be essentially holy, because mutable ; holiness is the substance of God, but a quality and accident in a creature. God is infinitely holy, creatures finitely holy. He is holy from himself, creatures are holy by derivation from him. He is not only holy, but holiness ; holiness, in the highest degree, is his sole prerogative. As the highest heaven is called the heaven of heavens, because it embraceth in its circle all the heavens, and contains the magnitude of them, and bath a greater vastness above all that it encloseth, so is God the holy of holies, he contains the holiness of all creatures put together, and infinitely more. As all the wisdom, excellency, and power of the creatures, if compared with

* Oehino, Predic., part iii. Bodic. 51, p. 347, 348.

the wisdom, excellency, and power of God, is but folly, vileness, and weakness, so the highest created purity, if set in parallel with God, is but impurity and uncleanness: Rev. xv. 4, 'Thou only art holy.' It is like the light of a glow-worm to that of the sun, Job xv. 15; 'The heavens are not pure in his sight, and his angels he charged with folly,' Job iv. 18. Though God hath crowned the angels with an unspotted sanctity, and placed them in a habitation of glory, yet as illustrious as they are, they have an unworthiness in their own nature to appear before the throne of so holy a God. Their holiness grows dim and pale in his presence; it is but a weak shadow of that divine purity, whose light is so glorious that it makes them cover their faces out of weakness to behold it, and cover their feet out of shame in themselves. They are not pure in his sight, because though they love God (which is a principle of holiness) as much as they can, yet not so much as he deserves. They love him with the intensest degree according to their power, but not with the intensest degree according to his own amiableness; for they cannot infinitely love God unless they were as infinite as God, and had an understanding of his perfections equal with himself, and as immense as his own knowledge. God having an intimate knowledge of himself, can only have an infinite love to himself, and consequently an infinite holiness without any defect; because he loves himself according to the vastness of his own amiableness, which no finite being can. Therefore though the angels be exempt from corruption and soil, they cannot enter into comparison with the purity of God, without acknowledgment of a dimness in themselves.* Besides, he charges them with folly, and puts no trust in them; because they have the power of sinning, though not the act of sinning, they have a possible folly in their own nature to be charged with. Holiness is a quality separable from them, but it is inseparable from God. Had they not at first a mutability in their nature, none of them could have sinned, there had been no devils; but because some of them sinned, the rest might have sinned. And though the standing angels shall never be changed, yet they are still changeable in their own nature, and their standing is due to grace, not to nature. And though they shall be for ever preserved, yet they are not, nor ever can be, immutable by nature, for then they should stand upon the same bottom with God himself; but they are supported by grace against that changeableness of nature which is essential to a creature. The Creator 'only hath immortality,' that is, immutability, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

It is as certain a truth that no creature can be naturally immutable and impeccable, as that God cannot create anything actually polluted and imperfect. It is as possible that the highest creature may sin, as it is possible that it may be annihilated; it may become not holy, as it may become not a creature, but nothing. The holiness of a creature may be reduced into nothing as well as his substance, but the holiness of the Creator cannot be diminished, dimmed, or overshadowed: James i. 17, 'He is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning.' It is as impossible his holiness should be blotted, as that his Deity should be extinguished; for whatsoever creature hath essentially such or such qualities, cannot be stripped of them without being turned out of its essence. As a man is essentially rational, and if he ceaseth to be rational, he ceaseth to be man; the sun is essentially luminous; if it should become dark in its own body, it would cease to be the sun. In regard of this absolute and only holiness of God, it is thrice repeated by the seraphims, Isa. vi. 3. The threefold repetition of a word notes the certainty or absoluteness of the thing, or the irreversibleness of the resolve; as Ezek. xxi. 27, 'I will over-

turn, overturn, overturn,' notes the certainty of the judgment; also Rev. viii. 8, 'Woe, woe, woe,' three times repeated, signifies the same. The holiness of God is so absolutely peculiar to him, that it can no more be expressed in creatures than his omnipotence, whereby they may be able to create a world; or his omniscience, whereby they may be capable of knowing all things, and knowing God as he knows himself.

3. God is so holy, that he cannot possibly approve of any evil done by another, but doth perfectly abhor it; it would not else be a glorious holiness: Ps. v. 3, 'He hath no pleasure in wickedness.' He doth not only love that which is just, but abhor with a perfect hatred all things contrary to the rule of righteousness. Holiness can no more approve of sin than it can commit it. To be delighted with the evil in another's act, contracts a guilt as well as the commission of it, for approbation of a thing is a consent to it. Sometime the approbation of an evil in another is a more grievous crime than the act itself, as appears in Rom. i. 32, who 'knowing the judgment of God, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do it,' where the *not only* manifests it to be a greater guilt to take pleasure in them. Every sin is aggravated by the delight in it; to take pleasure in the evil of another's action shews a more ardent affection and love to sin than the committer himself may have. This therefore can as little fall upon God as to do an evil act himself; yet as a man may be delighted with the consequences of another's sin, as it may occasion some public good, or private good to the guilty person, as sometimes it may be an occasion of his repentance, when the horridness of a fact stares him in the face, and occasions a self-reflection for that and other crimes, which is attended with an indignation against them, and sincere remorse for them, so God is pleased with those good things his goodness and wisdom bring forth upon the occasion of sin. But in regard of his holiness, he cannot approve of the evil, whence his infinite wisdom drew forth his own glory and his creatures' good. His pleasure is not in the sinful act of the creature, but in the act of his own goodness and skill, turning it to another end than what the creature aimed at.

(1.) He abhors it necessarily. Holiness is the glory of the Deity, therefore necessarily. The nature of God is so holy that he cannot but hate it: Hab. i. 13, 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.' He is more opposite to it than light to darkness, and therefore it can expect no countenance from him. A love of holiness cannot be without a hatred of everything that is contrary to it. As God necessarily loves himself, so he must necessarily hate everything that is against himself; and as he loves himself for his own excellency and holiness, he must necessarily detest whatsoever is repugnant to his holiness, because of the evil of it. Since he is infinitely good, he cannot but love goodness, as it is a resemblance to himself; and cannot but abhor unrighteousness, as being most distant from him, and contrary to him. If he have any esteem for his own perfections, he must needs have an implacable aversion to all that is so repugnant to him, that would, if it were possible, destroy him, and is a point directed not only against his glory, but against his life. If he did not hate it, he would hate himself; for since righteousness is his image, and sin would deface his image, if he did not love his image, and loathe what is against his image, he would loathe himself, he would be an enemy to his own nature. Nay, if it were possible for him to love it, it were possible for him not to be holy, it were possible then for him to deny himself, and will that he were no God, which is a palpable contradiction.* Yet this necessity in God of hating

* Turretin, de Satisfact. p. 35, 36.

sin is not a brutish necessity, such as is in mere animals, that avoid by a natural instinct, not of choice, what is prejudicial to them; but most free as well as necessary, arising from an infinite knowledge of his own nature, and of the evil nature of sin, and the contrariety of it to his own excellency, and the order of his works.

(2.) Therefore intensely. Nothing do men act for more than their glory. As he doth infinitely, and therefore perfectly, know himself, so he infinitely, and therefore perfectly, knows what is contrary to himself; and as according to the manner and measure of his knowledge of himself, is his love to himself, as infinite as his knowledge, and therefore unexpressible and unconceivable by us, so from the perfection of his knowledge of the evil of sin, which is infinitely above what any creature can have, doth arise a displeasure against it suitable to that knowledge. In creatures, the degrees of affection to, or aversion from, a thing, are suited to the strength of their apprehensions of the good or evil in them. God knows not only the workers of wickedness, but the wickedness of their works, Job xi. 11, for 'he knows vain men, he sees wickedness also.' The vehemency of this hatred is expressed variously in Scripture; he loathes it so, that he is impatient of beholding it; the very sight of it affects him with detestation, Hab. i. 13; he hates the first spark of it in the imagination, Zech. viii. 17. With what variety of expressions doth he repeat his indignation at their polluted services: Amos v. 21, 22, 'I hate,' 'I detest,' 'I despise,' 'I will not smell,' 'I will not accept,' 'I will not regard;' 'take away from me the noise of thy songs, I will not hear.' So Isa. i. 14, 'My soul hates, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them.' It is the 'abominable thing that he hates,' Jer. xlv. 4; he is vexed and fretted at it, Isa. lxiii. 10. Ezek. xvi. 43, he abhors it so, that his hatred redounds upon the person that commits it; Ps. v. 5, he 'hates all workers of iniquity.' Sin is the only primary object of his displeasure. He is not displeased with the nature of man as man, for that was derived from him; but with the nature of man as sinful, which is from the sinner himself. When a man hath but one object for the exercise of all his anger, it is stronger than when diverted to many objects. A mighty torrent, when diverted into many streams, is weaker than when it comes in a full body upon one place only. The infinite anger and hatred of God, which is as infinite as his love and mercy, has no other object against which he directs the mighty force of it, but only unrighteousness. He hates no person for all the penal evils upon him, though they were more by ten thousand times than Job was struck with, but only for his sin. Again, sin being only evil, and an unmixed evil, there is nothing in it that can abate the detestation of God, or balance his hatred of it; there is not the least grain of goodness in it, to incline him to the least affection to any part of it. This hatred cannot but be intense, for as the more any creature is sanctified, the more is he advanced in the abhorrence of that which is contrary to holiness; therefore God being the highest, most absolute and infinite holiness, doth infinitely, and therefore intensely, hate unholiness; being infinitely righteous, doth infinitely abhor unrighteousness; being infinitely true, doth infinitely abhor falsity, as it is the greatest and most deformed evil. As it is from the righteousness of his nature that he hath a content and satisfaction in righteousness,—Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness,'—so it is from the same righteousness of his nature that he detests whatsoever is morally evil. As his nature therefore is infinite, so must his abhorrence be.

(3.) Therefore universally, because necessarily and intensely. He doth not hate it in one, and indulge it in another, but loathes it wherever he finds

it; not one worker of iniquity is exempt from it: Ps. v. 5, 'Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' For it is not sin as in this or that person, or as great or little, but sin as sin, is the object of his hatred. And therefore let the person be never so great, and have particular characters of his image upon him, it secures him not from God's hatred of any evil action he shall commit. He is a jealous God, jealous of his glory, Exod. xx. 5; a metaphor taken from jealous husbands, who will not endure the least adultery in their wives, nor God the least defection of man from his law. Every act of sin is a spiritual adultery, denying God to be the chief good, and giving that prerogative by that act to some vile thing. He loves it no more in his own people than he doth in his enemies; he frees them not from his rod, the testimony of his loathing their crimes. Whosoever sows iniquity, shall reap affliction. It might be thought that he affected their dross, if he did not refine them, and loved their filth, if he did not cleanse them; because of his detestation of their sin, he will not spare them from the furnace, though because of love to their persons in Christ, he will exempt them from Tophet. How did the sword ever and anon drop down upon David's family after his unworthy dealing in Uriah's case, and cut off ever and anon some of the branches of it! He doth sometimes punish it more severely in this life in his own people, than in others. Upon Jonah's disobedience a storm pursues him, and a whale devours him, while the profane world lived in their lusts without control. Moses, for one act of unbelief, is excluded from Canaan, when greater sinners attained that happiness. It is not a light punishment, but a 'vengeance, he takes on their inventions,' Ps. xcix. 8, to manifest that he hates sin as sin, and not because the worst persons commit it. Perhaps, had a profane man touched the ark, the hand of God had not so suddenly reached him; but when Uzzah, a man zealous for him, as may be supposed by his care for the support of the tottering ark, would step out of his place, he strikes him down for his disobedient action, by the side of the ark, which he would indirectly (as not being a Levite) sustain, 2 Sam. vi. 7. Nor did our Saviour so sharply reprove the Pharisees, and turn so short from them as he did from Peter, when he gave a carnal advice, and contrary to that wherein was to be the greatest manifestation of God's holiness, viz., the death of Christ, Mat. xvi. 23. He calls him Satan, a name sharper than the title of the devil's children, wherewith he marked the Pharisees, and given (besides him) to none but Judas, who made a profession of love to him, and was outwardly ranked in the number of his disciples. A gardener hates a weed the more, for being in the bed with the most precious flowers. God's hatred is universally fixed against sin, and he hates it as much in those whose persons shall not fall under his eternal anger, as being secured in the arms of a Redeemer, by whom the guilt is wiped off, and the filth shall be totally washed away. Though he hates their sin, and cannot but hate it, yet he loves their persons, as being united as members to the mediator and mystical head. A man may love a gangrened member, because it is a member of his own body, or a member of a dear relation, but he loathes the gangrene in it, more than in those wherein he is not so much concerned.

Though God's hatred of believers' persons is removed by faith in the satisfactory death of Jesus Christ, yet his antipathy against sin was not taken away by that blood; nay, it was impossible it should. It was never designed, nor had it any capacity to alter the unchangeable nature of God, but to manifest the unspottedness of his will, and his eternal aversion to anything that was contrary to the purity of his being, and the righteousness of his laws.

(4.) Perpetually. This must necessarily follow upon the others. He can no more cease to hate impurity, than he can cease to love holiness. If

he should in the least instant approve of anything that is filthy, in that moment he would disapprove of his own nature and being ; there would be an interruption in his love of himself, which is as eternal as it is infinite. How can he love any sin, which is contrary to his nature, but for one moment, without hating his own nature, which is essentially contrary to sin ? Two contraries cannot be loved at the same time ; God must first begin to hate himself, before he can approve of any evil, which is directly opposite to himself. We indeed are changed with a temptation, sometimes bear an affection to it, and sometimes testify an indignation against it ; but God is always the same, without any shadow of change, and is 'angry with the wicked every day,' Ps. vii. 11, that is, uninterruptedly in the nature of his anger, though not in the effects of it. God indeed may be reconciled to the sinner, but never to the sin ; for then he should renounce himself, deny his own essence and his own divinity, if his inclinations to the love of goodness, and his aversion from evil, could be changed ; if he suffered the contempt of the one, and encouraged the practice of the other.

4. God is so holy, that he cannot but love holiness in others. Not that he owes anything to his creature, but from the unspeakable holiness of his nature, whence affections to all things that bear a resemblance of him do flow ; as light shoots out from the sun, or any glittering body. It is essential to the infinite righteousness of his nature, to love righteousness wherever he beholds it : Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.' He cannot, because of his nature, but love that which bears some agreement with his nature, that which is the curious draught of his own wisdom and purity. He cannot but be delighted with a copy of himself ; he would not have a holy nature, if he did not love holiness in every nature ; his own nature would be denied by him, if he did not affect everything that had a stamp of his own nature upon it. There was indeed nothing without God, that could invite him to manifest such goodness to man, as he did in creation. But after he had stamped that rational nature with a righteousness convenient for it, it was impossible but that he should ardently love that impression of himself, because he loves his own deity, and consequently all things which are any sparks and images of it. And were the devils capable of an act of righteousness, the holiness of his nature would incline him to love it, even in those dark and revolted spirits.

5. God is so holy, that he cannot positively will or encourage sin in any. How can he give any encouragement to that which he cannot in the least approve of, or look upon without loathing, not only the crime but the criminal ? Light may sooner be the cause of darkness, than holiness itself be the cause of unholiness, absolutely contrary to it ; it is a contradiction, that he that is the fountain of good should be the source of evil ; as if the same fountain should bubble up both sweet and bitter streams, salt and fresh, James iii. 11. Since whatsoever good is in man acknowledges God for its author, it follows that men are evil by their own fault. There is no need for men to be incited to that to which the corruption of their own nature doth so powerfully bend them. Water hath a forcible principle in its own nature to carry it downward ; it needs no force to hasten the motion : 'God tempts no man, but every man is drawn away by his own lusts,' James i. 13, 14. All the preparations for glory are from God, Rom. ix. 23. But men are said to be 'fitted to destruction,' ver. 22, but God is not said to fit them ; they by their iniquities fit themselves for ruin, and he by his long-suffering keeps the destruction from them for a while.

(1.) First, God cannot command any unrighteousness. As all virtue is summed up in a love to God, so all iniquity is summed up in an enmity to

God. Every wicked work declares a man an enemy to God: Col. i. 21, 'Enemies in your minds by wicked works.' If he could command his creature anything which bears an enmity in its nature to himself, he would then implicitly command the hatred of himself, and he would be in some measure a hater of himself. He that commands another to deprive him of his life, cannot be said to bear any love to his own life. God can never hate himself, and therefore cannot command anything that is hateful to him, and tends to a hating of him, and driving the creature further from him. In that very moment that God should command such a thing, he would cease to be good. What can be more absurd to imagine than that infinite goodness should enjoin a thing contrary to itself, and contrary to the essential duty of a creature, and order him to do anything that bespeaks an enmity to the nature of the Creator, or a deflowering and disparaging his works? God cannot but love himself, and his own goodness,—he were not otherwise good,—and therefore cannot order the creature to do anything opposite to his goodness, or anything hurtful to the creature itself, as unrighteousness is.

(2.) Nor can God secretly inspire any evil into us. It is as much against his nature to incline the heart to sin as it is to command it. As it is impossible but that he should love himself, and therefore impossible to enjoin anything that tends to a hatred of himself; by the same reason it is as impossible that he should infuse such a principle in the heart that might carry a man out to any act of enmity against him. To enjoin one thing, and incline to another, would be an argument of such insincerity, unfaithfulness, contradiction to itself, that it cannot be conceived to fall within the compass of the divine nature, Deut. xxxii. 4, who is a 'God without iniquity,' because a God of truth and sincerity, 'just and right is he.' To bestow excellent faculties upon man in creation, and incline him by a sudden impulsion to things contrary to the true end of him, and induce an inevitable ruin upon that work which he had composed with so much wisdom and goodness, and pronounced good with so much delight and pleasure, is inconsistent with that love which God bears to the creature of his own framing; to incline his will to that which would render him the object of his hatred, the fuel for his justice, and sink him into deplorable misery, it is most absurd and unchristianlike to imagine.

(3.) Nor can God necessitate man to sin. Indeed, sin cannot be committed by force; there is no sin but is in some sort voluntary; voluntary in root, or voluntary in the branch; voluntary by an immediate act of the will, or voluntary by a general or natural inclination of the will. That is not a crime to which a man is violence, without any concurrence of the faculties of the soul to that act; it is indeed not an act, but a passion; a man that is forced is not an agent, but a patient under the force. But what necessity can there be upon man from God, since he hath implanted such a principle in him, that he cannot desire anything but what is good, either really or apparently? And if a man mistakes the object, it is his own fault; for God hath endowed him with reason to discern, and liberty of will to choose upon that judgment.

And though it is to be acknowledged that God hath an absolute sovereign dominion over his creature, without any limitation, and may do what he pleases, and dispose of it according to his own will, as a potter doth with his vessel, Rom. ix. 21, according as the church speaks, Isa. lxiv. 8, 'We are the clay, and thou our potter, and we all are the work of thy hand,' yet he cannot pollute any undefiled creature by virtue of that sovereign power, which he hath to do what he will with it, because such an act would

be contrary to the foundation and right of his dominion, which consists in the excellency of his nature, his immense wisdom and unspotted purity. If God should therefore do any such act, he would expunge the right of his dominion, by blotting out that nature which renders him fit for that dominion, and the exercise of it.* Any dominion which is exercised without the rules of goodness is not a true sovereignty, but an insupportable tyranny. God would cease to be a rightful sovereign if he ceased to be good, he would cease to be good if he did command, necessitate or by any positive operation incline inwardly the heart of a creature directly to that which were morally evil, and contrary to the eminency of his own nature.

. But that we may the better conceive of this, let us trace man in his first fall, whereby he subjected himself and all his posterity to the curse of the law and hatred of God; we shall find no footsteps, either of precept, outward force, or inward impulsions.† The plain story of man's apostasy dischargeth God from any interest in the crime as an encouragement, and excuseth him from any appearance of suspicion, when he shewed him the tree he had reserved, as a mark of his sovereignty, and forbade him to eat of the fruit of it; he backed the prohibition with the threatening the greatest evil, viz., death, which could be understood to imply nothing less than the loss of all his happiness; and in that couched an assurance of the perpetuity of his felicity, if he did not rebelliously reach forth his hand to take and eat of the fruit, Gen. ii. 16, 17. It is true, God had given that fruit an excellency, a goodness for food, and a pleasantness to the eye, chap. iii. 6. He had given man an appetite whereby he was capable of desiring so pleasant a fruit, but God had by creation ranged it under the command of reason, if man would have kept it in its due obedience; he had fixed a severe threatening to bar the unlawful excursions of it; he had allowed him a multitude of other fruits in the garden, and given him liberty enough to satisfy his curiosity in all except this only. Could there be anything more obliging to man, to let God have his reserve of that one tree, than the grant of all the rest, and more deterring from any disobedient attempt than so strict a command, spirited with so dreadful a penalty? God did not solicit him to rebel against him. A solicitation to it, and a command against it, were inconsistent. The devil assaults him, and God permitted it, and stands as it were a spectator of the issue of the combat. There could be no necessity upon man to listen to, and entertain, the suggestions of the serpent. He had a power to resist him, and he had an answer ready for all the devil's arguments, had they been multiplied to more than they were; the opposing the order of God had been a sufficient confutation of all the devil's plausible reasonings: That Creator who hath given me my being hath ordered me not to eat of it. Though the pleasure of the fruit might allure him, yet the force of his reason might have quelled the liquorishness of his sense. The perpetual thinking of, and sounding out, the command of God, had silenced both Satan and his own appetite, had disarmed the tempter, and preserved his sensitive part in its due subjection. What inclination can we suppose there could be from the Creator, when upon the very first offer of the temptation, Eve opposes to the tempter the prohibition and threatening of God, and strains it to a higher peg than we find God had delivered it in? For in Gen. ii. 17, it is, 'you shall not eat of it;' but she adds, Gen. iii. 3, 'neither shall you touch it,' which was a remark that might have had more influence to restrain her. Had our first parents kept this fixed upon their understandings and thoughts, that God had forbidden any such act as the eating of the fruit, and that he was true to execute the

* Amyrald, Dissert. p. 103, 104.

† Amyrald, Defens. de Calvin, p. 151, 152.

threatening he had uttered, of which truth of God they could not but have a natural notion, with what ease might they have withstood the devil's attack, and defeated his design! And it had been easy with them to have kept their understandings by the force of such a thought, from entertaining any contrary imagination. There is no ground for any jealousy of any encouragements, inward impulsions, or necessity from God in this affair. A discharge of God from this first sin will easily induce a freedom from all other sins which follow upon it.

God doth not then encourage, or excite, or incline to sin. How can he excite to that which, when it is done, he will be sure to condemn? How can he be a righteous judge to sentence a sinner to misery for a crime acted by a secret inspiration from himself? Iniquity would deserve no reproof from him, if he were any way positively the author of it. Were God the author of it in us, what is the reason our own consciences accuse us for it, and convince us of it? That, being God's deputy, would not accuse us of it, if the sovereign power by which it acts did incline us to it. How can he be thought to excite to that which he hath enacted such severe laws to restrain, or incline man to that which he hath so dreadfully punished in his Son, and which it is impossible but the excellency of his nature must incline him eternally to hate? We may sooner imagine that a pure flame shall engender cold, and darkness be the offspring of a sunbeam, as imagine such a thing as this. 'What shall we say? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.' The apostle execrates such a thought, Rom. ix. 14.

6. God cannot act any evil in or by himself. If he cannot approve of sin in others, nor excite any to iniquity, which is less, he cannot commit evil himself, which is greater. What he cannot positively will in another can never be willed in himself; he cannot do evil through ignorance, because of his infinite knowledge; nor through weakness, because of his infinite power; nor through malice, because of his infinite rectitude. He cannot will any unjust thing, because, having an infinitely perfect understanding, he cannot judge that to be true which is false, or that to be good which is evil; his will is regulated by his wisdom. If he could will any unjust and irrational thing, his will would be repugnant to his understanding; there would be a disagreement in God, will against mind, and will against wisdom. He being the highest reason, the first truth, cannot do an unreasonable, false, defective action. It is not a defect in God that he cannot do evil, but a fulness and excellency of power. As it is not a weakness in the light, but the perfection of it, that it is unable to produce darkness. God is 'the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness,' James i. 17. Nothing pleases him, nothing is acted by him, but what is becomming the infinite excellency of his own nature. The voluntary necessity whereby God cannot be unjust renders him a 'God blessed for ever.' He would hate himself as the chief good, if, in any of his actions, he should disagree with his goodness. He cannot do any unworthy thing, not because he wants an infinite power, but because he is possessed of an infinite wisdom, and adorned with an infinite purity; and, being infinitely pure, cannot have the least mixture of impurity. As if you can suppose fire infinitely hot, you cannot suppose it to have the least mixture of coldness; the better anything is, the more unable it is to do evil. God being the only goodness, can as little be changed in his goodness as in his essence.

II. The second thing.

The next inquiry is, the proof that God is holy, or the manifestation of it. Purity is as requisite to the blessedness of God as to the being of God.

As he could not be God without being blessed, so he could not be blessed without being holy. He is called by the title of *blessed*, as well as by that of *holy*: Mark xiv. 61, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the blessed?' Unrighteousness is a misery and turbulency in any spirit wherein it is, for it is a privation of an excellency which ought to be in every intellectual being; and what can follow upon the privation of an excellency but unquietness and grief, the moth of happiness! An unrighteous man, as an unrighteous man, can never be blessed, though he were in a local heaven. Had God the least spot upon his purity, it would render him as miserable in the midst of his infinite sufficiency as iniquity renders a man in the confluence of his earthly enjoyments; the holiness and felicity of God are inseparable in him. The apostle intimates that the heathen made an attempt to sully his blessedness, when they would liken him to corruptible, mutable, impure man: Rom. i. 23, 25, 'They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man;' and after he entitles God, a 'God blessed for ever.' The gospel is therefore called 'the glorious gospel of the blessed God,' 1 Tim. i. 11, in regard of the holiness of the gospel precepts, and in regard of the declaration of the holiness of God in all the streams and branches; wherein his purity, in which his blessedness consists, is as illustrious as any other perfection of the divine being. God hath highly manifested this attribute in the state of nature, in the legal administration, in the dispensation of the gospel. His wisdom, goodness, and power are declared in creation, his sovereign authority in his law, his grace and mercy in the gospel, and his righteousness in all. Suitable to this three-fold state may be that ternal repetition of his holiness in the prophecy, Isa. vi. 3, *holy* as creator and benefactor; *holy* as lawgiver and judge; *holy* as restorer and redeemer.

1. His holiness appears as he is creator, in framing man in a perfect uprightness. Angels, as made by God, could not be evil, for God beheld his own work with pleasure, and could not have pronounced them all good had some been created pure, and others impure; two moral contrarieties could not be good. The angels had a first estate, wherein they were happy, Jude 6; and had they not left their own habitation and state, they could not have been miserable; but because the Scripture speaks only of the creation of man, we will consider that the human nature was well strung and tuned by God, according to the note of his own holiness: Eccles. vii. 29, 'God hath made man upright.' He had declared his power in other creatures, but would declare in his rational creature what he most valued in himself; and therefore created him upright, with a wisdom which is the rectitude of the mind, with a purity which is the rectitude of the will and affections. He had declared a purity in other creatures, as much as they were capable of, viz. in the exact tuning them to answer one another; and that God, who so well tuned and composed other creatures, would not make man a jarring instrument, and place a cracked creature to be lord of the rest of his earthly fabric. God being holy, could not set his seal upon any rational creature, but the impression would be like himself, pure and holy also; he could not be created with an error in his understanding, that had been inconsistent with the goodness of God to his rational creature; if so, the erroneous motion of the will, which was to follow the dictates of the understanding, could not have been imputed to him as his crime, because it would have been, not a voluntary, but a necessary effect of his nature; had there been an error in the first wheel, the error of the next could not have been imputed to the nature of that, but to the irregular motion of the first wheel in the engine. The sin of men and angels proceeded not from any natural de-

fect in their understandings, but from inconsideration. He that was the author of harmony in his other creatures, could not be the author of disorder in the chief of his works. Other creatures were his footsteps, but man was his image: Gen. i. 26, 27, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;' which, though it seems to imply no more in that place than an image of his dominion over the creatures, yet the apostle raises it a peg higher, and gives us a larger interpretation of it: Col. iii. 10, 'And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him;' making it to consist in a resemblance to his righteousness. *Image*, say some, notes the form, as man was a spirit in regard of the soul; *likeness* notes the quality implanted in his spiritual nature. The image of God was drawn in him, both as he was a rational and as he was a holy creature. The creatures manifested the being of a superior power as their cause, but the righteousness of the first man evidenced not only a sovereign power, as the donor of his being, but a holy power, as the pattern of his work. God appeared to be a holy God in the righteousness of his creature, as well as an understanding God in the reason of his creature, while he formed him with all necessary knowledge in his mind, and all necessary uprightness in his will. The law of love to God, with his whole soul, his whole mind, his whole heart and strength, was originally writ upon his nature. All the parts of his nature were framed in a moral conformity with God, to answer his law, and imitate God in his purity, which consists in a love of himself, and his own goodness and excellency. Thus doth the clearness of the stream point us to the purer fountain, and the brightness of the beam evidence a greater splendour in the sun which shot it out.

2. His holiness appears in his laws, as he is a lawgiver and a judge. Since man was bound to be subject to God as a creature, and had a capacity to be ruled by the law, as an understanding and willing creature, God gave him a law taken from the depths of his holy nature, and suited to the original faculties of man. The rules which God hath fixed in the world are not the resolves of bare will, but result particularly from the goodness of his nature; they are nothing else but the transcripts of his infinite detestation of sin, as he is the unblemished governor of the world. This being the most adorable property of his nature, he hath impressed it upon that law which he would have inviolably observed as a perpetual rule for our actions, that we may every moment think of this beautiful perfection. God can command nothing, but what hath some similitude with the rectitude of his own nature; all his laws, every paragraph of them therefore, scent of this and glitter with it: Deut. iv. 8, 'What nation hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law I set before you this day?' And therefore they are compared to fine gold, that hath no speck or dross, Ps. xix. 10.

This purity is evident,

- (1.) In the moral law, or law of nature;
- (2.) In the ceremonial law;
- (3.) In the allurements annexed to it for keeping it, and the affrightments to restrain from the breaking of it;
- (4.) In the judgments inflicted for the violation of it.

(1.) In the moral law, which is therefore dignified with the title of holy twice in one verse, Rom. vii. 12, 'Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good,' it being the express image of God's will, as our Saviour was of his person, and bearing a resemblance to the purity of his nature. The tables of this law were put into the ark, that as the mercy-seat was to represent the grace of God, so the law was to represent the

holiness of God. The psalmist, after he had spoken of the glory of God in the heavens, Ps. xix. 1, wherein the power of God is exposed to our view, introduceth the law, wherein the purity of God is evidenced to our minds, ver. 7, 8; 'perfect, pure, clean, righteous' are the titles given to it. It is clearer in holiness than the sun is in brightness, and more mighty in itself to command the conscience, than the sun is to run its race. As the holiness of the Scripture demonstrates the divinity of its author, so the holiness of the law doth the purity of the lawgiver.

[1.] The purity of this law is seen in the matter of it. It prescribes all that becomes a creature towards God, and all that becomes one creature towards another of his own rank and kind. The image of God is complete in the holiness of the first table, and the righteousness of the second; which is intimated by the apostle, Eph. iv. 24, the one being the rule of what we owe to God, the other being the rule of what we owe to man; there is no good but it enjoins, and no evil but it disowns. It is not sickly and lame in any part of it; not a good action but it gives it its due praise, and not an evil action but it sets a condemning mark upon. The commands of it are frequently in Scripture called *judgments*, because they rightly judge of good and evil, and are a clear light to inform the judgment of man in the knowledge of both. By this was the understanding of David enlightened to know every false way, and to hate it, Ps. cxix. 104. There is no case can happen but may meet with a determination from it; it teaches men the noblest manner of living a life like God himself, honourably for the lawgiver, and joyfully for the subject. It directs us to the highest end, sets us at a distance from all base and sordid practices; it proposeth light to the understanding, and goodness to the will. It would tune all the strings, set right all the orders of mankind; it censures the least mote, countenanceth not any stain in life. Not a wanton glance can meet with any justification from it, Mat. v. 28, not a rash anger but it frowns upon, ver. 22. As the lawgiver wants nothing as an addition to his blessedness, so his law wants nothing as a supplement to its perfection, Dent. iv. 2. What our Saviour seems to add, is not an addition to mend any defects, but a restoration of it from the corrupt glosses, wherewith the scribes and Pharisees had eclipsed the brightness of it; they had curtailed it and diminished part of its authority, cutting off its empire over the least evil, and left its power only to check the grosser practices. But Christ restores it to the due extent of its sovereignty, and shews it in those dimensions in which the holy men of God considered it as 'exceeding broad,' Ps. cxix. 96, reaching to all actions, all motions, all circumstances attending them, full of inexhaustible treasures of righteousness; and though this law since the fall doth irritate sin, it is no disparagement, but a testimony to the righteousness of it, which the apostle manifests by his *wherefore*, Rom. vii. 8, 'Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence,' and repeating the same sense, ver. 11, subjoins a *wherefore*, verse 12, 'Wherefore the law is holy.' The rising of men's sinful hearts against the law of God, when it strikes with its preceptive and minatory parts upon their consciences, evidenceth the holiness of the law and the lawgiver.

In its own nature it is a directing rule, but the malignant nature of sin is exasperated by it, as an hostile quality in a creature will awaken itself at the appearance of its enemy. The purity of this beam and transcript of God bears witness to a greater clearness and beauty in the sun and original. Undeiled streams manifest an untainted fountain.

[2.] It is seen in the manner of its precepts; as it prescribes all good and forbids all evil, so it doth enjoin the one, and banish the other as such. The

laws of men command virtuous things, not as virtuous in themselves, but as useful for human society, which the magistrate is the conservator of, and the guardian of justice.* The laws of men contain not all the precepts of virtue, but only such as are accommodated to their customs, and are useful to preserve the ligaments of their government. The design of them is not so much to render the subjects good men, as good citizens; they order the practice of those virtues that may strengthen civil society, and discountenance those vices only which weaken the sinews of it; but God, being the guardian of universal righteousness, doth not only enact the observance of all 'righteousness,' but the observance of it *as* righteousness. He commands that which is just in itself, enjoins virtues as virtues, and prohibits vices as vices, as they are profitable or injurious to ourselves as well as to others.

Men command temperance and justice not as virtues in themselves, but as they prevent disorder and confusion in a commonwealth; and forbid adultery and theft, not as vices in themselves, but as they are entrenchments upon property, not as hurtful to the person that commits them, but as hurtful to the person against whose right they are committed. Upon this account perhaps Paul applauds the holiness of the law of God, in regard of its own nature as considered in itself, more than he doth the justice of it in regard of man, and the goodness and conveniency of it to the world; Rom. vii. 12, the law is *holy* twice, and *just* and *good* but once.

[3.] In the spiritual extent of it. The most righteous powers of the world do not so much regard in their laws what the inward affections of their subjects are; the external acts are only the objects of their decrees, either to encourage them if they be useful, or discourage them if they be hurtful to the community; and indeed they can do no other, for they have no power proportioned to inward affections, since the inward disposition falls not under their censure, and it would be foolish for any legislative power to make such laws, which it is impossible for it to put in execution. They can prohibit the outward acts of theft and murder, but they cannot command the love of God, the hatred of sin, the contempt of the world; they cannot prohibit unclean thoughts and the atheism of the heart. But the law of God surmounts in righteousness all the laws of the best regulated commonwealths in the world; it restrains the licentious heart as well as the violent hand, it damps the very first bubbleings of corrupt nature, orders a purity in the spring, commands a clean fountain, clean streams, clean vessels. It would frame the heart to an inward, as well as the life to an outward righteousness, and make the inside purer than the outside. It forbids the first belchings of a murderous or adulterous intention; it obligeth man as a rational creature, and therefore exacts a conformity of every rational faculty, and of whatsoever is under the command of them. It commands the private closet to be free from the least cobweb, as well as the outward porch to be clean from mire and dust. It frowns upon all stains and pollutions of the most retired thoughts; hence the apostle calls it a spiritual law, Rom. vii. 14, as not political, but extending its force further than the frontiers of the man, placing its ensigns in the metropolis of the heart and mind, and curbing with its sceptre] the inward motions of the spirit, and commanding over the secrets of every man's breast.

[4.] In regard to the perpetuity of it. The purity and perpetuity of it are linked together by the psalmist, Ps. xix. 9, 'The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever;' the fear of the Lord, that is, that law which commands the fear and worship of God, and is the rule of it; and indeed, God values it at such a rate, that rather than part with a tittle, or let the honour of

* Ames de Consc. lib. v. cap. i. ques. 7.

it lie in the dust, he would not only let heaven and earth pass away, but expose his Son to death for the reparation of the wrong it had sustained. So holy it is, that the holiness and righteousness of God cannot dispense with it, cannot abrogate it, without despoiling himself of his own being. It is a copy of the eternal law ! Can he ever abrogate the command of love to himself, without shewing some contempt of his own excellency and very being ? Before he can enjoin a creature not to love him, he must make himself unworthy of love and worthy of hatred ; this would be the highest unrighteousness, to order us to hate that which is only worthy of our highest affections. So God cannot change the first command, and order us to worship many gods ; this would be against the excellency and unity of God, for God cannot constitute another God, or make anything worthy of an honour equal with himself.* Those things that are good only because they are commanded, are alterable by God ; those things that are intrinsically and essentially good, and therefore commanded, are unalterable as long as the holiness and righteousness of God stand firm. The intrinsic goodness of the moral law, the concern God hath for it, the perpetuity of the precepts of the first table, and the care he hath had to imprint the precepts of the second upon the minds and consciences of men, as the author of nature for the preservation of the world, manifests the holiness of the lawmaker and governor.

(2.) His holiness appears in the ceremonial law ; in the variety of sacrifices for sin, wherein he writ his detestation of unrighteousness in bloody characters. His holiness was more constantly expressed in the continual sacrifices, than in those rarer sprinklings of judgments now and then upon the world ; which often reached not the worst, but the most moderate sinners, and were the occasions of the questioning of the righteousness of his providence both by Jews and Gentiles. In judgments, his purity was only now and then manifest ; by his long patience, he might be imagined by some reconciled to their crimes, or not much concerned in them ; but by the morning and evening sacrifice he witnessed a perpetual and uninterrupted abhorrence of whatsoever was evil.

Besides those, the occasional washings and sprinklings upon ceremonial defilements, which polluted only the body, gave an evidence that everything that had a resemblance to evil was loathsome to him. Add also the prohibitions of eating such and such creatures as were filthy ; as the swine that wallowed in the mire, a fit emblem for the profane and brutish sinner ; which had a moral signification, both of the loathsomeness of sin to God, and the aversion themselves ought to have to everything that was filthy.

(3.) His holiness appears in the allurements annexed to the law for keeping it, and the affrightments to restrain from the breaking of it : both promises and threatenings have their fundamental root in the holiness of God, and are both branches of this peculiar perfection. As they respect the nature of God, they are declarations of his hatred of sin and his love of righteousness ; the one belong to his threatenings, the other to his promises ; both join together to represent this divine perfection to the creature, and to excite to an imitation in the creature. In the one, God would render sin odious, because dangerous, and curb the practice of evil, which would otherwise be licentious ; in the other, he would commend righteousness, and excite a love of it, which would otherwise be cold. By these God suits the two great affections of men, fear and hope, both the branches of self-love in man. The promises and threatenings are both the branches of holiness in God. The end of the promises is the same with the exhortation the apostle concludes from them : 2 Cor. vii. 1, ' Having these promises, let us cleanse

* Suarez.

ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' As the end of precepts is to direct, the end of threatenings is to deter from iniquity; so that of the promises is to allure to obedience. Thus God breathes out his love to righteousness in every promise, his hatred of sin in every threatening. The rewards offered in the one are the smiles of pleased holiness, and the curses thundered in the other are the sparklings of enraged righteousness.

(4.) His holiness appears in the judgments inflicted for the violation of this law. Divine holiness is the root of divine justice, and divine justice is the triumph of divine holiness. Hence both are expressed in Scripture by one word of righteousness, which sometimes signifies the rectitude of the divine nature, and sometimes the vindicative stroke of his arm: Ps. ciii. 6, 'The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.' So Dan. ix. 7, 'Righteousness,' that is, justice, 'belongs to thee.' The vials of his wrath are filled from his implacable aversion to iniquity. All penal evils showered down upon the heads of wicked men, spread their root in, and branch out from, this perfection. All the dreadful storms and tempests in the world are blown up by it. Why doth he 'rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest?' Because the righteous Lord 'loveth righteousness,' Ps. xi. 6, 7. And (as was observed before) when he was going about the dreadfulest work that ever was in the world, the overturning the Jewish state, hardening the hearts of that unbelieving people, and cashiering a nation, once dear to him, from the honour of his protection, his holiness, as the spring of all this, is applauded by the seraphims, Isa. vi. 3, compared with ver. 9-11, &c. Impunity argues the approbation of a crime, and punishment the abhorrency of it. The greatness of the crime, and the righteousness of the Judge, are the first natural sentiments that arise in the minds of men, upon the appearance of divine judgments in the world, by those that are near them.* As when men see gibbets erected, scaffolds prepared, instruments of death and torture provided, and grievous punishments inflicted, the first reflection in the spectators is the malignity of the crime, and the detestation the governors are possessed with.

[1.] How severely hath he punished his most noble creatures for it. The once glorious angels, upon whom he had been at greater cost than upon other creatures, and drawn more lively lineaments of his own excellency, upon the transgression of his law are thrown into the furnace of justice, without any mercy to pity them, Jude 6. And though there were but one sort of creatures upon the earth that bore his image, and were only fit to publish and keep up his honour below the heavens, yet upon their apostasy (though upon a temptation from a subtle and insinuating spirit) the man, with all his posterity, is sentenced to misery in life, and death at last; and the woman, with all her sex, have standing punishments inflicted on them; which as they have begun in their persons, were to reach as far as the last member of their successive generations. So holy is God, that he will not endure a spot in his choicest work. Men, indeed, when there is a crack in an excellent piece of work, or a stain upon a rich garment, do not cast it away; they value it for the remaining excellency, more than hate it for the contracted spot; but God saw no excellency in his creature worthy regarding, after the image of that which he most esteemed in himself was defaced.

[2.] How detestable to him are the very instruments of sin. For the ill use the serpent (an irrational creature) was put to by the devil, as an instrument in the fall of man, the whole brood of those animals are cursed: Gen. iii. 14, 'Cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field.' Not

* Amyraut, Moral. tom. v. p. 388.

only the devil's head is threatened to be for ever bruised, and (as some think) rendered irrecoverable upon this further testimony of his malice in the seduction of man, who perhaps, without this new act, might have been admitted into the arms of mercy, notwithstanding his first sin,—though the Scripture gives us no account of this, only this is the only sentence we read of pronounced against the devil, which puts him into an irrecoverable state by a mortal bruising of his head,—but, I say, he is not only punished, but the organ whereby he blew in his temptation, is put into a worse condition than it was before. Thus God hated the sponge whereby the devil deformed his beautiful image; thus God, to manifest his detestation of sin, ordered the beast, whereby any man was slain, to be slain as well as the malefactor, Lev. xx. 15. The gold and silver that had been abused to idolatry, and were the ornaments of images, though good in themselves, and incapable of a criminal nature, were not to be brought into their houses, but detested and abhorred by them, because they were cursed, and an abomination to the Lord. See with what loathing expressions this law is enjoined to them, Deut. vii. 25, 26. So contrary is the holy nature of God to every sin, that it curseth everything that is instrumental in it.

[3.] How detestable is everything to him that is in the sinner's possession! The very earth, which God had made Adam the proprietor of, was 'cursed for his sake,' Gen. iii. 17, 18. It lost its beauty, and lies languishing to this day; and notwithstanding the redemption by Christ, hath not recovered its health, nor is it like to do, till the completing the fruits of it upon the children of God, Rom. viii. 20–22. The whole lower creation was made 'subject to vanity,' and put into pangs upon the sin of man, by the righteousness of God detesting his offence. How often hath his implacable aversion from sin been shewn, not only in his judgments upon the offender's person, but by wrapping up in the same judgment those which stood in a near relation to them! Achan, with his children and cattle, are overwhelmed with stones, and burned together, Josh. vii. 24, 25. In the destruction of Sodom, not only the grown malefactors, but the young spawn, the infants (at present incapable of the same wickedness), and their cattle, were burned up by the same fire from heaven; and the place where their habitations stood is at this day partly a heap of ashes, and partly an infectious lake, that chokes any fish that swim into it from Jordan, and stifles (as is related) by its vapour any bird that attempts to fly over it. Oh, how detestable is sin to God, that causes him to turn a pleasant land, as the garden of the Lord (as it is styled, Gen. xiii. 10) into a lake of sulphur; to make it, both in his word and works, as a lasting monument of his abhorrence of evil!

[4.] What design hath God in all these acts of severity and vindictive justice, but to set off the lustre of his holiness? He testifies himself concerned for those laws, which he hath set as hedges and limits to the lusts of men; and therefore when he breathes forth his fiery indignation against a people, he is said to get himself honour; as when he intended the Red Sea should swallow up the Egyptian army, Exod. xiv. 17, 18, which Moses in his triumphant song echoes back again: Exod. xv. 1, 'Thou hast triumphed gloriously;' gloriously in his holiness, which is the glory of his nature, as Moses himself interprets it in the text. When men will not own the holiness of God in a way of duty, God will vindicate it in a way of justice and punishment. In the destruction of Aaron's sons, that were will-worshippers, and would take strange fire, *sanctified* and *glorified* are coupled, Lev. x. 3. He glorified himself in that act, in vindicating his holiness before all the people, declaring that he will not endure sin and disobedience. He doth, therefore, in this life more severely punish the sins of his people, when they presume

upon any act of disobedience, for a testimony, that the nearness and dear-ness of any person to him, shall not make him unconcerned in his holiness, or be a plea for impurity. The end of all his judgments is to witness to the world his abominating of sin. To punish and witness against men, are one and the same thing: Micah i. 2, 'The Lord shall witness against you;' and it is the witness of God's holiness: Hosea v. 5, 'And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face.' One renders it, the excellency of Israel, and understands it of God; the word וְיָאֵל, which is here in our translation pride, is rendered excellency: Amos viii. 7, 'The Lord hath sworn by his excellency,' which is interpreted holiness: Amos iv. 2, 'The Lord hath sworn by his holiness.' What is the issue or end of this swearing by holiness, and of his excellency testifying against them? In all those places you will find them to be sweeping judgments: in one, Israel and Ephraim shall 'fall in their iniquity;' in another, he will 'take them away with hooks, and their posterity with fish-hooks;' and in another, he would 'never forget any of their works.' He that punisheth wickedness in those he before used with the greatest tenderness, furnisheth the world with an undeniable evidence of the detestableness of it to him. Were not judgments sometimes poured out upon the world, it would be believed that God were rather an approver than an enemy to sin.

To conclude; since God hath made a stricter law to guide men, annexed promises above the merit of obedience to allure them, and threatenings dreadful enough to affright men from disobedience, he cannot be the cause of sin, nor a lover of it. How can he be the author of that which he so severely forbids, or love that which he delights to punish, or be fondly indulgent to any evil, when he hates the ignorant instruments in the offences of his reasonable creatures?

3. The holiness of God appears in our restoration. It is in the glass of the gospel we 'behold the glory of the Lord,' 2 Cor. iii. 18; that is, the glory of the Lord, into whose image we are changed; but we are changed into nothing as the image of God but into holiness. We bore not upon us by creation, nor by regeneration, the image of any other perfection. We cannot be changed into his omnipotence, omniscience, &c., but into the image of his righteousness. This is the pleasing and glorious sight the gospel mirror darts in our eyes. The whole scene of redemption is nothing else but a discovery of judgment and righteousness: Isa. i. 27, 'Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.'

(1.) This holiness of God appears in the manner of our restoration, viz., by the death of Christ. Not all the vials of judgments that have or shall be poured out upon the wicked world, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against the rebellious devils, nor the groans of the damned creatures, give such a demonstration of God's hatred of sin, as the wrath of God let loose upon his Son. Never did divine holiness appear more beautiful and lovely than at the time our Saviour's countenance was most marred in the midst of his dying groans. This himself acknowledges in that prophetic psalm, Ps. xxii. 1, 2, when God had turned his smiling face from him, and thrust his sharp knife into his heart, which forced that terrible cry from him, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' He adores this perfection of holiness, ver. 3, 'but thou art holy.' Thy holiness is the spring of all this sharp agony, and for this thou inhabitest, and shalt for ever inhabit, the praises of all thy Israel. Holiness drew the veil between God's countenance and our Saviour's soul. Justice indeed gave the stroke, but holiness ordered it. In this his purity did sparkle, and his irreversible justice manifested that all those

that commit sin are worthy of death; this was the perfect index of his righteousness, Rom. iii. 29, that is, of his holiness and truth. Then it was that 'God, that is holy, was sanctified in righteousness,' Isa. v. 16.

It appears the more, if you consider,

[1.] The dignity of the Redeemer's person. One that had been from eternity, had laid the foundations of the world, had been the object of the divine delight. He that was God 'blessed for ever' becomes a curse; he who was blessed by angels, and by whom God blessed the world, must be seized with horror. The Son of eternity must bleed to death. Where did ever sin appear so irreconcilable to God? where did God ever break out so furiously in his detestation of iniquity? The Father would have the most excellent person, one next in order to himself, and equal to him in all the glorious perfections of his nature, Phil. ii. 6, die on a disgraceful cross, and be exposed to the flames of divine wrath, rather than sin should live, and his holiness remain for ever disparaged by the violations of his law.

[2.] The near relation he stood in to the Father. He was his own Son that he delivered up, Rom. viii. 32, his essential image, as dearly beloved by him as himself; yet he would abate nothing of his hatred of those sins imputed to one so dear to him, and who never had done anything contrary to his will. The strong cries uttered by him could not cause him to cut off the least fringe of this royal garment, nor part with a thread the robe of his holiness was woven with. The torrent of wrath is opened upon him, and the Father's heart beats not in the least notice of tenderness to sin in the midst of his Son's agonies. God seems to lay aside the bowels of a father, and put on the garb of an irreconcilable enemy.* Upon which account, probably, our Saviour in the midst of his passion gives him the title of *God*, not of *Father*, the title he usually before addressed to him with: Mat. xxvii. 46, 'My God, my God,' not 'My Father, my Father, why hast thou forsaken me?' He seems to hang upon the cross like a disinherited son, while he appeared in the garb and rank of a sinner. Then was his head loaded with curses, when he stood under that sentence of 'Cursed is every one that hangs upon a tree,' Gal. iii. 13, and looked as one forlorn and rejected by the divine purity and tenderness. God dealt not with him as if he had been one in so near a relation to him. He left him not the will only of the instruments of his death, he would have the chiefest blow himself of bruising of him: Isa. liii. 10, 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him;' the Lord, because the power of creatures could not strike a blow strong enough to satisfy and secure the rights of infinite holiness. It was therefore a cup tempered and put into his hands by his Father; a cup given him to drink. In other judgments, he lets out his wrath against his creatures; in this, he lets out his wrath (as it were) against himself, against his Son, one as dear to him as himself. As in his making creatures, his power over nothing to bring it into being appeared, but in pardoning sin he hath power over himself; so in punishing creatures, his holiness appears in his wrath against creatures, against sinners by inherency. But by punishing sin in his Son, his holiness sharpens his wrath against him who was his equal, and only a reputed sinner. As if his affection to his own holiness surmounted his affection to his Son; for he chose to suspend the breakings out of his affections to his Son, and see him plunged in a sharp and ignominious misery, without giving him any visible token of his love, rather than see his holiness lie groaning under the injuries of a transgressing world.

[3.] The value he puts upon his holiness appears further, in the advancement of this redeeming person after his death. Our Saviour was advanced

* Lingend., tom. iii. p. 699, 700.

not barely for his dying, but for the respect he had in his death to this attribute of God. Heb. i. 9, 'Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness,' &c. By righteousness is meant this perfection, because of the opposition of it to iniquity. Some think *therefore* to be the final cause; as if this were the sense, 'Thou art anointed with the oil of gladness, that thou mightest love righteousness, and hate iniquity.' But the Holy Ghost seeming to speak in this chapter not only of the Godhead of Christ, but of his exaltation, the doctrine whereof he had begun in ver. 3, and prosecutes in the following verses, I would rather understand *therefore*, for this cause, or reason, hath God anointed thee, not to this end. Christ indeed had an unction of grace, whereby he was fitted for his mediatory work; he had also an unction of glory, whereby he was rewarded for it. In the first regard, it was a qualifying him for his office; in the second regard, it was a solemn inaugurating him in his royal authority. And the reason of his being settled upon a throne for ever and ever is because he loved righteousness. He suffered himself to be pierced to death, that sin, the enemy of God's purity, might be destroyed, and the honour of the law, the image of God's holiness, might be repaired and fulfilled in the fallen creature. He restored the credit of divine holiness in the world, in manifesting by his death God an irreconcilable enemy to all sin, in abolishing the empire of sin, so hateful to God, and restoring the rectitude of nature, and new framing the image of God in his chosen ones.

And God so valued this vindication of his holiness, that he confers upon him, in his human nature, an eternal royalty and empire over angels and men. Holiness was the great attribute respected by Christ in his dying, and manifested in his death; and for his love to this, God would bestow an honour upon his person in that nature wherein he did vindicate the honour of so dear a perfection. In the death of Christ, he shewed his resolution to preserve its rights; in the exaltation of Christ, he evidenced his mighty pleasure for the vindication of it; in both, the infinite value he had for it, as dear to him as his life and glory.

[4.] It may be further considered, that in this way of redemption, his holiness in the hatred of sin seems to be valued above any other attribute. He proclaims the value of it above the person of his Son, since the divine nature of the Redeemer is disguised, obscured, and veiled, in order to the restoring the honour of it. And Christ seems to value it above his own person, since he submitted himself to the reproaches of men, to clear this perfection of the divine nature, and make it illustrious in the eyes of the world. You heard before, at the beginning of the handling this argument, it was the beauty of the Deity, the lustre of his nature, the link of all his attributes, his very life; he values it equal with himself, since he swears by it as well as by his life. And none of his attributes would have a due decorum without it. It is the glory of power, mercy, justice, wisdom, that they are holy; so that though God had an infinite tenderness and compassion to the fallen creatures, yet it should not extend itself in his relief to the prejudice of the rights of his purity. He would have this triumph in the tenderness of his mercy as well as the severities of his justice. His mercy had not appeared in its true colours, nor attained a regular end, without vengeance on sin. It would have been a compassion that would (in sparing the sinner) have encouraged the sin, and affronted holiness in the issues of it. Had he dispersed his compassions about the world without the regard to his hatred of sin, his mercy had been too cheap, and his holiness had been contemned. His mercy would not have triumphed in his own nature whilst his holi-

ness had suffered. He had exercised a mercy with the impairing his own glory.

But now in this way of redemption, the rights of both are secured, both have their due lustre. The odiousness of sin is equally discovered with the greatness of his compassions; an infinite abhorrence of sin, and an infinite love to the world march hand in hand together. Never was so much of the irreconcilableness of sin to him set forth, as in the moment he was opening his bowels in the reconciliation of the sinner. Sin is made the chiefest mark of his displeasure, while the poor creature is made the highest object of divine pity. There could have been no motion of mercy with the least injury to purity and holiness. In this way 'mercy and truth,' mercy to the misery of the creature, and truth to the purity of the law, 'have met together;' the righteousness of God, and the peace of the sinner, 'have kissed each other,' Ps. lxxxv. 10.

(2.) The holiness of God in his hatred of sin appears in our justification, and the conditions he requires of all that would enjoy the benefit of redemption. His wisdom hath so tempered all the conditions of it, that the honour of his holiness is as much preserved as the sweetness of his mercy is experimented by us. All the conditions are records of his exact purity, as well as of his condescending grace. Our justification is not by the imperfect works of creatures, but by an exact and infinite righteousness, as great as that of the Deity which had been offended; it being the righteousness of a divine person, upon which account it is called the 'righteousness of God,' not only in regard of God's appointing it, and God's accepting it, but as it is a righteousness of that person that was God, and is God. Faith is the condition God requires to justification, but not a dead, James ii. 20, but an active faith; such a faith as 'purifies the heart,' Acts xv. 9. He calls for repentance, which is a moral retracting our offences, and an approbation of condemned righteousness and a violated law; an endeavour to regain what is lost, and to pluck out the heart of that sin we have committed. He requires mortification, which is called crucifying, whereby a man would strike as full and deadly a blow at his lusts as was struck at Christ upon the cross, and make them as certainly die as the Redeemer did.

Our own righteousness must be condemned by us as impure and imperfect. We must disown everything that is our own, as to righteousness, in reverence to the holiness of God and the valuation of the righteousness of Christ. He hath resolved not to bestow the inheritance of glory without the root of grace. None are partakers of the divine blessedness that are not partakers of the divine nature; there must be a renewing of his image before there be a vision of his face, Heb. xii. 14. He will not have men brought only into a relative state of happiness by justification, without a real state of grace by sanctification. And so resolved he is in it, that there is no admittance into heaven of a starting, but a persevering, holiness: Rom. ii. 7, a 'patient continuance in well doing;' patient under the sharpness of affliction, and continuing under the pleasures of prosperity. Hence it is that the gospel, the restoring doctrine, hath not only the motives of rewards to allure us to good, and the danger of punishments to scare us from evil, as the law had, but they are set forth in a higher strain, in a way of stronger engagement, the rewards are heavenly, and the punishments eternal; and more powerful motives besides, from the choicer expressions of God's love in the death of his Son. The whole design of it is to re-instate us in a resemblance to this divine perfection, whereby he shews what an affection he hath to this excellency of his nature, and what a detestation he hath of evil, which is contrary to it.

(3.) It appears in the actual regeneration of the redeemed soul, and a carrying it on to a full perfection. As election is the effect of God's sovereignty, our pardon the fruit of his mercy, our knowledge a stream from his wisdom, our strength an impression of his power, so our purity is a beam from his holiness. The whole work of sanctification, and the preservation of it, our Saviour begs for his disciples of his Father under this title: John xvii. 11, 17, 'Holy Father, keep them through thy own name,' and 'sanctify them through thy truth,' as the proper source whence holiness was to flow to the creature; as the sun is the proper fountain whence light is derived, both to the stars above and bodies here below. Whence he is not only called holy, but 'the Holy One of Israel;' Isa. xliii. 15, 'I am the Lord your Holy One, the Creator of Israel,' displaying his holiness in them by a new creation of them as his Israel. As the rectitude of the creature at the first creation was the effect of his holiness, so the purity of the creature by a new creation is a draught of the same perfection. He is called the Holy One of Israel more in Isaiah, that evangelical prophet, in erecting Zion, and forming a people for himself, than in the whole Scriptures besides. As he sent Jesus Christ to satisfy his justice for the expiation of the guilt of sin, so he sends the Holy Ghost for the cleansing the filth of sin and overcoming the power of it. Himself is the fountain, the Son is the pattern, and the Holy Ghost the immediate imprinter of this stamp of holiness upon the creature. God hath such a value for this attribute, that he designs the glory of this in the renewing of the creature more than the happiness of the creature; though the one doth necessarily follow upon the other, yet the one is the principal design and the other the consequent of the former; whence our salvation is more frequently set forth in Scripture by a redemption from sin, and sanctification of the soul, than by a possession of heaven, Titus ii. 11-14, and many other places.

Indeed, as God could not create a rational creature without interesting this attribute in a special manner, so he cannot restore the fallen creature without it. As in creating a rational creature there must be holiness to adorn it, as well as wisdom to form the design, and power to effect it, so in the restoration of the creature, as he could not make a reasonable creature unholy, so he cannot restore a fallen creature, and put him in a meet posture to take pleasure in him, without communicating to him a resemblance of himself. As God cannot be blessed in himself without this perfection of purity, so neither can a creature be blessed without it. As God would be unlovely to himself without this attribute, so would the creature be unlovely to God without a stamp and mark of it upon his nature. So much is this perfection one with God, valued by him, and interested in all his works and ways.

III. The third thing I am to do, is to lay down some propositions in the defence of God's holiness in all his acts about or concerning sin. It was a prudent and pious advice of Camero, not to be too busy and rash in inquiries and conclusions about the reason of God's providence in the matter of sin. The Scripture hath put a bar in the way of such curiosity, by telling us, that the ways of God's wisdom and righteousness in his judgments are unsearchable, Rom. xi. 33, much more the ways of God's holiness as he stands in relation to sin as a Governor of the world. We cannot consider those things without danger of slipping; our eyes are too weak to look upon the sun without being dazzled; too much curiosity met with a just check in our first parent. To be desirous to know the reason of all God's proceedings in the matter of sin, is to second the ambition of Adam, to be as wise as

God, and know the reason of his acting equally with himself. It is more easy, as the same author saith, to give an account of God's providence since the revolt of man, and the poison that hath universally seized upon human nature, than to make guesses at the manner of the fall of the first man. The Scripture hath given us but a short account of the manner of it, to discourage too curious inquiries into it.

It is certain that God made man upright; and when man sinned in paradise, God was active in sustaining the substantial nature and act of the sinner while he was sinning, though not in supporting the sinfulness of the act. He was permissive in suffering it, he was negative in withholding that grace which might certainly have prevented his crime, and consequently his ruin, though he withheld nothing that was sufficient for his resistance of that temptation wherewith he was assaulted. And since the fall of man, God, as a wise governor, is directive of the events of the transgression, and draws the choicest good out of the blackest evil, and limits the sins of men, that they creep not so far as the evil nature of men would urge them to; and as a righteous judge, he takes away the talent from idle servants, and the light from wicked ones, whereby they stumble and fall into crimes by the inclinations and proneness of their own corrupt natures, leaves them to the bias of their own vicious habits, denies that grace which they have forfeited, and have no right to challenge; and turns their sinful actions into punishments, both to the committers of them and others.

Prop. 1. God's holiness is not chargeable with any blemish, for his creating man in a mutable state. It is true angels and men were created with a changeable nature; and though there was a rich and glorious stamp upon them by the hand of God, yet their natures were not incapable of a base and vile stamp from some other principle; as the silver, which bears upon it the image of a great prince, is capable of being melted down, and imprinted with no better an image than that of some vile and monstrous beast. Though God made man upright, yet he was capable of seeking 'many inventions,' Eccles. vii. 29; yet the hand of God was not defiled by forming man with such a nature. It was suitable to the wisdom of God to give the rational creature, whom he had furnished with a power of acting righteously, the liberty of choice, and not fix him in an unchangeable state, without a trial of him in his natural. And if he did obey, his obedience might be the more valuable; and if he did freely offend, his offence might be more inexcusable.

1. No creature can be capable of immutability by nature. Mutability is so essential to a creature, that a creature cannot be supposed without it. You must suppose it a creator, not a creature, if you allow it to be an immutable nature. Immutability is the property of the supreme being. God 'only hath immortality,' 1 Tim. vi. 16. Immortality, as opposed not only to a natural, but to a sinful death; the word *only* appropriates every sort of immortality to God, and excludes every creature, whether angel or man, from a partnership with God in this by nature. Every creature therefore is capable of a death in sin. 'None is good but God,' and none is naturally free from change but God; which excludes every creature from the same prerogative; and certainly if one angel sinned, all might have sinned, because there was the same root of mutability in one as well as another. It is as possible for a creature to be creator, as for a creature to have naturally an incommunicable property of the Creator. All things, whether angels or men, are made of nothing, and therefore capable of defection;* because a creature being made of nothing, cannot be good *per essentiam*, or essentially

* Suarez, vol. ii. p. 548.

good, but by participation from another. Again, every rational creature, being made of nothing, hath a superior which created him and governs him, and is capable of a precept; and consequently capable of disobedience as well as obedience to the precept, to transgress it as well as obey it. God cannot sin, because he can have no superior to impose a precept on him. A rational creature, with a liberty of will and power of choice, cannot be made by nature of such a mould and temper, but he must be as well capable of choosing wrong, as of choosing right; and therefore the standing angels, and glorified saints, though they are immutable, it is not by nature they are so, but by grace, and the good pleasure of God; for though they are in heaven, they have still in their nature a remote power of sinning, but it shall never be brought into act, because God will always incline their wills to love him, and never concur with their wills to any evil act. Since therefore mutability is essential to a creature, as a creature, this changeableness cannot properly be charged upon God as the author of it; for it was not the term of God's creating act, but did necessarily result from the nature of the creature, as unchangeableness doth result from the essence of God. The brittleness of a glass is no blame to the art of him that blew up the glass into such a fashion; that imperfection of brittleness is not from the workman, but the matter. So though changeableness be an imperfection, yet it is so necessary a one, that no creature can be naturally without it. Besides, though angels and men were mutable by creation, and capable to exercise their wills, yet they were not necessitated to evil; and this mutability did not infer a necessity that they should fall; because some angels, which had the same root of changeableness in their natures with those that fell, did not fall, which they would have done, if capableness of changing, and necessity of changing, were one and the same thing.

2. Though God made the creature mutable, yet he made him not evil. There could be nothing of evil in him that God created after his own image, and pronounced good, Gen. i. 27, 31. Man had an ability to stand, as well as a capacity to fall; he was created with a principle of acting freely, whereby he was capable of loving God as his chief good, and moving to him as his last end; there was a beam of light in man's understanding to know the rule he was to conform to, a harmony between his reason and his affections, an original righteousness. So that it seemed more easy for him to determine his will to continue in obedience to the precept, than to swerve from it; to adhere to God as his chief good, than to listen to the charms of Satan. God created him with those advantages, that he might with more facility have kept his eyes fixed upon the divine beauty, than turn his back upon it; and with greater ease have kept the precept God gave him, than have broken it. The very first thought darted, or impression made by God upon the angelical or human nature, was the knowledge of himself as their author, and could be no other than such whereby both angels and men might be excited to a love of that adorable being that had framed them so gloriously out of nothing. And if they turned their wills and affections to another object, it was not by the direction of God, but contrary to the impression God had made upon them, or the first thought he flashed into them. They turned themselves to the admiring their own excellency, or affecting an advantage distinct from that which they were to look for only from God. 1 Tim. iii. 6, pride was the cause of the condemnation of the devil. Though the wills of angels and men were created mutable, and so were imperfect, yet they were not created evil. Though they might sin, yet they might not sin, and therefore were not evil in their own nature. What reflection then could this mutability of their nature be upon God? So far is it from any, that he is

fully cleared, by storing up in the nature of man sufficient provision against his departure from him. God was so far from creating him evil, that he fortified him with a knowledge in his understanding, and a strength in his nature, to withstand any invasion. The knowledge was exercised by Eve in the very moment of the serpent's assaulting her : Gen. iii. 3, Eve 'said to the serpent, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it.' And had her thoughts been intent upon this *God hath said*, and not diverted to the motions of the sensitive appetite and liquorish palate, it had been sufficient to put by all the passes the devil did, or could have made at her. So that you see, though God made the creature mutable, yet he made him not evil. This clears the holiness of God.

3. Therefore it follows, that though God created man changeable, yet he was not the cause of his change by his fall. Though man was created defective, yet he was not determined by God influencing his will by any positive act to that change and apostasy. God placed him in a free posture, set life and happiness before him on the one hand, misery and death on the other. As he did not draw him into the arms of perpetual blessedness, so he did not drive him into the gulf of his misery ;* he did not incline him to evil. It was repugnant to the goodness of God to corrupt the righteousness of those faculties he had so lately beautified him with. It was not likely he should deface the beauty of that work he had composed with so much wisdom and skill. Would he by any act of his own make that bad, which but a little before he had acquiesced in as good ? Angels and men were left to their liberty and conduct of their natural faculties ; and if God inspired them with any motions, they could not but be motions to good, and suited to that righteous nature he had endued them with. But it is most probable that God did not in a supernatural way act inwardly upon the mind of man, but left him wholly to that power which he had in creation furnished him with. The Scripture frees God fully from any blame in this, and lays it wholly upon Satan as the tempter, and upon man as the determiner of his own will. Gen. iii. 6, Eve took of the fruit, and did eat ; and Adam took from her of the fruit, and did eat. And Solomon, Ecces. vii. 29, distinguisheth God's work in the creation of man 'upright,' from man's work in 'seeking out' those ruining 'inventions.' God created man in a righteous state, and man cast himself into a forlorn state. As he was a mutable creature, he was from God ; as he was a changed and corrupted creature, it was from the devil seducing, and his own pliability in admitting ; as silver, and gold, and other metals, were created by God in such a form and figure, yet capable of receiving other forms by the industrious art of man. When the image of a man is put upon a piece of metal, God is not said to create that image, though he created the substance with such a property, that it was capable of receiving it. This capacity is from the nature of the metal by God's creation of it, but the carving the figure of this or that man, is not the act of God, but the act of man ; as images in Scripture are called the work of men's hands, in regard of the imagery, though the matter, wood or stone, upon which the image was carved, was a work of God's creative power. When an artificer frames an excellent instrument, and a musician exactly tunes it, and it comes out of their hands without a blemish, but capable to be untuned by some rude hand, or receive a crack by a sudden fall if it meet with a disaster, is either the workman or musician to be blamed ? The ruin of a house, caused by the wastefulness or carelessness of the tenant, is not to be imputed to the workman that built it strong, and left it in a good posture.

* Amyral. Moral. tom. i. p. 615, 616.

Prop. 2. God's holiness is not blemished by enjoining man a law, which he knew he would not observe.

1. The law was not above his strength. Had the law been impossible to be observed, no crime could have been imputed to the subject, the fault had lain wholly upon the governor; the non-observance of it had been from a want of strength, and not from a want of will. Had God commanded Adam to fly up to the sun, when he had not given him wings, Adam might have a will to obey it, but his power would be too short to perform it. But the law set him for a rule had nothing of impossibility in it; it was easy to be observed; the command was rather below than above his strength, and the sanction of it was more apt to restrain and scare him from the breach of it, than encourage any daring attempts against it. He had as much power, or rather more, to conform to it, than to warp from it; and greater arguments and interest to be observant of it, than to violate it; his all was secured by the one, and his ruin ascertained by the other. The commands of God are 'not grievous,' 1 John v. 3; from the first to the last command there is nothing impossible, nothing hard to the original and created nature of man, which were all summed up in a love to God, which was the pleasure and delight of man, as well as his duty, if he had not by inconsiderateness neglected the dictates and resolves of his own understanding. The law was suited to the strength of man, and fitted for the improvement and perfection of his nature; in which respect the apostle calls it good, as it refers to man; as well as holy, as it refers to God, Rom. vii. 12. Now since God created man a creature capable to be governed by a law, and as a rational creature endued with understanding and will, not to be governed according to his nature without a law, was it congruous to the wisdom of God to respect only the future state of man, which, from the depth of his infinite knowledge, he did infallibly foresee would be miserable by the wilful defection of man from the rule? Had it been agreeable to the wisdom of God to respect only this future state, and not the present state of the creature, and therefore leave him lawless, because he knew he would violate the law? Should God forbear to act like a wise governor, because he foresaw that man would cease to act like an obedient subject? Shall a righteous magistrate forbear to make just and good laws, because he foresees, either from the dispositions of his subjects, their ill-humour, or some circumstances which will intervene, that multitudes of them will incline to break those laws, and fall under the penalty of them? No blame can be upon that magistrate who minds the rule of righteousness, and the necessary duty of his government, since he is not the cause of those turbulent affections in men, which he wisely foresees will rise up against his just edicts.

2. Though the law now be above the strength of man, yet is not the holiness of God blemished by keeping it up. It is true, God hath been graciously pleased to mitigate the severity and rigour of the law by the entrance of the gospel; yet, where men refuse the terms of the gospel, they continue themselves under the condemnation of the law, and are justly guilty of the breach of it, though they have no strength to observe it. The law, as I said before, was not above man's strength, when he was possessed of original righteousness, though it be above man's strength, since he was stripped of original righteousness. The command was dated before man had contracted his impotency, when he had a power to keep it as well as to break it. Had it been enjoined to man only after the fall, and not before, he might have had a better pretence to excuse himself, because of the impossibility of it; yet he would not have had sufficient excuse, since the impossibility did not result from the nature of the law, but from the corrupted nature of the creature.

It was 'weak through the flesh,' Rom. viii. 3, but it was promulged when man had a strength proportioned to the commands of it. And now, since man hath unhappily made himself incapable of obeying it, must God's holiness in his law be blemished for enjoining it? Must he abrogate those commands, and prohibit what before he enjoined, for the satisfaction of the corrupted creature? Would not this be his ceasing to be holy, that his creature might be unblameably unrighteous? Must God strip himself of his holiness, because man will not discharge his iniquity? He cannot be the cause of sin, by keeping up the law, who would be the cause of all the unrighteousness of men, by removing the authority of it. Some things in the law, that are intrinsically good in their own nature, are indispensable, and it is repugnant to the nature of God not to command them. If he were not the guardian of his indispensable law, he would be the cause and countenancer of the creature's iniquity; so little reason have men to charge God with being the cause of their sin, by not repealing his law to gratify their impotence, that he would be unholy if he did. God must not lose his purity, because man hath lost his; and cast away the right of his sovereignty, because man hath cast away his power of obedience.

3. God's foreknowledge that his law would not be observed lays no blame upon him. Though the foreknowledge of God be infallible, yet it doth not necessitate the creature in acting. It was certain from eternity, that Adam would fall, that men would do such and such actions, that Judas would betray our Saviour; God foreknew all those things from eternity; but it is as certain that this foreknowledge did not necessitate the will of Adam, or any other branch of his posterity, in the doing those actions that were so foreseen by God; they voluntarily run into such courses, not by any impulsions. God's knowledge was not suspended between certainty and uncertainty. He certainly foreknew that his law would be broken by Adam; he foreknew it in his own decree of not hindering him, by giving Adam the efficacious grace which would infallibly have prevented it; yet Adam did freely break this law, and never imagined that the foreknowledge of God did necessitate him to it. He could find no cause of his own sin but the liberty of his own will; he charges the occasion of his sin upon the woman, and consequently upon God in giving the woman to him, Gen. iii. 12. He could not be so ignorant of the nature of God as to imagine him without a foresight of future things, since his knowledge of what was to be known of God by creation was greater than any man's since, in all probability. But, however, if he were not acquainted with the notion of God's foreknowledge, he could not be ignorant of his own act; there could not have been any necessity upon him, any kind of constraint of him in his action that could have been unknown to him; and he would not have omitted a plea of so strong a nature, when he was upon his trial for life or death, especially when he urgeth so weak an argument to impute his crime to God as the gift of the woman, as if that which was designed him for a help were intended for his ruin. If God's prescience takes away the liberty of the creature, there is no such thing as a free action in the world (for there is nothing done but is foreknown by God, else we render God of a limited understanding), nor ever was, no, not by God himself *ad extra*; for whatsoever he hath done in creation, whatsoever he hath done since the creation, was foreknown by him; he resolved to do it, and therefore foreknew that he would do it. Did God do it therefore necessarily, as necessity is opposed to liberty? As he freely decrees what he will do, so he effects what he freely decreed. Foreknowledge is so far from intrenching upon the liberty of the will, that predetermination, which in the notion of it speaks something more, doth not dissolve it; God did not only

foreknow, but determine the suffering of Christ, Acts iv. 27, 28. It was necessary, therefore, that Christ should suffer, that God might not be mistaken in his foreknowledge, or come short of his determinate decree. But did this take away the liberty of Christ in suffering? Eph. v. 2, 'Who offered himself up to God;' that is, by a voluntary act, as well as designed to do it by a determinate counsel. It did infallibly secure the event, but did not annihilate the liberty of the action, either in Christ's willingness to suffer, or the crime of the Jews that made him suffer. God's prescience is God's prevision of things arising from their proper causes; as a gardener foresees in his plants the leaves and the flowers that will arise from them in the spring, because he knows the strength and nature of their several roots which lie under ground, but his foresight of these things is not the cause of the rise and appearance of those flowers. If any of us see a ship moving towards such a rock or quicksand, and know it to be governed by a negligent pilot, we shall certainly foresee that the ship will be torn in pieces by the rock, or swallowed up by the sands; but is this foresight of ours from the causes, any cause of the effect, or can we from hence be said to be the authors of the miscarriage of the ship, and the loss of the passengers and goods? The fall of Adam was foreseen by God to come to pass by the consent of his free will in the choice of the proposed temptation. God foreknew Adam would sin, and if Adam would not have sinned, God would have foreknown that he would not sin. Adam might easily have detected the serpent's fraud, and made a better election; God foresaw that he would not do it; God's foreknowledge did not make Adam guilty or innocent; whether God had foreknown it or no, he was guilty by a free choice, and a willing neglect of his own duty. Adam knew that God foreknew that he might eat of the fruit, and fall and die, because God had forbidden him; the foreknowledge that he would do it was no more a cause of his action than the foreknowledge that he might do it. Judas certainly knew that his master foreknew that he should betray him, for Christ had acquainted him with it, John xiii. 21, 26, yet he never charged this foreknowledge of Christ with any guilt of his treachery.

Prop. 3. The holiness of God is not blemished by decreeing the eternal rejection of some men. Reprobation in its first notion is an act of preterition, or passing by. A man is not made wicked by the act of God, but it supposeth him wicked, and so it is nothing else but God's leaving a man in that guilt and filth wherein he beholds him. In its second notion it is an ordination, not to a crime, but to a punishment; Jude 4, an ordaining to condemnation. And though it be an eternal act of God, yet in order of nature it follows upon the foresight of the transgression of man, and supposeth the crime. God considers Adam's revolt, and views the whole mass of his corrupted posterity, and chooses some to reduce to himself by his grace, and leaves others to lie sinking in their ruins. Since all mankind fell by the fall of Adam, and have corruption conveyed to them successively by that root whereof they are branches; all men might justly be left wallowing in that miserable condition to which they were reduced by the apostasy of their common head, and God might have passed by the whole race of man, as well as he did the fallen angels, without any hope of redemption. He was no more bound to restore man than to restore devils, nor bound to repair the nature of any one son of Adam; and had he dealt with men as he dealt with the devils, they had had all of them as little just ground to complain of God; for all men deserved to be left to themselves, for all were 'concluded under sin.' But God calls out some to make monuments of his grace, which is an act of the sovereign mercy of that dominion whereby

'he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy,' Rom. ix. 18. Others he passes by, and leaves them remaining in that corruption of nature wherein they were born. If men have a power to dispose of their own goods, without any unrighteousness, why should not God dispose of his own grace, and bestow it upon whom he pleases, since it is a debt to none, but a free gift to any that enjoy it? God is not the cause of sin in this, because his operation about this is negative; it is not an action, but a denial of action, and therefore cannot be the cause of the evil actions of men.* God acts nothing, but withholds his power; he doth not enlighten their minds, nor incline their wills so powerfully as to expel their darkness, and root out those evil habits which possess them by nature. God could, if he would, savingly enlighten the minds of all men in the world, and quicken their hearts with a new life by an invincible grace, but in not doing it there is no positive act of God, but a cessation of action. We may with as much reason say, that God is the cause of all the sinful actions that are committed by the corporation of devils since their first rebellion, because he leaves them to themselves, and bestows not a new grace upon them; as say God is the cause of the sins of those that he overlooks and leaves in that state of guilt wherein he found them. God did not pass by any without the consideration of sin, so that this act of God is not repugnant to his holiness, but conformable to his justice.

Prop. 4. The holiness of God is not blemished by his secret will to suffer sin to enter into the world. God never willed sin by his preceptive will. It was never founded upon, or produced by any word of his, as the creation was. He never said, Let there be sin under the heaven, as he said, Let there be water under the heaven. Nor doth he will it by infusing any habit of it, or stirring up inclinations to it; no, 'God tempts no man,' James i. 13. Nor doth he will it by his approving will; it is detestable to him, nor ever can be otherwise. He cannot approve it either before commission or after.

1. The will of God is in some sort concurrent with sin. He doth not properly will it, but he wills not to hinder it, to which by his omnipotence he could put a bar. If he did positively will it, it might be wrought by himself, and so could not be evil. If he did in no sort will it, it would not be committed by his creature. Sin entered into the world, either God willing the permission of it, or not willing the permission of it. The latter cannot be said; for then the creature is more powerful than God, and can do that which God will not permit. God can, if he be pleased, banish all sin in a moment out of the world; he could have prevented the revolt of angels, and the fall of man, they did not sin whether he would or no; he might by his grace have stepped in the first moment, and made a special impression upon them of the happiness they already possessed, and the misery they would incur by any wicked attempt. He could as well have prevented the sin of the fallen angels, and confirmed them in grace, as of those that continued in their happy state; he might have appeared to man, informed him of the issue of his design, and made secret impressions upon his heart, since he was acquainted with every avenue to his will. God could have kept all sin out of the world, as well as all creatures from breathing in it; he was as well able to bar sin for ever out of the world as to let creatures lie in the womb of nothing, wherein they were first wrapped. To say God doth will sin as he doth other things, is to deny his holiness; to say it entered without anything of his will, is to deny his omnipotence. If he did necessitate Adam to fall, what shall we think of his purity? If

* Amyrald, *Defens. de Calv.*, p. 145.

Adam did fall without any concern of God's will in it, what shall we say of his sovereignty? The one taints his holiness, and the other clips his power. If it came without anything of his will in it, and he did not foresee it, where is his omniscience? If it entered whether he would or no, where is his omnipotence? Rom. ix. 19, 'Who hath resisted his will?' There cannot be a lustful act in Abimelech, if God will withhold his power: Gen. xx. 6, 'I withheld thee;' nor a cursing word in Balaam's mouth, unless God give power to speak it: Num. xxii. 38, 'Have I now any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that shall I speak.' As no action could be sinful if God had not forbidden it, so no sin could be committed if God did not will to give way to it.

2. God doth not will sin directly, and by an efficacious will. He doth not directly will it, because he hath prohibited it by his law, which is a discovery of his will. So that if he should directly will sin, and directly prohibit it, he would will good and evil in the same manner, and there would be contradictions in God's will. To will sin absolutely is to work it: Ps. cxv. 3, 'God hath done whatsoever he pleased.' God cannot absolutely will it, because he cannot work it. God wills good by a positive decree, because he hath decreed to effect it.* He wills evil by a privative decree, because he hath decreed not to give that grace which would certainly prevent it. God doth not will sin simply, for that were to approve it, but he wills it† in order to that good his wisdom will bring forth from it. He wills not sin for itself, but for the event. To will sin as sin, or as purely evil, is not in the capacity of a creature, neither of man nor devil. The will of a rational creature cannot will anything but under the appearance of good, of some good in the sin itself, or some good in the issue of it. Much more is this from God, who being infinitely good, cannot will evil as evil, and being infinitely knowing, cannot will that for good which is evil.‡ Infinite wisdom can be under no error or mistake. To will sin as sin would be an unanswerable blemish on God, but to will to suffer it in order to good is the glory of his wisdom. It could never have peeped up its head unless there had been some decree of God concerning it. And there had been no decree of God concerning it, had he not intended to bring good and glory out of it. If God did directly will the discovery of his grace and mercy to the world, he did in some sort will sin, as that without which there could not have been any appearance of mercy in the world; for an innocent creature is not the object of mercy, but a miserable creature, and no rational creature but must be sinful before it be miserable.

3. God wills the permission of sin. He doth not positively will sin, but he positively wills to permit it. And though he doth not approve of sin, yet he approves of that act of his will whereby he permits it. For since that sin could not enter into the world without some concern of God's will about it, that act of his will that gave way to it could not be displeasing to him. God could never be displeased with his own act: 'He is not a man that he should repent,' 1 Sam. xv. 29. What God cannot repent of, he cannot but approve of; it is contrary to the blessedness of God to disapprove of, and be displeased with, any act of his own will. If he hated any act of his own will, he would hate himself, he would be under a torture; every one that hates his own acts is under some disturbance and torment for them. That which is permitted by him is in itself, and in regard of the evil of it, hateful to him; but as the prospect of that good which he aims at in the permission of it is pleasing to him, so that act of his will whereby

* Rispolis.

† Bradward., lib. i. cap. xxxiv., God wills it, *secundum quid*.

‡ Aquin. Cont. Gent. l. i. p. 95.

he permits it is ushered in by an approving act of his understanding. Either God approved of the permission or not; if he did not approve his own act of permission, he could not have decreed an act of permission. It is unconceivable that God should decree such an act which he detested, and positively will that which he hated. Though God hated sin, as being against his holiness, yet he did not hate the permission of sin, as being subservient by the immensity of his wisdom to his own glory. He could never be displeased with that which was the result of his eternal counsel, as this decree of permitting sin was, as well as any other decree resolved upon in his own breast. For as God acts nothing in time, but what he decreed from eternity, so he permits nothing in time, but what he decreed from eternity to permit. To speak properly, therefore, God doth not will sin, but he wills the permission of it, and this will to permit is active and positive in God.

4. This act of permission is not a mere and naked permission, but such an one as is attended with a certainty of the event. The decrees of God to make use of the sin of man for the glory of his grace, in the mission and passion of his Son, hung upon this entrance of sin; would it consist with the wisdom of God to decree such great and stupendous things, the event whereof should depend upon an uncertain foundation, which he might be mistaken in? God would have sat in council from eternity to no purpose, if he had only permitted those things to be done, without any knowledge of the event of this permission; God would not have made such provision for redemption to no purpose, or an uncertain purpose, which would have been if man had not fallen, or if it had been an uncertainty with God whether he would fall or no. Though the will of God about sin was permissive, yet the will of God about that glory he would promote by the defect of the creature was positive, and therefore, he would not suffer so many positive acts of his will to hang upon an uncertain event, and therefore he did wisely and righteously order all things to the accomplishment of his great and gracious purposes.

5. This act of permission doth not taint the holiness of God. That there is such an act as permission is clear in Scripture: Acts xiv. 16, 'Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways;' but that it doth not blemish the holiness of God will appear,

(1.) From the nature of this permission.

[1.] It is not a moral permission, a giving liberty of toleration by any law to commit sin with impunity, when what one law did forbid another law doth leave indifferent to be done or not, as a man sees good in himself; as when there is a law made among men, that no man shall go out of a city or country without license, to go without license is a crime by the law; but when that law is repealed by another, that gives liberty for men to go and come at their pleasure, it doth not make their going or coming necessary, but leaves those which were before bound, to do as they see good in themselves. Such a permission makes a fact lawful, though not necessary; a man is not obliged to do it, but he is left to his own discretion to do as he pleases, without being chargeable with a crime for doing it. Such a permission there was granted by God to Adam of eating of the fruits of the garden, to choose any of them for food, except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It was a precept to him not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but the other was a permission, whereby it was lawful for him to feed upon any other that was most agreeable to his appetite. But there is not such a permission in the case of sin; this had been an indulgence of it which had freed man from any crime, and consequently from

punishment, because by such a permission by law he would have had authority to sin if he pleased. God did not remove the law which he had before placed as a bar against evil, nor ceased that moral impediment of his threatening; such a permission as this, to make sin lawful or indifferent, had been a blot upon God's holiness.

[2.] But this permission of God in the case of sin, is no more than the not hindering a sinful action which he could have prevented. It is not so much an action of God, as a suspension of his influence, which might have hindered an evil act, and a forbearing to restrain the faculties of man from sin; it is properly the not exerting that efficacy which might change the counsels that are taken, and prevent the action intended; as when one man sees another ready to fall, and can preserve him from falling by reaching out his hand, he permits him to fall, that is, he hinders him not from falling: so God describes his act about Abimelech, Gen. xx. 6, 'I withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.' If Abimelech had sinned, he had sinned by God's permission, that is, by God's not hindering or not restraining him, by making any impressions upon him; so that permission is only a withholding that help and grace, which, if bestowed, would have been an effectual remedy to prevent a crime; and it is rather a suspension or cessation, than properly a permission; and sin may be said to be committed *not without* God's permission, rather than *by* his permission.

Thus in the fall of man, God did not hold the reins strict upon Satan to restrain him from laying the bait, nor restrain Adam from swallowing the bait; he kept to himself that efficacious grace which he might have darted out upon man to prevent his fall. God left Satan to his malice of tempting, and Adam to his liberty of resisting and his own strength, to use that sufficient grace he had furnished him with, whereby he might have resisted and overcome the temptation. As he did not drive man to it, so he did not secretly restrain him from it. So in the Jews' crucifying our Saviour; God did not imprint upon their minds, by his Spirit, a consideration of the greatness of the crime, and the horror of his justice due to it, and being without those impediments, they run furiously of their own accord to the commission of that evil; as when a man lets a wolf or dog out upon his prey, he takes off the chain which held them, and they presently act according to their natures.* In the fall of angels and men, God's act was a leaving them to their own strength. In sins after the fall, it is God's giving them up to their own corruption. The first is a pure suspension of grace, the other hath the nature of a punishment: Ps. lxxxi. 1, 'So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust.' The first object of this permissive will of God was to leave angels and men to their own liberty and the use of their free will, which was natural to them,† not adding that supernatural grace which was necessary, not that they should not at all sin, but that they should infallibly not sin; they had a strength sufficient to avoid sin, but not sufficient infallibly to avoid sin, a grace sufficient to preserve them, but not sufficient to confirm them.

[3.] Now this permission is not the cause of sin, nor doth blemish the holiness of God; it doth not intrench upon the freedom of men, but supporteth it, establisheth it, and leaves man to it. God acted nothing, but only ceased to act, and therefore could not be the efficient cause of man's sin. As God is not the author of good but by willing and effecting it, so he is not the author of evil but by willing and effecting it. But he doth not positively will evil, nor effect it by any efficacy of his own. Permission is no action, nor the cause of that action which is permitted, but the will of that person who is permitted to do such an action is the cause.‡ God can

* Lawson, p. 64.

† Suarez, vol. iv. p. 414.

‡ Suarez, de Legib. p. 43.

no more be said to be the cause of sin, by suffering a creature to act as it will, than he can be said to be the cause of the not being of any creature by denying it being, and letting it remain nothing ; it is not from God that it is nothing, it is nothing in itself. Though God be said to be the cause of creation, yet he is never by any said to be the cause of that nothing which was before creation. This permission of God is not the cause of sin, but the cause of not hindering sin. Man and angels had a physical power of sinning from God, as they were created with free will and supported in their natural strength, but the moral power to sin was not from God ; he counselled them not to it, laid no obligation upon them to use their natural power for such an end ; he only left them to their freedom, and not hindered them in their acting what he was resolved to permit.

(2.) The holiness of God is not tainted by this, because he was under no obligation to hinder their commission of sin. Ceasing to act, whereby to prevent a crime for mischief, brings not a person permitting it under guilt, unless where he is under an obligation to prevent it ; but God, in regard of his absolute dominion, cannot be charged with any such obligation. One man that doth not hinder the murder of another when it is in his power, is guilty of the murder in part ; but it is to be considered that he is under a tie by nature, as being of the same kind, and being the other's brother by a communion of blood, also under an obligation of the law of charity, enacted by the common sovereign of the world ; but what tie was there upon God, since the infinite transcendency of his nature and his sovereign dominion frees him from any such obligation ? Job. ix. 12, 'If he takes away, who shall say, What dost thou ?' God might have prevented the fall of men and angels, he might have confirmed them all in a state of perpetual innocency, but where is the obligation ? He had made the creature a debtor to himself, but he owed nothing to the creature. Before God can be charged with any guilt in this case, it must be proved, not only that he could, but that he was bound to hinder it. No person can be justly charged with another's fault merely for not preventing it, unless he be bound to prevent it ; else not only the first sin of angels and man would be imputed to God as the author, but all the sins of men. He could not be obliged by any law, because he had no superior to impose any law upon him, and it will be hard to prove that he was obliged from his own nature to prevent the entrance of sin, which he would use as an occasion to declare his own holiness, so transcendent a perfection of his nature, more than ever it could have been manifested by a total exclusion of it, viz., in the death of Christ. He is no more bound in his own nature to preserve, by supernatural grace, his creatures from falling after he had framed them with sufficient strength to stand, than he was obliged in his own nature to bring his creature into being, when it was nothing. He is not bound to create a rational creature, much less bound to create him with supernatural gifts ; though, since God would make a rational creature, he could not but make him with a natural ; uprightness and rectitude.

God did as much for angels and men as became a wise governor. He had published his law, backed it with severe penalties, and the creature wanted not a natural strength to observe and obey it. Had not man a power to obey all the precepts of the law as well as one ? How was God bound to give him more grace, since what he had already was enough to shield him, and keep up his resistance against all the power of hell ! It had been enough to have pointed his will against the temptation, and he had kept off the force of it. Was there any promise passed to Adam of any further grace, which he could plead as a tie upon God ? No

such voluntary limit upon God's supreme dominion appears upon record. Was anything due to man which he had not? anything promised him which was not performed? What action of debt, then, can the creature bring against God? Indeed, when man began to neglect the light of his own reason, and became inconsiderate of the precept, God might have enlightened his understanding by a special flash, a supernatural beam, and imprinted upon him a particular consideration of the necessity of his obedience, the misery he was approaching to by his sin, the folly of any such apprehension of an equality in knowledge; he might have convinced him of the falsity of the serpent's arguments, and uncased to him the venom that lay under those baits. But how doth it appear that God was bound to those additional acts, when he had already lighted up in him a spirit which was 'the candle of the Lord,' Prov. xx. 27, whereby he was able to discern all, if he had attended to it. It was enough that God did not necessitate man to sin, did not counsel him to it, that he had given him sufficient warning in the threatening, and sufficient strength in his faculties, to fortify him against temptation. He gave him what was due to him as a creature of his own framing, he withdrew no help from him that was due to him as a creature, and what was not due he was not bound to impart. Man did not beg preserving grace of God, and God was not bound to offer it when he was not petitioned for it especially; yet if he had begged it, God having before furnished him sufficiently, might, by the right of his sovereign dominion, have denied it without any impeachment of his holiness and righteousness. Though he would not in such a case have dealt so bountifully with his creature as he might have done, yet he could not have been impleaded as dealing unrighteously with his creature. The single word that God had already uttered when he gave him his precept, was enough to oppose against all the devil's wiles, which tended to invalidate that word. The understanding of man could not imagine that the word of God was vainly spoken; and the very suggestion of the devil, as if the Creator should envy his creature, would have appeared ridiculous if he had attended to the voice of his own reason. God had done enough for him, and was obliged to do no more, and dealt not unrighteously in leaving him to act according to the principles of his nature.

To conclude; If God's permission of sin were enough to charge it upon God, or if God had been obliged to give Adam supernatural grace, Adam, that had so capacious a brain, could not be without that plea in his mouth, Lord, thou mightest have prevented it; the commission of it by me could not have been without thy permission of it; or, Thou hast been wanting to me, as the author of my nature. No such plea is brought by Adam into the court, when God tried and cast him; no such pleas can have any strength in them. Adam had reason enough to know that there was sufficient reason to overrule such a plea.

Since the permission of sin casts no dirt upon the holiness of God, as I think hath been cleared, we may under this head consider two things more.

1. That God's permission of sin is not so much as his restraint or limitation of it. Since the entrance of the first sin into the world by Adam, God is more a hinderer than a permitter of it. If he hath permitted that which he could have prevented, he prevents a world more, that he might, if he pleased, permit. The hedges about sin are larger than the outlets; they are but a few streams that glide about the world, in comparison of that mighty torrent he dams up both in men and devils. He that understands what a lake of Sodom is in every man's nature, since the universal infection of human nature, as the apostle describes it, Rom. iii. 9, 10, &c., must acknow-

ledge, that if God should cast the reins upon the necks of sinful men, they would run into thousands of abominable crimes more than they do. The impression of all natural laws would be razed out, the world would be a public stew, and a more bloody slaughter-house; human society would sink into a chaos; no star-light of commendable morality would be seen in it; the world would be no longer an earth, but a hell, and have lain deeper in wickedness than it doth. If God did not limit sin, as he doth the sea, and put bars to the waves of the heart, as well as those of the waters, and say of them, 'Hitherto you shall go, and no further,' man hath such a furious ocean in him, as would overflow the banks; and where it makes a breach in one place, it would in a thousand, if God should suffer it to act according to its impetuous current.

As the devil hath lust enough to destroy all mankind, if God did not bridle him; deal with every man as he did with Job, ruin their comforts, and deform their bodies with scabs; infect religion with a thousand more errors; fling disorders into commonwealths, and make them as a fiery furnace, full of nothing but flame: if he were not chained by that powerful arm, that might let him loose to fulfil his malicious fury, what rapines, murders, thefts, would be committed, if he did not stint him! Abimelech would not only lust after Sarah, but deflower her; Laban not only pursue Jacob, but rifle him; Saul not only hate David, but murder him; David not only threaten Nabal, but root him up, and his family, did not God girdle in the wrath of man, Ps. lxxvi. 10 (as the word *restrain* signifies). A greater remainder of wrath is pent in, than flames out, which yet swells for an outlet. God may be concluded more holy in preventing men's sins, than the author of sin in permitting some; since, were it not for his restraints, by the pull-back of conscience, and infused motions and outward impediments, the world would swarm more with this cursed brood.

2. His permission of sin is in order to his own glory and a greater good. It is no reflection upon the divine goodness to leave man to his own conduct, whereby such a deformity as sin sets foot in the world; since he makes his wisdom illustrious in bringing good out of evil, and a good greater than that evil he suffered to spring up.* God did not permit sin, as sin, or permit it barely for itself. As sin is not lovely in its own nature, so neither is the permission of sin intrinsically good or amiable for itself, but for those ends aimed at in the permission of it. God permitted sin, but approved not of the object of that permission, sin; because that, considered in its own nature, is solely evil: nor can we think that God could approve of the act of permission, considered only in itself as an act, but as it respected that event which his wisdom would order by it. We cannot suppose that God should permit sin, but for some great and glorious end; for it is the manifestation of his own glorious perfections he intends in all the acts of his will: Prov. xvi. 4, 'The Lord hath made all things for himself;' פֶּעַל hath wrought all things, which is not only his act of creation, but ordination; for himself, that is, for the discovery of the excellency of his nature, and the communication of himself to his creature. Sin, indeed, in its own nature, hath no tendency to a good end; the womb of it teems with nothing but monsters; it is a spurn at God's sovereignty, and a slight of his goodness. It both deforms and torments the person that acts it; it is black and abominable, and hath not a mite of goodness in the nature of it. If it ends in any good, it is only from that infinite transcendency of skill that can bring good out of evil, as well as light out of darkness.

Therefore God did not permit it as sin, but as it was an occasion for the

* *Majus bonum*, saith Bradward.

manifestation of his own glory. Though the goodness of God would have appeared in the preservation of the world, as well as it did in the creation of it, yet his mercy could not have appeared without the entrance of sin, because the object of mercy is a miserable creature ; but man could not be miserable as long as he remained innocent. The reign of sin opened a door for the reign and triumph of grace : Rom. v. 21, ' As sin hath reigned unto death, so might grace reign through righteousness to eternal life.' Without it, the bowels of mercy had never sounded, and the ravishing music of divine grace could never have been heard by the creature. Mercy, which renders God so amiable, could never else have beamed out to the world. Angels and men upon this occasion beheld the stirrings of divine grace, and the tenderness of divine nature, and the glory of the divine persons in their several functions about the redemption of man, which had else been a spring shut up and a fountain sealed ; the song of *Glory to God, and good will to men*, in a way of redemption, had never been sung by them. It appears in his dealings with Adam, that he permitted his fall, not only to shew his justice in punishing, but principally his mercy in rescuing ; since he proclaims to him first the promise of a Redeemer to bruise the serpent's head, before he settled the punishment he should smart under in the world, Gen. iii. 15-17. And what fairer prospect could the creature have of the holiness of God, and his hatred of sin, than in the edge of that sword of justice which punished it in the sinner, but glittered more in the punishment of a surety so near allied to him ? Had not man been criminal, he could not have been punishable, nor any been punishable for him ; and the pulse of divine holiness could not have beaten so quick, and been so visible, without an exercise of his vindictive justice. He left man's mutable nature to fall under unrighteousness, that thereby he might commend the righteousness of his own nature, Rom. iii. 7. Adam's sin in its nature tended to the ruin of the world, and God takes an occasion from it for the glory of his grace in the redemption of the world. He brings forth thereby a new scene of wonders from heaven, and a surprising knowledge on earth : as the sun breaks out more strongly after a night of darkness and tempest. As God in creation framed a chaos by his power, to manifest his wisdom in bringing order out of disorder, light out of darkness, beauty out of confusion and deformity, when he was able by a word to have made all creatures to stand up in their beauty, without the precedency of a chaos : so God permitted a moral chaos, to manifest a greater wisdom in the repairing a broken image, and restoring a deplorable creature, and bringing out those perfections of his nature, which had else been wrapt up in a perpetual silence in his bosom.* It was therefore very congruous to the holiness of God, to permit that which he could make subservient for his own glory, and particularly for the manifestation of this attribute of holiness, which seems to be in opposition to such a permission.

Prop. 5. The holiness of God is not blemished by his concurrence with the creature in the material part of a sinful act. Some, to free God from having any hand in sin, deny his concurrence to the actions of the creature ; because, if he concurs to a sinful action, he concurs to the sin also : not understanding how there can be a distinction between the act and the sinfulness or viciousness of it, and how God can concur to a natural action, without being stained by that moral evil which cleaves to it.

For the understanding of this, observe,

1. There is a concurrence of God to all the acts of the creature : Acts xvii. 28, ' In him we live, and move, and have our being.' We depend upon

* But of the wisdom of God in the permitting sin in order to redemption, I have handled in the attribute of Wisdom.

God in our acting as well as in our being. There is as much an efficacy of God in our motion, as in our production; as none have life without his power in producing it, so none have any operation without his providence concurring with it. *In him*, or *by him*, that is, by his virtue preserving and governing our motions, as well by his power bringing us into being. Hence man is compared to an axe, Isa. x. 15, an instrument that hath no action, without the co-operation of a superior agent handling it: and the actions of the second causes are ascribed to God; the grass, that is the product of the sun, rain, and earth, he is said to make to grow upon the mountains, Ps. cxlvii. 8, and the skin and flesh, which is by natural generation, he is said to clothe us with, Job. x. 5, in regard of his co-working with second causes, according to their natures. As nothing can exist, so nothing can operate without him; let his concurrence be removed, and the being and action of the creature cease; remove the sun from the horizon, or a candle from a room, and the light which floweth from either of them ceaseth. Without God's preserving and concurring power, the course of nature would sink, and the creation be in vain. All created things depend upon God as agents, as well as beings, and are subordinate to him in a way of action, as well as in a way of existing.† If God suspend his influence from their action, they would cease to act (as the fire did from burning the three children), as well as if God suspend his influence from their being, they would cease to be. God supports the nature whereby actions are wrought, the mind where actions are consulted, and the will where actions are determined, and the motive power whereby actions are produced. The mind could not contrive, nor the hand act a wickedness, if God did not support the power of the one in designing, and the strength of the other in executing a wicked intention. Every faculty in its being, and every faculty in its motion, hath a dependence upon the influence of God. To make the creature independent upon God in anything which speaks perfection, as action considered as action is, is to make a creature a sovereign being. Indeed, we cannot imagine the concurrence of God to the good actions of men since the fall, without granting a concurrence of God to evil actions; because there is no action so purely good, but hath a mixture of evil in it, though it takes its denomination of good from the better part: Eccles. vii. 20, 'There is no man that doeth good and sins not.'

2. Though the natural virtue of doing a sinful action be from God, and supported by him, yet this doth not blemish the holiness of God; while God concurs with them in the act, he instils no evil into men.

(1.) No act in regard of the substance of it is evil. Most of the actions of our faculties, as they are actions, might have been in the state of innocence. Eating is an act Adam would have used if he had stood firm, but not eating to excess. Worship was an act that should have been performed to God in innocence, but not hypocritically. Every action is good by a physical goodness, as it is an act of the mind or hand, which have a natural goodness by creation, but every action is not morally good. The physical goodness of the action depends on God, the moral evil on the creature.† There is no action, as a corporeal action, is prohibited by the law of God, but as it springs from an evil disposition, and is tainted by a venomous temper of mind. There is no action so bad, as attended with such objects and circumstances, but if the objects and circumstances were changed might be a brave and commendable action. So that the moral goodness or badness of an act is not to be esteemed from the substance of the act, which hath always a physical goodness, but from the objects, circumstances, and constitution of the mind in the doing of it. Worship is an act good in itself,

* Suarez, Metaph., part i. p. 552.

† Amyrald. de Libero arbit., p. 98, 99.

but the worship of an image is bad in regard of the object. Were that act of worship directed to God that is paid to a statue, and offered up to him with a sincere frame of mind, it would be morally good. The act in regard of the substance is the same in both, and considered as separated from the object to which the worship is directed, hath the same real goodness in regard of its substance; but when you consider this action in relation to the different objects, the one hath a moral goodness, and the other a moral evil. So in speaking. Speaking being a motion of the tongue in the forming of words, is an excellency belonging to a reasonable creature, an endowment bestowed, continued, and supported by God. Now if the same tongue forms words whereby it curseth God this minute, and forms words whereby it blesses and praises God the next minute, the faculty of speaking is the same, the motion of the tongue is the same in pronouncing the name of God either in a way of cursing or blessing: James iii. 9, 10, it is the 'same mouth that blesseth and curseth;' and the motion of it is naturally good in regard of the substance of the act in both; it is the use of an excellent power God hath given, and which God preserves in the use of it. But the estimation of the moral goodness or evil is not from the act itself, but from the disposition of the mind. Once more, killing as an act is good, nor is it unlawful as an act; for if so, God would never have commanded his people Israel to wage any war, and justice could not be done upon malefactors by the magistrate. A man were bound to sacrifice his life to the fury of an invader, rather than secure it by despatching that of an enemy. But killing an innocent, or killing without authority, or out of revenge, is bad. It is not the material part of the act, but the object, manner, and circumstance, that makes it good or evil. It is no blemish to God's holiness to concur to the substance of an action, without having any hand in the immorality of it, because whatsoever is real in the substance of the action might be done without evil. It is not evil as it is an act, as it is a motion of the tongue or hand, for then every motion of the tongue or hand would be evil.

(2.) Hence it follows that an act as an act is one thing, and the viciousness another. The action is the efficacy of the faculty,* extending itself to some outward object; but the sinfulness of an act consists in a privation of that comeliness and righteousness which ought to be in an action, in a want of conformity of the act with the law of God, either written in nature or revealed in the word. Now the sinfulness of an action is not the act itself, but is considered in it as it is related to the law, and is a deviation from it; and so it is something cleaving to the action, and therefore to be distinguished from the act itself, which is the subject of the sinfulness. When we say, such an action is sinful, the action is the subject, and the sinfulness of the action is that which adheres to it. The action is not the sinfulness, nor the sinfulness the action; they are distinguished, as the member and a disease in the member, the arm and the palsy in it. The arm is not the palsy, nor is the palsy the arm; but the palsy is a disease that cleaves to the arm. So sinfulness is a deformity that cleaves to an action.

The evil of an action is not the effect of an action, nor attends it as it is an action, but as it is an action so circumstantiated and conversant about this or that object; for the same action done by two several persons may be good in one and bad in the other. As when two judges are in joint commission for the trial of a malefactor, both upon the appearance of his guilt condemn him. This action in both, considered as an action, is good; for it is an adjudging a man to death whose crime deserves such a punishment. But this same act, which is but one joint act of both, may be morally good

* Amyrald., p. 321, 322.

in one judge and morally evil in the other: morally good in him that condemns him out of an unbiassed consideration of the demerit of his fact, obedience to the law, and conscience of the duty of his place; and morally evil in the other, who hath no respect to those considerations, but joins in the act of condemnation, principally moved by some private animosity against the prisoner, and desire of revenge for some injury he hath really received, or imagines that he hath received from him. The act in itself is the same materially in both; but in one it is an act of justice, and in the other an act of murder, as it respects the principles and motives of it in the two judges; take away the respect of private revenge, and the action in the ill judge had been as laudable as the action of the other. The substance of an act, and the sinfulness of an act, are separable and distinguishable; and God may concur with the substance of an act without concurring with the sinfulness of the act. As the good judge, that condemned the prisoner out of conscience, concurred with the evil judge who condemned the prisoner out of private revenge, not in the principle and motive of condemnation, but in the material part of condemnation, so God assists in that action of a man wherein sin is placed, but not in that which is the formal reason of sin, which is a privation of some perfection the action ought morally to have.

(3.) It will appear further in this, that hence it follows that the action and the viciousness of the action may have two distinct causes. That may be a cause of the one that is not the cause of the other, and hath no hand in the producing of it. God concurs to the act of the mind as it counsels, and to the external action upon that counsel, as he preserves the faculty, and gives strength to the mind to consult, and the other parts to execute; yet he is not in the least tainted with the viciousness of the action. Though the action be from God as a concurrent cause, yet the ill quality of the action is solely from the creature with whom God concurs. The sun and the earth concur to the production of all the plants that are formed in the womb of the one and midwived by the other. The sun distributes heat, and the earth communicates sap; it is the same heat dispersed by the one, and the same juice bestowed by the other. It hath not a sweet juice for one and a sour juice for another. This general influx of the sun and earth is not the immediate cause that one plant is poisonous and another wholesome, but the sap of the earth is turned by the nature and quality of each plant. If there were not such an influx of the sun and earth, no plant could exert that poison which is in its nature; but yet the sun and earth are not the cause of that poison which is in the nature of the plant. If God did not concur to the motions of men, there could be no sinful action, because there could be no action at all; yet this concurrence is not the cause of that venom that is in the action, which ariseth from the corrupt nature of the creature, no more than the sun and earth are the cause of the poison of the plant, which is purely the effect of its own nature upon that general influx of the sun and earth. The influence of God pierceth through all subjects, but the action of man done by that influence is vitiated according to the nature of its own corruption. As the sun equally shines through all the quartels in the window; if the glass be bright and clear, there is a pure splendour; if it be red or green, the splendour is from the sun, but the discolouring of that light upon the wall is from the quality of the glass.* But to be yet plainer, the soul is the image of God, and by the acts of the soul we may come to the knowledge of the acts of God; the soul gives motion to the body and every member of it, and no member could move without a concurrent virtue of the

* Zanch., tom. ii. lib. iii. cap. iv. qu. 4, p. 226.

soul. If a member be paralytic or gouty, whatsoever motion that gouty member hath is derived to it from the soul; but the goutiness of the member was not the act of the soul, but the fruit of ill humours in the body; the lameness of the member and the motion of the member have two distinct causes; the motion is from one cause, and the ill motion from another. As the member could not move irregularly without some ill humour or cause of that distemper, so it could not move at all without the activity of the soul. So though God concur to the act of understanding, willing, and execution, why can he not be as free from the irregularity in all those as the soul is free from the irregularity of the motion of the body, while it is the cause of the motion itself? There are two illustrations generally used in this case that are not unfit: the motion of the pen in writing is from the hand that holds it, but the blurs by the pen are from some fault in the pen itself; and the music of the instrument is from the hand that touches it, but the jarring from the faultiness of the strings; both are the causes of the motion of the pen and strings, but not the blurs or jarrings.

(4.) It is very congruous to the wisdom of God, to move his creatures according to their particular natures; but this motion makes him not the cause of sin. Had our innocent nature continued, God had moved us according to that innocent nature; but when the state was changed for a corrupt one, God must either forbear all concurrence, and so annihilate the world, or move us according to that nature he finds in us. If he had overthrown the world upon the entrance of sin, and created another upon the same terms, sin might have as soon defaced his second work, as it did the first; and then it would follow, that God would have been alway building and demolishing. It was not fit for God to cease from acting as a wise governor of his creature, because man did cease from his loyalty as a subject. Is it not more agreeable to God's wisdom as a governor, to concur with his creature according to his nature, than to deny his concurrence upon every evil determination of the creature! God concurred with Adam's mutable nature in his first act of sin; he concurred to the act, and left him to his mutability. If Adam had put out his hand to eat of any other unforbidden fruit, God would have supported his natural faculty then, and concurred with him in his motion.

When Adam would put out his hand to take the forbidden fruit, God concurred to that, natural action, but left him to the choice of the object, and to the use of his mutable nature; and when man became apostate, God concurs with him according to that condition wherein he found him, and cannot move him otherwise, unless he should alter that nature man had contracted. God moving the creature as he found him, is no cause of the ill motion of the creature; as when a wheel is broken the space of a foot, it cannot but move ill in that part till it be mended. He that moves it, uses the same motion (as it is his act) which he would have done had the wheel been sound; the motion is good in the mover, but bad in the subject. It is not the fault of him that moves it, but the fault of that wheel that is moved, whose breaches came by some other cause. A man doth not use to lay aside his watch for some irregularity, as long as it is capable of motion, but winds it up. Why should God cease from concurring with his creature in its vital operations and other actions of his will, because there was a flaw contracted in that nature, that came right and true out of his hand? And as he that winds up his disordered watch, is in the same manner the cause of its motion then, as he was when it was regular, yet by that act of his, he is not the cause of the false motion of it, but that is from the deficiency of some part of the watch itself. So though God concurs to that action of

the creature, whereby the wickedness of the heart is drawn out ; yet is not God therefore as unholy as the heart.

(5.) God hath one end in his concurrence, and man another in his action. So that there is a righteous, and often a gracious end in God, when there is a base and unworthy end in man. God concurs to the substance of the act ; man produceth the circumstance of the act, whereby it is evil. God orders both the action wherein he concurs, and the sinfulness over which he presides, as a governor, to his own ends. In Joseph's case, man was sinful, and God merciful ; his brethren acted envy, and God designed mercy, Gen. xlv. 4, 5. They would be rid of him as an eyesore, and God concurred with their action to make him their preserver : Gen. l. 20, 'Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good.' God concurred to Judas his action of betraying our Saviour ; he supported his nature while he contracted with the priests, and supported his members while he was their guide to apprehend him ; God's end was the manifestation of his choicest love to man, and Judas his end was the gratification of his own covetousness. The Assyrian did a divine work against Jerusalem, but not with a divine end, Isa. x. 5-7. He had a mind to enlarge his empire, enrich his coffers with the spoil, and gain the title of a conqueror ; he is desirous to invade his neighbours, and God employs him to punish his rebels ; but 'he means not so, nor doth his heart think so.' He intended not as God intended. The axe doth not think what the carpenter intends to do with it. But God used the rapine of an ambitious nature as an instrument of his justice. As the exposing malefactors to wild beasts was an ancient punishment, whereby the magistrate intended the execution of justice, and to that purpose used the natural fierceness of the beasts to an end different from what those ravaging creatures aimed at, God concurred with Satan in spoiling Job of his goods, and scarifying his body ; God gave Satan license to do it, and Job acknowledges it to be God's act, Job. i. 12, 21. But their ends were different ; God concurred with Satan for the clearing the integrity of his servant, when Satan aimed at nothing but the provoking him to curse his Creator. The physician applies leeches to suck the superfluous blood, but the leeches suck to glut themselves, without any regard to the intention of the physician, and the welfare of the patient. In the same act where men intend to hurt, God intends to correct ; so that his concurrence is in a holy manner, while men commit unrighteous actions. A judge commands the executioner to execute the sentence of death which he hath justly pronounced against a malefactor, and admonisheth him to do it out of love to justice ; the executioner hath the authority of the judge for his commission, and the protection of the judge for his security. The judge stands by to countenance and secure him in the doing of it ; but if the executioner hath not the same intention as the judge, viz., a love to justice in the performance of his office, but a private hatred to the offender, the judge, though he commanded the fact of the executioner, yet did not command this error of his in it ; and though he protects him in the fact, yet he owns not his corrupt disposition in him in the doing of what was enjoined him, as any act of his own.

To conclude this. Since the creature cannot act without God, cannot lift up a hand, or move his tongue, without God's preserving and upholding the faculty and preserving the power of action, and preserving every member of the body in its actual motion, and in every circumstance of its motion, we must necessarily suppose God to have such a way of concurrence as doth not intrench upon his holiness. We must not equal the creature to God, by denying its dependence on him ; nor must we imagine such a concurrence to the fulness of an act, as stains the divine purity, which is, I

think, sufficiently salved by distinguishing the matter of the act, from the evil adhering to it. For since all evil is founded in some good ; the evil is distinguishable from the good, and the deformity of the action from the action itself, which as it is a created act, hath a dependence on the will and influence of God ; and as it is a sinful act, is the product of the will of the creature.

Prop. 6. The holiness of God is not blemished by proposing objects to a man which he makes use of to sin. There is no object proposed to man, but is directed by the providence of God, which influenceth all motions in the world ; and there is no object proposed to man, but his active nature may, according to the goodness or badness of his disposition, make a good or an ill use of. That two men, one of a charitable, the other of a hard-hearted disposition, meet with an indigent and necessitous object, is from the providence of God ; yet this indigent person is relieved by the one, and neglected by the other. There could be no action in the world, but about some object ; there could be no object offered to us but by divine providence ; the active nature of man would be in vain, if there were not objects about which it might be exercised. Nothing could present itself to man as an object, either to excite his grace, or awaken his corruption, but by the conduct of the governor of the world. That David should walk upon the battlements of his palace, and Bathsheba be in the bath at the same time, was from the divine providence which orders all the affairs of the world, 2 Sam. xi. 2 ; and so some understand Jer. vi. 21, ' Thus saith the Lord, I will lay stumbling-blocks before his people, and the fathers and sons together shall fall upon them.' Since they have offered sacrifices without those due qualifications in their hearts, which were necessary to render them acceptable to me, I will lay in their way such objects, which their corruption will use ill, to their further sin and ruin : so Ps. cv. 25, ' He turned their heart to hate his people ;' that is, by the multiplying his people, he gave occasion to the Egyptians of hating them, instead of caressing them as they had formerly done.

But God's holiness is not blemished by this ; for,

1. This proposing or presenting of objects invades not the liberty of any man. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, set in the midst of the garden of Eden, had no violent influence on man to force him to eat of it ; his liberty to eat of it, or not, was reserved entire to himself ; no such charge can be brought against any object whatsoever. If a man meet accidentally at a table with meat that is grateful to his palate, but hurtful to the present temper of his body, doth the presenting this sort of food to him strip him of his liberty to decline it, as well as to feed of it ? Can the food have any internal influence upon his will, and lay the freedom of it asleep, whether he will or no ? Is there any charm in that more than in other sorts of diet ? No ; but it is the habit of love which he hath to that particular dish, the curiosity of his fancy, and the strength of his own appetite, whereby he is brought into a kind of slavery to that particular meat, and not anything in the food itself. When the word is proposed to two persons, it is embraced by the one, rejected by the other ; is it from the word itself, which is the object, that these two persons perform different acts ? The object is the same to both, but the manner of acting about the object is not the same. Is there any invasion of their liberty by it ? Is the one forced by the word to receive it, and the other forced by the word to reject it ? Two such contrary effects cannot proceed from one and the same cause ; outward things have only an objective influence, not an inward. If the mere proposal of things did suspend or strike down the liberty of man, no angels in heaven,

no man upon earth, no, not our Saviour himself, could do anything freely, but by force.* Objects that are ill used are of God's creation, and though they have allurements in them, yet they have no compulsive power over the will. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was pleasing to the sight; it had a quality to allure, there had not else needed a prohibition to bar the eating of it; but it could not have so much power to allure as the divine threatening to deter.

2. The objects are good in themselves, but the ill use of them is from man's corruption. Bathsheba was, by God's providence, presented to David's sight, but it was David's disposition moved him to so evil an act. What if God knew that he would use that object ill? yet he knew he had given him a power to refrain from any ill use of it. The objects are innocent, but our corruption poisons them. The same object hath been used by one to holy purposes and holy improvements, that hath been used by another to sinful ends; when a charitable object is presented to a good man and a cruel man, one relieves him, the other reviles him. The object was rather an occasion to draw out the charity of one, as well as the other; but the refusing to reach out a helping hand was not from the person in calamity, but the disposition of the refuser to whom he was presented. It is not from the nature of the object that men do good or evil, but from the disposition of the person; what is good in itself is made bad by our corruption. As the same meat which nourishes and strengthens a sound constitution cherisheth the disease of another that eats at the same table, not from any unwholesome quality in the food, but the vicious quality of the humours lodging in the stomach, which turns the diet into fuel for themselves, which in its own nature was apt to engender a wholesome juice. Some are perfected by the same things whereby others are ruined. Riches are used by some, not only for their own, but the advantage of others in the world; by others only for themselves, and scarcely so much as their necessities require. Is this the fault of the wealth, or the dispositions of the persons who are covetous instead of being generous? It is a calumny therefore upon God to charge him with the sin of man upon this account. The rain that drops from the clouds upon the plants is sweet in itself, but, when it moistens the root of any venomous plant, it is turned into the juice of the plant, and becomes venomous with it. The miracles that our Saviour wrought were applauded by some, and envied by the Pharisees; the sin arose not from the nature of the miracles, but the malice of their spirits. The miracles were fitter in their own nature to have induced them to an adoration of our Saviour, than to excite so vile a passion against one that had so many marks from heaven to dignify him, and proclaim him worthy of their respect. The person of Christ was an object proposed to the Jews; some worship him, others condemn and crucify him, and, according to their several vices and base ends, they use this object: Judas, to content his covetousness; the Pharisees, to glut their revenge; Pilate, for his ambition, to preserve himself in his government, and avoid the articles the people might charge him with of countenancing an enemy to Cæsar. God at that time put into their minds a rational and true proposition, which they apply to ill purposes.† Caiaphas said, that 'it was expedient for one man to die for the people,' which 'he spake not of himself,' John xi. 50, 51. God put it into his mind, but he might have applied it better than he did, and considered, though the maxim was commendable, whether it might justly be applied to Christ, or whether there was such a necessity that he must die, or the nation be destroyed by the Romans. The maxim was sound and holy, decreed by God; but what

* Amyrald. de libero arbit. p. 224.

† Amyrald. Irenic., p. 337.

an ill use did the high priest make of it, to put Christ to death as a seditious person, to save the nation from the Roman fury !

3. Since the natural corruption of men will use such objects ill, may not God, without tainting himself, present such objects to them in subserviency to his gracious decrees ? Whatsoever God should present to men in that state, they would make an ill use of ; hath not God then the sovereign prerogative to present what he pleases, and suppress others ? to offer that to them which may serve his holy purpose, and hide other things from them which are not so conducing to his gracious ends, which would be as much the occasions of exciting their sin as the others which he doth bring forth to their view ? The Jews, at the time of Christ, were of a turbulent and seditious humour ; they expected a Messiah, a temporal king, and would readily have embraced any occasion to have been up in arms to have delivered themselves from the Roman yoke ; to this purpose the people attempted once to make him king. And probably the expectation they had, that he had such a design to head them, might be one reason of their Hosannas, because without some such conceit it was not probable they should so soon change their note, and vote him to the cross in so short a time, after they had applauded him as if he had been upon a throne ; but their being defeated of strong expectations usually ended in a more ardent fury. This turbulent and seditious humour God directs in another channel, suppresseth all occurrences that might excite them to a rebellion against the Romans, which, if he had given way to, the crucifying Christ, which was God's design to bring about at that time, had not probably been effected, and the salvation of mankind been hindered, or stood at a stay for a time. God therefore orders such objects and occasions that might direct this seditious humour to another channel, which would else have run out in other actions, which had not been conducing to the great design he had then in the world. Is it not the right of God, and without any blemish to his holiness, to use those corruptions which he finds sown in the nature of his creature by the hand of Satan, and to propose such objects as may excite the exercise of them for his own service ? Sure God hath as much right to serve himself of the creature of his own framing, and what natures soever they are possessed with, and to present objects to that purpose, as a falconer hath to offer this or that bird to his hawk, to exercise his courage and excite his ravenousness, without being termed the author of that ravenousness in the creature. God planted not those corruptions in the Jews, but finds them in those persons over whom he hath an absolute sovereignty in the right of a Creator, and that of a judge for their sins, and by the right of that sovereignty may offer such objects and occasions, which, though innocent in themselves, he knows they will make use of to ill purposes, but which by the same decree that he resolves to present such occasions to them, he also resolves to make use of them for his own glory. It is not conceivable by us what way that death of Christ, which was necessary for the satisfaction of divine justice, could be brought about, without ordering the evil of some men's hearts by special occasions to effect his purpose ; we cannot suppose that Christ can be guilty of any crime that deserved death by the Jewish law ; had he been so a criminal, he could not have been a Redeemer.* A perfect innocence was necessary to the design of his coming. Had God himself put him to that death, without using instruments of wickedness in it, by some remarkable hand from heaven, the innocence of his nature had been for ever eclipsed, and the voluntariness of his sacrifice had been obscured. The strangeness of such a judgment would have made his innocence incredible ; he could not

* This I have spoken of before, but it is necessary now.

reasonably have been proposed as an object of faith. What, to believe in one that was struck dead by a hand from heaven! The propagation of the doctrine of redemption had wanted a foundation; and though God might have raised him again, the certainty of his death had been as questionable as his innocence in dying had he not been raised. But God orders everything so as to answer his own most wise and holy ends, and maintain his truth, and the fulfilling the predictions of the minutest concerns about them, and all this by presenting occasions innocent in themselves, which the corruptions of the Jews took hold of, and whereby God, unknown to them, brought about his own decrees. And may not this be conceived without any taint upon God's holiness; for when there are seeds of all sin in man's nature, why may not God hinder the sprouting up of this or that kind of seed, and leave liberty to the growth of the other, and shut up other ways of sinning, and restrain men from them, and let them loose to that temptation which he intends to serve himself of, hiding from them those objects which were not so serviceable to his purpose, wherein they would have sinned, and offer others which he knew their corruption would use ill, and were serviceable to his ends, since the depravation of their natures would necessarily hurry them to evil without restraining grace, as a scale will necessarily rise up, when the weight in it, which kept it down, is taken away?

Prop. 7. The holiness of God is not blemished by withdrawing his grace from a sinful creature, whereby he falls into more sin. That God withdraws his grace from men, and gives them up sometimes to the fury of their lusts, is as clear in Scripture as anything: Deut. xxix. 4, 'Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear,' &c. Judas was delivered to Satan after the sop, and put into his power for despising former admonitions. He often leaves the reins to the devil, that he may use what efficacy he can in those that have offended the majesty of God; he withholds further influences of grace, or withdraws what before he had granted them. Thus he withheld that grace from the sons of Eli, that might have made their father's pious admonitions effectual to them: 1 Sam. ii. 25, 'They hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.' He gave grace to Eli to reprove them, and withheld that grace from them which might have enabled them, against their natural corruption and obstinacy, to receive that reproof.

But the holiness of God is not blemished by this.

1. Because the act of God in this is only negative.* Thus God is said to harden men, not by positive hardening, or working anything in the creature, but by not working, not softening, leaving a man to the hardness of his own heart, whereby it is unavoidable, by the depravation of man's nature, and the fury of his passions, but that he should be further hardened, and 'increase unto more ungodliness,' as the expression is, 2 Tim. ii. 16. As a man is said to give another his life, when he doth not take it away when it lay at his mercy, so God is said to harden a man when he doth not mollify him when it was in his power, and inwardly quicken him with that grace whereby he might infallibly avoid any further provoking of him. God is said to harden men, when he removes not from them the incentives to sin, curbs not those principles which are ready to comply with those incentives, withdraws the common assistances of his grace, concurs not with counsels and admonitions to make them effectual, flasheth not in the convincing light which he darted upon them before. If hardness follows upon God's withholding his softening grace, it is not from any positive act of God, but from the natural hardness of man. If you put fire near to wax or resin, both

* Testard. de natur. et grat., Thes. 150, 151. Amyr. on divers texts, p. 311.

will melt; but when the fire is removed, they return to their natural quality of hardness and brittleness. The positive act of the fire is to melt and soften, and the softness of the rosin is to be ascribed to that, but the hardness is from the resin itself, wherein the fire hath no influence, but only a negative act by a removal of it; so when God hardens a man, he only leaves him to that stony heart which he derived from Adam, and brought with him into the world. All men's understandings being blinded, and their wills perverted in Adam, God's withdrawing his grace is but a leaving them to their natural pravity, which is the cause of their further sinning, and not God's removal of that special light he before afforded them, or restraint he held over them. As when God withdraws his preserving power from the creature, he is not the *efficient*, but *deficient*, cause of the creature's destruction; so in this case, God only ceaseth to bind and dam up that sin which else would break out.

2. The whole positive cause of this hardness is from man's corruption. God infuseth not any sin into his creatures, but forbears to infuse his grace and restrain their lusts, which upon the removal of his grace work impetuously. God only gives them up to that which he knows will work strongly in their hearts. And therefore the apostle wipes off from God any positive act in that uncleanness the heathens were given up to (Rom. i. 24, 'Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts;' and verse 26, God gave them up to 'vile affections,' but they were their own affections, none of God's inspiring), but adding, *through the lusts of their own hearts*. God's giving them up was the logical cause, or a cause by way of argument; their own lusts were the true and natural cause; their own they were before they were given up to them, and belonging to none as the author, but themselves after they were given up to them. The lust in the heart, and the temptation without, easily close and mix interests with one another; as the fire in a coal pit will with the fuel, if the streams derived into it for the quenching it be dammed up; the natural passions will run to a temptation, as the waters of a river tumble towards the sea. When a man that hath bridled in a high-mettled horse from running out, gives him the reins, or a huntsman takes off the string that held the dog, and lets him run after the hare, are they the immediate cause of the motion of the one or the other? No; but the mettle and strength of the horse, and the natural inclination of the hound, both which are left to their own motions to pursue their own natural instincts. Man doth 'as naturally tend to sin as a stone to the centre, or as a weighty thing inclines to a motion to the earth; it is from the propension of man's nature that he 'drinks up iniquity like water;' and God doth no more when he leaves a man to sin, by taking away the hedge which stopped him, but leave him to his natural inclination. As a man that breaks up a dam he hath placed, leaves the stream to run in their natural channel, or one that takes away a prop from a stone to let it fall, leaves it only to that nature which inclines it to a descent, both have their motion from their own nature, and man his sin from his own corruption.* The withdrawing the sunbeams is not the cause of darkness, but the shadiness of the earth; nor is the departure of the sun the cause of winter, but the coldness of the air and earth, which was tempered and beaten back into the bowels of the earth by the vigour of the sun, upon whose departure they return to their natural state. The sun only leaves the earth and air as it found them at the beginning of the spring, or the beginning of the day. If God do not give a man grace to melt him, yet he cannot be said to communicate to him that nature which hardens him, which man hath from him-

* Amyrald de Predest, p. 107.

self. As God was not the cause of the first sin of Adam, which was the root of all other, so he is not the cause of the following sins, which as branches spring from that root; man's free will was the cause of the first sin, and the corruption of his nature by it the cause of all succeeding sins. God doth not immediately harden any man, but doth propose those things from whence the natural vice of man takes an occasion to strengthen and nourish itself. Hence God is said to 'harden Pharaoh's heart,' Exod. vii. 13, by concurring with the magicians in turning their rods into serpents, which stiffened his heart against Moses, conceiving him by reason of that to have no more power than other men, and was an occasion of his further hardening; and Pharaoh is said to harden himself, Exod. viii. 32; that is, in regard of his own natural passion.

3. God is holy and righteous, because he doth not withdraw from man till man deserts him. To say that God withdrew that grace from Adam, which he had afforded him in creation, or anything that was due to him, till he had abused the gifts of God, and turned them to an end contrary to that of creation, would be a reflection upon the divine holiness. God was first deserted by man before man was deserted by God, and man doth first condemn and abuse the common grace of God, and those relics of natural light that 'enlighten every man that comes into the world, John i. 9, before God leaves him to the hurry of his own passions. Ephraim was first 'joined to idols,' before God pronounced the fatal sentence, 'Let him alone,' Hosea iv. 17. And the heathens first 'changed the glory of the incorruptible God,' Rom. i. 23, 24, before God withdrew his common grace from the corrupted creature, and they first 'serve the creature more than the Creator,' before the Creator gave them up to the slavish chains of their vile affections, ver. 25, 26. Israel first cast off God before God cast off them, but then 'he gave them up to their own heart's lusts, and they walked in their own counsels,' Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12. Since sin entered into the world by the fall of Adam, and the blood of all his posterity was tainted, man cannot do anything that is formally good; not for want of faculties, but for the want of a righteous habit in those faculties, especially in the will; yet God discovers himself to man in the works of his hands; he hath left in him footsteps of natural reason, he doth attend him with common motions of his Spirit, corrects him for his faults with gentle chastisements. He is near unto all in some kind of instructions; he puts many times providential bars in their way of sinning, but when they will rush into it 'as the horse into the battle,' when they will rebel against the light, God doth often leave them to their own course, sentence 'him that is filthy to be filthy still,' Rev. xxii. 11, which is a righteous act of God, as he is rector and governor of the world. Man's not receiving, or not improving what God gives, is the cause of God's not giving further, or taking away his own, which before he had bestowed. This is so far from being repugnant to the holiness and righteousness of God, that it is rather a commendable act of his holiness and righteousness, as the rector of the world, not to let those gifts continue in the hand of a man who abuses them contrary to his glory. Who will blame a father, that after all the good counsels he hath given his son to reclaim him, all the corrections he hath inflicted on him for his irregular practice, leaves him to his own courses, and withdraws those assistances which he scoffed at and turned the deaf ear unto? Or who will blame the physician for deserting the patient who rejects his counsel, will not follow his 'prescriptions, but dasheth his physic against the wall? No man will blame him, no man will say that he is the cause of the patient's death; but the true cause is the fury of the distemper, and the obstinacy of the diseased

person, to which the physician left him. And who can justly blame God in this case, who yet never denied supplies of grace to any that sincerely sought it at his hands? and what man is there that lies under a hardness, but first was guilty of very provoking sins? What unholiness is it to deprive men of those assistances because of their sin, and afterwards to direct those counsels and practices of theirs which he hath justly given them up unto, to serve the ends of his own glory in his own methods?

4. Which will appear further by considering, that God is not obliged to continue his grace to them. It was at his liberty whether he would give any renewing grace to Adam after his fall, or to any of his posterity; he was at his own liberty to withhold it or communicate it; but if he were under any obligation then, surely he must be under less now, since the multiplication of sin by his creatures; but if the obligation were none just after the fall, there is no pretence now to fasten any such obligation on God. That God had no obligation at first hath been spoken to before; he is less obliged to continue his grace after a repeated refusal, and a peremptory abuse, than he was bound to proffer it after the first apostasy. God cannot be charged with unholiness in withdrawing his grace after we have received it, unless we can make it appear that his grace was a thing due to us, as we are his creatures, and as he is the governor of the world. What prince looks upon himself as obliged to reside in any particular place of his kingdom? But suppose he be bound to inhabit in one particular city, yet after the city rebels against him, is he bound to continue his court there, spend his revenue among rebels, endanger his own honour and security, enlarge their charter, or maintain their ancient privileges? Is it not most just and righteous for him to withdraw himself, and leave them to their own tumultuousness and sedition, whereby they should eat the fruit of their own doings? If there be an obligation [on] God as a governor, it would rather lie on the side of justice, to leave man to the power of the devil, whom he courted, and the prevalency of those lusts he hath so often caressed, and wrap up in a cloud all his common illuminations, and leave him destitute of all common workings of his Spirit.

Prop. 8. God's holiness is not blemished by his commanding those things sometimes which seem to be against nature, or thwart some other of his precepts. As when God commanded Abraham with his own hand to sacrifice his son, Gen. xxii. 2, there was nothing of unrighteousness in it. God hath a sovereign dominion over the lives and beings of his creatures, whereby as he creates one day he might annihilate the next; and by the same right that he might demand the life of Isaac, as being his creature, he might demand the obedience of Abraham, in a ready return of that to him which he had so long enjoyed by his grant. It is true, killing is unjust when it is done without cause, and by private authority; but the authority of God surmounts all private and public authority whatsoever. Our lives are due to him when he calls for them, and they are more than once forfeit to him by reason of transgression. But howsoever the case is, God commanded him to do it for the trial of his grace, but suffered him not to do it in favour to his ready obedience; but had Isaac been actually slain and offered, how had it been unrighteous in God, who enacts laws for the regulation of his creature, but never intended them to the prejudice of the rights of his sovereignty? Another case is that of the Israelites borrowing jewels of the Egyptians by the order of God, Exod. xi. 2, 3, xii. 36. Is not God Lord of men's goods, as well as their lives? What have any they have not received, and that not as proprietors independent on God, but his stewards? and may not he demand a portion of his steward to bestow upon his favourite?

He that had power to dispose of the Egyptians' goods, had power to order the Israelites to ask them. Besides, God acted the part of a just judge in ordering them their wages for their service in this method, and making their taskmasters give them some recompence for their unjust oppression so many years; it was a command from God therefore, rather for the preservation of justice (the basis of all those laws which link human society), than any infringement of it. It was a material recompence in part, though not a formal one in the intention of the Egyptians; it was but in part a recompence; it must needs come short of the damage the poor captives had sustained by the tyranny of their masters, who had enslaved them contrary to the rules of hospitality, and could not make amends for the lives of the poor infants of Israel, whom they drowned in the river. He that might for the unjust oppression of his people have taken away all their lives, destroyed the whole nation, and put the Israelites into the possession of their lands, could without any unrighteousness dispose of part of their goods; and it was rather an act of clemency to leave them some part, who had doubly forfeited all. Again, the Egyptians were as ready to lend by God's influence, as the Israelites were to ask by God's order; and though it was a loan, God, as sovereign of the world, and Lord of the earth and the fulness thereof, alienated the property by assuming them to the use of the tabernacle, to which service most, if not all, of them were afterwards dedicated. God, who is lawgiver, hath power to dispense with his own law, and make use of his own goods, and dispose of them as he pleases. It is no unholiness in God to dispose of that which he hath a right unto. Indeed, God cannot command that which is in its own nature intrinsically evil, as to command a rational creature not to love him, to call God to witness to a lie; these are intrinsically evil; but for the disposing of the lives and goods of his creatures, which they have from him in right, and not in absolute propriety, is not evil in him, because there is no repugnancy in his own nature to such acts, nor is it anything inconsistent with the natural duty of a creature, and in such cases he may use what instruments he please.

IV. The point was, that holiness is a glorious perfection of the nature of God. We have shewed the nature of this holiness in God, what it is, and we have demonstrated it, and proved that God is holy, and must needs be so, and also the purity of his nature in all his acts about sin. Let us now improve it by way of use.

Use 1. Is holiness a transcendent perfection belonging to the nature of God? The first use shall be of instruction and information.

1. How great and how frequent is the contempt of this eminent perfection in the Deity! Since the fall, this attribute, which renders God most amiable in himself, renders him most hateful to his apostate creature. It is impossible that he that loves iniquity can affect that which is irreconcilably contrary to the iniquity he loves. Nothing so contrary to the sinfulness of man as the holiness of God, and nothing is thought of by the sinner with so much detestation. How do men account that, which is the most glorious perfection of the divinity, unworthy to be regarded as an accomplishment of their own souls! And when they are pressed to an imitation of it, and a detestation of what is contrary to it, have the same sentiments in their heart which the devil had in his language to Christ, 'Why art thou come to torment us before our time?' What an enmity the world naturally hath to this perfection, I think is visible in the practice of the heathen, who among all their heroes which they deified, elevated none to that dignity among them for this or that moral virtue that came nearest to it, but for their valour, or

some usefulness in the concerns of this life. Æsculapius was deified for his skill in the cure of diseases, Bacchus for the use of the grape, Vulcan for his operations by fire, Hercules for his destroying of tyrants and monsters, but none for their mere virtue; as if anything of purity were unworthy their consideration in the frame of a deity, when it is the glory of all other perfections; so essential it is, that when men reject the imitation of this, God regards it as a total rejection of himself, though they own all the other attributes of his nature: Ps. lxxxi. 11, 'Israel would none of me.' Why? Because 'they walked not in his ways,' ver. 13, those ways wherein the purity of the divine nature was most conspicuous. They would own him in his power, when they stood in need of a deliverance; they would own him in his mercy, when they were plunged in distress, but they would not imitate him in his holiness. This being the lustre of the divine nature, the contempt of it is an obscuring all his other perfections, and a dashing a blot upon his whole scutcheon. To own all the rest, and deny him this, is to frame him as an unbeautiful monster, a deformed power. Indeed, all sin is against this attribute, all sin aims in general at the being of God, but in particular at the holiness of his being. All sin is a violence to this perfection. There is not an iniquity in the world, but directs its venomous sting against the divine purity. Some sins are directed against his omniscience, as secret wickedness; some against his providence, as distrust; some against his mercy, as unbelief; some against his wisdom, as neglecting the means instituted by him, censuring his ways and actings; some against his power, as trusting in means more than in God, and the immoderate fear of men more than of God; some against his truth, as distrusting his promise, or not fearing his threatening; but all agree together in their enmity against this, which is the peculiar glory of the Deity. Every one of them is a receding from the divine image, and the blackness of every one is the deeper, by how much the distance of it from the holiness of God is the greater. This contrariety to the holiness of God is the cause of all the absolute atheism (if there be any such) in the world. What was the reason 'the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,' but because the fool is 'corrupt, and hath done abominable works,' Ps. xiv. 1. If they believe the being of a God, their own reason will enforce them to imagine him holy; therefore, rather than fancy a holy God, they would fain fancy none at all.

In particular,

(1.) The holiness of God is injured, in unworthy representations of God, and imaginations of him in our own minds. The heathen fell under his guilt, and ascribed to their idols those vices which their own sensuality inclined them to, unworthy of a man, much more unworthy of a god, that they might find a protection of their crimes in the practice of their idols. But is this only the notion of the heathens? May there not be many among us whose love to their lusts, and desires of sinning without control, move them to slander God in their thoughts rather than reform their lives, and are ready to frame, by the power of their imaginative faculty, a God not only winking, but smiling at their impurities? I am sure God charges the impieties of men upon this score, in that psalm (Ps. l. 21), which seems to be a representation of the day of judgment, as some gather from verse 6. When God sums up all together, 'These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself;' not a detester but approver of thy crimes. And the psalmist seems to express God's loathing of sin in such a manner, as intimates it to be contrary to the ideas and resemblances men make of him in their minds: Ps. v. 4, 'For thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness.' As we say in vindi-

cation of a man, he is not such a man as you imagine him to be ; thou art not such a God as the world commonly imagines thee to be, a God taking pleasure in iniquity. It is too common for men to fancy God not as he is, but as they would have him ; strip him of his excellency for their own security. As God made man after his image, man would dress God after his own modes, as may best suit the content of his lusts, and encourage him in a course of sinning ; for when they can frame such a notion of God, as if he were a countenancer of sin, they will derive from thence a reputation to their crimes, commit wickedness with an unbounded licentiousness, and crown their vices with the name of virtues, because they are so like to the sentiments of that God they fancy. From hence, as the psalmist in the psalm before mentioned, ariseth that mass of vice in the world ; such conceptions are the mother and nurse of all impiety, I question not but the first spring is some wrong notion of God in regard of his holiness. We are as apt to imagine God as we would have him, as the black Ethiopians were to draw the image of their gods after their own dark hue, and paint him with their own colour. As a philosopher in Theodoret speaks, if oxen and lions had hands, and could paint as men do, they would frame the images of their gods according to their own likeness and complexion. Such notions of God render him a swinish being, and worse than the vilest idols adored by the Egyptians, when men fancy a God indulgent to their appetites, and most sordid lusts.

(2.) In defacing the image of God in our souls. God in the first draught of man conformed him to his own image, or made him an image of himself, because we find that in regeneration this image is renewed : Eph. iv. 24, 'The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' He did not take angels for his pattern in the first polishing the soul, but himself. In defacing this image, we cast dirt upon the holiness of God, which was his pattern in the framing of us, and rather choose to be conformed to Satan, who is God's grand enemy, to have God's image wiped out of us, and the devil's pictured in us. Therefore natural men in an unregenerate state may justly be called devils, since our Saviour called the worst man Judas so, John vi. 70, and Peter, one of the best, Mat. xvi. 23. And if this title be given by an infallible judge to one of the worst, and one of the best, it may without wrong to any be ascribed to all men that wallow in their sin, which is directly contrary to that illustrious image God did imprint upon them. How often is it seen that men control the light of their own nature, and stain the clearest beams of that candle of the Lord in their own spirits, that fly in the face of their own consciences, and say to them, as Ahab to Micaiah, Thou didst never prophesy good to me ; thou didst never encourage me in those things that are pleasing to the flesh ; and use it at the same rate as the wicked king did the prophet, 'imprison it in unrighteousness,' Rom. i. 18, because it starts up in them sometimes sentiments of the holiness of God, which it represents in the soul of man. How jolly are many men when the exhalations of their sensitive part rise up to cloud the exactest principle of moral nature in their minds, and render the monstrous principles of the law of corruption more lively ! Whence ariseth the wickedness which hath been committed with an open face in the world, and the applause that hath been often given to the worst of villanies ? Have we not known among ourselves, men to glory in their shame, and esteem that a most genteel accomplishment of man which is the greatest blot upon his nature, and which, if it were upon God, would render him no God, but an impure devil, so that to be a gentleman among us hath been the same as to be an incarnate devil ; and to be a man was to be no better, but worse than a brute ? Vile

wretches ! Is not this a contempt of divine holiness, to kill that divine seed which lies languishing in the midst of corrupted nature ? to cut up any sprouts of it as weeds unworthy to grow in their gardens, and cultivate what is the seed of hell ? prefer the rotten fruits of Sodom, marked with a divine curse, before those relics of the fruits of Eden, of God's own planting ?

(3.) The holiness of God is injured in charging our sin upon God. Nothing is more natural to men than to seek excuses for their sin, and transfer it from themselves to the next at hand ; and rather than fail, shift it upon God himself ; and if they can bring God into a society with them in sin, they will hug themselves in a security that God cannot punish that guilt, wherein he is a partner. Adam's children are not of a different disposition from Adam himself, who, after he was arraigned and brought to his trial, boggles not at flinging his dirt in the face of God his creator, and accuseth him as if he had given him the woman, not to be his help but his ruin : Gen. iii. 12, ' And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.' He never supplicates for pardon, nor seeks a remedy, but reflects his crime upon God : had I been alone, as I was first created, I had not eaten, but the woman whom I received as a special gift from thee, hath proved my tempter and my bane. When man could not be like God in knowledge, he endeavoured to make God like him in his crime ; and when his ambition failed of equalising himself with God, he did, with an insolence too common to corrupted nature, attempt, by the imputation of his sin, to equal the divinity with himself. Some think Cain had the same sentiment in his answer to God's demand, where his brother was, Gen. iv. 9, ' Am I my brother's keeper ?' Art not thou the keeper and governor of the world ? why didst not thou take care of him, and hinder my killing him, and drawing this guilt upon myself, and terror upon my conscience ? David was not behind, when after the murder of Uriah, he sweeps the dirt from his own door to God's : 2 Sam. xi. 25, ' The sword devoureth one as well as another,' fathering that solely upon divine providence, which was his own wicked contrivance ; though afterwards he is more ingenuous in clearing God, and charging himself : Ps. li. 4, ' Against thee, thee only, have I sinned ;' and he clears God in his judgment too. It is too common for ' the foolishness of man to pervert his way,' and then ' his heart frets against the Lord,' Prov. xix. 3. He studies mischief, runs in a way of sin, and when he hath conjured up troubles to himself by his own folly, he excuseth himself, and with indignation charges God as the author both of his sin and misery, and sets his mouth against the heavens. It is a more horrible thing to accuse God as a principal or accessory in our guilt, than to conceive him to be a favourer of our iniquity ; yet both are bad enough.

(4.) The holiness of God is injured, when men will study arguments from the holy word of God to colour and shelter their crimes ; when men will seek for a shelter for their lies, in that of the midwives to preserve the children, or in that of Rahab to save the spies ; as if because God rewarded their fidelity, he countenanced their sin. How often is Scripture wrested to be a plea for unbecoming practices, that God in his word may be imagined a patron for their iniquity ? It is not unknown that some have maintained their quaffing and carousing from Ecces. viii. 15, ' That a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and drink, and be merry ;' and their gluttony from Mat. xv. 11, ' That which goes into the belly defiles not a man.' The Jesuits' morals are a transcript of this. How often hath the passion of our Saviour, the highest expression of God's holiness, been employed to stain it, and encourage the most debauched practices ! Grace

hath been turned into wantonness, and the abundance of grace been used as a blast to increase the flames of sin ; as if God had no other aim in that work of redemption, but to discover himself more indulgent to our sensual appetites, and by his severity with his Son, become more gracious to our lusts. This is to feed the roots of hell with the dews of heaven, to make grace a pander for the abuse of it, and to employ the expressions of his holiness in his word to be a sword against the essential holiness of his nature ; as if a man should draw an apology for his treason out of that law that was made to forbid, not to protect his rebellion. Not the meanest instrument in the temple was to be alienated from the use it was by divine order appointed to, nor was it to be employed in any common use ; and shall the word of God, which is the image of his holiness, be transferred by base interpretations to be an advocate for iniquity ? Such an ill use of his word reflects upon that hand which imprinted those characters of purity and righteousness upon it ; as the misinterpretation of the wholesome laws of a prince, made to discourage debauchery, reflects upon his righteousness and sincerity in enacting them.

(5.) The holiness of God is injured, when men will put up petitions to God to favour them in a wicked design. Such there are ; and taxed by the apostle, James iv. 3, ' Ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts,' who desired mercies from God with an intent to make them instruments of sin and weapons of unrighteousness, as it is reported of a thief, that he always prayed for the success of his robbery. It hath not been rare in the world to appoint fasts and prayers for success in war manifestly unjust, and commenced upon breaches of faith. Many covetous men petition God to prosper them in their unjust gain, as if the blessed God sat in his pure majesty upon the throne of grace to espouse unjust practices, and make iniquity prosperous. There are such as offer sacrifice with an evil mind, Prov. xxi. 27, to barter with God for a divine blessing to spirit a wicked contrivance. How great a contempt of the holiness of God is this ! How inexcusable would it be for a favourite to address himself to a just prince with this language : Sir, I desire a boon of such lands that lie near me for an addition to my estate, that I may have supports for my debauchery, and be able to play the villain more powerfully among my neighbours ; hereby he implies that his prince is a friend to such crimes and wickedness he intends his petition for. Is not this the language of many men's hearts in the immediate presence of God ? The order of prayer runs thus, ' Hallowed be thy name,' first to have a deep sense of the holiness of the divine nature, and an ardent desire for the glory of it. This order is inverted by asking those things which are not agreeable to the will of God, not meet for us to ask, nor meet for God to give, or asking things agreeable to the will of God, but with a wicked intention ; this is, in effect, to desire God to strip himself of his holiness, and commit sacrilege upon his own nature to gratify our lusts.

(6.) The purity of God is contemned in hating and scoffing at the holiness which is in a creature. Whosoever looks upon the holiness of a creature as an unlovely thing, can have no good opinion of the amiableness of divine purity. Whosoever hates those qualities and graces that resemble God in any person, must needs condemn the original pattern which is more eminent in God. If there be no comeliness in a creature's holiness to render it grateful to us, we should say of God himself, were he visible among us, with those in the prophet, Isa. liii., ' There is no beauty in him that we should desire him.' Holiness is beautiful in itself. If God be the most lovely being, that which is a likeness to him, so far as it doth resemble him, must needs be

amiable, because it partakes of God ; and therefore those that see no beauty in an inferior holiness, but condemn it because it is a purity above them, condemn God much more. He that hates that which is imperfect merely for that excellency which is in it, doth much more hate that which is perfect without any mixture or stain. Holiness being the glory of God, the peculiar title of the Deity, and from him derived unto the nature of a creature, he that mocks this in a person derides God himself ; and when he cannot abuse the purity in the Deity, he will do it in his image, as rebels that cannot wrong the king in his person will do it in his picture, and his subjects that are loyal to him. He that hates the picture of a man, hates the person represented by it much more ; he that hates the beams, hates the sun. The holiness of a creature is but a beam from that infinite sun, a stream from that eternal fountain. Where there is a derision of the purity of any creature, there is a greater reflection upon God in that derision, as he is the author of it. If a mixed and stained holiness be more the subject of any man's scoffs than a great deal of sin, that person hath a disposition more roundly to scoff at God himself, should he appear in that unblemished and unspotted purity which infinitely shines in his nature. Oh, it is a dangerous thing to scoff and deride holiness in any person, though never so mean ; such do deride and scoff at the most holy God.

(7.) The holiness of God is injured by our unprepared addresses to him, when, like swine, we come into the presence of God with all our mire reeking and steaming upon us. A holy God requires a holy worship ; and if our best duties, having filth in every part as performed by us, are unmeet for God, how much more unsuitable are dead and dirty duties to a living and immense holiness ! Slight approaches and drossy frames speak us to have imaginations of God as of a slight and sottish being ; this is worse than the heathens practised, who would purge their flesh before they sacrificed, and make some preparations in a seeming purity, before they would enter into their temples. God is so holy, that, were our services as refined as those of angels, we could not present him with a service meet for his holy nature, Josh. xxiv. 19. We condemn, then, this perfection when we come before him without due preparation, as if God himself were of an impure nature, and did not deserve our purest thoughts in our applications to him, as if any blemished and polluted sacrifice were good enough for him, and his nature deserved no better. When we excite not those elevated frames of spirit which are due to such a being, when we think to put him off with a lame and imperfect service, we worship him not according to the excellency of his nature, but put a slight upon his majestic sanctity, when we nourish in our duties those foolish imaginations which creep upon us, when we bring into and continue our worldly, carnal, debauched fancies in his presence, worse than the nasty servants or bemired dogs a man would blush to be attended with in his visits to a neat person. To be conversing with sordid sensualities when we are at the feet of an infinite God, sitting upon the throne of his holiness, is as much a contempt of him, as it would be of a prince, to bring a vessel full of nasty dung with us, when we come to present a petition to him clothed in his royal robes ; or, as it would have been to God, if the high priest should have swept all the blood and excrements of the sacrifices from the foot of the altar into the holy of holies, and heaped it up before the mercy-seat, where the presence of God dwelt between the cherubims, and afterwards shovelled it up into the ark, to be lodged with Aaron's rod and the pot of manna.

(8.) God's holiness is slighted in depending upon our imperfect services to bear us out before the tribunal of God. This is too ordinary ; the Jews were often infected with it, Rom. iii. 10, who not well understanding the enormity

of their transgressions, the interweaving of sin with their services, and the unspottedness of the divine purity, mingled an opinion of merit with their sacrifices, and thought by the cutting the throat of a beast, and offering it upon God's altar, they had made a sufficient compensation to that holiness they had offended; not to speak of many among the Romanists who have the same notion, thinking to make satisfaction to God by erecting an hospital or endowing a church, as if this injured perfection could be contented with the dregs of their purses, and the offering of an unjust mammon, more likely to mind God of the injury they have done him, than contribute to the appeasing of him. But is it not too ordinary with miserable men, whose consciences accuse them of their crimes, to rely upon the mumblings of a few formal prayers, and in the strength of them to think to stand before the tremendous tribunal of God, and meet with a discharge upon this account from any accusation this divine perfection can present against them? Nay, do not the best Christians sometimes find a principle in them that makes them stumble in their goings forth to Christ, and glorifying the holiness of God in that method which he hath appointed; sometimes casting an eye at their grace, and sticking awhile to this or that duty, and gazing at the glory of the temple building, while they should more admire the glorious presence that fills it? What is all this but a vilifying of the holiness of the divine nature, as though it would be well enough contented with our impurities and imperfections, because they look like a righteousness in our estimation? As though dross and dung, which are the titles the apostle gives to all the righteousness of a fallen creature, Philip. iii. 3, were valuable in the sight of God, and sufficient to render us comely before him. It is a blasphemy against this attribute, to pretend that anything so imperfect, so daubed, as the best of our services are, can answer to that which is infinitely perfect, and be a ground of demanding eternal life: it is at best to set up a gilded Dagon as a fit companion for the ark of his holiness, our own righteousness as a suitable mate for the righteousness of God, as if he had repented of the claim he made by the law to an exact conformity, and thrown off the holiness of his nature for the fondling of a corrupted creature. Rude and foolish notions of the divine purity are clearly evidenced by any confidence in any righteousness of our own, though never so splendid. It is a rendering the righteousness of God as dull and obscure as that of men, a mere outside as their own, as blind as the heathens pictured their *Fortune*, that knew as little how to discern the nature and value of the offerings made to her, as to distribute her gifts, as if it were all one to them to have a dog or a lamb presented in sacrifice. As if God did not well understand his own nature when he enacted so holy a law, and strengthened it with so severe a threatening, which must follow upon our conceit, that he will accept a righteousness lower than that which bears some suitableness to the holiness of his own nature and that of his law, and that he could easily be put off with a pretended and counterfeit service! What are the services of the generality of men, but suppositions that they can bribe God to an indulgence of them in their sins, and by an oral sacrifice cause him to divest himself of his hatred of their former iniquities, and countenance their following practices? As the harlot that would return fresh to her uncleanness, upon the confidence that her peace-offerings had contented the righteousness of God, Prov. vii. 14; as though a small service could make him wink at our sins and lay aside the glory of his nature, when, alas! the best duties in the most gracious persons in this life, are but as the streams of a spiced dunghill, a composition of myrrh and froth, since there are swarms of corruptions in their nature, and secret sins that they need a cleansing from!

(9.) It is a contemning the holiness of God when we charge the law of God with rigidness. We cast dirt upon the holiness of God when we blame the law of God, because it shackles us, and prohibits our desired pleasures; and hate the law of God, as they did the prophets, because they did not 'prophesy smooth things,' but called to them to 'get them out of the way, and turn aside out of the path, and cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them,' Isa. xxx. 10, 11. Put us no more in mind of the holiness of God and the holiness of his law; it is a troublesome thing for us to hear of it. Let him be gone from us, since he will not countenance our vices and indulge our crimes. We would rather hear there is no God, than you should tell us of a holy one. We are contrary to the law when we wish it were not so exact, and therefore contrary to the holiness God, which set the stamp of exactness and righteousness upon it. We think him injurious to our liberty when by his precept he thwarts our pleasure; we wish it of another frame, more mild, more suitable to our minds. It is the same as if we should openly blame God for consulting with his own righteousness, and not with our humours, before he settled his law; that he should not have drawn it from the depths of his righteous nature, but squared it to accommodate our corruption.

This being the language of such complaints, is a reproving God because he would not be unholy, that we might be unrighteous with impunity. Had the divine law been suited to our corrupt state, God must have been unholy to have complied with his rebellious creature. To charge the law with rigidness, either in language or practice, is the highest contempt of God's holiness; for it is an implicit wish that God were as defiled, polluted, disorderly, as our corrupted selves.

(10.) The holiness of God is injured opinionatively.

[1.] In the opinion of venial sins. The Romanists divide sins into venial and mortal. Mortal are those which deserve eternal death; venial the lighter sort of sins, which rather deserve to be pardoned than punished, or if punished, not with an eternal, but temporal punishment. This opinion hath no foundation in, but is contrary to, Scripture. How can any sin be in its own nature venial, when the due 'wages of every sin is death,' Rom. vi. 23; and he who 'continues not in everything that the law commands' falls under a curse, Gal. iii. 10. It is a mean thought of the holiness and majesty of God to imagine that any sin which is against an infinite majesty, and as infinite a purity both in the nature of God and the law of God, should not be considered as infinitely heinous. All sins are transgressions of the eternal law, and in every one the infinite holiness of God is some way slighted.

[2.] In the opinion of works of supererogation; that is, such works as are not commanded by God, which yet have such a dignity and worth in their own nature, that the performers of them do not only merit at God's hands for themselves, but fill up a treasure of merit for others that come short of fulfilling the precepts God hath enjoined. It is such a mean thought of God's holiness, that the Jews, in all the charges brought against them in Scripture, were never guilty of. And if you consider what pitiful things they are which are within the compass of such works, you have sufficient reason to bewail the ignorance of man, and the low esteem he hath of so glorious a perfection. The whipping themselves often in a week, extraordinary watchings, fastings, macerating their bodies, wearing a Capuchin's habit, &c., are pitiful things to give content to an infinite purity: as if the precept of God required only the inferior degrees of virtue, and the counsels the more high and excellent; as if the law of God, which the psalmist

counts perfect, Ps. xix. 7, did not command all good and forbid all evil; as if the holiness of God had forgotten itself in the framing the law, and made it a scanty and defective rule; and the righteousness of a creature were not only able to make an eternal righteousness, but surmount it. As man would be at first as knowing as God, so some of his posterity would be more holy than God, set up a wisdom against the wisdom of God, and a purity above the divine purity. Adam was not so presumptuous, he intended no more than an equalling God in knowledge; but those would exceed him in righteousness, and not only presume to render a satisfaction for themselves to the holiness they have injured, but to make a purse for the supply of others that are indigent, that they may stand before the tribunal of God with a confidence in the imaginary righteousness of a creature. How horrible is it for those that come short of the law of God themselves, to think that they can have enough for a loan to their neighbours! An unworthy opinion.

2. Information. It may inform us how great is our fall from God, and how distant we are from him. View the holiness of God, and take a prospect of the nature of man, and be astonished to see a person created in the divine image degenerated into the image of the devil. We are as far fallen from the holiness of God, which consists in a hatred of sin, as the lowest point of the earth is from the highest point of the heavens. The devil is not more fallen from the rectitude of his nature and likeness to God than we are; and that we are not in the same condition with those apostate spirits, is not from anything in our nature, but from the mediation of Christ, upon which account God hath indulged in us a continuance of some remainders of that which Satan is wholly deprived of. We are departed from our original pattern; we were created to live the life of God, that is, a life of holiness, but now we are 'alienated from the life of God,' Eph. iv. 18; and of a beautiful piece we are become deformed, daubed over with the most defiling mud. We 'work uncleanness with greediness,' according to our ability as creatures, as God doth work holiness with affection and ardeney, according to his infiniteness as creator. More distant we are from God by reason of sin than the vilest creature, the most deformed toad or poisonous serpent, is from the highest and most glorious angel. By forsaking our innocence, we departed from God as our original copy. The apostle might well say, Rom. iii. 23, that by sin we are 'come short of the glory of God.' Interpreters trouble themselves much about that place, 'Man is come short of the glory of God,' that is, of the holiness of God, which is the glory of the divine nature, and was pictured in the rational, innocent creature. By the glory of God is meant the holiness of God; as 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory;' that is, the glory of God in the text, into the image of which we are changed; but the Scripture speaks of no other image of God but that of holiness. We are come short of the glory of God, of the holiness of God, which is the glory of God; and the image of it, which was the glory of man. By sin, which is particular in opposition to the purity of God, man was left many leagues behind any resemblance to God; he stripped off that which was the glory of his nature, and was the only means of glorifying God as his creator. The word *ὑστεροῦνται*, the apostle uses, is very significant, *postponed* by sin, an infinite distance from any imitation of God's holiness, or any appearance before him in a garb of nature pleasing to him. Let us lament our fall and distance from God.

3. Information. All unholiness is vile and opposite to the nature of God. It is such a loathsome thing, that the purity of God's eye is averse from

beholding, Hab. i. 3. It is not said there that he *will not*, but he *cannot* look on evil; there cannot be any amicableness between God and sin, the natures of both are so directly and unchangeably contrary to one another. Holiness is the life of God, it endures as long as his life; he must be eternally averse from sin, he can live no longer than he lives in the hatred and loathing of it. If he should for one instant cease to hate it, he would cease to live. To be a holy God is as essential to him as to be a living God; and he would not be a living, but a dead God, if he were in the least point of time an unholy God. He cannot look on sin without loathing it, he cannot look on sin but his heart riseth against it. It must needs be most odious to him, as that which is against the glory of his nature, and directly opposite to that which is the lustre and varnish of all his other perfections. It is the 'abominable thing which his soul hates,' Jer. xlv. 4; the vilest terms imaginable are used to signify it. Do you understand the loathsomeness of a miry swine, or the nauseousness of the vomit of a dog? These are emblems of sin, 2 Peter ii. 22. Can you endure the steams of putrefied carcasses from an open sepulchre? Rom. iii. 23. Is the smell of the stinking sweat or excrements of a body delightful? the word *ὑπεραγία* in James i. 21 signifies as much. Or is the sight of a body overgrown with scabs and leprosy grateful to you? So vile, so odious is sin in the sight of God. It is no light thing, then, to fly in the face of God, to break his eternal law, to dash both the tables in pieces, to trample the transcript of God's own nature under our feet, to cherish that which is inconsistent with his honour, to lift up our heels against the glory of his nature, to join issue with the devil in stabbing his heart and depriving him of his life. Sin, in every part of it, is an opposition to the holiness of God, and consequently an envying him a being and life as well as a glory. If sin be such a thing, 'ye that love the Lord hate evil.'

4. Information. Sin cannot escape a due punishment. A hatred of unrighteousness, and consequently a will to punish it, is as essential to God as a love of righteousness. Since he is not as an heathen idol, but hath eyes to see, and purity to hate every iniquity, he will have an infinite justice to punish whatsoever is against infinite holiness. As he loves everything that is amiable, so he loathes everything that is filthy, and that consequently without any change; his whole nature is set against it, he abhors nothing but this. It is not the devil's knowledge or activity that his hatred is terminated in, but the malice and unholiness of his nature; it is this only is the object of his severity. It is in the recompence of this only that there can be a manifestation of his justice.

Sin must be punished; for,

(1.) His detestation of sin must be manifested. How should we certainly know his loathing of it, if he did not manifest by some act how ungrateful it is to him? As his love to righteousness would not appear without rewarding it, so his hatred of iniquity would be as little evidenced without punishing it. His justice is the great witness to his purity. The punishment, therefore, inflicted on the wicked, shall be, in some respect, as great as the rewards bestowed upon the righteous. Since the hatred of sin is natural to God, it is as natural to him to shew one time or other his hatred of it; and since men have a conceit that God is like them in impurity, there is a necessity of some manifestation of himself to be infinitely distant from those conceits they have of him: Ps. l. 21, 'I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.' He would also encourage the injuries done to his holiness, favour the extravagancies of the creature, and condemn, or at least slight, the righteousness both of his own nature and his sovereign law. What

way is there for God to manifest this hatred, but by threatening the sinner? And what would this be but a vain affrightment, and ridiculous to the sinner, if it were never to be put in execution? There is an indissoluble connection between his hatred of sin and punishment of the offender: Ps. xi. 5, 6, 'The wicked his soul hates: upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone,' &c. He cannot approve of it without denying himself, and a total impunity would be a degree of approbation.

The displeasure of God is eternal and irreconcilable against sin; for sin being absolutely contrary to his holy nature, he is eternally contrary to it. If there be not therefore a way to separate the sin from the sinner, the sinner must lie under the displeasure of God; no displeasure can be manifested without some marks of it upon the person that lies under that displeasure. The holiness of God will right itself of the wrongs done to it, and scatter the profaners of it at the greatest distance from him, which is the greatest punishment that can be inflicted; to be removed far from the fountain of life is the worst of deaths. God can as soon lay aside his purity, as always forbear his displeasure against an impure person; it is all one not to hate it, and not to manifest his hatred of it.

(2.) As his holiness is natural and necessary, so is the punishment of unholiness necessary to him. It is necessary that he should abominate sin, and therefore necessary he should discountenance it. The severities of God against sin are not vain scarecrows, they have their foundation in the righteousness of his nature; it is because he is a righteous and holy God, that he 'will not forgive our transgressions and sins,' Josh. xxiv. 19, that is, that he will punish them. The throne of his holiness is a 'fiery flame,' Dan. vii. 9, there is both a pure light and a scorching heat. Whatsoever is contrary to the nature of God, will fall under the justice of God; he would else violate his own nature, deny his own perfection, seem to be out of love with his own glory and life. He doth not hate it out of choice, but from the immutable propension of his nature; it is not so free an act of his will as the creation of man and angels, which he might have forborne as well as effected. As the detestation of sin results from the universal rectitude of his nature, so the punishment of sin follows upon that, as he is the righteous governor of the world. It is as much against his nature not to punish it, as it is against his nature not to loathe it; he would cease to be holy, if he ceased to hate it; and he would cease to hate it, if he ceased to punish it. Neither the obedience of our Saviour's life, nor the strength of his cries, could put a bar to the cup of his passion; God so hated sin, that when it was but imputed to his Son, without any commission of it, he would bring a hell upon his soul. Certainly, if God could have hated sin without punishing it, his Son had never felt the smart of his wrath. His love to his Son had been strong enough to have caused him to forbear, had not the holiness of his nature been stronger, to move him to inflict a punishment according to the demerit of his sin. God cannot but be holy, therefore cannot but be just, because injustice is a part of unholiness.

(3.) Therefore there can be no communion between God and unholy spirits. How is it conceivable that God should hate the sin, and cherish the sinner with all his filth in his bosom; that he should eternally detest the crime, and eternally fold the sinner in his arms? Can less be expected from the purity of his nature, than to separate an impure soul, as long as it remains so? Can there be any delightful communion between those whose natures are contrary? Darkness and light may as soon kiss each other, and become one nature? God and the devil may as soon enter into an eternal league and covenant together. For God to 'have pleasure in wickedness,'

and to admit 'evil to dwell with him,' are things equally impossible to his nature, Ps. v. 4; while he hates impurity, he cannot have communion with an impure person. It may as soon be expected that God should hate himself, offer violence to his own nature, lay aside his purity as an abominable thing, and blot his own glory, as love an impure person, entertain him as his delight, and set him in the same heaven and happiness with himself, and his holy angels; he must needs loathe him, he must needs banish him from his presence, which is the greatest punishment. God's holiness and hatred of sin necessarily infer the punishment of it.

5. Information. There is therefore a necessity of the satisfaction of the holiness of God by some sufficient mediator. The divine purity could not meet with any acquiescence in all mankind after the fall. Sin was hated, the sinner would be ruined, unless some way were found out to repair the wrongs done to the holiness of God; either the sinner must be condemned for ever, or some satisfaction must be made, that the holiness of the divine nature might eternally appear in its full lustre. That it is essential to the nature of God to hate all unrighteousness, as that which was absolutely repugnant to his nature, none do question. That the justice of God is so essential to him, as that sin could not be pardoned without satisfaction, some do question; though this latter seems rationally to follow upon the former.* That holiness is essential to the nature of God is evident, because else God may as much be conceived without purity, as he might be conceived without the creating the sun or stars. No man can in his right wits frame a right notion of a deity without purity. It would be a less blasphemy against the excellency of God, to conceit him not knowing, than to imagine him not holy; and for the essentialness of his justice, Joshua joins both his holiness and his jealousy as going hand in hand together: Josh. xxiv. 19, 'He is a holy God, he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your sin.'

But consider only the purity of God, since it is contrary to sin, and consequently hating the sinner; the guilty person cannot be reduced to God, nor can the holiness of God have any complacency in a filthy person, but as fire hath in stubble, to consume it. How the holy God should be brought to delight in man, without a *salvo* for the rights of his holiness, is not to be conceived without an impeachment of the nature of God. The law could not be abolished; that would reflect indeed upon the righteousness of the lawgiver; to abolish it, because of sin, would imply a change of the rectitude of his nature. Must he change his holiness for the sake of that which was against his holiness, in a compliance with a profane and unrighteous creature? This should engage him rather to maintain his law than to null it. And to abrogate his law as soon as he had enacted it, since sin stepped into the world presently after it, would be no credit to his wisdom.

There must be a reparation made of the honour of God's holiness; by ourselves it could not be without condemnation, by another it could not be without a sufficiency in the person; no creature could do it. All the creatures being of a finite nature, could not make a compensation for the disparagements of infinite holiness. He must have despicable and vile thoughts of this excellent perfection, that imagines that a few tears, and the glavering fawnings at the death of a creature, can be sufficient to repair the wrongs, and restore the rights of this attribute. It must therefore be such a compensation as might be commensurate to the holiness of the divine nature and the divine law, which could not be wrought by any but him that was possessed of a Godhead, to give efficacy and exact congruity to it. The person designed and appointed by God for so great an affair, was 'one in

* Turretin. de Satisfac. p. 8.

the form of God, one equal with God,' Philip. ii. 6; who could not be termed by such a title of dignity if he had not been equal to God in the universal rectitude of the divine nature, and therefore in his holiness. The punishment due to sin is translated to that person for the righting divine holiness, and the righteousness of that person is communicated to the sinner for the pardon of the offending creature.

If the sinner had been eternally damned, God's hatred of sin had been evidenced by the strokes of his justice; but his mercy to a sinner had lain in obscurity. If the sinner had been pardoned and saved without such a reparation, mercy had been evident; but his holiness had hid its head for ever in his own bosom. There was therefore a necessity of such a way to manifest his purity, and yet to bring forth his mercy, that mercy might not alway sigh for the destruction of the creature, and that holiness might not mourn for the neglect of its honour.

6. Information. Hence it will follow, there is no justification of a sinner by anything in himself. After sin had set foot in the world, man could present nothing to God acceptable to him, or bearing any proportion to the holiness of his law, till God set forth a person upon whose account the acceptance of our persons and services is founded: Eph. i. 6, 'Who hath made us accepted in the beloved.' The infinite purity of God is so glorious, that it shames the holiness of angels, as the light of the sun dims the light of the fire; much more will the righteousness of fallen man, who is vile, and 'drinks up iniquity like water,' vanish into nothing in his presence. With what self-abasement and abhorrence ought he to be possessed, that comes as short of the angels in purity as a dunghill doth of a star! The highest obedience that ever was performed by any mere man, since lapsed nature, cannot challenge any acceptance with God, or stand before so exact an inquisition. What person hath such a clear innocence, and unspotted obedience in such a perfection, as in any degree to suit the holiness of the divine nature! Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' If God should debate the case simply with man in his own person, without respecting the mediator, he were not able to 'answer one of a thousand.' Though we are his servants, as David was, and perform a sincere service, yet there are many little moths and dust of sin in the best works, that cannot be undiscovered from the eye of his holiness; and if we come short in the least of what the law requires, we are 'guilty of all,' James ii. 10. So that 'in thy sight shall no man living be justified;' in the sight of thy infinite holiness, which hates the least spot; in the sight of thy infinite justice, which punishes the least transgression.

God would descend below his own nature, and vilify both his knowledge and purity, should he accept that for a righteousness and holiness which is not so in itself; and nothing is so which hath the least stain upon it contrary to the nature of God. The most holy saints in Scripture, upon a prospect of his purity, have cast away all confidence in themselves; every flash of the divine purity has struck them into a deep sense of their own impurity and shame for it: Job xlii. 6, 'Wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes.' What can the language of any man be that lies under a sense of infinite holiness, and his own defilement in the least, but that of the prophet: Isa. vi. 5, 'Woe is me, I am undone!' And what is there in the world can administer any other thought than this, unless God be considered in Christ, 'reconciling the world to himself;' as a holy God, so righted as that he can dispense with the condemnation of a sinner without dispensing with his hatred of sin; pardoning the sin in the criminal, because it hath

been punished in the surety. That righteousness which God hath 'set forth' for justification is not our own, but a 'righteousness which is of God,' Philip. iii. 9, 10, of God's appointing, and of God's performing; appointed by the Father, who is God, and performed by the Son, who is one with the Father; a righteousness surmounting that of all the glorious angels, since it is an immutable one, which can never fail, an 'everlasting righteousness,' Dan. ix. 24; a righteousness wherein the holiness of God can acquiesce, as considered in itself, because it is a righteousness of one equal with God. As we therefore dishonour the divine majesty, when we insist upon our own bemired righteousness for our justification (as if a 'mortal man were as just as God,' and a 'man as pure as his maker,' Job iv. 17), so we highly honour the purity of his nature when we charge ourselves with folly, acknowledge ourselves unclean, and accept of that righteousness which gives a full content to his infinite purity. There can be no justification of a sinner by anything in himself.

7. It informs us, if holiness be a glorious perfection of the divine nature, then the deity of Christ might be argued from hence. He is indeed dignified with the title of 'the Holy One,' Acts iii. 14, 16, a title often given to God in the Old Testament; and he is called, 'The holy of holies,' Dan. ix. 24; but because the angels seem to be termed holy ones, Dan. iv. 13, 17, and the most sacred place in the temple was also called the holy of holies, I shall not insist upon that. But you find our Saviour particularly applauded by the angels, as holy, when this perfection of the divine nature, together with the incommunicable name of God, are linked together, and ascribed to him: Isa. vi. 3, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: and the whole earth is full of his glory,' which the apostle interprets of Christ, John xii. 39, 41. 'Isaiah [saith] again, 'He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.' He that Isaiah saw environed with the seraphims in a reverential posture before his face, and praised as most holy by them, was the true and eternal God; such acclamations belong to none but the great Jehovah, God blessed for ever. But, saith John, it was the glory of Christ that Isaiah saw in this vision; Christ therefore is 'God blessed for ever,' of whom it was said, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts.'* The evangelist had been speaking of Christ, the miracles which he wrought, the obstinacy of the Jews against believing on him; *his glory* therefore is to be referred to the subject he had been speaking of. The evangelist was not speaking of the Father, but of the Son, and cites those words out of Isaiah; not to teach anything of the Father, but to shew that the Jews could not believe in Christ. He speaks of him that had wrought so many miracles; but Christ wrought those miracles; he speaks of him whom the Jews refused to believe on; but Christ was the person they would not believe on, while they acknowledged God. It was the glory of this person Isaiah saw, and this person Isaiah spake of, if the words of the evangelist be of any credit. The angels are too holy to give acclamations belonging to God, to any but him that is God.

8. It informs us that God is fully fit for the government of the world. The righteousness of God's nature qualifies him to be judge of the world. If he were not perfectly righteous and holy, he were incapable to govern and judge the world: Rom. iii. 5, 'If there be unrighteousness with God, how shall he judge the world?' 'God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment,' Job xxxiv 12. How despicable is a judge

* Placeus de Deit. Christi *in locum*.

that wants innocence! As omniscience fits God to be a judge, so holiness fits him to be a righteous judge: Ps. i. 6, 'The Lord knows,' that is, loves, 'the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.'

9. Information. If holiness be an eminent perfection of the divine nature, the Christian religion is of a divine extraction. It discovers the holiness of God, and forms the creature to a conformity to him. It gives us a prospect of his nature, represents him in the 'beauty of holiness,' Ps. cx. 3, more than the whole glass of the creation. It is in this evangelical glass the glory of the Lord is beheld, and rendered amiable and imitable, 2 Cor. iii. 18. It is a doctrine 'according to godliness,' 1 Tim. vi. 3, directing us to live the life of God; a life worthy of God, and worthy of our first creation by his hand. It takes us off from ourselves, fixeth us upon a noble end, points our actions and the scope of our lives to God. It quells the monsters of sin, discountenanceth the moles of wickedness; and it is no mean argument for the divinity of it, that it sets us no lower a pattern for our imitation, than the holiness of the divine majesty. God is exalted upon the throne of his holiness in it, and the creature advanced to an image and resemblance of it: 1 Peter i. 16, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.'

Use 2. The second use is for comfort. This attribute frowns upon lapsed nature, but smiles in the restorations made by the gospel. God's holiness, in conjunction with his justice, is terrible to a guilty sinner, but now, in conjunction with his mercy, by the satisfaction of Christ, it is sweet to a believing penitent. In the first covenant, the purity of his nature was joined with the rigours of his justice; in the second covenant, the purity of his nature is joined with the sweetness and tenderness of his mercy. In the one, justice flames against the sinner in the right of injured holiness; in the other, mercy yearns towards a believer, with the consent of righted holiness. To rejoice in the holiness of God is the true and genuine spirit of a renewed man: 'My heart rejoiceth in the Lord.' What follows? 'There is none holy as the Lord,' 1 Sam. ii. 1, 2. Some perfections of the divine nature are astonishing, some affrighting, but this may fill us both with astonishment at it, and a joy in it.

1. By covenant we have an interest in this attribute as well as any other. In that clause of God's being our God, entire God with all his glory, all his perfections are passed over as a portion, and a gracious soul is brought into union with God as his God, not with a part of God, but with God in the simplicity, extent, integrity of his nature, and therefore in this attribute. And upon some account it may seem more in this attribute than in any other, for if he be our God, he is our God in his life and glory, and therefore in his purity especially, without which he could not live, he could not be happy and blessed. Little comfort will it be to have a dead God or a vile God made over us, and, as by this covenant he is our Father, so he gives us his nature, and communicates his holiness in all his dispensations, and in those that are severest as well as those that are sweetest: Heb. xii. 10, 'But he corrects us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' Not simply 'partakers of holiness' but of '*his* holiness,' to have a portraiture of it in our nature, a medal of it in our hearts, a spark of the same nature with that immense splendour and flame in himself. The holiness of a covenant soul is a resemblance of the holiness of God, and formed by it, as the picture of the sun in a cloud is a fruit of his beams, and an image of its author. The fulness of the perfection of holiness remains in the nature of God, as the fulness of the light doth in the sun; yet there are transmissions from the sun to the moon, and it is a light of the same nature both in the one and in the other. The holiness of a creature is nothing else but the

reflection of the divine holiness upon it ; and to make the creature capable of it, God takes various methods, according to his covenant grace.

2. This attribute renders God a fit object for trust and dependence. The notion of an unholy and unrighteous God, is an uncomfortable idea of him, and beats off our hands from laying any hold of him. It is upon this attribute the reputation and honour of God in the world is built. What encouragement can we have to believe him, or what incentives could we have to serve him, without the lustre of this in his nature ? The very thought of an unrighteous God, is enough to drive men at the greatest distance from him. As the honesty of a man gives a reputation to his word, so doth the holiness of God give credit to his promise. It is by this he would have us stifle our fears, and fortify our trust : Isa xli. 14, ' Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel ; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.' He will be in his actions what he is in his nature. Nothing shall make him defile his own excellency. Unrighteousness is the ground of mutability ; but the promise of God doth never fail, because the rectitude of his nature doth never languish. Were his attributes without the conduct of this, they would be altogether formidable. As this is the glory of all his other perfections, so this only renders him comfortable to a believing soul. Might we not fear his power to crush us, his mercy to overlook us, his wisdom to design against us, if this did not influence them ! What an oppression is power without righteousness in the hand of a creature, destructive instead of protecting ; the devil is a mighty spirit, but not fit to be trusted, because he is an impure spirit. When God would give us the highest security of the sincerity of his intentions, he swears by this attribute, Ps. lxxxix. 35. His holiness as well as his truth, is laid to pawn for the security of his promise. As we make God the judge between us and others, when we swear by him, so he makes his holiness the judge between himself and his people, when he swears by it.

(1.) It is this renders him fit to be confided in for the answer of our prayers. This is the ground of his readiness to give. ' If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ?' Mat. vii. 11. Though the holiness of God be not mentioned, yet it is to be understood ; the emphasis lies in those words, *if you being evil* ; God is then considered in a disposition contrary to this, which can be nothing but his righteousness. If you that are unholy, and have so much corruption in you to render you cruel, can bestow upon your children the good things they want, how much more shall God, who is holy, and hath nothing in him to check his mercifulness to his creatures, grant the petitions of his suppliants ! It was this attribute edged the fiduciary importunity of the souls under the altar, for the revenging their blood unjustly shed upon the earth : Rev. vi. 10, ' How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ?' Let not thy holiness stand with folded arms, as careless of the eminent sufferings of those that fear thee ; we implore thee by the holiness of thy nature, and the truth of thy word.

(2.) This renders him fit to be confided in, for the comfort of our souls in a broken condition. The reviving the hearts of the spiritually afflicted is a part of the holiness of his nature : Isa. lvii. 15, ' Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble.' He acknowledgeth himself the lofty One, they might therefore fear he would not revive them, but he is also the holy One, and therefore he will refresh them ; he is not more lofty than he is holy. Besides

the argument of the immutability of his promise, and the might of his power, here is the holiness of his nature moving him to pity his drooping creature. 'His promise is ushered in with the name of power, 'high and lofty One,' to bar their distrust of his strength, and with a declaration of his 'holiness,' to check any despair of his will. There is no ground to think I should be false to my word or misemploy my power, since that cannot be, because of the holiness of my name and nature.

(3.) This renders him fit to be confided in for the maintenance of grace, and protection of us against our spiritual enemies. What our Saviour thought an argument in prayer, we may well take as a ground of our confidence. In the strength of this he puts up his suit, when in his mediatory capacity he intercedes for the preservation of his people: John xvii. 11, 'Holy Father, keep through thy own name those that thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.' *Holy* Father, not merciful Father, or powerful, or wise Father, but holy, and, verse 25, *righteous* Father. Christ pleads that attribute for the performance of God's word, which was laid to pawn when he passed his word, for it was by his holiness that he swore, 'that his seed should endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before him,' Ps. lxxxix. 36, which is meant of the perpetuity of the covenant which he had made with Christ, and is also meant of the preservation of the mystical seed of David, and the perpetuating his loving-kindness to them, ver. 32, 33. Grace is an image of God's holiness, and therefore the holiness of God is most proper to be used as an argument to interest and engage him in the preservation of it. In the midst of church provocations he will not utterly extinguish, because he is the holy One in the midst of her, Hos. xi. 9; nor in the midst of judgments will he condemn his people to death, because he is their holy One, Hab. i. 12, but their enemies shall be ordained for judgment, and established for correction. One prophet assures them in the name of the Lord upon the strength of this perfection, and the other upon the same ground is confident of the protection of the church, because of God's holiness engaged in an inviolable covenant.

(3.) Comfort. Since holiness is a glorious perfection of the nature of God, he will certainly value every holy soul. It is of a greater value with him than the souls of all men in the world that are destitute of it; wicked men are the worst of vileness, mere dross and dunghill; Ps. xii. 8, 'The vilest men, זלזל'. Purity then, which is contrary to wickedness, must be the precious thing in his esteem; he must needs love that quality which he is most pleased with in himself, as a father looks with most delight upon the child which is possessed with those dispositions he most values in his own nature. 'His countenance doth behold the upright,' Ps. xi. 7. He looks upon them with a full and open face of favour, with a countenance clear, unmasked, and smiling, with a face full of delight. Heaven itself is not such a pleasing object to him, as the image of his own uncreated holiness, in the created holiness of men and angels; as a man esteems that most which is most like him of his own generation, more than a piece of art, which is merely the product of his wit or strength. And he must love holiness in the creature; he would not else love his own image, and consequently would undervalue himself. He despiseth the image the wicked bears, Ps. lxxiii. 20, but he cannot disesteem his own stamp on the godly; he cannot but delight in his own work, his choice work, the master-piece of all his works, the new creation of things, that which is next to himself, as being a divine nature like himself, 2 Pet. i. 4. When he overlooks strength, parts, knowledge, he cannot overlook this; 'he sets apart him that is godly for himself,' Ps. iv. 3, as a peculiar object to take pleasure in; he reserves such for his own com-

placency, when he leaves the rest of the world to the devil's power; he is choice of them above all his other works, and will not let any have so great a propriety in them as himself. If it be so dear to him here in its imperfect and mixed condition, that he appropriates it as a peculiar object for his own delight, how much more will the unspotted purity of glorified saints be infinitely pleasing to him, so that he will take less pleasure in the material heavens than in such a soul. Sin only is detestable to God, and when this is done away, the soul becomes as lovely in his account, as before it was loathsome.

4. It is comfort upon this account, that God will perfect holiness in every upright soul. We many times distrust God and despond in ourselves, because of the infinite holiness of the divine nature, and the dunghill corruptions in our own; but the holiness of God engageth him to the preservation of it, and consequently to the perfection of it; as appears by our Saviour's argument, John xvii. 11, 'Holy Father, keep through thy own name those whom thou hast given me.' To what end? 'That they may become as we are,' one with us in the resemblances of purity. And the holiness of the soul is used as an argument by the psalmist: Ps. lxxxvi. 2, 'Preserve my soul, for I am holy,' that is, I have an ardent desire to holiness; thou hast separated me from the mass of the corrupted world, preserve and perfect me with the assembly of the glorified choir. The more holy any are, the more communicative they are. God being most holy, is most communicative of that which he most esteems in himself, and delights to see in his creature; he is therefore more ready to impart his holiness to them that beg for it, than to communicate his knowledge or his power. Though he were holy, yet he let Adam fall, who never petitioned his holiness to preserve him; he let him fall, to declare the holiness of his own nature, which had wanted its due manifestation without it; but since that cannot be declared in a higher manner than it hath been already in the death of the surety that bore our guilt, there is no fear he should cast the work out of his hands, since the design of the permission of man's apostasy in the discovery of the perfections of his nature has been fully answered. The finishing the good work he hath begun, hath a relation to the glory of Christ, and his own glory in Christ to be manifested in the day of his appearing, Philip. i. 6, wherein the glory, both of his own holiness and the holiness of the mediator, are to receive their full manifestation. As it is a part of the holiness of Christ to sanctify his church, Eph. v. 26, till not a wrinkle or spot be left, so it is the part of God not to leave that work imperfect, which his holiness hath attempted a second time to beautify his creature with. He will not cease exalting this attribute, which is the believer's by the new covenant, till he utters that applauding speech of his own work, Cant. iv. 7, 'Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.'

Use 3. Is for exhortation. Is holiness an eminent perfection of the divine nature? Then,

1. Let us get and preserve right and strong apprehensions of this divine perfection. Without a due sense of it, we can never exalt God in our hearts; and the more distinct conceptions we have of this and the rest of his attributes, the more we glorify him. When Moses considered God as his strength and salvation, he would exalt him, Exod. xv. 2, and he could never break out in so admirable a doxology as that in the text, without a deep sense of the glory of his purity, which he speaks of with so much admiration. Such a sense will be of use to us,

(1.) In promoting genuine convictions. A deep consideration of the holiness of God cannot but be followed with a deep consideration of our im-

pure and miserable condition by reason of sin; we cannot glance upon it without reflections upon our own vileness. Adam no sooner heard the voice of a holy God in the garden, but he considered his own nakedness with shame and fear, Gen. iii. 10, much less can we fix our minds upon it, but we must be touched with a sense of our own uncleanness. The clear beams of the sun discover that filthiness in our garments and members, which was not visible in the darkness of the night. Impure metals are discerned by comparing them with that which is pure and perfect in its kind. The sense of guilt is the first natural result upon a sense of this excellent perfection, and the sense of the imperfection of our own righteousness is the next. Who can think of it, and reflect upon himself as an object fit for divine love? Who can have a due thought of it, without regarding himself as stubble before a consuming fire? Who can, without a confusion of heart and face, glance upon that pure eye, which beholds with detestation the foul moles as well as the filthier and bigger spots? When Isaiah saw his glory, and heard how highly the angels exalted God for this perfection, he was in a cold sweat, ready to swoon, till a seraphim with a coal from the altar both purged and revived him, Isa. vi. 5-7. They are sound and genuine convictions, which have the prospect of divine purity for their immediate spring, and not a foresight of our own misery, when it is not the punishment we have deserved, but the holiness we have offended, most grates our hearts. Such convictions are the first rude draughts of the divine image in our spirits, and grateful to God because they are an acknowledgment of the glory of this attribute, and the first mark of honour given to it by the creature; those that never had a sense of their own vileness, were always destitute of a sense of God's holiness. And by the way, we may observe, that those that scoff at any for hanging down the head under the consideration and conviction of sin (as is too usual with the world), scoff at them for having deeper apprehensions of the purity of God than themselves, and consequently make a mock of the holiness of God, which is the ground of those convictions; a sense of this would prevent such a damnable reproaching.

(2.) A sense of this will render us humble in the possession of the greatest holiness a creature were capable of. We are apt to be proud, with the Pharisee, when we look upon others wallowing in the mire of base and unnatural lusts; but let any clap their wings, if they can, in a vain-boasting and exultation, when they view the holiness of God. What torch, if it had reason, would be proud and swagger in its own light, if it compared itself with the sun! 'Who can stand before this holy Lord God?' is the just reflection of the holiest person, as it was of those, 1 Sam. vi. 20, that had felt the marks of his jealousy after their looking into the ark, though likely out of affection to it, and triumphant joy at its return. When did the angels testify, by the covering of their faces, their weakness to bear the lustre of his majesty, but when they beheld his glory! When did they signify, by their covering their feet, the shame of their own vileness, but when their hearts were fullest of the applaudings of this perfection! Isa. vi. 2, 3. Though they found themselves without spot, yet not with such a holiness, that they could appear either with their faces or feet unveiled or unmasked in the presence of God. Doth the immense splendour of this attribute engender shaming reflections in those pure spirits? What will it, what should it do in us, that dwell in houses of clay, and creep up and down with that clay upon our backs, and too much of it in our hearts? The stars themselves, which appear beautiful in the night, are masked at the awaking of the sun. What a dim light is that of a glow-worm to that of the sun! The apprehensions of this made the elders humble themselves in the midst of their glory, by 'casting down

their crowns before his throne,' Rev. iv. 8, 10; a metaphor taken from the triumphing generals among the Romans, who hung up their victorious laurels in the capitol, dedicating them to their gods, acknowledging them their superiors in strength, and authors of their victory. This self-emptiness at the consideration of divine purity, is the note of the true church represented by the four and twenty elders, and a note of a true member of the church; whereas boasting of perfection and merit is the property of the antichristian tribe, that have mean thoughts of this adorable perfection, and think themselves more righteous than the unspotted angels. What a self-annihilation is there in a good man, when the sense of divine purity is most lively in him; yea, how detestable is he to himself? There is as little proportion between the holiness of the divine majesty and that of the most righteous creature, as there is between the nearness of a person that stands upon a mountain to the sun, and of him that beholds him in a vale; one is nearer than the other, but it is an advantage not to be boasted of, in regard of the vast distance that is between the sun and the elevated spectator.

(3.) This would make us full of an affectionate reverence in all our approaches to God. By this perfection God is rendered venerable, and fit to be revered by his creature; and magnificent thoughts of it in the creature would awaken him to an actual reverence of the divine majesty: Ps. cxi. 9, 'Holy and reverend is his name;' a good opinion of this would engender in us a sincere respect towards him; we should then 'serve the Lord with fear,' as the expression is, Ps. ii. 11; that is, be afraid to cast anything before him that may offend the eyes of his purity. Who would venture rashly and garishly into the presence of an eminent moralist, or of a righteous king upon his throne? The fixedness of the angels arose from the continual prospect of this. What if we had been with Isaiah when he saw the vision, and beheld him in the same glory, and the heavenly choir in their reverential posture in the service of God; would it not have barred our wanderings, and staked us down to our duty? Would not the fortifying an idea of it in our minds produce the same effect? It is for want of this we carry ourselves so loosely and unbecomingly in the divine presence, with the same or meaner affections than those wherewith we stand before some vile creature, that is our superior in the world; as though a piece of filthy flesh were more valuable than this perfection of the divinity. How doth the psalmist double his exhortation to men to sing praise to God: Ps. xlvii. 6, 'Sing praise to God, sing praises; sing praise to our King, sing praise,' because of his majesty, and the purity of his dominion: and ver. 8, 'God reigns over the heathen; God sits upon the throne of his holiness.' How would this elevate us in praise, and prostrate us in prayer, when we praise and pray with an understanding and insight of that nature we bless or implore; as he speaks, ver. 7, 'Sing ye praise with understanding.' The holiness of God in his government and dominion, the holiness of his nature, and the holiness of his precepts, should beget in us an humble respect in our approaches. The more we grow in a sense of this, the more shall we advance in the true performance of all our duties.* Those nations which adored the sun, had they at first seen his brightness wrapped and masked in a cloud, and paid a veneration to it, how would their adorations have mounted to a greater point, after they had seen it in its full brightness, shaking off those veils, and chasing away the mists before it; what a profound reverence would they have paid it, when they beheld it in its glory and meridian brightness? Our reverence to God in all our addresses to him will arrive to greater degrees, if every act of duty be ushered in, and seasoned

* Amyrald, Moral. tom. v. p. 462.

with the thoughts of God as sitting upon a throne of holiness; we shall have a more becoming sense of our own vileness, a greater ardour to his service, a deeper respect in his presence, if our understanding be more cleared, and possessed with notions of this perfection. Thus take a view of God in this part of his glory, before you fall down before his throne, and assure yourselves you will find your hearts and services quickened with a new and lively spirit.

(4.) A due sense of this perfection in God would produce in us a fear of God, and arm us against temptations and sin. What made the heathens so wanton and loose, but the representations of their gods as vicious. Who would stick at adulteries and more prodigious lusts, that can take a pattern for them from the person he adores for a deity! Upon which account Plato would have poets banished from his commonwealth, because by dressing up their gods in wanton garbs in their poems, they encouraged wickedness in the people; but if the thoughts of God's holiness were impressed upon us, we should regard sin with the same eye, mark it with the same detestation in our measures, as God himself doth. So far as we are sensible of the divine purity, we should account sin vile, as it deserves; we should hate it entirely, without a grain of love to it, and hate it perpetually: Ps. cxix. 104, 'Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.' He looks into God's statute-book, and thereby arrives to an understanding of the purity of his nature, whence his hatred of iniquity commenced. This would govern our motion, check our vices; it would make us tremble at the hissing of a temptation: when a corruption did but peep out, and put forth its head, a look to the divine purity would be attended with a fresh convoy to resist it. There is no such fortification as to be wrapped up in the sense of this: this would fill us with an awe of God: we should be ashamed to admit any filthy thing into us, which we know is detestable to his pure eye. As the approach of a grave and serious man makes children hasten their trifles out of the way, so would a consideration of this attribute make us cast away our idols, and fling away our ridiculous thoughts and designs.

(5.) A due sense of this perfection would inflame us with a vehement desire to be conformed to him. All our desires would be ardent to regulate ourselves according to this pattern of holiness and goodness, which is not to be equalled; the contemplating it as it shines forth in the face of Christ will 'transform us into the same image,' 2 Cor. iii. 19. Since our lapsed state, we cannot behold the holiness of God in itself without affrightment; nor is it an object of imitation, but as tempered in Christ to our view. When we cannot without blinding ourselves look upon the sun in its brightness, we may behold it through a coloured glass, whereby the lustre of it is moderated without dazzling our eyes. The sense of it will furnish us with a greatness of mind, that little things will be contemned by us; motives of a greater alloy would have little influence upon us; we should have the highest motives to every duty, and motives of the same strain which influence the angels above. It would change us, not only into an angelical nature, but a divine nature. We should act like men of another sphere, as if we had received our original in another world, and seen with angels the ravishing beauties of heaven. How little would the mean employments of the world sink us into dirt and mud! How often hath the meditation of the courage of a valiant man, or acuteness and industry of a learned person, spurred on some men to an imitation of them, and transformed them into the same nature; as the looking upon the sun imprints an image of the sun upon our eye, that we seem to behold nothing but the sun

a while after. The view of the divine purity would fill us with a holy generosity to imitate him, more than the examples of the best men upon earth. It was a saying of a heathen, that if virtue were visible, it would kindle a noble flame of love to it in the heart by its ravishing beauty. Shall the infinite purity of the author of all virtue come short of the strength of a creature? Can we not render that visible to us by frequent meditation, which though it be invisible in its nature, is made visible in his law, in his ways, in his Son? It would make us ready to obey him, since we know he cannot command anything that is sinful, but what is holy, just, and good. It would put all our affections in their due place, elevate them above the creature, and subject them to the Creator.

(6.) It would make us patient and contented under all God's dispensations. All penal evils are the fruits of his holiness, as he is judge and governor of the world. He is not an arbitrary judge, nor doth any sentence pronounced, nor warrant for execution issue from him, but what bears upon it a stamp of the righteousness of his nature; he doth nothing by passion or unrighteousness, but according to the eternal law of his own unstained nature, which is the rule to him in his works, the basis and foundation of his throne and sovereign dominion. Ps. lxxxix. 14, 'Justice,' or righteousness, 'and judgment are the habitation of thy throne;' upon these his sovereign power is established, so that there can be no just complaint or indictment brought against any of his proceedings with men. How doth our Saviour, who had the highest apprehensions of God's holiness, justify God in his deepest distresses, when he cried and was not answered in the particular he desired, in that prophetic psalm of him: Ps. xxii. 2, 3, 'I cry day and night, but thou hearest not.' Thou seemest to be deaf to all my petitions, 'afar off from the words of my roaring, but thou art holy.' I cast no blame upon thee; all thy dealings are squared by thy holiness, this is the only law to thee, in this I acquiesce. It is part of thy holiness to hide thy face from me, to shew thereby thy detestation of sin. Our Saviour adores the divine purity in his sharpest agony, and a like sense of it would guide us in the same steps to acknowledge and glorify it in our greatest desertions and afflictions, especially since, as they are the fruit of the holiness of his nature, so they are the means to impart to us clearer stamps of holiness, according to that in himself, which is the original copy, Heb. xii. 10. He melts us down as gold, to fit us for the receiving a new impression, to mortify the affections of the flesh, and clothe us with the graces of his Spirit. The due sense of this would make us to submit to his stroke, and to wait upon him for a good issue of his dealings.

2. Exhortation. Is holiness a perfection of the divine nature? Is it the glory of the Deity? Then let us glorify this holiness of God. Moses glorifies it in the text, and glorifies it in a song, which was a copy for all ages. The whole corporation of seraphims have their mouths filled with the praises of it. The saints, whether militant on earth, or triumphant in heaven, are to continue the same acclamation, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts,' Rev. iv. 8. Neither angels nor glorified spirits exalt at the same rate the power which formed them creatures, nor goodness which preserves them in a blessed immortality, as they do holiness, which they bear some beams of in their own nature, and whereby they are capacitated to stand before his throne. Upon the account of this, a debt of praise is demanded of all rational creatures by the psalmist: Ps. xcix. 3, 'Let them praise thy great and terrible name, for it is holy.' Not so much for the greatness of his majesty, or the treasures of his justice, but as they are considered in conjunction with his holiness, which renders them beautiful; 'for it is holy.'

Grandeur and majesty simply in themselves are not objects of praise, nor do they merit the acclamations of men, when destitute of righteousness; this only renders everything else adorable, and this adorns the divine greatness with an amiableness: Isa. xii. 6, 'Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee,' and makes his might worthy of praise, Luke i. 49. In honouring this, which is the soul and spirit of all the rest, we give a glory to all the perfections which constitute and beautify his nature; and without the glorifying this we glorify nothing of them, though we should extol every other single attribute a thousand times. He values no other adoration of his creatures, unless this be interested, nor accepts anything as a glory from them: Lev. x. 3, 'I will be sanctified in them that come near me, and I will be glorified.' As if he had said, In manifesting my name to be holy, you truly, you only honour me. And as the Scripture seldom speaks of this perfection without a particular emphasis, it teaches us not to think of it without a special elevation of heart. By this act only, while we are on earth, can we join concert with the angels in heaven; he that doth not honour it, delight in it, and in the meditation of it, hath no resemblance of it; he hath none of the image, that delights not in the original. Everything of God is glorious, but this most of all. If he built the world principally for anything, it was for the communication of his goodness, and display of his holiness. He formed the rational creature to manifest his holiness in that law whereby he was to be governed. Then deprive not God of the design of his own glory.

We honour this attribute,

(1.) When we make it the ground of our love to God; not because he is gracious to us, but holy in himself. As God honours it in loving himself for it, we should honour it by pitching our affections upon him chiefly for it. What renders God amiable to himself, should render him lovely to all his creatures. Isa. xlii. 21, 'The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake.' If the hatred of evil be the immediate result of a love to God, then the peculiar object or term of our love to God must be that perfection which stands in direct opposition to the hatred of evil. Ps. xevii. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord hate evil.' When we honour his holiness in every stamp and impression of it, his law, not principally because of its usefulness to us, its accommodateness to the order of the world, but for its innate purity, and his people, not for our interest in them so much as for bearing upon them this glittering mark of the Deity, we honour then the purity of the lawgiver, and the excellency of the sanctifier.

(2.) We honour it when we regard chiefly the illustrious appearance of this in his judgments in the world. In a case of temporal judgment, Moses celebrates it in the text; in a case of spiritual judgments, the angels applaud it in Isaiah. All his severe proceedings are nothing but the strong breathings of this attribute. Purity is the flash of his revenging sword. If he did not hate evil, his vengeance would not reach the committers of it. He is a 'refiner's fire' in the day of his anger, Mal. iii. 2. By his separating judgments, he 'takes away the wicked of the earth like dross,' Ps. cxix. 119. How is his holiness honoured, when we take notice of his sweeping out the rubbish of the world; how he suits punishment to sin, and discovers his hatred of the matter and circumstances of the evil in the matter and circumstances of the judgment. This perfection is legible in every stroke of his sword; we honour it when we read the syllables of it, and not by standing amazed only at the greatness and severity of the blow, when we read how holy he is in his most terrible dispensations. For as in them God magnifies the greatness of his power, so he sanctifies himself; that is, declares the

purity of his nature as a revenger of all impiety : Ezek. xxxviii. 22, 23, 'And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood ; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself.'

(3.) We honour this attribute when we take notice of it in every accomplishment of his promise, and every grant of a mercy. His truth is but a branch of his righteousness, a slip from this root. He is 'glorious in holiness' in the account of Moses, because he 'led forth his people whom he had redeemed,' Exod. xv. 13 : his people, by a covenant with their fathers, being the God of Moses, the God of Israel, and the God of their fathers. Ver. 2, 'My God, and my father's God, I will exalt thee.' For what? For his faithfulness to his promise. The holiness of God, which Mary, Luke i. 49, magnifies, is summed up in this, the help he afforded his servant Israel 'in the remembrance of his mercy, as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and his seed for ever,' ver. 54, 55. The certainty of his covenant mercy depends upon an unchangeableness of his holiness. What are 'sure mercies,' Isa. lv. 3, are 'holy mercies' in the Septuagint, and in Acts xiii. 34, which makes that translation canonical. His nearness to answer us when we call upon him for such mercies, is a fruit of the holiness of his name and nature ; Ps. cxlv. 17, 'The Lord is holy in all his works ; the Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him.' Hannah, after a return of prayer, sets a particular mark upon this in her song, 1 Sam. ii. 2, 'There is none holy as the Lord ;' separated from all dross, firm to his covenant, and righteous in his suppliants that confide in him and plead his word. When we observe the workings of this in every return of prayer, we honour it ; it is a sign the mercy is really a return of prayer, and not a mercy of course, bearing upon it only the characters of a common providence. This was the perfection David would bless for the catalogue of mercies in Ps. ciii. 1, &c., 'Bless his *holy* name.' Certainly one reason why sincere prayer is so delightful to him, is because it puts him upon the exercise of this his beloved perfection, which he so much delights to honour. Since God acts in all those as the governor of the world, we honour him not, unless we take notice of that righteousness which fits him for a governor, and is the inward spring of all his motions : Gen. xviii. 25, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' It was his design in his pity to Israel, as well as the calamities he intended against the heathens, to be 'sanctified in them ;' that is, declared holy in his merciful as well as his judicial procedure, Ezek. xxxvi. 21, 23. Hereby God credits his righteousness, which seemed to be forgotten by the one and contemned by the other ;* he removes by this all suspicion of any unfaithfulness in him.

(4.) We honour this attribute when we trust his covenant and promise against outward appearances. Thus our Saviour in the prophecy of him, Ps. xxii. 2-4, when God seemed to bar up the gates of his palace against the entry of any more petitions ; this attribute proves the support of the Redeemer's soul : 'But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.' As it refers to what goes before, it has been twice explained ; as it refers to what follows, it is a ground of trust, 'Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel.' Thou hast had the praises of Israel for many ages for thy holiness. How ? 'Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them ;' they honoured thy holiness by their trust, and thou didst honour their faith by a deliverance ; thou always hadst a purity that would not shame nor confound them. I will trust in thee as thou art holy, and expect the breaking

* Sanct. in *loc.*

out of this attribute for my good as well as my predecessors: 'Our fathers trusted in thee,' &c.

(5.) We honour this attribute when we shew a greater affection to the marks of his holiness in times of the greatest contempt of it. As the psalmist, Ps. cxix. 126, 127, 'They have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold.' While they spurn at the purity of thy law, I will value it above the gold they possess; I will esteem it as gold because others count it as dross. By their scorn of it my love to it shall be the warmer, and my hatred of iniquity shall be the sharper. The disdain of others should inflame us with a zeal and fortitude to appear in the behalf of his despised honour.

We honour this holiness many other ways: by preparation for our addresses to him out of a sense of his purity; when we imitate it. As he honours us by teaching us his statutes, Ps. cxix. 135, so we honour him by learning and observing them. When we beg of him to shew himself a refiner of us, to make us more conformable to him in holiness, and bless him for any communication of it to us, it renders us beautiful and lovely in his sight.

To conclude; to honour it is the way to engage it for us. To give it the glory of what it hath done by the arm of power for our rescue from sin, and beating down our corruptions at his feet, is the way to see more of his marvellous works, and behold a clearer brightness. As unthankfulness makes him withdraw his grace, Rom. i. 21, 24, so glorifying him causes him to impart it. God honours men in the same way they honour him. When we honour him by acknowledging his purity, he will honour us by communicating of it to us. This is the way to derive a greater excellency to our souls.

3. Exhortation. Since holiness is an eminent perfection of the divine nature, let us labour after a conformity to God in this perfection. The nature of God is presented to us in the Scriptures, both as a pattern to imitate, and a motive to persuade the creature to holiness, 1 John iii. 3. Since it is therefore the nature of God, the more our natures are beautified with it the more like we are to the divine nature, Mat. v. 48, Lev. xi. 44. It is not the pattern of angels nor archangels that our Saviour or his apostle proposeth for our imitation, but the original of all purity, God himself, 1 Peter i. 15, 16. The same that created us to be imitated by us. Nor is an equal degree of purity enjoyed by us; though we are to be pure, and perfect, and merciful as God is, yet not essentially so; for that would be to command us an impossibility in itself, as much as to order us to cease to be creatures, and commence gods. No creature can be essentially holy but by participation from the chief fountain of holiness, but we must have the same kind of holiness, the same truth of holiness; as a short line may be as straight as another, though it parallel it not in the immense length of it; a copy may have the likeness of the original, though not the same perfection. We cannot be good without eyeing some exemplar of goodness as the pattern. No pattern is so suitable as that which is the highest goodness and purity. That limner that would draw the most excellent piece fixes his eyes upon the most excellent pattern. He that would be a good orator, or poet, or artificer, considers some person most excellent in each kind as the object of his imitation. Who so fit as God to be viewed as the pattern of holiness in our intendment of, and endeavour after, holiness? The Stoics, one of the best sects of philosophers, advised their disciples to pitch upon some eminent example of virtue, according to which to form their lives, as Socrates, &c. But true holiness doth not only endeavour to live the life of a good

man, but chooses to live a divine life. As before the man was 'alienated from the life of God,' Eph. iv. 19, so upon his return he aspires after the life of God. To endeavour to be like a good man is to make one image like another, to set our clocks by other clocks without regarding the sun; but true holiness consists in a likeness to the most exact sampler. God being the first purity, is the rule as well as the spring of all purity in the creature, the chief and first object of imitation. We disown ourselves to be his creatures, if we breathe not after a resemblance to him in what he is imitable. There was in man, as created according to God's image, a natural appetite to resemble God. It was at first planted in him by the author of his nature. The devil's temptation of him by that motive to transgress the law had been as an arrow shot against a brazen wall, had there not been a desire of some likeness to his Creator engraven upon him, Gen. iii. 5. It would have had no more influence upon him than it could have had upon a mere animal. But man mistook the term; he would have been like God in knowledge, whereas he should have affected a greater resemblance of him in purity. Oh that we could exemplify God in our nature! Precepts may instruct us more, but examples affect us more; one directs us, but the other attracts us. What can be more attractive of our imitation than that which is the original of all purity in both men and angels?

This conformity to him consists in an imitation of him,

(1.) In his law. The purity of his nature was first visible in this glass; hence it is called a 'holy law,' Rom. vii. 12, a 'pure law,' Ps. xix. 8. Holy and pure, as it is a ray of the pure nature of the Lawgiver. When our lives are a comment upon his law, they are expressive of his holiness; we conform to his holiness when we regulate ourselves by his law, as it is a transcript of his holiness; we do not imitate it when we do a thing in the matter of it agreeable to that holy rule, but when we do it with respect to the purity of the Lawgiver beaming in it. If it be agreeable to God's will, and convenient for some design of our own, and we do anything only with a respect to that design, we make not God's holiness discovered in the law our rule, but our own conveniency. It is not a conformity to God, but a conformity of our actions to self. As in abstinence from intemperate courses, not because the holiness of God in his law hath prescribed it, but because the health of our bodies, or some noble contentments of life, require it; then it is not God's holiness that is our rule, but our own security, conveniency, or something else which we make a god to ourselves.

It must be a real conformity to the law; our holiness should shine as really in the practice as God's purity doth in the precept. God hath not a pretence of purity in his nature, but a reality; it is not only a sudden boiling up of an admiration of him, or a starting wish to be like him, from some sudden impression upon the fancy (which is a mere temporary blaze), but a settled temper of soul, loving everything that is like him, doing things out of a firm desire to resemble his purity in the copy he hath set; not a resting in negatives, but aspiring to positives. *Holy* and *harmless* are distinct things; they were distinct qualifications in our high priest in his obedience to the law, Heb. vii. 26, so they must be in us.

(2.) In his Christ. As the law is the transcript, so Christ is the image of his holiness. The glory of God is too dazzling to be beheld by us. The acute eye of an angel is too weak to look upon that bright sun without covering his face. We are much too weak to take our measures from that purity which is infinite in his nature; but he hath made his Son like us, that by the imitation of him in that temper and shadow of human flesh, we may arrive to a resemblance of him, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Then there is a con-

formity to him, when that which Christ did is drawn in lively colours in the soul of a Christian ; when as he died upon the cross, we die to our sins ; as he rose from the grave, we rise from our lusts ; as he ascended on high, we mount our souls thither ; when we express in our lives what shined in his, and exemplify in our hearts what he acted in the world, and become [one] with him, as he was separate from sinners. The holiness of God in Christ is our ultimate pattern. As we are not only to believe in Christ, but by Christ in God, John xiv. 1, so we are not only to imitate Christ, but the holiness of God as discovered in Christ.

And to enforce this upon us, let us consider,

(1.) It is this only wherein he commands our imitation of him. We are not commanded to be mighty and wise, as God is mighty and wise, but 'be holy as I am holy.' The declarations of his power are to enforce our subjection, those of his wisdom to encourage our direction by him ; but this only to attract our imitation. When he saith, 'I am holy,' the immediate inference he makes is, 'be ye so too,' which is not the proper instruction from any other perfection.* Man was created by divine power, and harmonized by divine wisdom, but not after them, or according to them, as the true image ; this was the prerogative of divine holiness, to be the pattern of his rational creature, Eph. iv. 24, Col. iii. 10. Wisdom and power were subservient to this, the one as the pencil, the other as the hand that moved it. The condition of a creature is too mean to have the communications of the divine essence, the true impressions of his righteousness and goodness we are only capable of. It is only in those moral perfections we are said to resemble God. The devils, those impure and ruined spirits, are nearer to him in strength and knowledge than we are ; yet in regard of that natural and intellectual perfection, never counted like him, but at the greatest distance from him, because at the greatest distance from his purity. God values not a natural might, nor an acute understanding, nor vouchsafes such perfections the glorious title of that of his image. Plutarch saith, God is angry with those that imitate his thunder or lightning, his works of majesty, but delighteth with those that imitate his virtue.† In this only we can never incur any reproof from him, but for falling short of him and his glory. Had Adam endeavoured after an imitation of this, instead of that of divine knowledge, he had escaped his fall, and preserved his standing. And had Lucifer wished himself like God in this as well as his dominion, he had still been a glorious angel, instead of being now a ghastly devil. To reach after a union with the supreme being in regard of holiness, is the only generous and commendable ambition.

(2.) This is the prime way of honouring God. We do not so glorify God by elevated admirations, or eloquent expressions, or pompous services of him, as when we aspire to a conversing with him with unstained spirits, and live to him in living like him. The angels are not called holy for applauding his purity, but conforming to it. The more perfect any creature is in the rank of beings, the more is the Creator honoured ; as it is more for the honour of God to create an angel or man, than a mere animal ; because there are in such, clearer characters of divine power and goodness, than in those that are inferior. The more perfect any creature is morally, the more is God glorified by that creature ; it is a real declaration that God is the best and most amiable being, that nothing besides him is valuable, and worthy to be the object of our imitation. It is a greater honouring of him, than the highest acts of devotion, and the most religious bodily exercise, or

* In this, saith Plato, God is *ἐν μέσῳ παράδειγμα*.

† Eugub. de perenni Philoso. lib. vi. cap. vi.

the singing this song of Moses in the text, with a triumphant spirit ; as it is more the honour of a father to be imitated in his virtues by his son, than to have all the glaving commendations by the tongue or pen of a vicious and debauched child. By this we honour him in that perfection which is dearest to him, and counted by him as the chiefest glory of his nature. God seems to accept the glorifying this attribute, as if it were a real addition to that holiness which is infinite in his nature, and because infinite, cannot admit of any increase ; and therefore the word *sanctified* is used instead of *glorified*. Isa. viii. 13, ' Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself ; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.' And xxix. 23, ' They shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and fear the God of Israel.' This sanctification of God is by the fear of him, which signifies in the language of the Old Testament, a reverence of him, and a righteousness before him. He doth not say, when he would have his power or wisdom glorified, ' Empower me,' or ' Make me wise ;' but when he would have holiness glorified by the creature, it is ' Sanctify me ;' that is, manifest the purity of my nature by the holiness of your lives. But he expresseth it in such a term, as if it were an addition to this infinite perfection ; so acceptable it is to him, as if it were a contribution from his creature for the enlarging an attribute so pleasing to him, and so glorious in his eye. It is, as much as in the creature lies, a preserving the life of God, since this perfection is his life ; and that he would as soon part with his life as part with his purity. It keeps up the reputation of God in the world, and attracts others to a love of him ; whereas unworthy carriages defame God in the eyes of men, and bring up an ill report of him, as if he were such a one as those that profess him, and walk unsuitably to their profession, appear to be.

(3.) This is the excellency and beauty of a creature. The title of beauty is given to it in Ps. cx. 3, *beauties*, in the plural number, as comprehending in it all other beauties whatsoever. What is a divine excellency cannot be a creature's deformity. The natural beauty of it is a representation of the divinity ; and a holy man ought to esteem himself excellent, it being such in his measure as his God is, and puts his principal felicity in the possession of the same purity in truth. This is the refined complexion of the angels that stand before his throne. The devils lost their comeliness when they fell from it. It was the honour of the human nature of our Saviour, not only to be united to the Deity, but to be sanctified by it. He was ' fairer than all the children of men,' because he had a holiness above the children of men : ' grace was poured into his lips,' Ps. xlv. 2. It was the jewel of the reasonable nature in paradise. Conformity to God was man's original happiness in his created state, and what was naturally so, cannot but be immutably so in its own nature. The beauty of every copied thing consists in its likeness to the original ; everything hath more of loveliness, as it hath greater impressions of its first pattern ; in this regard holiness hath more of beauty on it, than the whole creation, because it partakes of a greater excellency of God than the sun, moon, and stars. No greater glory can be, than to be a conspicuous and visible image of the invisible, and holy, and blessed God. As this is the splendour of all the divine attributes, so it is the flower of all a Christian's graces, the crown of all religion ; it is the glory of the Spirit. In this regard the ' king's daughter' is said to be ' all glorious within,' Ps. xlv. 13. It is more excellent than the soul itself, since the greatest soul is but a deformed piece without it, a diamond without lustre.* What are the noble faculties of the soul without it, but as a curious rusty watch, a delicate heap of disorder and confusion ! It is impossible there can be beauty,

* Vaughan, p. 4, 5.

where there are a multitude of 'spots and wrinkles,' that blemish a countenance, Eph. v. 27. It can never be in its true brightness, but when it is perfect in purity, when it regains what it was possessed of by creation, and dispossessed of by the fall, and recovers its primitive temper. We are not so beautiful by being the work of God, as by having a stamp of God upon us. Worldly greatness may make men honourable in the sight of creeping worms. Soft lives, ambitious reaches, luxurious pleasures, and a pompous religion, render no man excellent and noble in the sight of God. This is not the excellency and nobility of the Deity which we are bound to resemble; other lines of a divine image must be drawn in us to render us truly excellent.

(4.) It is our life. What is the life of God, is truly the life of a rational creature.* The life of the body consists not in the perfection of its members, and in the integrity of its organs; these remain when the body becomes a carcass; but in the presence of the soul, and its vigorous animation of every part, to perform the distinct offices belonging to each of them. The life of the soul consists not in its being, or spiritual substance, or the excellency of its faculties of understanding and will, but in the moral and becoming operations of them. The spirit is only 'life because of righteousness,' Rom. viii. 10. The faculties are turned by it, to acquit themselves in their functions, according to the will of God; the absence of this doth not only deform the soul, but in a sort annihilate it, in regard of its true essence and end. Grace gives a Christian being, and a want of it is the want of a true being, 1 Cor. xv. 10. When Adam divested himself of his original righteousness, he came under the force of the threatening, in regard of a spiritual death. Every person is morally 'dead whiles he lives' an unholy life, 1 Tim. v. 6. What life is to the body, that is righteousness to the Spirit; and the greater measure of holiness it hath, the more of life it hath, because it is in a greater nearness, and partakes more fully of the fountain of life. Is not that the most worthy life, which God makes most account of, without which his life could not be a pleasant and blessed life, but a life worse than death! What a miserable life is that of the men of the world, that are carried with greedy inclinations to all manner of unrighteousness, whither their interests or their lusts invite them! The most beautiful body is a carcass, and the most honourable person hath but a brutish life, Ps. xlix. 20; miserable creatures when their life shall be extinct without a divine rectitude, when all other things will vanish as the shadows of the night at the appearance of the sun.

Holiness is our life.

(5.) It is this only fits us for communion with God. Since it is our beauty and our life, without it, what communion can an excellent God have with deformed creatures, a living God with dead creatures? 'Without holiness none shall see God,' Heb. xii. 14. The creature must be stripped of his unrighteousness, or God of his purity, before they can come together. Likeness is the ground of communion and of delight in it. The opposition between God and unholy souls is as great as that between light and darkness, 1 John i. 6. Divine fruition is not so much by a union of presence as a union of nature. Heaven is not so much an outward as an inward life; the foundation of glory is laid in grace; a resemblance to God is our vital happiness, without which the vision of God would not be so much as a cloudy and shadowy happiness, but rather a torment than a felicity; unless we be of a like nature to God, we cannot have a pleasing fruition of him. Some philosophers think that if our bodies were of the same nature with the

* Amyrald in Heb. p. 101, 102.

heavens, of an ethereal substance, the nearness of the sun would cherish, not scorch us. Were we partakers of a divine nature, we might enjoy God with delight; whereas remaining in our unlikeness to him, we cannot think of him, and approach to him without terror. As soon as sin had stripped man of the image of God, he was an exile from the comfortable presence of God, unworthy for God to hold any correspondence with. He can no more delight in a defiled person than a man can take a toad into intimate converse with him; he would hereby discredit his own nature, and justify our impurity. The holiness of a creature only prepares him for an eternal conjunction with God in glory. Enoch's walking with God was the cause of his being so soon wafted to the place full of a fruition of him; he hath as much delight in such as in heaven itself; one is his habitation as well as the other. The one is his habitation of glory, and the other is the house of his pleasure. If he dwell in Zion, it must be a 'holy mountain,' Joel iii. 17, and the members of Zion must be upheld in their rectitude and integrity before they be 'set before the face of God for ever,' Ps. xli. 12. Such are stiled his jewels, his portion, as if he lived upon them, as a man upon his inheritance. As God cannot delight in us, so neither can we delight in God without it. We must 'purify ourselves as he is pure,' if we expect to 'see him as he is,' 1 John iii. 2, 3, in the comfortable glory and beauty of his nature, else the sight of God would be terrible and troublesome. We cannot be satisfied with the likeness of God at the resurrection, unless we have a righteousness wherewith to 'behold his face,' Ps. xvii. 15. It is a vain imagination in any to think that heaven can be a place of happiness to him, in whose eye the beauty of holiness, which fills and adorns it, is an unlovely thing; or that any can have a satisfaction in that divine purity which is loathsome to him in the imitations of it. We cannot enjoy him, unless we resemble him; nor take any pleasure in him if we were with him, without something of likeness to him.

Holiness fits us for communion with God.

(6.) We can have no evidence of our election and adoption without it. Conformity to God in purity is the fruit of electing love: Eph. i. 4, 'He hath chosen us that we should be holy.' The goodness of the fruit evidenceth the nature of the root. This is the seal that assures us the patent is the authentic grant of the prince. Whatsoever is holy speaks itself to be from God, and whosoever is holy speaks himself to belong to God. This is the only evidence that we are 'born of God,' 1 John ii. 29. The subduing our souls to him, the forming us into a resemblance to himself, is a more certain sign we belong to him, than if we had with Isaiah seen his glory in the vision with all his train of angels about him. This justifies us to be the seed of God, when he hath as it were taken a slip from his own purity, and engrafted it in our spirits. He can never own us for his children without his mark, the stamp of holiness. The devil's stamp is none of God's badge. Our spiritual extraction from him is but pretended, unless we do things worthy of so illustrious a birth, and becoming the honour of so great a Father. What evidence can we else have of any child-like love to God, since the proper act of love is to imitate the object of our affections?

And that we may be in some measure like to God in this excellent perfection,

[1.] Let us be often viewing and ruminating on the holiness of God, especially as discovered in Christ. It is by a believing meditation on him that we are 'changed into the same image,' 2 Cor. iii. 18. We can think often of nothing that is excellent in the world but it draws our faculties to some kind of suitable operation; and why should not such an excellent idea

of the holiness of God in Christ perfect our understandings, and awaken all the powers of our souls to be formed to actions worthy of him? A painter, employed in the limning some excellent piece, has not only his pattern before his eyes, but his eye frequently upon the pattern, to possess his fancy to draw forth an exact resemblance. He that would express the image of God must imprint upon his mind the purity of his nature, cherish it in his thoughts, that the excellent beauty of it may pass from his understanding to his affections, and from his affections to his practice. How can we arise to a conformity to God in Christ, whose most holy nature we seldom glance upon, and more rarely sink our souls into the depths of it by meditation! Be frequent in the meditation of the holiness of God.

[2.] Let us often exercise ourselves in acts of love to God, because of this perfection. The more adoring thoughts we have of God, the more delightfully we shall aspire to, and more ravishingly catch after, anything that may promote the more full draught of his divine image in our hearts. What we intensely affect, we desire to be as near as we can, and to be that very thing rather than ourselves. All imitations of others arise from an intense love to their persons or excellency. When the soul is ravished with this perfection of God, it will desire to be united with it, to have it drawn in it, more than to have its own being continued to it. It will desire and delight in its own being, in order to this heavenly and spiritual work. The impressions of the nature of God upon it, and the imitations of the nature of God by it, will be more desirable than any natural perfection whatsoever. The will in loving is rendered like the object beloved, is turned into its nature,* and imbibes its qualities. The soul by loving God will find itself more and more transformed into the divine image, whereas slighted ensamples are never thought worthy of imitation.

[3.] Let us make God our end. Every man's mind forms itself to a likeness to that which it makes its chief end. An earthly soul is as drossy as the earth he gapes for; an ambitious soul is as elevated as the honour he reaches at; the same characters that are upon the thing aimed at, will be imprinted upon the spirit of him that aims at it. When God and his glory are made our end, we shall find a silent likeness pass in upon us; the beauty of God will by degrees enter upon our souls.

[4.] In every deliberate action, let us reflect upon the divine purity as a pattern. Let us examine whether anything we are prompted unto, bear an impression of God upon it, whether it looks like a thing that God himself would do in that case, were he in our natures and in our circumstances. See whether it hath the livery of God upon it, how congruous it is to his nature; whether, and in what manner, the holiness of God can be glorified thereby; and let us be industrious in all this: for can such an imitation be easy which is resisted by the constant assaults of the flesh, which is discouraged by our ignorance, and depressed by our faint and languishing desires after it? Oh, happy we, if there were such a heart in us!

4. A fourth exhortation. If holiness be a perfection belonging to the nature of God, then, where there is some weak conformity to the holiness of God, let us labour to grow up in it, and breathe after fuller measures of it. The more likeness we have to him, the more love we shall have from him. Communion will be suitable to our imitation, his love to himself in his essence will cast out beams of love to himself in his image. If God loves holiness in a lower measure, much more will he love it in a higher degree, because then his image is more illustrious and beautiful, and comes nearer to the lively lineaments of his own infinite purity. Perfection in anything

* Amor naturam induit et mores imbibit rei amatae.

is more lovely and amiable than imperfection in any state, and the nearer anything arrives to perfection, the further are those things separated from it which might cool an affection to it. An increase in holiness is attended with a manifestation of his love : John xiv. 21, ' He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me, and he shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and I will manifest myself to him.' It is a testimony of love to God, and God will not be behind hand with the creature in kindness ; he loves a holy man for some resemblance to him in his nature, but when there is an abounding in sanctified dispositions suitable to it, there is an increase of favour ; the more we resemble the original, the more shall we enjoy the blessedness of that original ; as any partake more of the divine likeness, they partake more of the divine happiness.

5. Exhortation. Let us carry ourselves holily in a spiritual manner in all our religious approaches to God : Ps. xciii. 5, ' Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, for ever.' This attribute should work in us a deep and reverential respect to God. This is the reason rendered why we should ' worship at his footstool,' in the lowest posture of humility, prostrate before him, because ' he is holy,' Ps. xcix. 5. Shoes must be put off from our feet, Exod. iii. 5, that is, lusts from our affections, everything that our souls are clogged and bemired with, as the shoe is with dirt. He is not willing we should offer to him an impure soul, mired hearts, rotten carcasses, putrefied in vice, rotten in iniquity. Our services are to be as free from profaneness as the sacrifices of the law were to be free from sickness or any blemish. Whatsoever is contrary to his purity is abhorred by him, and unlovely in his sight, and can meet with no other success at his hands, but a disdainful turning away both of his eye and ear, Isa. i. 15. Since he is an immense purity, he will reject from his presence, and from having any communion with him, all that which is not conformable to him ; as light chases away the darkness of the night, and will not mix with it. If we ' stretch out our hands towards him,' we must ' put iniquity far away from us,' Job xi. 13, 14 ; the fruits of all service will else drop off to nothing. ' Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to the Lord.' When ? When the heart is purged by Christ ' sitting as a purifier of silver,' Mal. iii. 3, 4. Not all the incense of the Indies yield him so sweet a savour, as one spiritual act of worship from a heart estranged from the vileness of the world, and ravished with an affection to, and a desire of imitating, the purity of his nature.

6. Exhortation. Let us address for holiness to God the fountain of it. As he is the author of bodily life in the creature, so he is the author of his own life, the life of God in the soul. By his holiness he makes men holy, as the sun by his light enlightens the air. He is not only the holy One, but *our* holy One, Isa. xliii. 15 ' The Lord that sanctifies us,' Lev. xx. 8. As he hath mercy to pardon us, so he hath holiness to purify us, the excellency of being a sun to comfort us, and a shield to protect us, ' giving grace and glory,' Ps. lxxxiv. 11 : grace whereby we may have communion with him to our comfort, and strength against our spiritual enemies for our defence ; grace as our preparatory to glory, and grace growing up till it ripen in glory. He only can mould us into a divine frame. The great original can only derive the excellency of his own nature to us. We are too low, too lame to lift up ourselves to it ; too much in love with our own deformity, to admit of this beauty without a heavenly power inclining our desires for it, our affections to it, our willingness to be partakers of it. He can as soon set the beauty of holiness in a deformed heart, as the beauty of harmony in a confused mass when he made the world. He can as soon cause the light of purity to rise out of the darkness of corruption, as frame glorious spirits out

of the insufficiency of nothing. His beauty doth not decay, he hath as much in himself now as he had in his eternity: he is as ready to impart it as he was at the creation; only we must wait upon him for it, and be content to have it by small measures and degrees. There is no fear of our sanctification, if we come to him as a God of holiness, since he is a God of peace, and the breach made by Adam is repaired by Christ: 1 Thess. v. 23, 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly,' &c. He restores the sanctifying Spirit which was withdrawn by the fall, as he is a God pacified, and his holiness righted by the Redeemer. The beauty of it appears in its smiles upon a man in Christ, and is as ready to impart itself to the reconciled creature, as before justice was to punish the rebellious one. He loves to send forth the streams of this perfection into created channels, more than any else. He did not design the making the creature so powerful as he might, because power is not such an excellency in its own nature, but as it is conducted and managed by some other excellency. Power is indifferent, and may be used well or ill, according as the possessor of it is righteous or unrighteous. God makes not the creature so powerful as he might, but he delights to make the creature that waits upon him as holy as it can be, beginning it in this world, and ripening it in the other. It is from him we must expect it, and from him that we must beg it, and draw arguments from the holiness of his nature to move him to work holiness in our spirits. We cannot have a stronger plea. Purity is the favourite of his own nature, and delights itself in the resemblances of it in the creature. Let us also go to God, to preserve what he hath already wrought and imparted. As we cannot attain it, so we cannot maintain it without him. God gave it Adam, and he lost it: when God gives it us, we shall lose it without his influencing and preserving grace. The channel will be without a stream, if the fountain do not bubble it forth; and the streams will vanish, if the fountain doth not constantly supply them. Let us apply ourselves to him for holiness, as he is a God 'glorious in holiness.' By this we honour God, and advantage ourselves.