

## A DISCOURSE UPON THE WISDOM OF GOD.

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*To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.—*  
ROM. XVI. 27.

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

In ver. 17, he warns them not to be drawn aside from the gospel doctrine which had been taught them, by the plausible pretences and insinuations which the corrupters of the doctrine and rule of Christ never want from the suggestions of their carnal wisdom. The brats of soul-destroying errors may walk about the world in a garb and disguise of good words and fair speeches, as it is in the 18th verse, 'by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.' And for their encouragement to a constancy in the gospel doctrine, he assures them that all those that would dispossess them of truth, to possess them with vanity, are but Satan's instruments, and will fall under the same captivity and yoke with their principal: ver. 18, 20  
'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.'

Whence observe,

1. All corrupters of divine truth, and troublers of the church's peace, are no better than devils. Our Saviour thought the name Satan a title merited by Peter, when he breathed out an advice, as an axe at the root of the gospel, the death of Christ, the foundation of all gospel truth; and the apostle concludes them under the same character, which hinder the superstructure, and would mix their chaff with his wheat. Mat. xvi. 23, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' It is not, 'Get thee behind me, Simon,' or, 'Get thee behind me, Peter,' but, 'Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence to me.' Thou dost oppose thyself to the wisdom, and grace, and authority of God, to the redemption of man, and to the good of the world.

As the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth, so is Satan the spirit of falsehood; as the Holy Ghost inspires believers with truth, so doth the devil corrupt unbelievers with error. Let us cleave to the truth of the gospel, that we may not be counted by God as part of the corporation of fallen angels, and not be barely reckoned as enemies of God, but in league with the greatest enemy to his glory in the world.

2. The reconciler of the world will be the subduer of Satan. The God of

peace sent the Prince of peace to be the restorer of his rights, and the hammer to beat in pieces the usurper of them. As a God of truth, he will make good his promise ; as a God of peace, he will perfect the design his wisdom hath laid and begun to act. In the subduing Satan, he will be the conqueror of his instruments. He saith not, God shall bruise your troublers and heretics, but Satan. The fall of a general proves the rout of the army. Since God, as a God of peace, hath delivered his own, he will perfect the victory, and make them cease from bruising the heel of his spiritual seed.

3. Divine evangelical truth shall be victorious. No weapon formed against it shall prosper ; the head of the wicked shall fall as low as the feet of the godly. The devil never yet blustered in the world, but he met at last with a disappointment. His fall hath been like lightning, sudden, certain, vanishing.

4. Faith must look back as far as the foundation-promise, 'The God of peace shall bruise,' &c. The apostle seems to allude to the first promise, Gen. iii. 15 ; a promise that hath vigour to nourish the church in all ages of the world ; it is the standing cordial ; out of the womb of this promise all the rest have taken their birth. The promises of the Old Testament were designed for those under the New, and full performance of them is to be expected, and will be enjoyed by them. It is a mighty strengthening to faith, to trace the footsteps of God's truth and wisdom, from the threatening against the serpent in Eden, to the bruise he received in Calvary, and the triumph over him upon mount Olivet.

5. We are to confide in the promise of God, but leave the season of its accomplishment to his wisdom. He will bruise Satan under your feet, therefore do not doubt it ; and shortly, therefore wait for it. Shortly it will be done, that is, quickly, when you think it may be a great way off ; or shortly, that is, seasonably, when Satan's rage is hottest. God is the best judge of the seasons of distributing his own mercies, and darting out his own glory. It is enough to encourage our waiting, that it will be, and that it will be shortly ; but we must not measure God's *shortly* by our minutes.

The apostle, after this, concludes with a comfortable prayer, that since they were liable to many temptations to turn their backs upon the doctrine which they had learned, yet he desires God, who had brought them to the knowledge of his truth, would confirm them in the belief of it, since it was the gospel of Christ his dear Son, and a mystery he had been chary of and kept in his own cabinet, and now brought forth to the world in pursuance of the ancient prophecies, and now had published to all nations, for that end that it might be obeyed ; and concludes with a doxology, a voice of praise, to him who was only wise to effect his own purposes, ver. 25-27 : 'Now to him that is of power to establish you, according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.' This doxology is interlaced with many comforts for the Romans. He explains the causes of this glory to God, power and wisdom. Power to establish the Romans in grace, which includes his will. This he proves from a divine testimony, viz., the gospel ; the gospel committed to him and preached by him, which he commends by calling it the preaching of Christ ; and describes it, for the instruction and comfort of the church, from the adjuncts, the obscurity of it under the Old Testament, and the clearness of it under the New. It was hid from the former ages and kept in silence, not simply and absolutely, but comparatively and in part ; because in the Old Testament, the doctrine of

salvation by Christ was confined to the limits of Judea, preached only to the inhabitants of that country : ' To them he gave his statutes and his judgments, and dealt not so magnificently with any nation,' Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20 ; but now he causes it to spring with greater majesty out of those narrow bounds, and spread its wings about the world. This manifestation of the gospel he declares, first, from the subject, all nations ; 2, from the principal efficient cause of it, the commandment and order of God ; 3, the instrumental cause, the prophetic scriptures ; 4, from the end of it, the obedience of faith.\*

*Obs. 1.* The glorious attributes of God bear a comfortable respect to believers. Power and wisdom are here mentioned as two props of their faith ; his power here includes his goodness. Power to help, without will to assist, is a dry chip. The apostle mentions not God's power simply and absolutely considered, for that of itself is no more comfort to men than it is to devils ; but as considered in the gospel covenant, his power, as well as his other perfections, are ingredients in that cordial of God's being our God. We should never think of the excellency of the divine nature, without considering the duties they demand, and gathering the honey they present.

*Obs. 2.* The stability of a gracious soul depends upon the wisdom, as well as the power of God. It would be a disrepute to the almightiness of God, if that should be totally vanquished which was introduced by his mighty arm, and rooted in the soul by an irresistible grace. It would speak a want of strength to maintain it, or a change of resolution, and so would be no honour to the wisdom of his first design. It is no part of the wisdom of an artificer to let a work, wherein he determined to shew the greatness of his skill, to be dashed in pieces, when he hath power to preserve it. God designed every gracious soul for a piece of his workmanship, Eph. ii. 10. What, to have the skill of his grace defeated ? If any soul which he hath graciously conquered should be wrested from him, what could be thought but that his power is enfeebled ? If deserted by him, what could be imagined, but that he repented of his labour and altered his counsel, as if rashly undertaken ? These Romans were rugged pieces, and lay in a filthy quarry, when God came first to smooth them, for so the apostle represents them with the rest of the heathen, Rom. i. 19 ; and would he throw them away, or leave them to the power of his enemy, after all his pains he had taken with them, to fit them for his building ? Did he not foresee the designs of Satan against them, what stratagems he would use to defeat his purposes and strip him of the honour of his work ? And would God so gratify his enemy, and disgrace his own wisdom ? The deserting of what hath been acted is a real repentance, and argues an imprudence in the first resolve and attempt. The gospel is called, ' the manifold wisdom of God,' Eph. iii. 10 ; the fruit of it in the heart of any person, which is a main design of it, hath a title to the same character ; and shall this grace, which is the product of this gospel, and therefore the birth of manifold wisdom, be suppressed ? It is at God's hand we must seek our fixedness and establishment, and act faith upon these two attributes of God. Power is no ground to expect stability, without wisdom interesting the agent in it, and finding out and applying the means for it. Wisdom is naked without power to act, and power is useless without wisdom to direct. They are these two excellencies of the Deity, the apostle here pitches the hope and faith of the converted Romans upon for their stability.

*Obs. 3.* Perseverance of believers in grace is a gospel doctrine. ' According to my gospel : ' my gospel ministerially, according to that gospel doctrine I have taught you in this epistle (for as the prophets were comments upon the law, so are the epistles upon the gospel). This very doctrine he

\* Gomarus *in loc.*

had discoursed of, Rom. viii. 38, 39, where he tells them, that 'neither death nor life,' the terrors of a cruel death, or the allurements of an honourable and pleasant life, 'nor principalities and powers,' with all their subtilty and strength; not the things we have before us, nor the promises of a future felicity, by either 'angels' in heaven or devils in hell; not the highest angel, nor the deepest devil, 'is able to separate us,' us Romans, 'from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.' So that, *according to my gospel* may be according to that declaration of the gospel which I have made in this epistle, which doth not only promise the first creating grace, but the perfecting and crowning grace; for not only the being of grace, but the health, liveliness, and perpetuity of grace is the fruit of the new covenant, Jer. xxxiii. 40.

*Obs. 4.* That the gospel is the sole means of a Christian's establishment. 'According to my gospel;' that is, 'by my gospel.' The gospel is the instrumental cause of our spiritual life, it is the cause also of the continuance of it; it is the seed whereby we were born, and the milk whereby we are nourished, 1 Peter i. 23; it is the power of God to salvation, 1 Peter ii. 2, and therefore to all the degrees of it: John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them by thy truth,' or 'through thy truth;' by or through his truth he sanctifies us, and by the same truth he establisheth us. The first sanctification, and the progress of it; the first lineaments, and the last colours, are wrought by the gospel. The gospel therefore ought to be known, studied, and considered by us; it is the charter of our inheritance, and the security of our standing. The law acquaints us with our duty, but contributes nothing to our strength and settlement.

*Obs. 5.* The gospel is nothing else but the revelation of Christ: verse 25, 'According to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ.' The discovery of the mystery, and redemption, and salvation in and by him, it is *genitivus objecti*, that preaching wherein Christ is declared and set out, with the benefits accruing by him. This is the privilege the wisdom of God reserved for the latter times, which the Old Testament Church had only under a veil.

*Obs. 6.* It is a part of the excellency of the gospel that it had the Son of God for its publisher: 'The preaching of Jesus Christ.' It was first preached to Adam in paradise by God, and afterwards published by Christ in person to the inhabitants of Judea. It was not the invention of man, but copied from the bosom of the Father, by him that lay in his bosom. The gospel we have is the same which our Saviour himself preached when he was in the world. He preached it not to the Romans, but the same gospel he preached is transmitted to the Romans. It therefore commands our respect; whoever slights it, it is as much as if he slighted Jesus Christ himself, were he in person to sound it from his own lips. The validity of a proclamation is derived from the authority of the prince that dictates it and orders it; yet, the greater the person that publisheth it, the more dishonour is cast upon the authority of the prince that enjoins it, if it be contemned. The everlasting God ordained it, and the eternal Son published it.

*Obs. 7.* The gospel was of an eternal resolution, though of a temporary revelation: ver. 25, 'According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.' It is an everlasting gospel. It was a promise 'before the world began,' Tit. i. 2. It was not a new invention, but only kept secret among the *Arcana*, in the breast of the Almighty. It was hidden from angels, for the depths of it are not yet fully made known to them; their 'desire to look into' it speaks yet a deficiency in their knowledge of it, 1 Peter i. 12. It was published in paradise, but in such words as Adam did not fully understand; it was both discovered and clouded in

the smoke of sacrifices ; it was wrapped up in a veil under the law, but not opened till the death of the Redeemer ; it was then plainly said to the cities of Judah, ' Behold, your God comes.' The whole transaction of it between the Father and the Son, which is the spirit of the gospel, was from eternity ; the creation of the world was in order to the manifestation of it. Let us not then regard the gospel as a novelty ; the consideration of it, as one of God's cabinet rarities, should enhance our estimation of it. No traditions of men, no invention of vain wits, that pretend to be wiser than God, should have the same credit with that which bears date from eternity.

*Obs.* 8. That divine truth is mysterious. ' According to the revelation of the mystery,' Christ, ' manifested in the flesh.' The whole scheme of Godliness is a mystery. No man or angel could imagine how two natures, so distant as the divine and human, should be united ; how the same person should be criminal and righteous ; how a just God should have a satisfaction, and a sinful man a justification ; how the sin should be punished and the sinner saved. None could imagine such a way of justification as the apostle in this epistle declares ; it was a mystery, when hid under the shadows of the law ; and a mystery to the prophets, when it sounded from their mouths ; they searched it without being able to comprehend it, 1 Peter i. 10, 11.

If it be a mystery, it is humbly to be submitted to ; mysteries surmount human reason. The study of the gospel must not be with a yawning and careless frame. Trades you call mysteries are not learned sleeping and nodding, diligence is required ; we must be disciples at God's feet. As it had God for the author, so we must have God for the teacher of it ; the contrivance was his, and the illumination of our minds must be from him. As God only manifested the gospel, so he only can open our eyes to see the mysteries of Christ in it.

In verse 26 we may observe,

1. The Scriptures of the Old Testament verify the substance of the New, and the New doth evidence the authority of the Old : ' By the Scriptures of the prophets made known.' The Old Testament credits the New, and the New illustrates the Old. The New Testament is a comment upon the prophetic part of the Old. The Old shews the promises and predictions of God, and the New shews the performance ; what was foretold in the Old is fulfilled in the New ; the predictions are cleared by the events. The predictions of the Old are divine, because they are above the reason of man to foreknow ; none but an infinite knowledge could foretell them, because none but an infinite wisdom could order all things for the accomplishment of them.

The Christian religion hath then the surest foundation, since the Scriptures of the prophets, wherein it is foretold, are of undoubted antiquity, and owned by the Jews and many heathens, which are and were the great enemies of Christ. The Old Testament is therefore to be read for the strengthening of our faith. Our blessed Saviour himself draws the streams of his doctrine from the Old Testament ; he clears up the promise of eternal life, and the doctrine of the resurrection, from the words of the covenant, ' I am the God of Abraham,' &c., Mat. xxii. 32. And our apostle clears up the doctrine of justification by faith, from God's covenant with Abraham, Rom. iv. It must be read, and it must be read as it is writ ; it was writ to a gospel end, it must be studied with a gospel spirit. The Old Testament was writ to give credit to the New, when it should be manifested in the world. It must be read by us to give strength to our faith, and establish us in the doctrine of Christianity. How many view it as a bare story, an almanack out of date, and regard it as a dry bone, without sucking from it the evangelical marrow !

Christ is, in Genesis, Abraham's seed ; in David's Psalms and the prophets, the Messiah and Redeemer of the world.

2. Observe, the antiquity of the gospel is made manifest by the Scriptures of the prophets. It was of as ancient a date as any prophecy. The first prophecy was nothing else but a gospel charter ; it was not *made* at the incarnation of Christ, but *made manifest* ; it then rose up to its meridian lustre, and sprung out of the clouds wherewith it was before obscured. The gospel was preached to the ancients by the prophets, as well as to the Gentiles by the apostles : Heb. iv. 2, 'Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them.' To them first, to us after ; to them indeed more cloudy, to us more clear ; but they, as well as we, were evangelised, as the word signifies.

The covenant of grace was the same in the writings of the prophets and the declarations of the evangelists and apostles. Though by our Saviour's incarnation the gospel light was clearer, and by his ascension the effusions of the Spirit fuller and stronger, yet the believers under the Old Testament saw Christ in the swaddling bands of legal ceremonies and the lattice of prophetic writings. They could not offer one sacrifice, or read one prophecy, with a faith of the right stamp. Abraham's justifying faith had Christ for its object, though it was not so explicit as ours, because the manifestation was not so clear as ours.

3. All truth is to be drawn from Scripture. The apostle refers them here to the gospel and the prophets. The Scripture is the source of divine knowledge ; not the traditions of men, nor reason separate from Scripture. Whosoever brings another doctrine coins another Christ : nothing is to be added to what is written, nothing detracted from it. He doth not send us for truth to the puddles of human inventions, to the enthusiasms of our brain ; nor to the see of Rome, no, nor to the instructions of angels ; but the writings of the prophets, as they clear up the declarations of the apostles. The church of Rome is not made here the standard of truth, but the Scriptures of the prophets are to be the touch-stone to the Romans for the trial of the truth of the gospel.

4. How great is the goodness of God ! The borders of grace are enlarged to the Gentiles, and not hid under the skirts of the Jews. He that was so long the God of the Jews, is now also manifest to be the God of the Gentiles. The gospel is now 'made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God ;' not only in a way of common providence, but special grace, in calling them to the knowledge of himself, and a justification of them by faith. He hath brought strangers to him, to 'the adoption of children,' and lodged them under the wings of the covenant, that were before 'alienated from him' through the universal corruption of nature. Now he hath manifested himself a God of truth, mindful of his promise in blessing all nations in the seed of Abraham. The fury of devils and the violence of men could not hinder the propagation of this gospel. Its light hath been dispersed as far as that of the sun, and that grace that sounded in the Gentiles' ears hath bent many of their hearts to the obedience of it.

5. Observe that libertinism and licentiousness find no encouragement in the gospel. It was made known to all nations 'for the obedience of faith.' The goodness of God is published, that our enmity to him may be parted with. Christ's righteousness is not offered to us to be put on, that we may roll more warmly in our lusts. The doctrine of grace commands us to give up ourselves to Christ, to be accepted through him, and to be ruled by him. Obedience is due to God, as a sovereign Lord in his law, and it is due out of gratitude, as he is a God of grace in the gospel. The discovery of a

further perfection in God weakens not the right of another, nor the obligation of the duty the former attribute claims at our hands. The gospel frees us from the curse, but not from the duty and service. We are 'delivered from the hands of our enemies, that we might serve God in holiness and righteousness,' Luke i. 74. 'This is the will of God' in the gospel, 'even our sanctification.' When a prince strikes off a malefactor's chains, though he deliver him from the punishments of his crime, he frees him not from the duty of a subject. His pardon adds a greater obligation than his protection did before, while he was loyal. Christ's righteousness gives us a title to heaven, but there must be a holiness to give us a fitness for heaven.

6. Observe that evangelical obedience, or the obedience of faith, is only acceptable to God. 'Obedience of faith,' *genitivus speciei*, noting the kind of obedience God requires; an obedience springing from faith, animated and influenced by faith. Not obedience of faith, as though faith were the rule, and the law were abrogated; but *to* the law as a rule, and *from* faith as a principle. There is no true obedience before faith: Heb. xi. 6, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God,' and therefore without faith impossible to obey him. A good work cannot proceed from a defiled mind and conscience, and without faith every man's mind is darkened, and his conscience polluted, Tit. i. 15. Faith is the band of union to Christ, and obedience is the fruit of union. We cannot bring forth fruit without being branches, John xv. 4, 5; and we cannot be branches without believing. Legitimate fruit follows upon marriage to Christ, not before it: Rom. vii. 4, 'That you should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that you should bring forth fruit unto God.' All fruit before marriage is bastard, and bastards were excluded from the sanctuary. Our persons must be first accepted in Christ before our services can be acceptable. Those works are not acceptable where the person is not pardoned. Good works flow from a pure heart, but the heart cannot be pure before faith. All the good works reckoned up in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews were from this spring; those heroes first believed, and then obeyed. By faith Abel was righteous before God; without it, his sacrifice had been no better than Cain's. By faith Enoch pleased God, and had a divine testimony to his obedience before his translation. By faith Abraham offered up Isaac, without which he had been no better than a murderer. All obedience hath its root in faith, and is not done in our own strength, but in the strength and virtue of another, of Christ, whom God hath set forth as our head and root.

7. Observe, faith and obedience are distinct, though inseparable: 'The obedience of faith.' Faith, indeed, is obedience to a gospel command, which enjoins us to believe; but it is not all our obedience. Justification and sanctification are distinct acts of God; justification respects the person, sanctification the nature; justification is first in order of nature, and sanctification follows. They are distinct, but inseparable. Every justified person hath a sanctified nature, and every sanctified nature supposeth a justified person. So faith and obedience are distinct; faith as the principle, obedience as the product; faith as the cause, obedience as the effect. The cause and the effect are not the same. By faith we own Christ as our Lord, by obedience we regulate ourselves according to his command. The acceptance of the relation to him as a subject precedes the performance of our duty. By faith we receive his law, and by obedience we fulfil it. Faith makes us God's children, Gal. iii. 26, obedience manifests us to be Christ's disciples, John xv. 8. Faith is the touchstone of obedience: the touchstone, and that which is tried by it, are not the same; but though they are distinct,

yet they are inseparable. Faith and obedience are joined together; obedience follows faith at the heels. Faith 'purifies the heart,' and a pure heart cannot be without pure actions. Faith unites us to Christ, whereby we partake of his life; and a living branch cannot be without fruit in its season, and 'much fruit,' John xv. 5, and that naturally, from a 'newness of spirit,' Rom. vii. 6, not constrained by the rigours of the law, but drawn forth from a sweetness of love; for 'faith works by love.' The love of God is the strong motive, and love to God is the quickening principle. As there can be no obedience without faith, so no faith without obedience.

After all this, the apostle ends with the celebration of the wisdom of God: 'To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever!' The rich discovery of the gospel cannot be thought of by a gracious soul without a return of praise to God and admiration of his singular wisdom.

'Wise God.' His power before, and his wisdom here, are mentioned in conjunction (in which his goodness is included as interested in his establishing power), as the ground of all the glory and praise God hath from his creatures.

'Only wise.' As Christ saith, Mat. xix. 17, 'None is good but God,' so the apostle saith, none wise but God. As all creatures are unclean in regard of his purity, so they are all fools in regard of his wisdom, yea, the glorious angels themselves, Job iv. 18. Wisdom is the royalty of God; the proper dialect of all his ways and works. No creature can lay claim to it; he is so wise, that he is wisdom itself.

'Be glory through Jesus Christ.' As God is only known in and by Christ, so he must be only worshipped and celebrated in and through Christ. In him we must pray to him, and in him we must praise him. As all mercies flow from God through Christ to us, so all our duties are to be presented to God through Christ.

In the Greek, *verbatim*, it runs thus: 'To the alone wise God, through Jesus Christ, to him be glory for ever.' But we must not understand it, as if God were wise by Jesus Christ; but that thanks is to be given to God through Christ, because in and by Christ God hath revealed his wisdom to the world. The Greek hath a repetition of the article  $\omega$  not expressed in the translation, 'To him be glory.' Beza expungeth this article, but without reason, for  $\omega$  is as much as  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omega$ , *to him*; and joining this, 'the only wise God,' with the 25th verse, 'To him that is of power to establish you,' reading it thus, 'To him that is of power to establish you, the only wise God,' leaving the rest in a parenthesis, it runs smoothly, 'To him be glory through Jesus Christ.' And Crellius the Socinian observes that this article  $\omega$ , which some leave out, might be industriously inserted by the apostle, to shew, that the glory we ascribe to God is also given to Christ.

We may observe, that neither in this place, nor anywhere in Scripture, is the Virgin Mary, or any of the saints, associated with God or Christ in the glory ascribed to them.

In the words there is,

1. An appropriation of wisdom to God, and a remotion of it from all creatures: 'only wise God.'

2. A glorifying him for it.

The point I shall insist upon is,

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



I shall handle it thus :

I. Shew what wisdom is ; then lay down,

II. Some propositions about the wisdom of God ; and shew,

III. That God is wise, and only wise.

IV. Wherein his wisdom appears.

V. The use.

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

But in particular, wisdom consists,

1. In acting for a right end. The chiefest part of prudence is in fixing a right end, and in choosing fit means, and directing them to that scope. To shoot at random is a mark of folly. As he is the wisest man that hath the noblest end and fittest means, so God is infinitely wise ; as he is the most excellent being, so he hath the most excellent end. As there is none more excellent than himself, nothing can be his end but himself. As he is the cause of all, so he is the end of all ; and he puts a true bias into all the means he useth, to hit the mark he aims at : ' Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things,' Rom. xi. 36.

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

3. Wisdom consists, in willing and acting according to the right reason, according to a right judgment of things. We never count a wilful man a wise man, but him only that acts according to a right rule, when right counsels are taken, and vigorously executed. The resolves and ways of God are not mere will, but will guided by the reason and counsel of his own infinite understanding : Eph. i. 11, ' Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will.' The motions of the divine will are not rash, but follow the proposals of the divine mind. He chooses that which is fittest to be done, so that all his works are graceful, and all his ways have a come-

\* Amyraut, Moral. tom. iii. p. 123.

liness and decorum in them. Hence all his ways are said to be judgment, Deut. xxxii. 4, not mere will.

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

Again, knowledge and wisdom may be distinguished in our conception, as two distinct perfections in God. The knowledge of God is his understanding of all things; his wisdom is the skilful resolving and acting of all things; and the apostle, in his admiration of him, owns them as distinct. 'Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God,' Rom. xi. 33. Knowledge is the foundation of wisdom, and antecedent to it; wisdom, the superstructure upon knowledge. Men may have knowledge without wisdom, but not wisdom without knowledge; according to our common proverb, the greatest clerks are not the wisest men. All practical knowledge is founded in speculation, either *secundum rem*, as in men; or *secundum rationem*, as in God. They agree in this, that they are both acts of the understanding; but knowledge is the apprehension of a thing, and wisdom is the appointing and ordering of things. Wisdom is the splendour and lustre of knowledge shining forth in operations, and is an act both of understanding and will; understanding in counselling and contriving, will in resolving and executing. Counsel and will are linked together, Eph. i. 11.

II. The second thing is to lay down some propositions in general concerning the wisdom [of] God.

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

*Prop.* 2. Therefore, secondly, the wisdom of God is the same with the essence of God. Wisdom in God is not a habit added to his essence, as it is in man, but it is his essence. It is like the splendour of the sun, the same with the sun itself; or like the brightness of crystal, which is not communicated to it by anything else, as the brightness of a mountain is by the beam of the sun, but it is one with the crystal itself. It is not a habit superadded to the divine essence: that would be repugnant to the simplicity of God, and speak him compounded of diverse principles; it would be contrary to the eternity of his perfections. If he be eternally wise, his wisdom

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

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

(1.) God is only wise necessarily. As he is necessarily God, so he is necessarily wise ; for the notion of wisdom is inseparable from the notion of a Deity. When we say God is a Spirit, is true, righteous, wise, we understand that he is transcendentally these by an intrinsic and absolute necessity, by virtue of his own essence, without the efficiency of any other, or any efficiency in and by himself. God doth not make himself wise, no more than he makes himself God. As he is a necessary being in regard of his life, so he is necessarily wise in regard of his understanding. Synesius saith, that God is essentiated, οὐσιωσθαι, by his understanding. He places the substance of God in understanding and wisdom ; wisdom is the first vital operation of God. He can no more be unwise than he can be untrue ; for folly in the mind is much the same with falsity in speech. Wisdom among men is gained by age and experience, furthered by instructions and exercise, but the wisdom of God is his nature ; as the sun cannot be without light, while it remains a sun, and as eternity cannot be without immortality, so neither can God be without wisdom. As ‘ he only hath immortality,’ 1 Tim. vi. 16, not arbitrarily, but necessarily, so he only hath wisdom ; not because he will be wise, but because he cannot but be wise. He cannot but contrive counsels, and exert operations becoming the greatness and majesty of his nature.

(2.) Therefore only wise originally. God is αὐτοδιδάκτος, αὐτίσοφος. Men acquire wisdom by the loss of their fairest years : but his wisdom is the perfection of the divine nature, not the birth of study or the growth of experience, but as necessary, as eternal as his essence. He goes not out of himself to search wisdom ; he needs no more the brains of creatures in the contrivances of his purposes than he doth their arm in the execution of them. He needs no counsel, he receives no counsel from any : Rom. xi. 34, ‘ Who hath been his counsellor ? ’ and Isa. xl. 14, ‘ With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, or taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the path of understanding ? ’ He is the only fountain of wisdom to others ; angels and men have what wisdom they have by communication from him. All created wisdom is a spark of the divine light, like that of the stars borrowed from the sun. He that borrows wisdom from another, and doth not originally possess it in his own nature, cannot properly be called wise. As God is the only being,

\* Maimon. Mor. part i. cap. 53.

† Laert. lib. i. Proem.

in regard that all other beings are derived from him, so he is only wise, because all other wisdom flows from him. He is the spring of wisdom to all; none the original of wisdom to him.

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

(4.) Therefore only wise universally. Wisdom in one man is of one sort, in another of another sort; one is a wise tradesman, another a wise statesman, and another a wise philosopher; one is wise in the business of the world, another is wise in divine concerns; one hath not so much of plenty of one sort, but he may have a scantiness in another; one may be wise for invention, and foolish in execution; an artificer may have skill to frame an engine, and not skill to use it. The ground that is fit for olives, may not be fit for vines; that will bear one sort of grain and not another. But God hath an universal wisdom, because his nature is wise; it is not limited, but hovers over everything, shines in every being. His executions are as wise as his contrivances; he is wise in his resolves, and wise in his ways; wise in all the varieties of his works of creation, government, redemption. As his will wills all things, and his power effects all things, so his wisdom is the universal director of the motions of his will, and the executions of his power; as his righteousness is the measure of the matter of his actions, so his wisdom is the rule that directs the manner of his actions. The absolute power of God is not an unruly power; his wisdom orders all things, so that nothing is done but what is fit and convenient, and agreeable to so excellent a being; as he cannot do an unjust thing because of his righteousness, so he cannot do an unwise act because of his infinite wisdom. Though God be not necessitated to any operation without himself, as to the creation of anything, yet supposing he will act, his wisdom necessitates him to do that which is congruous; as his righteousness necessitates him to do that which is just, so that though the will of God be the principle, yet his wisdom is the rule of his actions. We must in our conceiving of the order suppose wisdom antecedent to will. None that acknowledges a God can have such an impious thought as to affix temerity and rashness to any of his proceedings.

All his decrees are drawn out of the infinite treasury of wisdom in himself. He resolves nothing about any of his creatures without reason, but the reason of his purposes is in himself, and springs from himself, and not from the creatures.\* There is not one thing that he wills, but he wills by counsel, and works by counsel, Eph. i. 11. Counsel writ down every line, every letter in his eternal book, and all the orders are drawn out from thence by his wisdom and will. What was illustrious in the contrivance glitters in the execution. His understanding and will are infinite; what is therefore the act of his will is the result of his understanding, and therefore

\* Polhill against Sherlock, p. 377.

rational; his understanding and will join hands; there is no contest in God, will against mind, and mind against will; they are one in God, one in his resolves, and one in all his works.

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

(6.) He is only incomprehensibly wise. His 'thoughts are deep,' Ps. xcii. 5; 'his judgments unsearchable, his ways past finding out,' Rom. xi. 33, depths that cannot be fathomed; a splendour more dazzling to our dim minds, than the light of the sun to our weak eyes. The wisdom of one man may be comprehended by another, and over comprehended; and often men are understood by others to be wiser in their actions than they understand themselves to be. And the wisdom of one angel may be measured by another angel of the same perfection; but as the essence, so the wisdom of God, is incomprehensible to any creature. God is only comprehended by God. The secrets of wisdom in God are double to the expressions of it in his works: Job xi. 6, 7, 'Canst thou by searching find out God?' There is an unfathomable depth in all his decrees, in all his works. We cannot comprehend the reason of his works, much less that of his decrees, much less that in his nature; because his wisdom being infinite as well as his power, can no more act to the highest pitch than his power. As his power is not terminated by what he hath wrought, but he could give further testimonies of it, so neither is his wisdom, but he could furnish us with infinite expressions and pieces of his skill. As in regard of his immensity he is not bounded by the limits of place, in regard of his eternity not measured by the minutes of time, in regard of his power not terminated with this or that number of objects, so in regard of his wisdom he is not confined to this or that particular mode of working; so that in regard of the reason of his actions, as well as the glory and majesty of his nature, 'he dwells in unapproachable light,' 1 Tim. vi. 16; and whatsoever we understand of his wisdom in creation and providence, is infinitely less than what is in himself and his own unbounded nature.

Many things in Scripture are declared chiefly to be the acts of the divine will, yet we must not think that they were acts of mere will without wisdom, but they are represented so to us, because we are not capable of understand-

\* Qu. 'flutter'?—ED.

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

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

God is not only so wise that nothing more wise can be conceived, but he is more wise than can be imagined, something greater in all his perfections than can be comprehended by any creature. It is a foolish thing therefore to question that which we cannot comprehend; we should adore instead of disputing against it, and take it for granted that God would not order anything, were it not agreeable to the sovereignty of his wisdom as well as that of his will. Though the reason of man proceed from the wisdom of God, yet there is more difference between the reason of man and the wisdom of God than between the light of the sun and the feeble shining of the glow-worm; yet we presume to censure the ways of God, as if our purblind reason had a reach above him.

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

be defeated by all the legions of men and devils; for 'as he thinks, so shall it come to pass; and as he hath purposed, so shall it stand. The Lord hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?' Isa. xiv. 24, 27. The wisdom of the creature is a drop from the wisdom of God, and is like a drop to the ocean, and a shadow to the sun; and therefore is not able to mate the wisdom of God, which is infinite and boundless. No wisdom is exempted from mistakes but the divine. He is wise in all his resolves, and never 'calls back his words' and purposes, Isa. xxxi. 2.

### III. The third general is to prove that God is wise.

This is ascribed to God in Scripture: Dan. ii. 20, 'Wisdom and might are his:' wisdom to contrive, and power to effect. Where should wisdom dwell but in the head of a Deity, and where should power triumph but in the arm of Omnipotency? \* All that God doth he doth artificially, skilfully, whence he is called the builder of the heavens, Heb. xi. 10; *Τεχνίτης*, an artificial and curious builder, a builder by art. And that word, Prov. viii. 30, meant of Christ, 'Then I was by him, as one brought up with him,' some render it, 'Then was I the curious artificer;' and the same word is translated 'a cunning workman,' Cant. vii. 5. For this cause counsel is ascribed to God (Isa. xli. 10; Jer. xxxii. 19, 'Great in counsel;' Job xii. 13, 'He hath counsel and understanding'); not properly, for counsel implies something of ignorance or irresolution antecedent to the consultation, and a posture of will afterwards which was not before. Counsel is properly a laborious deliberation and a reasoning of things, an invention of means for the attainment of the end, after a discussing and reasoning of all the doubts which arise *pro re natâ*, about the matter in counsel; but God hath no need to deliberate in himself what are the best means to accomplish his ends. He is never ignorant or undetermined what course he should take, as men are before they consult; but it is an expression in condescension to our capacity, to signify that God doth nothing but with reason and understanding, with the highest prudence, and for the most glorious ends, as men do after consultation, and the weighing of every foreseen circumstance.

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

\* Culverwell, Light of Nature, p. 30.

*Mens*,\* and Cleanthes used to call God *Reason*, and Socrates thought the title of *Σοφὴς* too magnificent to be attributed to anything else but God alone.

Arguments to prove that God is wise.

*Reas.* 1. God could not be infinitely perfect without wisdom. A rational nature is better than an irrational nature. A man is not a perfect man without reason; how can God, without it, be an infinitely perfect God? Wisdom is the most eminent of all virtues; all the other perfections of God without this, would be as a body without an eye, a soul without understanding. A Christian's graces want their lustre, when they are destitute of the guidance of wisdom; mercy is a feebleness, and justice a cruelty, patience a timorousness, and courage a madness, without the conduct of wisdom. So the patience of God would be cowardice, his power an oppression, his justice a tyranny, without wisdom as the spring, and holiness as the rule. No attribute of God could shine with a due lustre and brightness without it. Power is a great perfection, but wisdom a greater.† Wisdom may be without much power, as in bees and ants; but power is a tyrannical thing without wisdom and righteousness. The pilot is more valuable because of his skill, than the galley-slave because of his strength, and the conduct of a general more estimable than the might of a private soldier. Generals are chosen more by their skill to guide, than their strength to act. What a clod is a man without prudence; what a nothing would God be without it! This is the salt that gives relish to all other perfections in a creature; this is the jewel in the ring of all the excellencies of the divine nature, and holiness is the splendour of that jewel.

Now God, being the first Being, possesses whatsoever is most noble in any being. If therefore wisdom, which is the most noble perfection in any creature, were wanting to God, he would be deficient in that which is the highest excellency. God being the 'living God,' as he is frequently termed in Scripture, he hath therefore the most perfect manner of living, and that must be a pure and intellectual life. Being essentially living, he is essentially in the highest degree of living. As he hath an infinite life above all creatures, so he hath an infinite, intellectual life, and therefore an infinite wisdom; whence some have called God not *sapientem*, but *super-sapientem*,‡ not only wise, but above all wisdom.

*Reas.* 2. Without infinite wisdom, he could not govern the world. Without wisdom in forming the matter, which was made by divine power, the world could have been no other than a chaos; and without wisdom in government, it could have been no other than a heap of confusion; without wisdom, the world could not have been created in the posture it is. Creation supposeth a determination of the will, putting power upon acting; the determination of the will supposeth the counsel of the understanding, determining the will. No work, but supposeth understanding, as well as will, in a rational agent. As without skill things could not be created, so without it things cannot be governed. Reason is a necessary perfection to him that presides over all things. Without knowledge, there could not be in God a foundation for government; and without wisdom, there could not be an exercise of government; and without the most excellent wisdom, he could not be the most excellent governor. He could not be an universal governor, without a universal wisdom; nor the sole governor, without an unimitable wisdom; nor an independent governor, without an original and independent wisdom; nor a perpetual governor, without an incorruptible wisdom. He would not

\* Eugub. Per. Philosoph., lib. i. cap. v.

† Licet magnum sit *posse*, majus tamen est *sapere*.

‡ Suarez, vol. i. lib. i. cap. iii. p. 10.



be the Lord of the world in all points, without skill to order the affairs of it. Power and wisdom are foundations of all authority and government: wisdom to know how to rule and command, power to make those commands obeyed. No regular order could issue out without the first, nor could any order be enforced without the second. A feeble wisdom and a brutish power seldom or never produce any good effect. Magistracy without wisdom, would be a frantic power, a rash conduct. Like a strong arm when the eye is out, it strikes it knows not what, and leads it knows not whither. Wisdom without power, would be like a great body without feet; \* like the knowledge of a pilot that hath lost his arm, who, though he knows the rule of navigation, and what course to follow in his voyage, yet cannot manage the helm. But when those two, wisdom and power, are linked together, there ariseth from both a fitness for government. There is wisdom to propose an end, and both wisdom and power to employ means that conduct to that end. And therefore, when God demonstrates to Job his right of government, and the unreasonableness of Job's quarrelling with his proceedings, he chiefly urgeth upon him the consideration of those two excellencies of his nature, power and wisdom, which are expressed in his works, chap. xxxviii.—xli. A prince without wisdom, is but a title without a capacity to perform the office; no man without it is fit for government. Nor could God, without wisdom, exercise a just dominion in the world. He hath therefore the highest wisdom, since he is the universal governor. That wisdom which is able to govern a family, may not be able to govern a city; and that wisdom which governs a city, may not be able to govern a nation or kingdom, much less a world. The bounds of God's government being greater than any, his wisdom for government must needs surmount the wisdom of all. And though the creatures be not in number actually infinite, yet they cannot be well governed but by one endowed with infinite discretion.† Providential government can be no more without infinite wisdom, than infinite wisdom can be without providence.

*Reas. 3.* The creatures working for an end, without their own knowledge, demonstrates the wisdom of God that guides them. All things in the world work for some end; the ends are unknown to them, though many of their ends are visible to us. As there was some prime cause, which by his power inspired them with their several instincts, so there must be some supreme wisdom which moves and guides them to their end. As their being manifests his power that endowed them, so the acting, according to the rules of their nature, which they themselves understand not, manifests his wisdom in directing them; everything that acts for an end must know that end, or be directed by another to attain that end. The arrow doth not know who shoots it, or to what end it is shot, or what mark is aimed at; but the archer that puts it in, and darts it out of the bow, knows. A watch hath a regular motion, but neither the spring nor the wheels that move know the end of their motion; no man will judge a wisdom to be in the watch, but in the artificer that disposed the wheels and spring, by a joint combination to produce such a motion for such an end. Doth either the sun that enlivens the earth, or the earth that travails with the plant, know what plant it produceth in such a soil, what temper it should be of, what fruit it should bear, and of what colour? What plant knows its own medicinal qualities, its own beautiful flowers, and for what use they are ordained? When it strikes up its head from the earth, doth it know what proportion of them there will be? yet it produceth all these things in a state of ignorance. The sun warms the earth, concocts the humours, excites the virtue of it, and cherishes

\* Amyraut, Moral.

† Amyrald. Dissert. Theol., p. 111.

the seeds, which are cast into her lap, yet all unknown to the sun or the earth; since therefore that nature, that is the immediate cause of those things, doth not understand its own quality, nor operation, nor the end of its action, that which thus directs them must be conceived to have an infinite wisdom. When things act by a rule they know not, and move for an end they understand not, and yet work harmoniously together for one end, that all of them, we are sure, are ignorant of, it mounts up our minds to acknowledge the wisdom of that supreme cause that hath ranged all these inferior causes in their order, and imprinted upon them the laws of their motions, according to the idea in his own mind, who orders the rule by which they act, and the end for which they act, and directs every motion according to their several natures, and therefore is possessed with infinite wisdom in his own nature.

*Reas.* 4. God is the fountain of all wisdom in the creatures, and therefore is infinitely wise himself. As he hath a fulness of being in himself, because the streams of being are derived to other things from him, so he hath a fulness of wisdom, because he is the spring of wisdom to angels and men. That being must be infinitely wise, from whence all other wisdom derives its original, for nothing can be in the effect which is not eminently in the cause; the cause is alway more perfect than the effect. If therefore the creatures are wise, the Creator must be much more wise; if the Creator were destitute of wisdom, the creature would be much more perfect than the Creator. If you consider the wisdom of the spider in her web, which is both her house and net; the artifice of the bee in her comb, which is both her chamber and granary; the provision of the *pismire* in her repositories for corn: the wisdom of the Creator is illustrated by them; whatsoever excellency you see in any creature is an image of some excellency in God. The skill of the artificer is visible in the fruits of his art; a workman transcribes his spirit in the work of his hands; but the wisdom of rational creatures, as men, doth more illustrate it. All arts among men are the rays of divine wisdom shining upon them, and by a common gift of the Spirit enlightening their minds to curious inventions, as Prov. viii. 12, 'I, Wisdom, find out the knowledge of witty inventions;' that is, I give a faculty to men to find them out; without my wisdom all things would be buried in darkness and ignorance. Whatsoever wisdom there is in the world, it is but a shadow of the wisdom of God, a small rivulet derived from him, a spark leaping out from uncreated wisdom: Isa. liv. 16, 'He created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and makes the instruments.' The skill to use those weapons in warlike enterprises is from him: 'I have created the waster to destroy.' It is not meant of creating their persons, but communicating to them their art; he speaks it there to expel fear from the church of all warlike preparations against them. He had given men the skill to form and use weapons, and could as well strip them of it, and defeat their purposes. The art of husbandry is a fruit of divine teaching, Isa. xxviii. 24, 25. If those lower kinds of knowledge, that are common to all nations, and easily learned by all, are discoveries of divine wisdom, much more the nobler sciences, intellectual and political wisdom: Dan. ii. 21, 'He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding;' speaking of the more abstruse parts of knowledge, 'The inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding,' Job xxxii. 8. Hence the wisdom which Solomon expressed in the harlot's case, 1 Kings iii. 28, was, in the judgment of all Israel, the wisdom of God; that is, a fruit of divine wisdom, a beam communicated to him from God. Every man's soul is endowed more or less with those noble qualities. The soul of every man exceeds that of a brute; if the streams be

so excellent, the fountain must be fuller and clearer. The first Spirit must infinitely more possess what other spirits derive from him by creation; were the wisdom of all the angels in heaven, and men on earth, collected in one spirit, it must be infinitely less than that which is in the spring, for no creature can be equal to the Creator. As the highest creature already made, or that we can conceive may be made, by infinite power, would be infinitely below God in the notion of a creature, so it would be infinitely below God in the notion of wise.

IV. The fourth thing is, wherein the wisdom of God appears.

It appears, 1, in creation; 2, in government; 3, in redemption.

1. In creation. As in a musical instrument there is first the skill of the workman in the frame, then the skill of the musician in stringing it proper for such musical notes as he will express upon it, and after that the tempering of the strings, by various stops, to a delightful harmony, so is the wisdom of God seen in framing the world, then in tuning it, and afterwards in the motion of the several creatures. The fabric of the world is called the wisdom of God: 1 Cor. i. 21, 'After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God,' *i.e.* by the creation the world knew not God; the framing cause is there put for the effect and the work framed, because the divine wisdom stepped forth in the creatures to a public appearance, as if it had presented itself in a visible shape to man, giving instructions in and by the creatures, to know and adore him. What we translate, Gen. i. 1, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,' the Targum expresseth, 'In the wisdom God created the heaven and the earth;' both bear a stamp of this perfection on them.\* And when the apostle tells the Romans, chap. i. 20, 'The invisible things of God were clearly understood by the things that are made,' the word he uses is, *ποιήμασι*, not *ἔργοις*; this signifies a work of labour, but *ποίημα* a work of skill, or a poem. The whole creation is a poem, every species a stanza, and every individual creature a verse in it. The creation presents us with a prospect of the wisdom of God, as a poem doth the reader with the wit and fancy of the composer: 'By wisdom he created the earth,' Prov. iii. 19; 'and stretched out the heavens by discretion,' Jer. x. 12. There is not anything so mean, so small, but glitters with a beam of divine skill; and the consideration of them would justly make every man subscribe to that of the psalmist, 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all,' Ps. civ. 24;—all, the least as well as the greatest, and the meanest as well as the noblest, even those creatures which seem ugly and deformed to us, as toads, &c., because they fall short of those perfections which are the dowry of other animals. In these there is a footstep of divine wisdom, since they were not produced by him at random, but determined to some particular end, and designed to some usefulness, as parts of the world in their several natures and stations. God could never have had a satisfaction in the review of his works, and pronounced them good or comely, as he did, Gen. i. 31, had they not been agreeable to that eternal original copy in his own mind. It is said he was refreshed, viz. with that review, Exod. xxxi. 17, which could not have been if his piercing eye had found any defect in anything which had sprung out of his hand, or an unsuitableness to that end for which he created them. He seems to do as a man that hath made a curious and polite work, with exact care to peer about every part and line, if he could perceive any imperfection in it, to rectify the mistake; but no defect was found by the infinitely wise God upon his second examination.

\* *Omne opus naturæ est opus intelligentiæ.*

This wisdom of the creation appears,

(1.) In the variety, (2.) in the beauty, (3.) the fitness of every creature for its use, (4.) the subordination of one creature to another, and the joint concurrence of all to one common end.

(1.) In the variety. Ps. civ. 24, 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works !' How great a variety is there of animals and plants, with a great variety of forms, shapes, figurations, colours, various smells, virtues, and qualities ! And this variety is produced from one and the same matter, as beasts and plants from the earth : Gen. i. 11, 24, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures. And the earth brought forth grass, and the herb yielding seed after his kind.' Such diversity of fowl and fish from the water : Gen. i. 20, 'Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly.' Such a beautiful and active variety from so dull a matter as the earth ; so solid a variety from so fluid a matter as the water ; so noble a piece as the body of man, with such a variety of members, fit to entertain a more excellent soul as a guest, from so mean a matter as the dust of the ground, Gen. ii. 7 : this extraction of such variety of forms out of one single and dull matter is the chemistry of divine wisdom. It is a greater skill to frame noble bodies of vile matter, as varieties of precious vessels of clay and earth, than of a noble matter, as gold and silver.

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

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

The comeliness of the body is visible in the variety of members, and their usefulness to one another. What an inform thing had man been had he been all ear or all eye ! If God had made all the stars to be suns, it would have been a demonstration of his power, but perhaps less of his wisdom. No creatures, with the natures they now have, could have continued in being under so much heat. There was no less wisdom went to the frame of the least than to the greatest creature. It speaks more art in a limner to paint a landscape exactly than to draw the sun, though the sun be a more glorious body.

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

(2.) The wisdom of the creation appears in the beauty, and order, and

situation of the several creatures. Eccles. iii. 11, 'He hath made everything beautiful in his time.' As their being was a fruit of divine power, so their order is a fruit of divine wisdom. All creatures are as members in the great body of the world, proportioned to one another, and contributing to the beauty of the whole,\* so that if the particular forms of everything, the union of all for the composition of the world, and the laws which are established in the order of nature for its conservation, be considered, it would ravish us with an admiration of God. All the creatures are as so many pictures or statues, exactly framed by line: Ps. xix. 4, 'Their line is gone through all the earth.' Their line, a measuring line, or a carpenter's rule, whereby he proportions several pieces to be exactly linked and coupled together. Their line, that is, their harmonious proportion, and the instruction from it, is gone forth through all the earth. Upon the account of this harmony, some of the ancient heathens framed the images of their gods with musical instruments in their hands, signifying that God wrought all things in a due proportion.†

The heavens speak this wisdom in their order.

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

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

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

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

The earth also speaks the divine wisdom, It is the pavement of the world, as the heaven is the ceiling of fretwork.|| It is placed lowermost, as being the heaviest body, and fit to receive the weightiest matter, and provided as an habitation proper for those creatures which derive the matter of

\* Amyraut, Moral., Vol. I. p. 257.

† Montag. against Selden, p. 281. Plutarch calls God *ἀρμονικὸς καὶ μουσικὸς*; he saith, Nothing was made without music.

‡ Charlton, Light of Nature, p. 57.

§ Daille, mel. part i. p. 483.

|| Amyraut, Predestin. p. 9.

their bodies from it, and partake of its earthy nature; and garnished with other creatures for the profit and pleasure of man.

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

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

(3.) This wisdom is seen in the fitness of everything for its end, and the usefulness of it. Divine wisdom is more illustrious in the fitness and usefulness of this great variety than in the composure of their distinct parts, as the artificer's skill is more eminent in fitting the wheels, and setting them in order for their due motion, than in the external fabric of the materials which compose the clock.

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

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

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

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

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

Rivers are appointed to bathe the ground,‡ and render it fresh and lively;

\* Amyraut, sur diverses text, p. 127.

† Lessius.

‡ Daille, Melan., part ii. p. 472, 473.

they fortify cities, are the limits of countries, serve for commerce; they are the watering-pots of the earth, and the vessels for drink for the living creatures that dwell upon the earth. God cut those channels for the wild asses, the beasts of the desert, which are his creatures as well as the rest, Ps. civ. 10, 12, 13.

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

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

The day and night have also their usefulness.\* The day gives life to labour, and is a guide to motion and action: Ps. civ. 23, 'The sun ariseth, man goeth forth to his labour until the evening.' It warms the air, and quickens nature. Without day, the world would be a chaos, an unseen beauty. The night, indeed, casts a veil upon the bravery of the earth, but it draws the curtains from that of heaven; though it darkens below, it makes us see the beauty of the world above, and discovers to us a glorious part of the creation of God, the tapestry of heaven, and the motion of the stars, hid from us by the eminent light of the day. It procures a truce from labour, and refresheth the bodies of creatures, by recruiting the spirits which are scattered by watching. It prevents the ruin of life, by a reparation of what was wasted in the day. It takes from us the sight of flowers and plants, but it washeth their face with dews for a new appearance next morning. The length of the day and night is not without a mark of wisdom: were they of a greater length, as the length of a week or month, the one would too much dry, and the other too much moisten, and for want of action the members would be stupefied. The perpetual succession of day and night is an evidence of the divine wisdom, in tempering the travel and rest of creatures. Hence the psalmist tells us, Ps. lxxiv. 16, 17, 'The day is thine, and the night is thine; thou hast prepared the light of the sun, and made summer and winter;' *i.e.* they are of God's framing, not without a wise counsel and end.

Hence let us ascend to the bodies of living creatures, and we shall find every member fitted for use. What a curiosity is there in every member! Every one fitted to a particular use in their situation, form, temper, and mutual agreement for the good of the whole; the eye to direct, the ear to receive directions from others, the hands to act, the feet to move. Every creature hath members fitted for that element wherein it resides. And in the body, some parts are appointed to change the food into blood, others to refine it, and others to distribute and convey it to several parts for the maintenance of the whole; the heart to mint vital spirits for preserving life, and the brain to coin animal spirits for life and motion; the lungs to serve for the cooling the heart, which else would be parched as the ground in summer. The motion of the members of the body by one act of the will, and also without the will, by a natural instinct, is an admirable evidence of divine skill in the structure of the body, so that well might the psalmist cry out, Ps. cxxxix. 14, 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made.'

But how much more of this divine perfection is seen in the soul! A nature furnished with a faculty of understanding to judge of things, to gather

\* Daille, Melang., part i. p. 477, &c.

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

(4.) Fourthly, The wisdom is apparent, in the linking all these useful parts together, so that one is subordinate to the other for a common end. All parts are exactly suited to one another, and every part to the whole; though they are of different natures, as lines distant in themselves, yet they meet in one common centre, the good and the preservation of the universe. They are all jointed together, as the word translated *framed* signifies, Heb. xi. 3; knit by fit bands and ligaments, to contribute mutual beauty, strength, and assistance to one another, like so many links of a chain coupled together, that though there be a distance in place, there is a unity in regard of connection and end, there is a consent in the whole: Hosea ii. 21, 22, 'The heavens hear the earth, and the earth hears the corn, and the wine, and the oil.' The heavens communicate their qualities to the earth, and the earth conveys them to the fruits she bears; the air distributes light, wind, and rain to the earth,\* the earth and the sea render to the air exhalations and vapours, and all together charitably give to the plants and animals that which is necessary for their nourishment and refreshment. The influences of the heavens animate the earth, and the earth affords matter in part for the influences it receives from the regions above. Living creatures are maintained by nourishment, nourishment is conveyed to them by the fruits of the earth, the fruits of the earth are produced by means of rain and heat, matter for rain and dew is raised by the heat of the sun, and the sun by its motion distributes heat and quickening virtue to all parts of the earth. So colours are made for the pleasure of the eye, sounds for the delight of the ear; light is formed, whereby the eye may see the one, and air to convey the species of colours to the eye and sound to the ear. All things are like the wheels of a watch compacted; and though many of the creatures be endowed with contrary qualities, yet they are joined in a marriage knot for the public security, and subserviency to the preservation and order of the universe, as the variety of strings upon an instrument, sending forth various and distinct sounds, are tempered together, for the framing excellent and delightful airs. In this universal conspiring of the creatures together to one end, is the wisdom of the Creator apparent, in tuning so many contraries as the elements are, and preserving them in their order, which, if once broken, the whole frame of nature would crack, and fall in pieces. All are so interwoven and inlaid together by the divine workmanship, as to make up one entire beauty in the whole fabric; as every part in the body of man hath a distinct comeliness, yet there is, besides, the beauty of the whole, that results from the union of diverse parts exactly fashioned to one another, and linked together.

By the way,

*Use.* How much may we see of the perfection of God in every thing that presents itself to our eyes! And how should we be convinced of our un-

\* Daille, Serm. xv. p. 170.



worthy neglect of ascending to him with reverent and admiring thoughts, upon the prospect of the creatures! What dull scholars are we, when every creature is our teacher, every part of the creature a lively instruction! Those things that we tread under our feet, if used by us according to the full design of their creation, would afford rich matter, not only for our heads, but our hearts. As grace doth not destroy nature, but elevate it, so neither should the fresher and fuller discoveries of divine wisdom in redemption, deface our thoughts of his wisdom in creation. Though the greater light of the sun obscures the lesser sparkling of the stars, yet it gives way in the night to the discovery of them, that God may be seen, known, and considered in all his works of wonder and miracles of nature. No part of Scripture is more spiritual than the psalms; none filled with clearer discoveries of Christ in the Old Testament; yet how often do the penmen consider the creation of God, and find their meditations on him to be sweet, as considered in his works! Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet.' When? Why, after a short history of the goodness and wisdom of God in the frame of the world, and the species of the creatures.

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

I shall omit his government of inanimate creatures, and confine the discourse to his government of man, as rational, as sinful, as restored.

(1.) In his government of man as a rational creature.

[1.] In the law he gives to man. Wisdom framed it, though will enacted it. The will of God is the rule of righteousness to us, but the wisdom of God is the foundation of that rule of righteousness which he prescribes us. The composure of a musician is the rule of singing to his scholars;\* yet the consent and harmony in that composure, derives not itself from his will, but from his understanding; he would not be a musician, if his composures were contrary to the rules of true harmony. So the laws of men are composed by wisdom, though they are enforced by will and authority.

The moral law, which was the law of nature, the law imprinted upon Adam, is so framed, as to secure the rights of God as supreme, and the rights of men in their distinctions of superiority and equality. It is therefore called holy and good, Rom. vii. 12: holy, as it prescribes our duty to God in his worship; good, as it regulates the offices of human life, and preserves the common interest of mankind.

*First*, It is suited to the nature of man. As God hath given a law of nature, a fixed order to inanimate creatures, so he hath given a law of reason to rational creatures. Other creatures are not capable of a law differencing good and evil, because they are destitute of faculties and capacities to make distinction between them. It had not been agreeable to the wisdom of God to propose any moral law to them, who had neither understanding to discern, nor will to choose. It is therefore to be observed, that whilst Christ

\* Castelleio, Dialog. l. iv. p. 46.

exhorted others to the embracing his doctrine, yet he exhorted not little children, though he took them in his arms, because though they had faculties, yet they were not come to such a maturity, as to be capable of a rational instruction. But there was a necessity for some command for the government of man; since God had made him a rational creature, it was not agreeable to his wisdom to govern him as a brute, but as a rational creature, capable of knowing his precepts, and voluntarily walking in them; and without a law, he had not been capable of any exercise of his reason in services respecting God.

He therefore gives him a law with a covenant annexed to it, whereby man is obliged to obedience, and secured of a reward. This was enforced with severe penalties,—death, with all the horrors attending it,—to deter him from transgression, Gen. ii. 17, wherein is implied a promise of continuance of life and all its felicities, to allure him to a mindfulness of his obligation. So perfect a hedge did divine wisdom set about him, to keep him within the bounds of that obedience, which was both his debt and security, that where-soever he looked, he saw either something to invite him, or something to drive him to the payment of his duty, and perseverance in it. Thus the law was exactly framed to the nature of man; man had twisted in him a desire of happiness; the promise was suited to cherish this natural desire. He had also the passion of fear; the proper object of this was anything destructive to his being, nature, and felicity; this the threatening met with. In the whole it was accommodated to man as rational. Precepts to the law in his mind, promises to the natural appetite; threatenings to the most prevailing affection, and to the implanted desires of preserving both his being and happiness in that being. These were rational motives fitted to the nature of Adam, which was above the life God had given plants, and the sense he had given animals.

The command given man in innocence, was suited to his strength and power; God gave him not any command, but what he had ability to observe; and since we want not power to forbear an apple in our corrupted and impotent state, he wanted not strength in his state of integrity. The wisdom of God commanded nothing, but what was very easy to be observed by him, and inferior to his natural ability. It had been both unjust and unwise to have commanded him to fly up to the sun, when he had not wings; or stop the course of the sea, when he had not strength.

*Secondly*, It is suited to the happiness and benefit of man. God's laws are not an act of mere authority respecting his own glory, but of wisdom and goodness respecting man's benefit. They are perfective of man's nature, conferring a wisdom upon him, 'rejoicing his heart, enlightening his eyes,' Ps. xix. 7, 8, affording him both a knowledge of God and of himself. To be without a law, is for man to be as beasts, without justice and without religion. Other things are for the good of the body, but the laws of God for the good of the soul; the more perfect the law, the greater the benefit. The laws given to the Jews were the honour and excellency of that nation: Deut. i. 8, 'What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous?' They were made statesmen in the judicial law, ecclesiastics in the ceremonial, honest men in the second table, and divine in the first. All his laws are suited to the true satisfaction of man, and the good of human society. Had God framed a law only for one nation, there would have been the characters of a particular wisdom; but now an universal wisdom appears, in accommodating his law, not only to this or that particular society or corporation of men, but to the benefit of all mankind, in the variety of climates and countries wherein they live. Everything that is disturbing to human

society is provided against ; nothing is enjoined but what is sweet, rational, and useful. It orders us not to attempt anything against the life of our neighbour, the honour of his bed, propriety in his goods, and the clearness of his reputation ; and if well observed, would alter the face of the world, and make it look with another hue. The world would be altered from a brutish to a human world. It would change lions and wolves, men of lion-like and wolfish disposition, into reason and sweetness. And because the whole law is summed up in love, it obligeth us to endeavour the preservation of one another's beings, the favouring of one another's interests, and increasing the goods, as much as justice will permit, and keeping up one another's credits ; because love, which is the soul of the law, is not shewn by a cessation from action, but signifies an order, upon all occasions, in doing good. I say, were this law well observed, the world would be another thing than it is. It would become a religious fraternity ; the voice of enmity, and the noise of groans and cursings, would not be heard in our streets ; peace would be in all borders, plenty of charity in the midst of cities and countries, joy and singing would sound in all habitations. Man's advantage was designed in God's laws, and doth naturally result from the observance of them. God so ordered them by his wisdom, that the obedience of man should draw forth his goodness, and prevent those smarting judgments which were necessary to reduce the creature to order, that would not voluntarily continue in the order God had appointed. The laws of men are often unjust, oppressive, cruel, sometimes against the law of nature ; but an universal wisdom and righteousness glitters in the divine law. There is nothing in it, but what is worthy of God and useful for the creature ; so that we may well say with Job, ' Who teaches like God ? ' Job xxxvi. 22, or as some render it, ' Who is a lawgiver like God ? ' who can say to him, Thou hast wrought iniquity, or folly, among men ? His precepts were framed for the preservation of man in that rectitude wherein he was created, in that likeness to God wherein he was first made, that there might be a correspondence between the integrity of the creature and the goodness of his Creator, by the obedience of man, that man might exercise his faculties in operations worthy of him, and beneficial to the world.

*Thirdly,* The wisdom of God is seen in suiting his laws to the consciences, as well as the interest of all mankind. Rom. ii. 14, ' The Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law,' so great an affinity there is between the wise law and the reason of man.

There is a natural beauty emerging from them, and darting upon the reasons and consciences of men, which dictates to them that this law is worthy to be observed in itself. The two main principles of the law, the love and worship of God, and doing as we would be done by, have an indelible impression in the consciences of all men in regard of the principle, though they are not suitably expressed in the practice. Were there no law outwardly published, yet every man's conscience would dictate to him that God was to be acknowledged, worshipped, loved, as naturally as his reason would acquaint him that there was such a being as God. This suitableness of them to the consciences of men is manifest, in that the laws of the best-governed nations among the heathen have had an agreement with them. Nothing can be more exactly composed, according to the rules of right and exact reason, than this ; no man but approves of something in it, yea, of the whole, when he exerciseth that dim reason which he hath. Suppose any man, not an absolute atheist, he cannot but acknowledge the reasonableness of worshipping God. Grant him to be a Spirit, and it will presently appear absurd to represent him by any corporeal image, and derogate from his ex-

cellency by so mean a resemblance. With the same easiness he will grant a reverence due to the name of God, that we must not serve our turn of him by calling him to witness to a lie in a solemn oath ; that as worship is due to him, so some stated time is a circumstance necessary to the performance of that worship. And as to the second table, will any man in his right reason quarrel with that command that engageth his inferiors to honour him, that secures his being from a violent murder, and his goods from unjust rapine ? And though, by the fury of his lusts, he break the laws of wedlock himself, yet he cannot but approve of that law, as it prohibits every man from doing him the like injury and disgrace. The suitableness of the law to the consciences of men, is further evidenced by those furious reflections and strong alarms of conscience upon a transgression of it, and that in all parts of the world, more or less in all men ; so exactly hath divine wisdom fitted the law to the reason and consciences of men, as one tally to another. Indeed, without such an agreement, no man's conscience could have any ground for a hue and cry, nor need any man be startled with the records of it. This manifests the wisdom of God in framing his law so, that the reasons and consciences of all men do one time or other subscribe to it. What governor in the world is able to make any law, distinct from this revealed by God, that shall reach all places, all persons, all hearts ?

We may add to this, the extent of his commands in ordering goodness at the root, not only in action but affection, not only in the motion of the members, but the disposition of the soul, which, suiting a law to the inward frame of man, is quite out of the compass of the wisdom of any creature.

*Fourthly.* His wisdom is seen in the encouragements he gives for the studying and observing his will : Ps. xix. 11, 'In keeping the commandments there is great reward.' The variety of them : there is not any particular genius in man, but may find something suitable to win upon him in the revealed will of God. There is a strain of reason to suit the rational, of eloquence to gratify the fanciful, of interest to allure the selfish, of terror to startle the obstinate. As a skilful angler stores himself with baits, according to the appetites of the sorts of fish he intends to catch, so in the word of God there are varieties of baits, according to the varieties of the inclinations of men : threatenings, to work upon fear ; promises, to work upon love ; examples of holy men set out for imitation, and those plainly ; neither his threatenings nor his promises are dark, as the heathen oracles, but peremptory, as becomes a sovereign lawgiver, and plain, as was necessary for the understanding of a creature. As he deals graciously with men, in exhorting and encouraging them, so he deals wisely herein, by taking away all excuse from them, if they ruin the interest of their souls by denying obedience to their sovereign.

Again, the rewards God proposeth are accommodated, not to the brutish parts of man, his carnal sense and fleshly appetite, but to the capacity of a spiritual soul, which admits only of spiritual gratifications, and cannot, in its own nature, without a sordid subjection to the humours of the body, be moved by sensual proposals. God backs his precepts with that which the nature of man longed for, and with spiritual delights, which can only satisfy a rational appetite ; and thereby did as well gratify the noblest desires in man, as oblige him to the noblest service and work.\* Indeed, virtue and holiness, being perfectly amiable, ought chiefly to affect our understandings, and by them draw our wills to the esteem and pursuit of them. But since the desire of happiness is inseparable from the nature of man, as impossible to be disjoined, as an inclination to descend to be severed from heavy bodies,

\* Amyraut.

or an instinct to ascend from light and airy substances, God serves himself of the inclination of our natures to happiness, to engender in us an esteem and affection to the holiness he doth require. He proposeth the enjoyment of a supernatural good and everlasting glory, as a bait to that insatiable longing our natures have for happiness, to receive the impression of holiness into our souls. And besides, he doth proportion rewards according to the degrees of men's industry, labour, and zeal for him; and weighs out a recompence, not only suited to, but above the service. He that improves five talents\* is to be ruler over five cities, that is, a greater proportion of honour and glory than another, Luke xix. 17, 18. As a wise father excites the affection of his children to things worthy of praise, by varieties of recompences according to their several actions. And it was the wisdom of the steward, in the judgment of our Saviour, to give every one the portion that belonged to him, Luke xii. 42. There is no part of the word wherein we meet not with the will and wisdom of God, varieties of duties, and varieties of encouragement mingled together.

*Fifthly*, The wisdom of God is seen in fitting the revelations of his will to after times, and for the preventing of the foreseen corruptions of men. The whole revelation of the mind of God is stored with wisdom, in the words, connection, sense; it looks backwards to past, and forwards to ages to come. A hidden wisdom lies in the bowels of it, like gold in a mine.

The Old Testament was so composed as to fortify the New, when God should bring it to light. The foundations of the gospel were laid in the law. The predictions of the prophets, and figures of the law, were so wisely framed and laid down in such clear expressions, as to be proofs of the authority of the New Testament, and convictions of Jesus his being the Messiah, Luke xxiv. 27. Things concerning Christ were written in Moses, the prophets, and Psalms, and do to this day stare the Jews so in the face, that they are fain to invent absurd and nonsensical interpretations to excuse their unbelief, and continue themselves in their obstinate blindness. And in pursuance of the efficacy of those predictions, it was a part of the wisdom of God to bring forth the translation of the Old Testament (by the means of Ptolemy, king of Egypt, some hundreds of years before the coming of Christ) into the Greek language, the tongue the most known in the world; and why? To prepare the Gentiles, by the reading of it, for that gracious call he intended them, and for the entertainment of the gospel, which some few years after was to be published among them; that by reading the predictions so long before made, they might more readily receive the accomplishment of them in their due time.

The Scripture is written in such a manner as to obviate errors foreseen by God to enter into the church. It may be wondered why the universal particle should be inserted by Christ, in the giving the cup in the supper, which was not in the distributing the bread: Mat. xxvi. 27, 'Drink ye *all* of it;' not at the distributing the bread, eat you all of it. And Mark in his relation tells us, 'They *all* drank of it,' Mark xi. 23. The Church of Rome hath been the occasion of discovering to us the wisdom of our Saviour in inserting that particle *all*, since they were so bold to exclude the communicants from the cup by a trick of concomitancy. Christ foresaw the error, and therefore put in a little word to obviate a great invasion. And the Spirit of God hath particularly left upon record that particle, as we may reasonably suppose, to such a purpose. And so in the description of the blessed virgin, Luke i. 27. There is nothing of her holiness mentioned,

\* There seems to be here a confusion of the parable in Luke xix. with that in Mat. xxv.—ED.

which is with much diligence recorded of Elizabeth: ver. 6, 'Righteous, walking in all the commandments of God blameless;' probably to prevent the superstition which God foresaw would arise in the world. And we do not find more undervaluing speeches uttered by Christ to any of his disciples in the exercise of his office than to her, except to Peter. As when she acquainted him with the want of wine at the marriage in Cana, she receives a slighting answer: 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' John ii. 4. And when one was admiring the blessedness of her that bare him, he turns the discourse another way, to pronounce a blessedness rather belonging to them that hear the word of God, and keep it, Luke xi. 27, 28, in a mighty wisdom to antidote his people against any conceit of the prevalency of the virgin over him in heaven, in the exercise of his mediatory office.

[2.] As his wisdom appears in his government by his laws, so it appears in the various inclinations and conditions of men. As there is a distinction of several creatures, and several qualities in them, for the common good of the world, so among men there are several inclinations and several abilities, as donatives from God, for the common advantage of human society; as several channels cut out from the same river run several ways, and refresh several soils; one man is qualified for one employment, another marked out by God for a different work, yet all of them fruitful to bring in a revenue of glory to God, and a harvest of profit to the rest of mankind. How unuseful would the body be, if it had but one member! 1 Cor. xii. 19. How unprovided would a house be, if it had not vessels of dishonour as well as of honour! The corporation of mankind would be as much a chaos, as the matter of the heavens and the earth was before it was distinguished by several forms breathed into it at the creation. Some are inspired with a particular genius for one art, some for another; every man hath a distinct talent. If all were husbandmen, where would be the instruments to plough and reap? If all were artificers, where would they have corn to nourish themselves? All men are like vessels, and parts in the body, designed for distinct offices and functions for the good of the whole, and mutually return an advantage to one another.

As the variety of gifts in the church is a fruit of the wisdom of God, for the preservation and increase of the church, so the variety of inclinations and employments in the world is a fruit of the wisdom of God, for the preservation and subsistence of the world by mutual commerce. What the apostle largely discourseth of the former, in 1 Cor. xii., may be applied to the other.

The various conditions of men is also a fruit of divine wisdom. Some are rich, and some poor; the rich have as much need of the poor as the poor have of the rich. If the poor depend upon the rich for their livelihood, the rich depend upon the poor for their conveniencies. Many arts would not be learned by men if poverty did not oblige them to it, and many would faint in the learning of them if they were not thereunto encouraged by the rich.

The poor labour for the rich, as the earth sends vapours into the vaster and fuller air, and the rich return advantages again to the poor, as the clouds do the vapours in rain upon the earth. As meat would not afford a nourishing juice without bread, and bread without other food would immoderately fill the stomach, and not be well digested, so the rich would be unprofitable in the commonwealth without the poor, and the poor would be burdensome to a commonwealth without the rich. The poor could not be easily governed without the rich, nor the rich sufficiently and conveniently

provided for without the poor. If all were rich, there would be no objects for the exercise of a noble part of charity; if all were poor, there were no matter for the exercise of it. Thus the divine wisdom planted various inclinations, and diversified the conditions of men for the public advantages of the world.

(2.) God's wisdom appears in the government of men as fallen and sinful, or in the government of sin. After the law of God was broke, and sin invaded and conquered the world, divine wisdom had another scene to act in, and other methods of government were necessary. The wisdom of God is then seen in ordering those jarring discords, drawing good out of evil, and honour to himself out of that which in its own nature tended to the supplanting of his glory. God being a sovereign good would not suffer so great an evil to enter, but to serve himself of it for some greater end; for all his thoughts are full of goodness and wisdom.

Now though the permission of sin be an act of his sovereignty, and the punishment of sin be an act of his justice, yet the ordination of sin to good is an act of his wisdom, whereby he doth dispose the evil, overrules the malice, and orders the events of it to his own purposes. Sin in itself is a disorder, and therefore God doth not permit sin for itself; for in its own nature it hath nothing of amiableness, but he wills it for some righteous end, which belongs to the manifestation of his glory, which is his aim in all the acts of his will; he wills it not as sin, but as his wisdom can order it to some greater good than was before in the world, and make it contribute to the beauty of the order he intends. As a dark shadow is not delightful and pleasant in itself, nor is drawn by a painter for any amiableness there is in the shadow itself, but as it serves to set forth that beauty which is the main design of his art, so the glorious effects which arise from the entrance of sin into the world are not from the creatures' evil, but the depths of divine wisdom.

Particularly,

[1.] God's wisdom is seen in the bounding of sin. As it is said of 'the wrath of man, it shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath God doth restrain,' Ps. lxxvi. 10. He sets limits to the boiling corruption of the heart, as he doth to the boisterous waves of the sea: 'Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further.' As God is the rector of the world, he doth so restrain sin, so temper and direct it, as that human society is preserved, which else would be overflown with a deluge of wickedness, and ruin would be brought upon all communities. The world would be a shambles, a brothel-house, if God by his wisdom and goodness did not set bars to that wickedness which is in the hearts of men. The whole earth would be as bad as hell. Since the heart of man is a hell of corruption, by that the souls of all men would be excited to the acting the worst villainies; since 'every thought of the heart of man is only evil, and that continually,' Gen. vi. 5; if the wisdom of God did not stop these flood-gates of evil in the hearts of men, it would overflow the world, and frustrate all the gracious designs he carries on among the sons of men. Were it not for this wisdom, every house would be filled with violence, as well as every nature is with sin. What harm would not strong and furious beasts do, did not the skill of man tame and bridle them? How often hath divine wisdom restrained the viciousness of human nature, and let it run, not to that point they designed, but to the end he proposed! Laban's fury, and Esau's enmity against Jacob were pent in within bounds for Jacob's safety, and their hearts overruled from an intended destruction of the good man to a perfect amity, Gen. xxxi. 29, and Gen. xxxii.

[2.] God's wisdom is seen in the bringing glory to himself out of sin.

*First*, Out of sin itself. God erects the trophies of honour upon that, which is a natural means to hinder and deface it. His glorious attributes are drawn out to our view upon the occasion of sin, which otherwise had lain hid in his own being. Sin is altogether black and abominable; but by the admirable wisdom of God, he hath drawn out of the dreadful darkness of sin, the saving beams of his mercy, and displayed his grace in the incarnation and passion of his Son for the atonement of sin. Thus he permitted Adam's fall, and wisely ordered it, for a fuller discovery of his own nature, and a higher elevation of man's good, that 'as sin reigned to death, so might grace reign through righteousness to eternal life, by Jesus Christ,' Rom. v. 21. The unbounded goodness of God could not have appeared without it. His goodness in rewarding innocent obedience would have been manifested, but not his mercy in pardoning rebellious crimes. An innocent creature is the object of the rewards of grace, as the standing angels are under the beams of grace; but not under the beams of mercy, because they were never sinful, and consequently never miserable. Without sin the creature had not been miserable. Had man remained innocent, he had not been the subject of punishment; and without the creature's misery, God's mercy in sending his Son to save his enemies could not have appeared. The abundance of sin is a passive occasion for God to manifest the abundance of his grace.

The power of God in the changing the heart of a rebellious creature had not appeared, had not sin infected our nature. We had not clearly known the vindictive justice of God had no crime been committed, for that is the proper object of divine wrath. The goodness of God could never have permitted justice to exercise itself upon an innocent creature, that was not guilty either personally or by imputation: Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.' Wisdom is illustrious hereby. God suffered man to fall into a mortal disease, to shew the virtue of his own restoratives to cure sin, which in itself is incurable by the art of any creature; and otherwise this perfection, whereby God draws good out of evil, had been utterly useless, and would have been destitute of an object wherein to discover itself.

Again, wisdom, in ordering a rebellious headstrong world to its own ends, is greater than the ordering an innocent world, exactly observant of his precepts, and complying with the end of the creation. Now, without the entrance of sin, this wisdom had wanted a stage to act upon. Thus God raised the honour of his wisdom, while man ruined the integrity of his nature; and made use of the creature's breach of his divine law, to establish the honour of it in a more signal and stable manner, by the active and passive obedience of the Son of his bosom. Nothing serves God so much as an occasion of glorifying himself, as the entrance of sin into the world; by this occasion God communicates to us the knowledge of those perfections of his nature, which had else been folded up from us in an eternal night: his justice had lain in the dark, as having nothing to punish; his mercy had been obscure, as having none to pardon; a great part of his wisdom had been silent, as having no such object to order.

*Secondly*, His wisdom appears in making use of sinful instruments. He uses the malice and enmity of the devil to bring about his own purposes, and makes the sworn enemy of his honour contribute to the illustrating of it against his will. This great crafts-master he took in his own net, and defeated the devil by the devil's malice, by turning the contrivances he had hatched and accomplished against man, against himself. He used him as a tempter, to grapple with our Saviour in the wilderness, whereby to make him



fit to succour us ; and as the God of this world, to inspire the wicked Jews to crucify him, whereby to render him actually the Redeemer of the world, and so made him an ignorant instrument of that divine glory he designed to ruin.

It is more skill to make a curious piece of workmanship with ill-conditioned tools, than with instruments naturally fitted for the work. It is no such great wonder for a limner to draw an exact piece with a fit pencil and suitable colours, as to begin and perfect a beautiful work with a straw and water, things improper for such a design.\* This wisdom of God is more admirable and astonishing, than if a man were able to rear a vast palace by fire, whose nature is to consume combustible matter, not to erect a building.

To make things serviceable, contrary to their own nature, is a wisdom peculiar to the Creator of nature. God's making use of devils, for the glory of his name, and the good of his people, is a more amazing piece of wisdom than his goodness in employing the blessed angels in his work. To promise that 'the world' (which includes the God of the world), and 'death,' and 'things present,' let them be as evil as they will, should be 'ours,' that is, for our good, and for his glory, is an act of goodness ; but to make them serviceable to the honour of Christ, and the good of his people, is a wisdom that may well raise our highest admirations, 1 Cor. iii. 22. They are for believers, as they are for the glory of Christ, and as Christ is for the glory of God.

To chain up Satan wholly, and frustrate his wiles, would be an argument of divine goodness ; but to suffer him to run his risk, and then improve all his contrivances for his own glorious and gracious ends and purposes, manifests, besides his power and goodness, his wisdom also. He uses the sins of evil instruments for the glory of his justice, Isa. x. 5-7. Thus he served himself of the ambition and covetousness of the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Romans, for the correction of his people and punishment of his rebels ; just as the Roman magistrates used the fury of lions and other wild beasts, in their theatres, for the punishment of criminals. The lions acted their natural temper in tearing those that were exposed to them for a prey ; but the intent of the magistrates was to punish their crimes. The magistrate inspired not the lions with their rage, that they had from their natures ; but served themselves of that natural rage to execute justice.

*Thirdly*, God's wisdom is seen in bringing good to the creature out of sin. He hath ordered sin to such an end as man never dreamt of, the devil never imagined, and sin in its own nature could never attain. Sin in its own nature tends to no good, but that of punishment, whereby the creature is brought into order. It hath no relation to the creature's good in itself, but to the creature's mischief ; but God, by an infinite act of wisdom, brings good out of it to the creature, as well as glory to his name, contrary to the nature of the crime, the intention of the criminal, and the design of the tempter.

God willed sin, that is, he willed to permit it, that he might communicate himself to the creature in the most excellent manner. He willed the permission of sin, as an occasion to bring forth the mystery of the incarnation and passion of our Saviour ; as he permitted the sin of Joseph's brethren, that he might use their evil to a good end. He never, because of his holiness, wills sin as an end ; but, in regard of his wisdom, he wills to permit it as a means and occasion. And thus to draw good out of those things which are in their own nature most contrary to good, is the highest pitch of wisdom.

\* Moulin's Serm. Decad. x. p. 231, 232.

First, The redemption of man in so excellent a way was drawn from the occasion of sin. The greatest blessing that ever the world was blessed with, was ushered in by contrarieties, by the lust and irregular affection of man; the first promise of the Redeemer by the fall of Adam, Gen. iii. 15, and the bruising the heel of that promised seed, by the blackest tragedy acted by wicked rebels, the treachery of Judas, and the rage of the Jews; the highest good hath been brought forth by the greatest wickedness. As God out of the chaos of rude and indigested matter framed the first creation, so from the sins of men, and malice of Satan, he hath erected the everlasting scheme of honour in a new creation of all things by Jesus Christ.

The devil inspired man to content his own fury in the death of Christ, and God ordered it to accomplish his own design of redemption in the passion of the Redeemer. The devil had his diabolical ends, and God overpowers his action to serve his own divine ends. The person that betrayed him was admitted to be a spectator of the most private actions of our Saviour, that his innocence might be justified; to shew that he was not afraid to have his enemies judges of his most retired privacies. While they all thought to do their own wills, divine wisdom orders them to do God's will: Acts ii. 23, 'Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.' And wherein the crucifiers of Christ sinned, in shedding the richest blood, upon their repentance they found the expiation of their crimes, and the discovery of a superabundant mercy. Nothing but blood was aimed at by them; the best blood was shed by them, but infinite wisdom makes the cross the scene of his own righteousness, and the womb of man's recovery.

By the occasion of man's lapsed state there was a way open to raise man to a more excellent condition than that whereinto he was put by creation. And the depriving man of the happiness of an earthly paradise, in the way of justice, was an occasion of advancing him to a heavenly felicity, in a way of grace. The violation of the old covenant occasionally introduced a better; the loss of the first integrity ushered in a more stable righteousness, an 'everlasting righteousness,' Dan. ix. 24. And the falling of the first head was succeeded by one whose standing could not but be eternal.

The fall of the devil was ordered by infinite wisdom, for the good of that body from which he fell. It is supposed by some that the devil was the chief angel in heaven, the head of all the rest; and that he falling, the angels were left as a body without a head; and after he had politically beheaded the angels, he endeavoured to destroy man, and rout him out of paradise. But God takes the opportunity to set up his Son as the head of angels and men. And thus whilst the devil endeavoured to spoil the corporation of angels, and make them a body contrary to God, God makes angels and men one body under one head for his service.

The angels in losing a defectible head attained a more excellent and glorious head in another nature, which they had not before; though of a lower nature in his humanity, yet of a more glorious nature in his divinity; from whence many suppose they derive their confirming grace, and the stability of their standing. All things in heaven and earth are gathered together in Christ, Eph. i. 10, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι; all united in him and reduced under one head. That though our Saviour be not properly their redeemer, for redemption supposeth captivity, yet in some sense he is their head and mediator; so that now the inhabitants of heaven and earth are but one family, Eph. iii. 15. And the innumerable company of angels are parts of that heavenly and triumphant Jerusalem, and that general assembly, whereof Jesus Christ is mediator, Heb. xii. 22, 23.

Secondly, The good of a nation often, by the skill of divine wisdom, is promoted by the sins of some men. The patriarchs' selling Joseph to the Midianites, Gen. xxxvii. 28, was without question a sin, and a breach of natural affection; yet by God's wise ordination it proved the safety of the whole church of God in the world, as well as the Egyptian nation, Gen. xlv. 5, 8, and l. 30.

The Jews' unbelief was a step whereby the Gentiles arose to the knowledge of the gospel; as the setting of the sun in one place is the rising of it in another, Mat. xxii. 9. He uses the corruptions of men instrumentally to propagate his gospel; he built up the true church by the preaching of 'some out of envy,' Philip. i. 15, as he blessed Israel out of the mouth of a false prophet, Num. xxiii. How often have the heresies of men been the occasion of clearing up the truth of God, and fixing the more lively impressions of it on the hearts of believers.

Neither Judah nor Tamar, in their lust, dreamt of a stock for the Redeemer; yet God gave a son from that unlawful bed, whereof Christ came according to the flesh, Gen. xxxviii. 29 compared with Mat. i. 3.

Jonah's sin was probably the first and remote occasion of the Ninevites giving credit to his prophecy; his sin was the cause of his punishment, and his being flung into the sea might facilitate the reception of his message, and excite the Ninevites' repentance, whereby a cloud of severe judgment was blown away from them.

It is thought by some, that when Jonah passed through the streets of Nineveh with his proclamation of destruction, he might be known by some of the mariners of that ship from whence he was cast overboard into the sea, and might after their voyage be occasionally in that city, the metropolis of the nation, and the place of some of their births; and might acquaint the people that this was the same person they had cast into the sea by his own consent, for his acknowledged running from the presence of the Lord; for that he had told them, Jonah i. 10, and the mariners' prayer, ver. 14, evidenceth it; whereupon they might conclude his message worthy of belief, since they knew from such evidences that he had sunk into the bowels of the waters, and now saw him safe in their streets by a deliverance unknown to them; and that therefore that power that delivered him could easily verify his word in the threatened judgment.

Had Jonah gone at first without committing that sin and receiving that punishment, his message had not been judged a divine prediction, but a fruit of some enthusiastic madness. His sin upon this account was the first occasion of averting a judgment from so great a city.

Thirdly, The good of the sinner himself is sometimes promoted by divine wisdom ordering the sin. As God had not permitted sin to enter upon the world, unless to bring glory to himself by it, so he would not let sin remain in the little world of a believer's heart, if he did not intend to order it for his good. What is done by man to his damage and disparagement is directed by divine wisdom to his advantage; not that it is the intent of the sin or the sinner, but it is the event of the sin by the ordination of divine wisdom and grace.

As without the wisdom of God permitting sin to enter into the world some attributes of God had not been experimentally known, so some graces could not have been exercised; for where had there been an object for that noble zeal, in vindicating the glory of God, had it not been invaded by an enemy? The intenseness of love to him could not have been so strong had we not an enemy to hate for his sake. Where had there been any place for that noble part of charity, in holy admonitions and compassion to the souls

of our neighbours, and endeavours to reduce them out of a destructive to a happy path? Humility would not have had so many grounds for its growth and exercise, and holy sorrow had had no fuel.

And as without the appearance of sin, there had been no exercise of the patience of God, so without afflictions, the fruits of sin, there had been no ground for the exercise of the patience of a Christian, one of the noblest parts of valour. Now sin being evil, and such as cannot but be evil, hath no respect in itself to any good, and cannot work a gracious end, or anything profitable to the creature; nay, it is a hindrance to any good, and therefore what good comes from it is accidental, occasioned indeed by sin, but efficiently caused by the over-ruling wisdom of God, taking occasion thereby to display itself and the divine goodness.

The sins and corruptions remaining in the heart of a man, God orders for good, and there are good effects by the direction of his wisdom and grace.

As the soul respects God.

1st, God often brings forth a sensibleness of the necessity of dependence on him. The nurse often lets the child slip, that it may the better know who supports it, and may not be too venturous and confident of its own strength. Peter would trust in habitual grace, and God suffers him to fall, that he might trust more in assisting grace: Mat. xxvi. 35, 'Though I should die with thee, yet I will not deny thee.' God leaves sometimes the brightest souls in an eclipse, to manifest that their holiness, and the preservation of it, depend upon the darting out his beams upon them.

As the falls of men are the effects of their coldness and remissness in acts of faith and repentance, so the fruit of these falls is often a running to him for refuge, and a deeper sensibleness where their security lies. It makes us lower our swelling sails, and come under the lee and protection of divine grace. When the pleasures of sin answer not the expectations of a revolted creature, he reflects upon his former state, and sticks more close to God, when before God had little of his company: Hosea ii. 7, 'I will return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now.'

As God makes the sins of men sometimes an occasion of their conversion, so he sometimes makes them an occasion of a further conversion. Onesimus run from Philemon, and was met with by Paul, who proved an instrument of his conversion: Philem. 10, 'My son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.' His flight from his master was the occasion of his regeneration by Paul, a prisoner.

The falls of believers God orders to their further stability. He that is fallen for want of using his staff, will lean more upon it to preserve himself from the like disaster.

God, by permitting the lapses of men, doth often make them despair of their own strength to subdue their enemies, and rely upon the strength of Christ, wherein God hath laid up power for us, and so become stronger in that strength which God hath ordained for them.

We are very apt to trust in ourselves, and have confidence in our own worth and strength; and God lets loose corruptions to abate this swelling humour. This was the reason of the apostle Paul's 'thorn in the flesh,' 2 Cor. xii. 9, whether it were a temptation, or corruption, or sickness, that he might be sensible of his own inability, and where the sufficiency of grace for him was placed.

He that is in danger of drowning, and hath the waves come over his head, will with all the might he hath, lay hold upon anything near him, which is capable to save him. God lets his people sometimes sink into such

a condition, that they may lay the faster hold on him who is 'near to all that call upon him.'

2dly, God hereby raiseth higher estimations of the value and virtue of the blood of Christ. As the great reason why God permitted sin to enter into the world, was to honour himself in the Redeemer, so the continuance of sin, and the conquests it sometimes makes in renewed men, are to honour the infinite value and virtue of the Redeemer's merit, which God from the beginning intended to magnify: the value of it, in taking off so much successive guilt; and the virtue of it, in washing away so much daily filth.

The wisdom of God hereby keeps up the credit of imputed righteousness, and manifests the immense treasure of the Redeemer's merit to pay such daily debts. Were we perfectly sanctified, we should stand upon our own bottom, and imagine no need of the continual and repeated imputation of the righteousness of Christ for our justification. We should confide in inherent righteousness, and slight imputed.

If God should take off all remainders of sin, as well as the guilt of it, we should be apt to forget that we are fallen creatures, and that we had a Redeemer. But the relics of sin in us, mind us of the necessity of some higher strength to set us right. They mind us both of our own misery and the Redeemer's perpetual benefit. God by this keeps up the dignity and honour of our Saviour's blood to the height, and therefore sometimes lets us see, to our own cost, what filth yet remains in us for the employment of that blood, which we should else but little think of, and less admire. Our gratitude is so small to God, as well as man, that the first obligations are soon forgot, if we stand not in need of fresh ones successively to second them; we should lose our thankful remembrance of the first virtue of Christ's blood in washing us, if our infirmities did not mind us of fresh reiterations and applications of it.

Our Saviour's office of advocacy was erected especially for sins committed after a justified and renewed state, 1 John ii. 1. We should scarce remember we had an advocate, and scarce make use of him, without some sensible necessity; but our remainders of sin discover our impotency, and an impossibility for us either to expiate our sin, or conform to the law, which necessitates us to have recourse to that person whom God hath appointed, to make up the breaches between God and us.

So the apostle wraps up himself in the covenant of grace and his interest in Christ, after his conflict with sin: Rom. vii. 25, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ.' 'Now,' after such a body of death, a principle within me that sends up daily steams; yet as long as I serve God with my mind, as long as I keep the main condition of the covenant, 'there is no condemnation,' chap. viii. 1. Christ takes my part, procures my acceptance, and holds the band of salvation firm in his hands. The brightness of Christ's grace is set off by the darkness of our sin. We should not understand the sovereignty of his medicines, if there were no relics of sin for him to exercise his skill upon. The physician's art is most experimented, and therefore most valued, in relapses, as dangerous as the former disease. As the wisdom of God brought our Saviour into temptation, that he might have compassion to us; so it permits us to be overcome by temptation, that we might have due valuations of him.

3dly, God hereby often engageth the soul to a greater industry for his glory. The highest persecutors, when they have become converts, have been the greatest champions for that cause they both hated and oppressed. The apostle Paul is such an instance of this, that it needs no enlargement. By how much they have failed of answering the end of their creation in

glorifying God, by so much the more they summon up all their force for such an end, after their conversion, to restore as much as they can of that glory to God, which they by their sin had robbed him of. Their sins, by the order of divine wisdom, prove whetstones to sharpen the edge of their spirits for God. Paul never remembered his persecuting fury, but he doubled his industry for the service of God, which before he trampled under his feet. The further we go back, the greater leap many times we take forward.

Our Saviour, after his resurrection, put Peter upon the exercise of that love to him, which had so lately shrunk his head out of suffering, John xxi. 15-17; and no doubt but the consideration of his base denial, together with a reflection upon a gracious pardon, engaged his ingenuous soul to stronger and fiercer flames of affection. A believer's courage for God is more sharpened oftentimes by the shame of his fall. He endeavours to repair the faults of his ingratitude and disingenuity, by larger and stronger steps of obedience. As a man in a fight, having been foiled by his enemy, reassumes new courage by his fall, and is many times obliged to his foil, both for his spirit and his victory; a gracious heart will, upon the very motions to sin, double its vigour, as well as by good ones. It is usually more quickened, both in its motion to God and for God, by the temptations and motions to sin which run upon it. This is another good the wisdom of God brings forth from sin.

4thly, Again, humility towards God is another good divine wisdom brings forth from the occasion of sin. By this God beats down all good opinion of ourselves. Hezekiah was more humbled by his fall into pride, than by all the distress he had been in by Sennacherib's army, 2 Chron. xxxii. 26. Peter's confidence before his fall, gave way to an humble modesty after it. You see his confidence, Mark xiv. 29, 'Though all should be offended in thee, yet will not I;' and you have the mark of his modesty, John xxi. 17. It is not then, Lord, I will love thee to the death, I will not start from thee; but, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.' I cannot assure myself of anything after this miscarriage; but, Lord, thou knowest there is a principle of love in me to thy name. He was ashamed that himself, who appeared such a pillar, should bend as meanly as a shrub to a temptation.

The reflection upon sin lays a man as low as hell in his humiliation, as the commission of sin did in the merit. When David comes to exercise repentance for his sin, he begins it from the well-head of sin, Ps. li. 5, his original corruption, and draws down the streams of it to the last commission. Perhaps he did not so seriously humble himself for the sin of his nature all his days, so much as at that time; at least, we have not such evidences of it. And Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart; not only for the pride of his act, 2 Chron. xxxii. 26, but for the pride in the heart, which was the spring of that pride in act, in shewing his treasures to the Babylonish ambassadors. God lets sin continue in the hearts of the best in this world, and sometimes gives the reins to Satan, and a man's own corruption, to keep up a sense of the ancient sale we made of ourselves to both.

In regard of ourselves.

Herein is the wonder of divine wisdom, that God many times makes a sin, which meritoriously fits us for hell, a providential occasion to fit us for heaven; when it is an occasion of a more humble faith and believing humility, and an occasion of a thorough sanctification and growth in grace, which prepares us for a state of glory.

1st, He makes use of one sin's breaking out to discover more, and so

brings us to a self-aborrancy and indignation against sin, the first step towards heaven. Perhaps David, before his gross fall, thought he had no hypocrisy in him. We often find him appealing to God for his integrity, and desiring God to try him, if any guile could be found in his heart, as if he could find none himself; but his lapse into that great wickedness makes him discern much falseness in his soul, when he desires God to 'renew a right spirit' within him, and speaks of 'truth in the inward parts,' Ps. li. 6, 10; the stirring of one corruption makes all the mud at the bottom appear, which before a soul did not suspect. No man would think there were so great a cloud of smoke contained in a little stick of wood, were it not for the powerful operation of the fire, that both discovers and separates it. Job, that cursed the day of his birth, and uttered many impatient expressions against God upon the account of his own integrity, upon his recovery from his affliction, and God's close application of himself, was wrought to a greater abhorrancy of himself than ever we read he was exercised in before, Job xlii. 6. The hostile acts of sin increase the soul's hatred of it, and the deeper our humiliations are for it the stronger impressions of abhorrancy are made upon us.

*2dly*, He often orders it, to make conscience more tender, and the soul more watchful. He that finds by his calamity his enemy to have more strength against him than he suspected, will double his guards and quicken his diligence against him. A being overtaken by some sin is, by the wisdom of God, disposed to make us more fearful of cherishing any occasion to inflame it, and watchful against every motion and start of it; by a fall the soul hath more experience of the deceitfulness of the heart, and, by observing its methods, is rendered better able to watch against them. It is our ignorance of the devices of Satan, and our own hearts, that makes us obnoxious to their surprises. A fall into one sin is often a prevention of more which lay in wait for us. As the fall of a small body into ambush prevents the design of the enemy upon a greater, as God suffers heresies in the church, to try our faith, so he suffers sins to remain, and sometimes to break out, to try our watchfulness. This advantage he brings from them, to steel our resolutions against the same sins, and quicken our circumspection for the future against new surprises by a temptation. David's sin was 'ever before him,' Ps. li. 3, and made his conscience cry, Blood, blood, upon every occasion. He refused the water of the well of Bethlehem, 2 Sam. xxiii. 16, 17, because it was gained with the hazard of lives; he could endure nothing that had the taste of blood in it. Our fear of a thing depends much upon a trial of it; a child will not fear too near approaches to the fire till he feels the smart of it.

Mortification doth not wholly suppress the motions of sin, though it doth the resolutions to commit it; but that there will be a proneness in the relics of it, to entice a man into those faults, which, upon sight of their blemishes, cost him so many tears. As great sicknesses after the cure are more watched, and the body humoured, that a man might not fall from the craziness they have left in him, which he is apt to do if relapses are not carefully provided against. A man becomes more careful of anything that may contribute to the resurrection of an expired disease.

*3dly*, God makes it an occasion of the mortification of that sin, which was the matter of the fall. The liveliness of one sin in a renewed man many times is the occasion of the death of it. A wild beast, while kept close in a den, is secure in its life; but, when it breaks out to rapine, it makes the master resolve to prevent any further mischief by the death of it. The impetuous stirring of a humour in a disease is sometime critical, and a prog-

nostic of the strength of nature against it, whereby the disease loseth its strength by its struggling, and makes room for health to take place by degrees. One sin is used by God for the destruction both of itself and others. As the flesh of a scorpion cures the biting of it, it sometimes, by wounding us, loseth its sting, and, like the bee, renders itself incapable of a second revenge. Peter, after his gross denial, never denied his master afterwards. The sin that lay undiscovered is, by a fall, become visible, and so more obvious to a mortifying stroke. The soul lays the faster hold on Christ and the promise, and goes out against that enemy in the name of that Lord of hosts, of which he was too negligent of before, and therefore, as he proves more strong, so more successful; he hath more strength because he hath less confidence in himself, and more in God, the prime strength of his soul. As it was with Christ, so it is with us; while the devil was bruising his heel, he was bruising his head; and while the devil is bruising our heel, the God of peace and wisdom is sometimes bruising his head both in us and for us, so that the strugglings of sin are often as the faint groans or bitings of a beast that is ready to expire. It is just with a man sometimes as with a running fountain that hath mud at the bottom; when it is stirred, the mud tinctures and defiles it all over; yet some of that mud hath a vent with the streams which run from it, so that when it is re-settled at the bottom, it is not so much in quantity as it was before. God by his wisdom weakens the sin, by permitting it to stir and defile.

*4thly*, Sometimes divine wisdom makes it an occasion to promote a sanctification in all parts of the soul. As the working of one ill-humour in the body is an occasion of cashiering not only that, but the rest, by a sound purge; as a man that is a little cold doth not think of the fire, but if he slips with one foot into an icy puddle he hastens to the fire, whereby not only that part, but all the rest, receive a warmth and strength upon that occasion; or, as if a person fall into the mire, his clothes are washed, and by that means cleansed, not only from the filth at present contracted, but from the former spots that were before unregarded: God by his wisdom brings secret sins to a discovery, and thereby cleanseth the soul of them.

David's fall might be ordered as an answer to his former petition: Ps. xix. 12, 'Cleanse thou me from my secret sins;' and as he did earnestly pray after his fall, so no doubt but he endeavoured a thorough sanctification: Ps. li. 7, 'Purge me, wash me;' and that he meant not only a sanctification from that single sin, but from all root and branch, is evident by that complaint of the flaw in his nature, ver. 5. The dross and chaff which lies in the heart is hereby discovered, and an opportunity administered of throwing it out, and searching all the corners of the heart to discover where it lay. As God sometime takes occasion from one sin, to reckon with men in a way of justice for others, so he sometimes takes occasion from the commission of one sin, to bring out all the actions against the sinner, to make him, in a way of gracious wisdom, set more cordially upon the work of sanctification.

A great fall sometimes has been the occasion of a man's conversion. The fall of mankind occasioned a more blessed restoration, and the falls of particular believers oftentimes occasion a more extensive sanctification. Thus the only wise God makes poisons in nature to become medicines in a way of grace and wisdom.

*5thly*, Hereby the growth in grace is furthered. It is a wonder of divine wisdom, to subtract sometimes his grace from a person, and let him fall into sin, thereby to occasion the increase of habitual grace in him, and to augment it by those ways that seemed to depress it; by making sins an



occasion of a more vigorous acting the contrary grace, the wisdom of God makes our corruptions, in their own nature destructive, to become profitable to us. Grace often breaks out more strongly afterwards, as the sun doth with its heat, after it hath been masked and interrupted with a mist; they often, through the mighty working of the Spirit, make us more humble, and humility fits us to receive more grace from God, James iv. 5. How doth faith, that sunk under the waves, lift up its head again, and carry the soul out with a greater liveliness! What ardours of love, what floods of repenting tears, what severity of revenge, what horrors at the remembrance of the sin, what tremblings at the appearance of a second temptation! so that grace seems to be awakened to a new and more vigorous life, 2 Cor. vii. 11. The broken joint is many times stronger in the rupture than it was before; the luxuriancy of the branches of corruption is an occasion of purging, and purging is with a design to make grace more fruitful: John xv. 2, 'He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.'

Thus divine wisdom doth both sharpen and brighten us by the dust of sin, and ripen and mellow the fruits of grace by the dung of corruption. Grace grows the stronger by opposition, as the fire burns hottest and clearest when it is most surrounded by a cold air, and our natural heat reassumes a new strength by the coldness of the winter. The foil under a diamond, though an imperfection in itself, increaseth the beauty and lustre of the stone. The enmity of man was a commendation of the grace of God. It occasioned the breaking out of the grace of God upon us, and is an occasion, by the wisdom and grace of God, of the increase of grace many times in us.

How should the consideration of God's incomprehensible wisdom in the management of evil swallow us up in admiration, who brings forth such beauty, such eminent discoveries of himself, such excellent good to the creature, out of the bowels of the greatest contrarieties, making dark shadows serve to display and beautify to our apprehensions the divine glory! If evil were not in the world, men would not know what God is. They would not behold the lustre of divine wisdom, as without night we could not understand the beauty of the day.

Though God is not the author of sin, because of his holiness, yet he is the administrator of sin by his wisdom, and accomplisheth his own purposes by the iniquities of his enemies, and the lapses and infirmities of his friends.

Thus much for the second, the government of man in his lapsed state, and the government of sin, wherein the wisdom of God doth wonderfully appear.

(3.) The wisdom of God appears in the government of man in his conversion and return to him. If there be a counsel inframing the lowest creature, and in the minutest passages of providence, there must needs be a higher wisdom in the government of the creature to a supernatural end, and framing the soul to be a monument of his glory. The wisdom of God is seen with more admirations, and in more varieties by the angels in the church than in the creation, Eph. iii. 10; that is, in forming a church out of the rubbish of the world, out of contrarieties and contradictions to him, which is greater than the framing a celestial and elementary world out of a rude chaos. The most glorious bodies in the world, even those of the sun, moon, and stars, have not such stamps of divine skill upon them as the soul of man; nor is there so much of wisdom in the fabric and faculties of that, as in the reduction of a blind, wilful, rebellious soul to its own happiness and God's glory: Eph. i. 11, 12, 'He worketh all things according to the

counsel of his own will, that we should be for the praise of his glory.' If all things, then this, which is none of the least of his works, to the praise of the glory of his goodness in his work, and to the praise of the rule of his work, his counsel, in both the act of his will and the act of his wisdom. The restoring of the beauty of the soul, and its fitness for its true end, speaks no less wisdom than the first draught of it in creation. And the application of redemption, and bringing forth the fruits of it, is as well an act of his prudence as the contrivance was of his counsel.

Divine wisdom appears,

[1.] In the subjects of conversion. His goodness reigns in the very dust, and he erects the walls and ornaments of his temple from the clay and mud of the world. He passes over the wise, and noble, and mighty, that may pretend some grounds of boasting in their own natural or acquired endowments, and pitches upon the most contemptible materials wherewith to build a spiritual tabernacle for himself: 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 'The foolish and weak things of the world;' those that are naturally most unfit for it, and most refractory to it. Herein lies the skill of an architect, to render the most knotty, crooked, and inform pieces, by his art, subservient to his main purpose and design. Thus God hath ordered from the beginning of the world contrary tempers, various humours, divers nations, as stones of several natures, to be a building for himself, fitly framed together, and to be his own family, 1 Cor. iii. 9. Who will question the skill that alters a black jet into a clear crystal, a glow-worm into a star, a lion into a lamb, and a swine into a dove? The more intricate and knotty any business is, the more eminent is any man's ability and prudence in untying the knots and bringing it to a good issue. The more desperate the disease, the more admirable is the physician's skill in the cure.

He pitches upon men for his service who have natural dispositions to serve him in such ways as he disposeth of them after their conversion. So Paul was naturally a conscientious man. What he did against Christ was from the dictates of an erroneous conscience, soaked in the Pharisaical interpretations of the Jewish law. He had a strain of zeal to prosecute what his depraved reason and conscience did inform him in. God pitches upon this man, and works him in the fire for his service. He alters not his natural disposition, to make him of a constitution and temper contrary to what he was before, but directs it to another object, claps in another bias into the bowl, and makes his ill-governed dispositions move in a new way of his own appointment, and guided that natural heat to the service of that interest which he was before ambitious to extirpate. As a high mettled horse, when left to himself, creates both disturbance and danger, but under the conduct of a wise rider moves regularly, not by a change of his natural fierceness, but a skilful management of the beast to the rider's purpose.

[2.] In the seasons of conversion. The prudence of man consists in the timing the execution of his counsels; and no less doth the wisdom of God consist in this. As he is a God of judgment or wisdom, he waits to introduce his grace into the soul in the fittest season.

This attribute Paul, in the story of his own conversion, puts a particular mark upon, which he doth not upon any other in that catalogue he reckons up: 1 Tim. i. 17, 'Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.' A most solemn doxology, wherein wisdom sits upon the throne above all the rest, with a special amen to the glory of it, which refers to the timing of his mercy so to Paul, as made most for the glory of his grace, and the encouragement of others from him as the pattern. God took him at a time when he was upon

the brink of hell; when he was ready to devour the new-born infant church at Damascus; when he was armed with all the authority from without, and fired with all the zeal from within, for the prosecution of his design, then God seizeth upon him, and runs him in a channel for his own honour and his creatures' happiness.

It is observable, which I have upon another occasion noted, how God set his eye upon Paul all along in his furious course, and lets him have the reins, without putting out his hand to bridle him, yet no motion he could take but the eye of God runs along with him. He suffered him to kick against the pricks of miracles, and the convincing discourse of Stephen at his martyrdom. There were many that voted for Stephen's death, as the witnesses that flung the stones first at him; but they are not named, only Saul, who testified his approbation as well as the rest, and that by watching the witnesses' clothes while they were about that bloody work: Acts vii. 58, 'The witnesses laid their clothes at a young man's feet, named Saul.' Again, though multitudes were consenting to his death, yet, Acts viii. 1, Saul only is mentioned. God's eye is upon him, yet he would not at that time stop his fury. He goes on further, and makes havock of the church, Acts viii. 3. He had surely many more accomplices, but none are named (as if none regarded with any design of grace) but Saul. Yet God would not reach out his hand to change him, but eyes him, waiting for a fitter opportunity, which in his wisdom he did foresee. And therefore, Acts ix. 1, the Spirit of God adds a *yet*: 'Saul yet breathing out threatenings.' It was not God's time yet, but it would be shortly. But when Saul was putting in execution his design against the church of Damascus, when the devil was at the top of his hopes, and Saul in the height of his fury, and the Christians sunk into the depth of their fears, the wisdom of God lays hold of the opportunity, and by Paul's conversion at this season, defeats the devil, disappoints the high priests, shields his people, discharges their fears by pulling Saul out of the devil's hands, and forming Satan's instrument to a holy activity against him.

[3.] The wisdom of God appears in the manner of conversion. So great a change God makes, not by a destruction, but with a preservation of, and suitableness to, nature. As the devil tempts us, not by offering violence to our natures, but by proposing things convenient to our corrupt natures, so doth God solicit us to a return by proposals suited to our faculties. As he doth in nature convey nourishment to men by means of the fruits of the earth, and produceth the fruits of the earth by the influences of heaven, the influences of heaven do not force the earth, but excite that natural virtue and strength which is in it, so God produceth grace in the soul by the means of the word, fitted to the capacity of man as man, and proportioned to his rational faculties as rational.

It would be contrary to the wisdom of God to move man like a stone, to invert the order and privilege of that nature which he settled in creation, for then God would in vain have given man understanding and will; because, without moving men according to those faculties, they would remain unprofitable and unuseful in man. God doth not reduce us to himself as logs, by a mere force, or as slaves forced by a cudgel to go forth to that place and do that work which they have no stomach to, but he doth accommodate himself to those foundations he hath laid in our nature, and guides us in a way agreeable thereunto by an action as sweet as powerful;\* clearing our understandings of dark principles, whereby we may see his truth, our own misery, and the seat of our happiness, and bending our wills according

\* Daille sur Philip., part i. p. 545, 546.

to this light, to desire and move conveniently to this end of our calling; efficaciously, yet agreeably; powerfully, yet without imposing on our natural faculties; sweetly,\* without violence in ordering the means, but effectually, without failing in accomplishing the end. And therefore the Scripture calleth it 'teaching,' John vi. 45, 'alluring,' Hosea ii. 14, 'calling us to seek the Lord,' Ps. xxvii. 8. Teaching is an act of wisdom, alluring an act of love, calling an act of authority; but none of them argue a violent constraint. The principle that moves the will is supernatural, but the will, as a natural faculty, concurs in the act or motion.

God doth not act in this in a way of absolute power, without an infinite wisdom, suiting himself to the nature of the things he acts upon. He doth not change the physical nature, though he doth the moral. As in the government of the world he doth not make heavy things ascend nor light things descend ordinarily, but guides their motions according to their natural qualities, so God doth not strain the faculties beyond their due pitch. He lets the nature of the faculty remain, but changes the principle in it. The understanding remains understanding, and the will remains will; but where there was before folly in the understanding, he puts in a spirit of wisdom; and where there was before a stoutness in the will, he forms it to a pliability to his offers. He hath a key to fit every ward in the lock, and opens the will without injuring the nature of the will.

He doth not change the soul by an alteration of the faculties, but by an alteration of something in them; not by an inroad upon them, or by mere power or a blind instinct, but by proposing to the understanding something to be known, and informing it of the reasonableness of his precepts, and the innate goodness and excellency of his offers, and by inclining the will to love and embrace what is proposed. And things are proposed under those notions which usually move our wills and affections. We are moved by things as they are good, pleasant, profitable; we entertain things as they make for us; and detest things as they are contrary to us. Nothing affects us but under such qualities, and God suits his encouragements to these natural affections which are in us. His power and wisdom go hand in hand together; his power to act what his wisdom orders, and his wisdom to conduct what his power executes. He brings men to him in ways suited to their natural dispositions. The stubborn he tears like a lion, the gentle he wins like a turtle, by sweetness; he hath a hammer to break the stout, and a cord of love to draw the more pliable tempers. He works upon the more rational in a way of gospel reason, upon the more ingenuous in a way of kindness, and draws them by the cords of love.

The wise men were led to Christ by a star, and means suited to the knowledge and study that those eastern nations used, which was much in astronomy. He worketh upon others by miracles accommodated to every one's sense, and so proportions the means according to the nature of the subjects he works upon.

[4.] The wisdom of God is apparent in his discipline and penal evils. The wisdom of human governments is seen in the matter of their laws, and in the penalties of their laws, and in the proportion of the punishment to the offence, and in the good that redounds from the punishment, either to the offender or to the community.

The wisdom of God is seen in the penalty of death upon the transgression of his law, both in that it was the greatest evil that man might fear, and so was a convenient means to keep him in his due bound, and also in the proportion of it to the transgression. Nothing less could be in a wise justice

\* Sanderson, part ii. p. 205.

inflicted upon an offender for a crime against the highest being and the supreme excellency. But this hath been spoken of before in the wisdom of his laws. I shall only mention some few; it would be too tedious to run into all.

*First*, His wisdom appears in judgments, in the suiting them to the qualities of persons and nature of sins. He 'deviseth evil,' Jer. xviii. 11; his judgments are fruits of counsel. 'He also is wise, and will bring evil,' Isa. xxxi. 2; evil suitable to the person offending, and evil suitable to the offence committed. As the husbandman doth his threshing instruments to the grain, he hath a rod for the cummin, a tenderer seed, and a flail for the harder, so hath God greater judgments for the obdurate sinner, and lighter for those that have something of tenderness in their wickedness: Isa. xxviii. 27, 29, 'Because he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working;' so some understand the place: 'With the froward he will shew himself froward.'

He proportions punishment to the sin, and writes the cause of the judgment in the forehead of the judgment itself. Sodom burned in lust, and was consumed by fire from heaven. The Jews sold Christ for thirty pence, and at the taking of Jerusalem, thirty of them were sold for a penny. So Adonibezek cut off the thumbs and great toes of others, and he is served in the same kind, Judges i. 7. The Babel builders designed an indissoluble union, and God brings upon them an unintelligible confusion. And in Exod. ix. 9, the ashes of the furnace where the Israelites burnt the Egyptian bricks, sprinkled towards heaven, brought boils upon the Egyptian bodies, that they might feel in their own what pain they had caused in the Israelites' flesh, and find, by the smart of the inflamed scab, what they had made the Israelites endure. The waters of the river Nilus are turned into blood, wherein they had stifled the breath of the Israelites' infants. And at last the prince and the flower of their nobility are drowned in the Red Sea.

It is part of the wisdom of justice to proportion punishment to the crime, and the degrees of wrath to the degrees of malice in the sin. Afflictions also are wisely proportioned. God, as a wise physician, considers the nature of the humour and strength of the patient, and suits his medicines both to the one and the other, 1 Cor. x. 13.

*Secondly*, In the seasons of punishments and afflictions. He stays till sin be ripe, that his justice may appear more equitable, and the offender more inexcusable: Dan. ix. 14, he 'watches upon the evil, to bring it upon men;' to bring it in the just season and order for his righteous and gracious purpose; his righteous purpose on the enemies, and his gracious purpose on his people.

Jerusalem's calamity came upon them when the city was full of people at the solemnity of the passover, that he might mow down his enemies at once, and time their destruction to such a moment wherein they had timed the crucifixion of his Son. He watched over the clouds of his judgments, and kept them from pouring down, till his people, the Christians, were provided for, and had departed out of the city to the chambers and retiring-places God had provided for them. He made not Jerusalem the shambles for his enemies till he had made Pella and other places the ark of his friends. As Pliny tells us, the providence of God holds the seas in a calm for fifteen days, that the haleyons, little birds that frequent the shore, may build their nests, and hatch up their young. The judgment upon Sodom was suspended for some hours till Lot was secured.

God suffered not the church to be invaded by violent persecutions till she

was established in the faith;\* he would not expose her to so great combats while she was weak and feeble, but gave her time to fortify herself, to be rendered more capable of bearing up under them. He stifled all the motions of passion the idolaters might have for their superstition till religion was in such a condition as rather to be increased and purified than extinguished by opposition. Paul was secured from Nero's chains, and the nets of his enemies, till he had broke off the chain of the devil from many cities of the Gentiles, and caught them by the net of the gospel out of the sea of the world.

Thus the wisdom of God is seen in the seasons of judgments and afflictions.

*Thirdly,* It is apparent in the gracious issue of afflictions and penal evils. It is a part of wisdom to bring good out of the evil of punishment, as well as to bring good out of sin. The church never was so like to heaven as when it was most persecuted by hell; the storms often cleansed it, and the lance often made it more healthful. Job's integrity had not been so clear, nor his patience so illustrious, had not the devil been permitted to afflict him. God, by his wisdom, outwits Satan when he by his temptations intends to pollute us and buffet us, God orders it to purify us; he often brings the clearest light out of the thickest darkness, makes poisons to become medicines. Death itself, the greatest punishment in this life, and the entrance into hell in its own nature, he hath by his wise contrivance made to his people the gate of heaven and the passage into immortality.† Penal evils in a nation often end in a public advantage; troubles and wars among a people are many times not destroying, but medicinal, and cure them of that degeneracy, luxury, and effeminateness they contracted by a long peace.

*Fourthly,* This wisdom is evident in the various ends which God brings about by afflictions. The attainment of various ends by one and the same means, is the fruit of the agent's prudence. By the same affliction the wise God corrects sometimes for some base affection, excites some sleepy grace, drives out some lurking corruption, refines the soul, and ruins the lust; discovers the greatness of a crime, the vanity of the creature, and the sufficiency in himself.

The Jews bind Paul, and by the judge he is sent to Rome; while his mouth is stopped in Judea, it is opened in one of the greatest cities of the world, and his enemies unwittingly contribute to the increase of the knowledge of Christ by those chains in that city that triumphed over the earth, Acts xxviii. 31. And his afflictive bonds added courage and resolution to others—Philip. i. 14, 'Many waxing confident by my bonds'—which could not in their own nature produce such an effect, but by the order and contrivance of divine wisdom. In their own nature they would rather make them disgust the doctrine he suffered for, and cool their zeal in the propagating of it, for fear of the same disgrace and hardship they saw him suffer.‡ But the wisdom of God changed the nature of these fetters, and conducted them to the glory of his name, the encouragement of others, the increase of the gospel, and the comfort of the apostle himself, Philip. i. 12, 13, 18. The sufferings of Paul at Rome confirmed the Philippians, a people at a distance from thence, in the doctrine they had already received at his hands.

Thus God makes sufferings sometimes which appear like judgments to be like the viper on Paul's hand, Acts xxviii. 6, a means to clear up innocence, and procure favour to the doctrine among those barbarians. How often hath

\* Daille sur 1 Cor. x. p. 390.

† Daille sur Philip. Parta. p. 116, 117.

‡ Turretine, Serm. p. 53.

he multiplied the church by death and massacres, and increased it by those means used to annihilate it!

*Fifthly*, The divine wisdom is apparent in the deliverances he affords to other parts of the world as well as to his church. There are delicate composites, curious threads in his webs, and he works them like an artificer. A goodness wrought for them, curiously wrought, Ps. xxxi. 19.

First, In making the creatures subservient in their natural order to his gracious ends and purposes. He orders things in such a manner as not to be necessitated to put forth an extraordinary power in things, which some part of the creation might accomplish. Miraculous productions would speak his power; but the ordering the natural course of things, to occasion such effects they were never intended for, is one part of the glory of his wisdom. And that his wisdom may be seen in the course of nature, he conducts the notions\* of creatures, and acts them in their own strength, and doth that by various windings and turnings of them, which he might do in an instant by his power in a supernatural way. Indeed, sometimes he hath made invasions on nature, and suspended the order of their natural law for a season, to shew himself the absolute Lord and Governor of nature. Yet if frequent alterations of this nature were made, they would impede the knowledge of the nature of things, and be some bar to the discovery and glory of his wisdom, which is best seen by moving the wheels of inferior creatures in an exact regularity to his own ends. He might, when his little church in Jacob's family was like to starve in Canaan, have for their preservation turned the stones of the country into bread; but he sends them down to Egypt to procure corn, that a way may be opened for their removal into that country; the truth of his prediction in their captivity accomplished, and a way made after† the declaration of his great name Jehovah, both in the fidelity of his word and the greatness of his power in their deliverance from that furnace of affliction. He might have struck Goliath, the captain of the Philistines' army, with a thunderbolt from heaven when he blasphemed his name and scared his people; but he useth the natural strength of a stone, and the artificial motion of a sling, by the arm of David, to confront the giant, and thereby to free Judea from the ravage of a potent enemy. He might have delivered the Jews from Babylon by as strange miracles as he used in their deliverance from Egypt; he might have plagued their enemies, gathered his people into a body, and protected them by the bulwark of a cloud and a pillar of fire against the assaults of their enemies. But he uses the differences between the Persians and those of Babylon to accomplish his ends. How sometimes hath the veering about of the wind on a sudden been the loss of a navy when it hath been upon the point of victory, and driven back the destruction upon those which intended it for others! and the accidental stumbling, or the natural fierceness, of a horse, flung down a general in the midst of a battle, where he hath lost his life by the throng, and his death hath brought a defeat to his army, and deliverance to the other party that were upon the brink of ruin! Thus doth the wisdom of God link things together according to natural order, to work out his intended preservation of a people.

Secondly, In the season of deliverance. The timing of affairs is a part of the wisdom of man, and an eminent part of the wisdom of God. It is in 'due season' he sends the 'former and the latter rain,' when the earth is in the greatest indigence, and when his influences may most contribute to the bringing forth and ripening the fruit. The dumb creatures have 'their meat from him in due season,' Ps. civ. 27. And in his due season have,

\* Qu. 'motions'?—Ed.

† Qu. 'for'?—Ed.

his darling people their deliverance. When Paul was upon his journey to Damascus with a persecuting commission, he is struck down, for the security of the church in that city. The nature of the lion is changed in due season for the preservation of the lambs from worrying. The Israelites are miraculously rescued from Egypt, when their wits were at a loss, when their danger to human understanding was unavoidable; when earth and sea refused protection, then the wisdom and power of heaven stepped in to effect that which was past the skill of the conductors of that multitude. And when the lives of the Jews lay at the stake, and their necks were upon the block at the mercy of their enemies' swords by an order from Shushan, not only a reprieve, but a triumph arrives to the Jews, by the wisdom of God guiding the affair, whereby, of persons designed to execution, they are made conquerors, and have opportunity to exercise their revenge instead of their patience, proving triumphers where they expected to be sufferers, Esther viii. and ix. How strangely doth God by secret ways bow the hearts of men, and the nature of things, to the execution of that which he designs, notwithstanding all the resistance of that which would traverse the security of his people! How often doth he trap the wicked in the work of their own hands, make their confidence to become their ruin, and ensnare them in those nets they wrought and laid for others! Ps. ix. 16, 'The wicked is snared in the works of his own hands.' 'He scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts,' Luke i. 51, in the height of their hopes, when their designs have been laid so deep in the foundation, and knit, and cemented so close in their superstructure, that no human power or wisdom could raze them down. He hath then disappointed their projects, and befooled their craft. How often hath he kept back the fire when it hath been ready to devour, broke the arrows when they have been prepared in the bow, turned the spear into the bowels of the bearers, and wounded them at the very instant they were ready to wound others.

Thirdly, In suiting instruments to his purpose. He either finds them fit, or makes them on a sudden fit for his gracious ends. If he hath a tabernacle to build, he will fit a Bezaleel and Aholiab with the spirit of wisdom and understanding in all cunning workmanship, Exod. xxxi. 3, 6. If he finds them crooked pieces, he can, like a wise architect, make them straight beams for the rearing his house, and for the honour of his name.

He sometimes picks out men according to their natural tempers, and employs them in his work. Jehu, a man of a furious temper, and ambitious spirit, is called out for the destruction of Ahab's house. Moses, a man furnished with all Egyptian wisdom, fitted by a generous education, prepared also by the affliction he met with in his flight, and one who had had the benefit of conversation with Jethro, a man of more than ordinary wisdom and goodness, as appears by his prudent and religious counsel,—this man is called out to be the head and captain of an oppressed people, and to rescue them from their bondage, and settle the first national church in the world. So Elijah, a high-spirited man, of a hot and angry temper, one that slighted the frowns and undervalued the favour of princes, is set up to stem the torrent of the Israelitish idolatry. So Luther, a man of the same temper, is drawn out by the same wisdom to encounter the corruptions in the church, against such opposition, which a milder temper would have sunk under. The earth, in Rev. xii. 16, is made an instrument to help the woman. When the grandees of that age transferred the imperial power upon Constantine, who became afterwards a protecting and nursing father to the church, an end which many of his favourers never designed, nor ever dreamed of; but God by his infinite wisdom made these several designs, like several arrows shot at



rovers, meet in one mark to which he directed them, viz., in bringing forth an instrument to render peace to the world, and security and increase to his church.

(3.) The wisdom of God doth wonderfully appear in redemption. His wisdom in creation ravisheth the eye and understanding; his wisdom in government doth no less affect a curious observer of the links and concatenation of the means, but his wisdom in redemption mounts the mind to a greater astonishment. The works of creation are the footsteps of his wisdom; the work of redemption is the face of his wisdom. A man is better known by the features of his face than by the prints of his feet. 'We with open face,' or a revealed face, 'beholding the glory of the Lord,' 2 Cor. iii. 18. *Face* there refers to God, not to us; the glory of God's wisdom is now open, and no longer covered and veiled by the shadows of the law. As we behold the light glorious, as scattered in the air before the appearance of the sun, but more gloriously in the face of the sun, when it begins its race in our horizon,—all the wisdom of God in creation and government, in his variety of laws, was like the light, the three first days of the creation, dispersed about the world, but the fourth day it was more glorious, when all gathered into the body of the sun, Gen. i. 4, 16,—so the light of divine wisdom and glory was scattered about the world, and so more obscure, till the fourth divine day of the world, about the four thousandth year, it was gathered into one body, the Sun of righteousness, and so shone out more gloriously to men and angels. All things are weaker the thinner they are extended, but stronger the more they are united and compacted in one body and appearance. In Christ, in the dispensation by him, as well as in his person, were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. ii. 3. Some doles of wisdom were given out in creation, but the treasures of it opened in redemption, the highest degrees of it that ever God did exert in the world. Christ is therefore called the wisdom of God, as well as the power of God, 1 Cor. i. 24, and the gospel is called the wisdom of God. Christ is the wisdom of God principally, and the gospel instrumentally, as it is the power of God instrumentally to subdue the heart to himself. This is wrapped up in the appointing Christ as redeemer, and opened to us in the revelation of it by the gospel.

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

glory. They knew the prophecies of it in the word, but attained not a clear interpretation of those prophecies till the things that were prophesied of came upon the stage.

[2.] Manifold wisdom ; so it is called. As manifold as mysterious. Variety in the mystery, and mystery in every part of the variety. It was not one single act, but a variety of counsels met in it ; a conjunction of excellent ends and excellent means. The glory of God, the salvation of man, the defeat of the apostate angels, the discovery of the blessed Trinity in their nature, operations, their combined and distinct acts and expressions of goodness. The means are the conjunction of two natures infinitely distant from one another ; the union of eternity and time, of mortality and immortality ; death is made the way to life, and shame the path to glory. The weakness of the cross is the reparation of man, and the creature is made wise by the ' foolishness of preaching ; ' fallen man grows rich by the poverty of the Redeemer, and man is filled by the emptiness of God ; the heir of hell made a son of God, by God's taking upon him the ' form of a servant ; ' the son of man advanced to the highest degree of honour, by the Son of God becoming of ' no reputation.'

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

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

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

*First*, Justice pleads. I arraign before the tribunal a rebel who was the

glorious work of thy hands, the centre of thy rich goodness, and a counterpart of thy own image. He is indeed miserable, whereby to excite thy compassion ; but he is not miserable, without being criminal. Thou didst create him in a state, and with ability to be otherwise. The riches of thy bounty aggravate the blackness of his crime. He is a rebel, not by necessity, but will. What constraint was there upon him to listen to the counsels of the enemy of God ? What force could there be upon him, since it is without the compass of any creature to work upon or constrain the will ? Nothing of ignorance can excuse him ; the law was not ambiguously expressed, but in plain words ; both as to precept and penalty, it was writ in his nature in legible characters. Had he received any disgust from thee after his creation, it would not excuse his apostasy, since, as a sovereign, thou wert not obliged to thy creature. Thou hadst provided all things richly for him ; he was crowned with glory and honour. Thy infinite power had bestowed upon him an habitation richly furnished, and varieties of servants to attend him. Whatever he viewed without, and whatever he viewed within himself, were several marks of thy divine bounty, to engage him to obedience. Had there been some reason of any disgust, it could not have balanced that kindness which had so much reason to oblige him. However, he had received no courtesy from the fallen angel, to oblige him to turn into his camp. Was it not enough that one of thy creatures would have stripped thee of the glory of heaven, but this also must deprive thee of thy glory upon earth, which was due from him to thee as his creator ? Can he charge the difficulty of the command ? No ; it was rather below than above his strength. He might rather complain that it was no higher, whereby his obedience and gratitude might have a larger scope, and a more spacious field to move in, than a precept so light, so easy, as to abstain from one fruit in the garden. What excuse can he have, that would prefer the liquorishness of his sense before the dictates of his reason, and the obligations of his creation ? The law thou didst set him was righteous and reasonable, and shall righteousness and reason be rejected by the supreme and infallible reason, because the rebellious creature hath trampled upon it ? What ! must God abrogate his holy law, because the creature hath slighted it ? What reflection will this be upon the wisdom that enacted it, and upon the equity of the command and sanction of it ! Either man must suffer, or the holy law be expunged, and for ever out of date. And is it not better man should eternally smart under his crime, than any dishonourable reflections of unrighteousness be cast upon the law, and of folly and want of foresight upon the lawgiver ? Not to punish would be to approve the devil's lie, and justify the creature's revolt ; it would be a condemnation of thy own law as unrighteous, and a sentencing thy own wisdom as imprudent. Better man should for ever bear the punishment of his offence, than God bear the dishonour of his attributes ; better man should be miserable, than God should be unrighteous, unwise, false, and tamely bear the denial of his sovereignty. But what advantage would it be to gratify mercy by pardoning the malefactor ? Besides the irreparable dishonour to the law, the falsifying thy veracity in not executing the denounced threatening, he would receive encouragement by such a grace to spurn more at thy sovereignty, and oppose thy holiness by running on in a course of sin with hopes of impunity. If the creature be restored, it cannot be expected that he that hath fared so well, after the breach of it, should be very careful of a future observance ; his easy re-admission would abet him in the repetition of his offence, and thou shalt soon find him cast off all moral dependence on thee. Shall he be restored without any condition or covenant ? He is a creature not to be governed with-

out a law, and a law is not to be enacted without a penalty. What future regard will he have to thy precept, or what fear will he have of thy threatening, if his crime be so lightly passed over? Is it the stability of thy word? What reason will he have to give credit to that which he hath found already disregarded by thyself? Thy truth in future threatenings will be of no force with him who hath experienced thy laying it aside in the former. It is necessary therefore that the rebellious creature should be punished, for the preservation of the honour of the law and the honour of the lawgiver, with all those perfections that are united in the composure of it.

Secondly, Mercy doth not want a plea. It is true, indeed, the sin of man wants not its aggravations: he hath slighted thy goodness, and accepted thy enemy as his counsellor; but it was not a pure act of his own, as the devil's revolt was. He had a tempter, and the devil had none; he had, I acknowledge, an understanding to know thy will, and a power to obey it, yet it was mutable, and had a capacity to fall. It was no difficult task that was set him, nor a hard yoke that was laid upon [him]; yet he had a brutish part, as well as a rational, and sense as well as soul, whereas the fallen angel was a pure intellectual spirit. Did God create the world to suffer an eternal dishonour, in letting himself be outwitted by Satan, and his work wrested out of his hands? Shall the work of eternal counsel presently sink into irreparable destruction, and the honour of an Almighty and wise work be lost in the ruin of the creature? This would seem contrary to the nature of thy goodness, to make man only to render him miserable; to design him in his creation for the service of the devil, and not for the service of his Creator. What else could be the issue, if the chief work of thy hand, defaced presently after the erecting, should for ever remain in this marred condition; what can be expected upon the continuance of his misery, but a perpetual hatred and enmity of thy creature? Did God in creation design his being hated, or his being loved by his creature? Shall God make a holy law, and have no obedience to that law from that creature whom it was made to govern? Shall the curious workmanship of God, and the excellent engravings of the law of nature in his heart, be so soon defaced, and remain in that blotted condition for ever? This fall thou couldst not but in the treasures of thy infinite knowledge foresee; why hadst thou goodness then to create him in an integrity, if thou wouldst not have mercy to pity him in misery? Shall thy enemy for ever trample upon the honour of thy work, and triumph over the glory of God, and applaud himself in the success of his subtilty? Shall thy creature only passively glorify thee as an avenger, and not actively as a compassionater? Am not I a perfection of thy nature as well as justice? Shall justice engross all, and I never come into view? It is resolved already, that the fallen angels shall be no subjects for me to exercise myself upon, and I have now less reason than before to plead for them. They fell with a full consent of will, without any motion from another; and, not content with their own apostasy, they envy thee, and thy glory upon earth, as well as in heaven, and have drawn into their party the best part of the creation below. Shall Satan plunge the whole creation in the same irreparable ruin with himself? If the creature be restored, will he contract a boldness in sin by impunity? Hast thou not a grace to render him ingenuous in obedience, as well as a compassion to recover him from misery? What will hinder, but that such a grace, which hath established the standing angels, may establish this recovered creature? If I am utterly excluded from exercising myself on men, as I have been from devils, a whole species is lost; nay, I can never expect to appear upon the stage. If thou wilt quite ruin him by justice, and create another world, and another man, if he stand, thy

bounty will be eminent ; yet there is no room for mercy to act upon unless, by the commission of sin, he exposeth himself to misery ; and if sin enter into another world, I have little hopes to be heard then if I am rejected now. Worlds will be perpetually created by goodness, wisdom, and power ; sin entering into these worlds, will be perpetually punished by justice ; and mercy, which is a perfection of thy nature, will for ever be commanded silence, and lie wrapt up in an eternal darkness. Take occasion now, therefore, to expose me to the knowledge of thy creature, since, without misery, mercy can never set foot into the world.

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

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

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

*Secondly*, The wisdom of God appears in the subject or person wherein these were accorded, the second person in the blessed Trinity. There was a congruity in the Son's undertaking and effecting it rather than any other person, according to the order of the persons, and the several functions of the persons, as represented in Scripture. The Father, after creation, is the lawgiver, and presents man with the image of his own holiness, and the way to his creatures' happiness; but after the fall, man was too impotent to perform the law, and too polluted to enjoy a felicity. Redemption was then necessary; not that it was necessary for God to redeem man, but it was necessary for man's happiness that he should be recovered. To this the second person is appointed, that by communion with him, man might derive a happiness, and be brought again to God. But since man was blind in his understanding, and an enemy in his will to God, there must be the exerting of a virtue to enlighten his mind, and bend his will to understand, and accept of this redemption. And this work is assigned to the third person, the Holy Ghost.

First, It was not congruous that the Father should assume human nature, and suffer in it for the redemption of man. He was first in order; he was the lawgiver, and therefore to be the judge. As lawgiver, it was not convenient he should stand in stead of the law-breaker; and as a judge, it was as little convenient he should be reputed a malefactor. That he who had made a law against sin, denounced a penalty upon the commission of sin, and whose part it was actually to punish the sinner, should become sin for the wilful transgressor of this law, he being the rector, how could he be an advocate and intercessor to himself? How could he be the judge and the sacrifice? A judge, and yet a mediator to himself? If he had been the sacrifice, there must be some person to examine the validity of it, and pronounce the sentence of acceptance. Was it agreeable that the Son should sit upon a throne of judgment, and the Father stand at the bar and be responsible to the Son; that the Son should be in the place of a governor, and the Father in the place of the criminal; that the Father should be bruised by the Son, as the Son was by the Father, Isa. liii. 10; that the Son should awaken a sword against the Father, as the Father did against the Son, Zech. xiii. 7; that the Father should be sent by the Son, as the Son was by the Father? Mal. ii. 1. The order of the persons in the blessed Trinity had been inverted and disturbed. Had the Father been sent, he had not been first in order; the sender is before the person sent. As the Father begets, and the Son is begotten, John i. 14, so the Father sends, and the Son is sent. He whose order is to send cannot properly send himself.

*Secondly*, Nor was it congruous that the Spirit should be sent upon this affair. If the Holy Ghost had been sent to redeem us, and the Son to apply that redemption to us, the order of the persons had also been inverted: the Spirit then, who was third in order, had been second in operation. The Son would then have received of the Spirit, as the Spirit doth now of Christ, and shews unto us, John xvi. 14. As the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son, so the proper function and operation of it was in order after the operations of the Father and the Son. Had the Spirit been sent to redeem us, and the Son sent by the Father and the Spirit to apply that redemption to us, the Son in his acts had proceeded from the Father and the Spirit; the Spirit, as sender, had been in order before the Son: whereas the Spirit is called 'the Spirit of Christ,' as sent by Christ from the Father, Gal. iv. 6, John xv. 26; but as the order of the works, so the order of the persons is preserved in their several operations. Creation, and a law to govern the creature, precedes redemption. Nothing, or that which hath no

being, is not capable of a redeemed being. Redemption supposeth the existence and the misery of a person redeemed. As creation precedes redemption, so redemption precedes the application of it. As redemption supposeth the being of the creature, so application of redemption supposeth the efficacy of redemption. According to the order of these works is the order of the operations of the three persons. Creation belongs to the Father, the first person; redemption, the second work, is the function of the Son, the second person; application, the third work, is the office of the Holy Ghost, the third person.\* The Father orders it, the Son acts it, the Holy Ghost applies it. He purifies our souls to understand, believe, and love these mysteries. He forms Christ in the womb of the soul, as he did the body of Christ in the womb of the Virgin. As the Spirit of God moved upon the waters, to garnish and adorn the world, after the matter of it was formed, Gen. i. 2, so he moves upon the heart, to supple it to a compliance with Christ, and draws the lineaments of the new creation in the soul, after the foundation is laid.

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

Thirdly, The second person had the greatest congruity to this work. He by whom God created the world was most conveniently employed in restoring the defaced world: who more fit to recover it from its lapsed state than he that had erected it in its primitive state? Heb. i. 2. He was the light of men in creation, John i. 4, and therefore it was most reasonable he should be the light of men in redemption. Who fitter to reform the divine image than he that first formed it? Who fitter to speak for us to God, than he who was the Word? John i. 1. Who could better intercede with the Father than he who was the only begotten and beloved Son? Who so fit to redeem the forfeited inheritance as the heir of all things? Who fitter and better to prevail for us to have the right of children than he that possessed it by nature? We fell from being the sons of God, and who fitter to introduce us into an adopted state, than the Son of God? Herein was an expression of the richer grace, because the first sin was immediately against the wisdom of God, by an ambitious affectation of a wisdom equal to God, that that person, who was the wisdom of God, should be made a sacrifice for the expiation of the sin against wisdom.

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

\* Amyraut, Moral. tom. v. p. 478-480.

First, The union itself is admirable: the word is made flesh, John i. 14. One equal with God, in the form of a servant, Phil. ii. 7. When the apostle speaks of 'God manifested in the flesh,' he speaks 'the wisdom of God in a mystery,' 1 Tim. iii. 16. That which is incomprehensible to the angels, which they never imagined before it was revealed, which perhaps they never knew till they beheld it. I am sure, under the law the figures of the cherubims were placed in the sanctuary with their faces looking towards the propitiatory, in a perpetual posture of contemplation and admiration, Exod. xxxvii. 9, to which the apostle alludes, 1 Pet. i. 12.

Mysterious is the wisdom of God to unite finite and infinite, almightiness and weakness, immortality and mortality, immutability with a thing subject to change; to have a nature from eternity, and yet a nature subject to the revolutions of time; a nature to make a law, and a nature to be subjected to the law; to be God blessed for ever in the bosom of his Father, and an infant exposed to calamities from the womb of his mother: terms seeming most distant from union, most incapable of conjunction, to shake hands together, to be most intimately conjoined; glory and vileness, fulness and emptiness, heaven and earth; the creature with the Creator; he that made all things, in one person with a nature that is made; Immanuel, God and man in one; that which is most spiritual to partake of that which is carnal flesh and blood, Heb. ii. 14; one with the Father in his Godhead, one with us in his manhood; the Godhead to be in him in the fullest perfection, and the manhood in the greatest purity; the creature one with the Creator, and the Creator one with the creature. Thus is the incomprehensible wisdom of God declared in the Word being made flesh.

Secondly, In the manner of this union. A union of two natures, yet no natural union. It transcends all the unions visible among creatures;\* it is not like the union of stones in a building, or of two pieces of timber fastened together, which touch one another only in their superficies and outside, without any intimacy with one another. By such a kind of union, God would not be man: the Word could not so be made flesh; nor is it union of parts to the whole, as the members and the body; the members are parts, the body is the whole; for the whole results from the parts, and depends upon the parts; but Christ being God, is independent upon anything. The parts are in order of nature before the whole, but nothing can be in order of nature before God. Nor is it as the union of two liquors, as when wine and water are mixed together, for they are so incorporated, as not to be distinguished from one another; no man can tell which particle is wine, and which is water. But the properties of the divine nature are distinguishable from the properties of the human. Nor is it as the union of the soul and body, so as that the Deity is the form of the humanity, as the soul is the form of the body; for as the soul is but a part of the man, so the divinity would be then but a part of the humanity; and as a form, or the soul, is in a state of imperfection without that which it is to inform; so the divinity of Christ would have been imperfect till it had assumed the humanity; and so the perfection of an eternal Deity would have depended on a creature of time.

This union of two natures in Christ is incomprehensible; and it is a mystery we cannot arrive to the top of, how the divine nature, which is the same with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost, should be united to the human nature, without its being said that the Father and the Holy Ghost were united to the flesh; but the Scripture doth not encourage any such notion: it speaks only of the Word, the person of the Word being made flesh; and in his being made flesh, distinguisheth him from the Father, as 'the only

\* Savana, Triump. Crucis, lib. iii. cap. vii. p. 211.



begotten of the Father,' John i. 14. The person of the Son was the term of this union.

*1st*, This union doth not confound the properties of the Deity, and those of the humanity. They remain distinct and entire in each other. The Deity is not changed into flesh, nor the flesh transformed into God. They are distinct and yet united; they are conjoined, and yet unmixed; the dues of either nature are preserved. It is impossible that the majesty of the divinity can receive an alteration. It is as impossible that the meanness of the humanity can receive the impressions of the Deity, so as to be changed into it; and a creature be metamorphosed into the Creator, and temporary flesh become eternal, and finite mount up into infinity. As the soul and body are united, and make one person, yet the soul is not changed into the perfections of the body, nor the body into the perfections of the soul. There is a change made in the humanity by being advanced to a more excellent union, but not in the Deity; as a change is made in the air, when it is enlightened by the sun, not in the sun, which communicates that brightness to the air. Athanasias makes the burning bush to be a type of Christ's incarnation, Exod. iii. 2, the fire signifying the divine nature, and the bush the human. The bush is a branch springing up from the earth, and the fire descends from heaven; as the bush was united to the fire, yet was not hurt by the flame, nor converted into fire, there remained a difference between the bush and the fire, yet the properties of the fire shined in the bush, so that the whole bush seemed to be on fire. So in the incarnation of Christ, the human nature is not swallowed up by the divine, nor changed into it, nor confounded with it; but so united, that the properties of both remain firm, two are so become one that they remain two still. One person in two natures, containing the glorious perfections of the divine, and the weaknesses of the human. The fulness of the Deity dwells bodily in Christ, Col. ii. 9.

*2dly*, The divine nature is united to every part of the humanity, the whole divinity to the whole humanity; so that no part but may be said to be the member of God, as well as the blood is said to be the blood of God, Acts xx. 28. By the same reason it may be said, the hand of God, the eye of God, the arm of God. As God is infinitely present everywhere, so as to be excluded from no place, so is the Deity hypostatically everywhere in the humanity, not excluded from any part of it, as the light of the sun in every part of the air, as a sparkling splendour in every part of the diamond. Therefore it is concluded by all that acknowledge the deity of Christ, that when his soul was separated from the body, the deity remained united both to soul and body, as light doth in every part of a broken crystal.

*3dly*, Therefore perpetually united: Col. ii. 9, The 'fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily.' It dwells in him, not lodges in him as a traveller in an inn, it resides in him as a fixed habitation. As God describes the perpetuity of his presence in the ark by his habitation or dwelling in it, Exod. xxix. 45, so doth the apostle the inseparable duration of the Deity in the humanity, and the indissoluble union of the humanity with the Deity. It was united on earth, it remains united in heaven. It was not an image or an apparition, as the tongues wherein the Spirit came upon the apostle were a temporary representation, not a thing united perpetually to the person of the Holy Ghost.

*4thly*, It was a personal union. It was not an union of persons, though it was a personal union. So Davenant expounds, Col. ii. 9, Christ did not take the person of man, but the nature of man, into subsistence with

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

Thirdly, The end of this union.

1st, He was hereby fitted to be mediator. He hath something like to man, and something like to God. If he were in all things only like to man, he would be at a distance from God. If he were in all things only like to God, he would be at a distance from man. He is a true mediator between mortal sinners and the immortal righteous one. He was near to us by the infirmities of our nature, and near to God by the perfections of the divine; as near to God in his nature, as to us in ours; as near to us in our nature as he is to God in the divine. Nothing that belongs to the Deity, but he possesses; nothing that belongs to the human nature, but he is clothed with.

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

2dly, He was hereby fitted for the working out the happiness of man. A divine nature to communicate to man, and a human nature to carry up to God.

1st, He had a nature whereby to suffer for us, and a nature whereby to be meritorious in those sufferings; a nature to make him capable to bear the penalty, and a nature to make his sufferings sufficient for all that embraced him; a nature capable to be exposed to the flames of divine wrath, and another nature incapable to be crushed by the weight, or consumed by the heat of it: a human nature to suffer, and stand a sacrifice in the stead of man; a divine nature to sanctify these sufferings, and fill the nostrils of God with a sweet savour, and thereby atone his wrath; the one to bear the stroke due to us, and the other to add merit to his sufferings for us. Had he not been man, he could not have filled our place in suffering; and could he otherwise have suffered, his sufferings had not been applicable to us; and had he not been God, his sufferings had not been meritoriously and fruitfully applicable. Had not his blood been the blood of God, it had been

\* Gomb. de relig. p. 42.

of as little advantage as the blood of an ordinary man, or the blood of the legal sacrifices, Heb. ix. 12. Nothing less than God could have satisfied God for the injury done by man. Nothing less than God could have counter-vailed the torments due to the offending creature. Nothing less than God could have rescued us out of the hands of the jailor, too powerful for us.

2dly, He had therefore a nature to be compassionate to us, and victorious for us; a nature sensibly to compassionate us, and another nature to render those compassions effectual for our relief; he had the compassions of our nature to pity us, and the patience of the divine nature to bear with us. He hath the affections of a man to us, and the power of a God for us; a nature to discern the devil for us, and another nature to be sensible of the working of the devil in us, and against us. If he had been only God, he would not have had an experimental sense of our misery; and if he had been only man, he could not have vanquished our enemies. Had he been only God, he could not have died; and had he been only man, he could not have conquered death.

3dly, A nature efficaciously to instruct us. As man, he was to instruct us sensibly; as God, he was to instruct us infallibly. A nature whereby he might converse with us, and a nature whereby he might influence us in those converses. A human mouth to minister instructions to man, and a divine power to imprint it with efficacy.

4thly, A nature to be a pattern to us. A pattern of grace as man, as Adam was to have been to his posterity. A divine nature shining in the human, the image of the invisible God in the glass of our flesh, that he might be a perfect copy for our imitation: Col. i. 15, 'The image of the invisible God, and the first-born of every creature' in conjunction.\* The virtues of the Deity are sweetened and tempered by the union with the humanity, as the beams of the sun are by shining through a coloured glass, which condescends more to the weakness of our eye.

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

5thly, A nature to be a ground of confidence in our approach to God. A nature wherein we may behold him, and wherein we may approach to him; a nature for our comfort, and a nature for our confidence. Had he been only man, he had been too feeble to assure us; and had he been only God, he had been too high to attract us; but now we are allured by his human nature, and assured by his divine, in our drawing near to heaven. Communion with God was desired by us, but our guilt stifled our hopes, and the infinite excellency of the divine nature would have damped our hopes of speeding; but since these two natures, so far distant, are met in a marriage-knot, we have a ground of hope, nay, an earnest that the Creator and believing creature shall meet and converse together.

And since our sins are expiated by the death of the human nature in conjunction with the divine, our guilt, upon believing, shall not hinder us from this comfortable approach. Had he been only man, he could not have assured us an approach to God; had he been only God, his justice would not have admitted us to approach to him; he had been too terrible for guilty persons, and too holy for polluted persons to come near to him; but by being made man, his justice is tempered; and by his being God and man, his mercy is insured. A human nature he had, one with us, that we might be related to God as one with him.

\* Amyraut, Moral. tom. v. p. 468, 469.

6thly, A nature to derive all good to us. Had he not been man, we had had no share or part in him; a satisfaction by him had not been imputed to us. If he were not God, he could not communicate to us divine graces and eternal happiness, he could not have had power to convey so great a good to us had he been only man; and he could not have done it, according to the rule of inflexible righteousness, had he been only God. As man, he is the way of conveyance; as God, he is the spring of conveyance. From this grace of union, and the grace of unction, we find rivers of waters flowing to 'make glad the city of God.' Believers are his branches, and draw sap from him as he is their root in his human nature, and have an endless duration of it from his divine. Had he not been man, he had not been in a state to obey the law; had he not been God as well as man, his obedience could not have been valuable to be imputed to us.

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

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

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

It became the wisdom, justice, and holiness of God, as the rector of the world, to exact it, Heb. ii. 10; and it became the holiness of the mediator to fulfil all the righteousness of the law, Rom. viii. 3, Mat. iii. 15. And thus the honour of the law was vindicated in all the parts of it. The transgression of the law was condemned in the flesh of the Redeemer, and the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in his person; and both these acts of obedience, being counted as one righteousness, and imputed to the believing sinner, rendered him a subject to the law, both in its preceptive and minis-

tory part. By Adam's sinful acting we were made sinners, and by Christ's righteous acting we are made righteous: Rom. v. 19, 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' The law was obeyed by him, that 'the righteousness of it might be fulfilled in us,' Rom. viii. 4. It is not fulfilled in us, or in our actions, by inherency, but fulfilled in us by imputation of that righteousness which was exactly fulfilled by another. As he died for us, and rose again for us, so he lived for us. The commands of the law were as well observed for us, as the threatenings of the law were endured for us. This justification of a sinner, with the preservation of the holiness of the law in truth, in the inward parts, in sincerity of intention as well as the conformity in action, is the wisdom of God, the gospel wisdom which David desires to know: Ps. li. 6, 'Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom;' or, as some render it, 'the hidden things of wisdom.' Not an inherent wisdom in the acknowledgments of his sin, which he had confessed before, but the wisdom of God in providing a medicine, so as to keep up the holiness of the law in the observance of it in truth, and the averting the judgment due to the sinner. In and by this way, methodised by the wisdom of God, all doubts and troubles are discharged. Naturally, if we take a view of the law to behold its holiness and justice, and then of our hearts, to see the contrariety in them to the command, and the pollution repugnant to its holiness, and after this cast our eyes upward and behold a flaming sword edged with curses and wrath, is there any matter but that of terror afforded by any of these? But when we behold in the life of Christ a conformity to the mandatory part of the law, and in the cross of Christ a sustaining the minatory part of the law, this wisdom of God gives a well-grounded and rational dismiss to all the horrors that can seize upon us.

*Fifthly*, The wisdom of God in redemption is visible in manifesting two contrary affections at the same time, and in one act: the greatest hatred of sin, and the greatest love to the sinner. In this way he punishes the sin without ruining the sinner, and repairs the ruins of the sinner without indulging the sin. Here is eternal love and eternal hatred; a condemning the sin to what it merited, and an advancing the sinner to what he could not expect. Herein is the choicest love and the deepest hatred manifest; an implacableness against the sin, and a placableness to the sinner. His hatred of sin hath been discovered in other ways: in punishing the devil without remedy; sentencing man to an expulsion from paradise, though seduced by another; in accusing the serpent, an irrational creature, though but a misguided instrument. The whole tenor of his threatenings declare his loathing of sin, and the sprinklings of his judgments in the world, and the horrible expectations of terrified consciences, confirm it. But what are all these testimonies to the highest evidence that can possibly be given, in the sheathing the sword of his wrath in the heart of his Son! If a father should order his son to take a mean garb below his dignity, order him to be dragged to prison, seem to throw off all affection of a father for the severity of a judge, condemn his son to a horrible death, be a spectator of his bleeding condition, withhold his hand from assuaging his misery, regard it rather with joy than sorrow, give him a bitter cup to drink, and stand by to see him drink it off to the bottom, dregs and all, and flash frowns in his face all the while, and this not for any fault of his own, but the rebellion of some subjects he undertook for, and that the offenders might have a pardon sealed by the blood of the son, the sufferer, all this would evidence his detestation of the rebellion, and his affection to the rebels; his hatred to their crime,

and his love to their welfare. This did God do: he delivered Christ up for our offences, Rom. viii. 32; the Father gave him the cup, John xviii. 18; the Lord bruised him with pleasure, Isa. liii. 10, and that for sin. He transferred upon the shoulders of his Son the pain we had merited, that the criminal might be restored to the place he had forfeited. He hates the sin so as to condemn it for ever, and wrap it up in the curse he had threatened, and loves the sinner believing and repenting, so as to mount him to an expectation of a happiness exceeding the first state both in glory and perpetuity. Instead of an earthly paradise, lays the foundation of an heavenly mansion, brings forth a weight of glory from a weight of misery, separates the comfortable light of the sun from the scorching heat we had deserved at his hands. Thus hath God's hatred of sin been manifested. He is at an eternal defiance with sin, yet nearer in alliance with the sinner than he was before the revolt; as if man's miserable fall had endeared him to the Judge. This is the wisdom and prudence of grace wherein God hath abounded, Eph. i. 8; a wisdom in twisting the happy restoration of the broken amity with an everlasting curse upon that which made the breach, both upon sin the cause, and upon Satan the seducer to it. Thus is hatred and love in their highest glory manifested together: hatred to sin, in the death of Christ, more than if the torments of hell had been undergone by the sinner; and love to the sinner, more than if he had, by an absolute and simple bounty, bestowed upon him the possession of heaven; because the gift of his Son for such an end is a greater token of his boundless affections than a reinstating man in paradise. Thus is the wisdom of God seen in redemption; consuming the sin, and recovering the sinner.

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

He was conquered by that nature he had cast headlong into ruin. A woman, by his subtilty, was the occasion of our death; and woman, by the conduct of the only wise God, brings forth the author of our life and the conqueror of our enemies. The flesh of the old Adam had infected us, and the flesh of the new Adam cures us: 1 Cor. xv. 21, 'By man came death; by man also came the resurrection from the dead.' We are killed by the old Adam, and raised by the new; as among the Israelites, a fiery serpent gave the wound, and a brazen serpent administers the cure. The nature that was deceived bruise the deceiver, and razeth up the foundations of

\* And indeed the heathen oracles, managed by the devils, declared that they were not long to hold their sceptre in the world, but the Hebrew child should vanquish them.

his kingdom. Satan is defeated by the counsels he took to secure his possession, and loses the victory by the same means whereby he thought to preserve it.

His tempting the Jews to the sin of crucifying the Son of God, had a contrary success to his tempting Adam to eat of the tree. The first death he brought upon Adam ruined us, and the death he brought by his instruments upon the second Adam restored us. By a tree, if one may so say, he had triumphed over the world, and by the fruit of a tree, one hanging upon a tree, he is discharged of his power over us: Heb. ii. 14, 'Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death.' And thus the devil ruins his own kingdom while he thinks to confirm and enlarge it, and is defeated by his own policy, whereby he thought to continue the world under his chains, and deprive the Creator of the world of his purposed honour. What deeper counsel could he resolve upon for his own security, than to be instrumental in the death of him who was God, the terror of the devil himself, and to bring the Redeemer of the world to expire with disgrace in the sight of a multitude of men! Thus did the wisdom of God shine forth in restoring us by methods seemingly repugnant to the end he aimed at, and above the suspicion of a subtle devil, whom he intended to baffle.

Could he imagine that we should be healed by stripes, quickened by death, purified by blood, crowned by a cross, advanced to the highest honour by the lowest humility, comforted by sorrows, glorified by disgrace, absolved by condemnation, and made rich by poverty? That the sweetest honey should at once spring out of the belly of a dead lion, the lion of the tribe of Judah, and out of the bosom of the living God? How wonderful is this wisdom of God! That the seed of the woman, born of a mean virgin, brought forth in a stable, spending his days in affliction, misery, and poverty, without any pomp and splendour, passing some time in a carpenter's shop, Mark vi. 6, with carpenter's tools, and afterwards exposed to a horrible and disgraceful death, should by this way pull down the gates of hell, subvert the kingdom of the devil, and be the hammer to break in pieces that power which he had so long exercised over the world! Thus became he the author of our life, by being bound for a while in the chains of death, and arrived to a principality over the most malicious powers by being a prisoner for us, and the anvil of their rage and fury.

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

*1st,* It is a ground of the highest comfort and confidence in God. Since he hath given such an evidence of his impartial truth to his threaten-

ing for the honour of his justice, we need not question but he will be as punctual to his promise for the honour of his mercy. It is a ground of confidence in God, since he hath redeemed us in such a way as glorifies the steadiness of his veracity, as well as the severity of his justice ; we may well trust him for the performance of his promise, since we have experience of the execution of his threatening ; his merciful truth will as much engage him to accomplish the one, as his just truth did to inflict the other. The goodness which shone forth in weaker rays in the creation, breaks out with stronger beams in redemption. And the mercy which before the appearance of Christ was manifested in some small rivulets, diffuseth himself like a boundless ocean. That God that was our creator is our redeemer, the 'repairer of our breaches, and the restorer of our paths to dwell in,' and the plenteous redemption from all iniquity, manifested in the incarnation and passion of the Son of God, is much more a ground of hope in the Lord than it was in the past ages, when it could not be said, 'The Lord *hath*,' but 'the Lord *shall* redeem Israel from all his iniquities,' Ps. cxxx. 8. It is a full warrant to cast ourselves into his arms.

2dly, An incentive to obedience.

1st, The commands of the gospel require the obedience of the creature. There is not one precept in the gospel which interferes with any rule in the law, but strengthens it, and represents it in its true exactness. The heat to scorch us is allayed, but the light to direct us is not extinguished. Not the least allowance to any sin is granted, not the least affection to any sin is indulged. The law is tempered by the gospel, but not nulled and cast out of doors by it ; it enacts that none but those that are sanctified shall be glorified ; that there must be grace here, if we expect glory hereafter ; that we must not presume to expect an admittance to the vision of God's face, unless our souls be clothed with a robe of holiness, Heb. xii. 14 ; it requires an obedience to the whole law in our intention and purpose, and an endeavour to observe it in our actions ; it promotes the honour of God, and ordains an universal charity among men ; it reveals the whole counsel of God, and furnisheth men with the holiest laws.

2dly, It presents to us the exactest pattern for our obedience. The redeeming person is not only a propitiation for the sin, but a pattern to the sinner, 1 Peter ii. 21. The conscience of man, after the fall of Adam, approved of the reason of the law, but by the corruption of nature man had no strength to perform the law. The possibility of keeping the law by human nature is evidenced by the appearance and life of the Redeemer, and an assurance given that it shall be advanced to such a state as to be able to observe it. We aspire to it in this life, and have hopes to attain it in a future. And while we are here, the actor of our redemption is the copy for our imitation. The pattern to imitate is greater than the law to be ruled by. What a lustre did his virtues cast about the world ! How attractive are his graces ! With what high examples for all duties hath he furnished us out of the copy of his life !

3dly, It presents us with the strongest motives to obedience. Titus ii. 11, 12, 'The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness.' What chains bind faster and closer than love ? Here is love to our nature, in his incarnation ; love to us through enemies, in his death and passion ; encouragements to obedience by the proffers of pardon for former rebellions. By the disobedience of man God introduceth his redeeming grace, and engageth his creature to more ingenuous and excellent returns than his innocent state could oblige him to. In his created state he had goodness to move him, he hath the same goodness now to oblige him as a creature, and a greater



love and mercy to oblige him as a repaired creature; and the terror of justice is taken off, which might envenom his heart as a criminal. In his revolted state, he had misery to discourage him; in his redeemed state, he hath love to attract him. Without such a way, black despair had seized upon the creature exposed to a remediless misery, and God would have had no returns of love from the best of his earthly works; but if any spark of ingenuity be left, they will be excited by the efficacy of this argument.

This willingness of God to receive returning sinners is manifested in the highest degree, and the willingness of a sinner to return to him in duty hath the strongest engagements. He hath done as much to encourage our obedience as to illustrate his glory. We cannot conceive what could be done greater for the salvation of our souls, and consequently what could have been done more to enforce our observance. We have a Redeemer, as man to copy it to us, and as God to perfect us in it. It would make the heart of any to tremble, to wound him that hath provided such a salve for our sores, and to make grace a warrant for rebellion, motives capable to form rocks into a flexibleness. Thus is the wisdom of God seen in giving us a ground of the surest confidence, and furnishing us with incentives to the greatest obedience, by the horrors of wrath, death, and sufferings of our Saviour.

*Eighthly*, The wisdom of God is apparent in the condition he hath settled for the enjoying the fruits of redemption; and this is faith, a wise and reasonable condition, and the concomitants of it.

1st, In that it is suited to man's lapsed state, and God's glory. Innocence is not required here; that had been a condition impossible in its own nature after the fall. The rejecting of mercy is now only condemning where mercy is proposed. Had the condition of perfection in works been required, it had rather been a condemnation than redemption. Works are not demanded, whereby the creature might ascribe anything to himself, but a condition which continues in man a sense of his apostasy, abates all aspiring pride, and makes the reward of grace, not of debt; a condition whereby mercy is owned, and the creature emptied; flesh silenced in the dust, and God set upon his throne of grace and authority; the creature brought to the lowest debasement, and divine glory raised to the highest pitch. The creature is brought to acknowledge mercy, and seal to justice, to own the holiness of God in the hatred of sin, the justice of God in the punishment of sin, and the mercy of God in the pardoning of sin; a condition that despoils nature of all its pretended excellency; beats down the glory of man at the foot of God, 1 Cor. i. 29, 31. It subjects the reason and will of man to the wisdom and authority of God; it brings the creature to an unreserved submission and entire resignation. God is made the sovereign cause of all; the creature continued in his emptiness, and reduced to a greater dependence upon God than by a creation; depending upon him for a constant influx, for an entire happiness: a condition that renders God glorious in the creature, and the fallen creature happy in God; God glorious in his condescension to man, and man happy in his emptiness before God.

Faith is made the condition of man's recovery, that 'the lofty looks of man might be humbled, and the haughtiness of man be pulled down,' Isa. ii. 11. That every towering imagination might be levelled, 2 Cor. x. 5. Man must have all from without doors; he must not live upon himself, but upon another's allowance. He must stand to the provision of God, and be a perpetual suitor at his gates.

2dly, A condition opposite to that which was the cause of the fall. We fell from God by an unbelief of the threatening, he recovers us by a belief of the promise; by unbelief we laid the foundation of God's dishonour,

by faith therefore God exalts the glory of his free grace. We lost ourselves by a desire of self-dependence, and our return is ordered by a way of self-emptiness. It is reasonable we should be restored in a way contrary to that whereby we fell. We sinned by a refusal of cleaving to God; it is a part of divine wisdom to restore us in a denial of our own righteousness and strength.\* Man having sinned by pride, the wisdom of God humbles him (saith one) at the very root of the tree of knowledge, and makes him deny his own understanding, and submit to faith, or else for ever to lose his desired felicity.

*3dly*, It is a condition suited to the common sentiment and custom of the world. There is more of belief than reason in the world; all instructors and masters in sciences and arts require first a belief in their disciples, and a resignation of their understandings and wills to them. And it is the wisdom of God to require that of man, which his own reason makes him submit to another, which is his fellow-creature. He therefore that quarrels with the condition of faith must quarrel with all the world, since belief is the beginning of all knowledge; † yea, and most of the knowledge in the world may rather come under the title of belief than of knowledge, for what we think we know this day we may find from others such arguments as may stagger our knowledge, and make us doubt of that we thought ourselves certain of before; nay, sometimes we change our opinions ourselves, without any instructor, and see a reason to entertain an opinion quite contrary to what we had before; and, if we found a general judgment of others to vote against what we think we know, it would make us give the less credit to ourselves and our sentiments. All knowledge in the world is only a belief, depending upon the testimony or arguings of others; for, indeed, it may be said of all men, as in Job, chap. viii. 9, 'We are but of yesterday, and know nothing.' Since therefore belief is so universal a thing in the world, the wisdom of God requires that of us which every man must count reasonable, or render himself utterly ignorant of anything; it is a condition that is common to all religions. All religions are founded upon a belief; unless men did believe future things, they would not hope nor fear. A belief and resignation was required in all the idolatries in the world, so that God requires nothing but what an universal custom of the world gives its suffrage to the reasonableness of; indeed, justifying faith is not suited to the sentiments of men, but that faith which must precede justifying, a belief of the doctrine, though not comprehended by reason, is common to the custom of the world.‡ It is no less madness not to submit our reason to faith, than not to regulate our fancies by reason.

*4thly*, This condition of faith and repentance is suited to the consciences of men. The law of nature teaches us that we are bound to believe every revelation from God, when it is made known to us; and not only to assent to it as true, but embrace it as good. This nature dictates that we are as much obliged to believe God, because of his truth, as to love him because of his goodness. Every man's reason tells him he cannot obey a precept, nor depend upon a promise, unless he believes both the one and the other; no man's conscience but will inform him, upon hearing the revelation of God, concerning his excellent contrivance of redemption, and the way to enjoy it, that it is very reasonable he should strip off all affections to sin, lie down in sorrow, and bewail what he hath done amiss against so tender a God. Can you expect that any man that promises you a great honour or a rich donative, should demand less of you than to trust his word, bear an affection to him, and return him kindness? Can any less be ex-

\* Laud against Fisher, p. 5. † Bradward. p. 28. ‡ Janeway, p. 83.

pected by a prince than obedience from a pardoned subject, and a redeemed captive? If you have injured any man in his body, estate, reputation, would you not count it a reasonable condition for the partaking of his clemency and forgiveness, to express a hearty sorrow for it, and a resolution not to fall into the like crime again? Such are the conditions of the gospel, suited to the consciences of men.

*5thly*, The wisdom of God appears in that this condition was only likely to attain the end. There are but two common heads appointed by God, Adam and Christ: by one we are made a living soul, by the other a quickening spirit; by the one we are made sinners, by the other we are made righteous. Adam fell as a head, and all his members, his whole issue and posterity, fell with him, because they proceeded from him by natural generation; but since the second Adam cannot be our head by natural generation, there must be some other way of ingrafting us in him, and uniting us to him as our head, which must be moral and spiritual. This cannot rationally be conceived to be by any other way than what is suitable to a reasonable creature, and therefore must be by an act of the will, consent, and acceptance, and owning the terms settled for an admission to that union; and this is that we properly call faith, and therefore called a 'receiving of him,' John i. 12.

1st, Now this condition of enjoying the fruits of redemption could not be a bare knowledge, for that is but only an act of the understanding, and doth not in itself include the act of the will, and so would have united only one faculty to him, not the whole soul; but faith is an act both of the understanding and will too, and principally of the will, which doth presuppose an act of the understanding, for there cannot be a persuasion in the will without a proposition from the understanding. The understanding must be convinced of the truth and goodness of a thing before the will can be persuaded to make any motion towards it, and therefore all the promises, invitations, and proffers are suited to the understanding and will: to the understanding in regard of knowledge, to the will in regard of appetite; to the understanding as true, to the will as good; to the understanding as practical and influencing the will.

2dly, Nor could it be an entire obedience. That, as was said before, would have made the creature have some matter of boasting, and this was not suitable to the condition he was sunk into by the fall; besides, man's nature being corrupted, was rendered incapable to obey, and unable to have one thought of a due obedience, 2 Cor. iii. 5.

When man turned from God, and upon that was turned out of paradise, his return was impossible by any strength of his own; his nature was as much corrupted as his re-entrance into paradise was prohibited. That covenant, whereby he stood in the garden, required a perfection of action and intention in the observance of all the commands of God; but his fall had cracked his ability to recover happiness by the terms and condition of an entire obedience. Yet man being a person governable by a law, and capable of happiness by a covenant, if God would restore him, and enter into a covenant with him, we must suppose it to have some condition, as all covenants have. That condition could not be works, because man's nature was polluted. Indeed, had God reduced man's body to the dust, and his soul to nothing, and framed another man, he might have governed him by a covenant of works; but that had not been the same man that had revolted, and upon his revolt was stained and disabled. But suppose God had, by any transcendent grace, wholly purified him from the stain of his former transgression, and restored to him the strength and ability he had lost,

might he not as easily have rebelled again? And so the condition would never have been accomplished, the covenant never have been performed, and happiness never have been enjoyed. There must be some other condition, then, in the covenant God would make for man's security.

Now faith is the most proper for receiving the promise of pardon of sin; belief of those promises is the first natural recollection that a malefactor can make upon a pardon offered him, an acceptance of it is the first consequent from that belief. Hence is faith entitled a 'persuasion of,' and 'embracing the promises,' Heb. xi. 13, and a 'receiving the atonement,' Rom. v. 11.

Thus the wisdom of God is apparent in annexing such a condition to the covenant, whereby man is restored, as answers the end of God for his glory, the state, conscience, and necessity of man, and had the greatest congruity to his recovery.

*Ninthly*, This wisdom of God is manifest in the manner of the publishing and propagating this doctrine of redemption.

1st, In the gradual discoveries of it. Flashing a great light in the face of a sudden is amazing; should the sun glare in our eye in all its brightness on a sudden, after we have been in a thick darkness, it would blind us, instead of comforting us; so great a work as this must have several digestions.

God first reveals of what seed the redeeming person should be, 'the seed of the woman,' Gen. iii. 15. Then of what nation, Gen. xxvi. 4, then of what tribe, Gen. xlix. 12, of the tribe of Judah; then of what family, the family of David; then what works he has to do, what sufferings to undergo. The first predictions of our Saviour were obscure. Adam could not well see the redemption in the promise, for the punishment of death, which succeeded in the threatening; the promise exercised his faith, and the obscurity and bodily death his humility. The promise made to Abraham was clearer than the revelations made before, yet he could not tell how to reconcile his redemption with his exile. God supported his faith by the promise, and exercised his humility by making him a pilgrim, and keeping him in a perpetual dependence upon him in all his motions.

The declarations to Moses are brighter than those to Abraham; the delineations of Christ by David in the Psalms, more illustrious than the former; and all those exceeded by the revelations made to the prophet Isaiah and the other prophets, according as the age did approach wherein the Redeemer was to enter into his office.

God wrapped up this gospel in a multitude of types and ceremonies, fitted to the infant state of the church, Gal. iv. 3. An infant state is usually affected with sensible things, yet those ceremonies were fitted to that great end of the gospel, which he would bring forth in time to the world. And the wisdom of God in them would be amazing, if we could understand the analogy between every ceremony in the law and the thing signified by it; as it cannot but affect a diligent reader to observe that little account of them we have by the apostle Paul, sprinkled in his epistles, and more largely in that to the Hebrews. As the political laws of the Jews flowed from the depths of the moral law, so their ceremonial did from the depths of evangelical counsels, and all of them had a special relation to the honour of God and the debasing the creature.

Though God formed the mass and matter of the world at the first creation at once, yet his wisdom took six days' time for the disposing and adorning it. The more illustrious truths of God are not to be comprehended on a sudden by the weakness of men. Christ did not declare all truths to his disciples in the time of his life, because they were not able at that present to bear them: John xvi. 12, 'Ye cannot bear them now.' Some were re-

served for his resurrection, others for the coming of the Spirit ; and the full discovery of all kept back for another world. This doctrine God figured out in the law, oracled by the prophets, and unveiled by Christ and his apostles.

2dly, The wisdom of God appeared, in using all proper means to render the belief of it easy.

1st, The most minute things that were to be transacted were predicted, in the ancient foregoing age, long before the coming of the Redeemer. The vinegar and gall offered to him upon the cross, the parting his garments, the not breaking of his bones, the piercing of his hands and feet, the betraying of him, the slighting of him by the multitude, all were exactly painted and represented in variety of figures. There was light enough to good men not to mistake him ; and yet not so plain, as to hinder bad men from being serviceable to the counsels of God in the crucifying of him when he came.

2dly, The translation of the Old Testament from the private language of the Jews into the most public language of the world, that translation which we call *Septuagint*, from Hebrew into Greek, some years before the coming of Christ, that tongue being most diffused at that time, by reason of the Macedonian empire raised by Alexander, and the university of Athens, to which other nations resorted for learning and education. This was a preparation for the sons of Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem. By this was the entertainment of the gospel facilitated, when they compared the prophecies of the Old Testament with the declarations of the New, and found things so long predicted before they were transacted in the public view.

3dly, By ordering concurrent testimonies as to matter of fact, that the matter of fact was not deniable. That there was such a person as Christ, that his miracles were stupendous, that his doctrine did not incline to sedition, that he affected not worldly applause, that he did suffer at Jerusalem, was acknowledged by all ; not a man among the greatest enemies of Christians was found, that denied the matter of fact. And this great truth, that Christ is the Messiah and Redeemer, hath been, with universal consent, owned by all the professors of Christianity throughout the world. Whatever bickerings there have been among them about some particular doctrines, they all centred in that truth of Christ's being the Redeemer. The first publication of this doctrine was sealed by a thousand miracles, and so illustrious, that he was an utter stranger to the world that was ignorant of them.

4thly, In keeping up some principles and opinions in the world to facilitate the belief of this, or render men inexcusable for rejecting of it. The incarnation of the Son of God could not be so strange to the world, if we consider the general belief of the appearances\* of their gods among them ; that the Epicureans, and others that denied any such appearances, were counted atheists.† And Pythagoras was esteemed to be one, not of the inferior genii and lunar demons, but one of the higher gods, who appeared in a human body, for the curing and rectifying mortal life ; ‡ and himself tells Abaris the Scythian, that he was *ἀνθρωπομορφος*, that he took the flesh of man, that men might not be astonished at him, and in a fright fly from his instructions. It was not therefore accounted an irrational thing among them, that God should be incarnate ; but indeed, the great stumbling-block was a crucified God. But had they known the holy and righteous nature of God, the malice of sin, the universal corruption of human nature, the first threatening, and the necessity of vindicating the honour of the law, and clearing the justice of God, the notion of his crucifixion would not have appeared so incredible, since they believed the possibility of an incarnation.

\* *Ἐπιφάνειαι.*

† Dionys. Halicar. Antiq., l. ii. p. 128.

‡ Iamblich. Vit. Pythag., l. i. cap. vi. p. 44, et lib. ii. c. xix. p. 94.

Another principle was that universal one of sacrifices for expiation, and rendering God propitious to man, and was practised among all nations. I remember not any wherein this custom did not prevail, for it did even among those people where the Jews, as being no trading nation, had not any commerce, and also in America, found out in these latter ages. It was not a law of nature (no man can find any such thing written in his own heart), but a tradition from Adam. Now that among the loss of so many other doctrines, that were handed down from Adam to his immediate posterity, as in particular that of the 'seed of the woman,' which one would think a necessary appendix to that of sacrificing, this latter should be preserved as a fragment of an ancient tradition, seems to be an act of divine wisdom, to prepare men for the entertainment of the doctrine of the great sacrifice for the expiation of the sin of the world. And as the apostle forms his argument from the Jewish sacrifices in the Epistle to the Hebrews, for the convincing them of the end of the death of Christ, so did the ancient fathers make use of this practice of the heathen, to convince them of the same doctrine.

5thly, The wisdom of God appeared, in the time and circumstances of the first solemn publication of the gospel by the apostles at Jerusalem. The relation you may read in Acts ii. 1-12. The Spirit was given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, a time wherein there were multitudes of Jews from all nations, not only near but remote, that heard the great things of God spoken in the several languages of those nations where their habitations were fixed, and that by twelve illiterate men, that two or three hours before knew no language but that of their native country.

It was the custom of the Jews that dwelt among other nations at a distance from Jerusalem, to assemble together at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost; and God pitched upon this season, that there might be witnesses of this miracle in many parts of the world. There were some of every nation under heaven, ver. 5, that is, of that known part of the world, so saith the text. Fourteen several nations are mentioned, and proselytes as well as Jews by birth. They are called devout men, men of conscience, whose testimony would carry weight with it among their neighbours at their return, because of their reputation by their religious carriage.

Again, this was not heard and seen by some of them at one time, and some at another, by some one hour, by others the next successively,\* but altogether in a solemn assembly, that the testimony of so many witnesses at a time might be more valid, and the truth of the doctrine appear more illustrious and undeniable. And it must needs be astonishing to them, to hear that person magnified in so miraculous a manner, who had so lately been condemned by their countrymen as a malefactor.

Wisdom consists in the timing of things. And in this circumstance doth the wisdom of God appear, in furnishing the apostles with the Spirit at such a time, and bringing forth such a miracle as the gift of tongues on a sudden, that every nation might hear in their own language the wonder of redemption, and as witnesses at their returns into their own countries, report it to others, that the credit they had in their several places might facilitate the belief and entertainment of the gospel, when the apostles or others should arrive to those several charges and dioceses appointed for them to preach the gospel in. Had this miracle been wrought in the presence only of the inhabitants of Judea, that understood only their own language, or one or two of the neighbouring tongues, it had been counted by them rather a madness than a miracle. Or had they understood all the tongues which they spoke, the news of it had spread no further than the limits of their

\* Faucheur *in loc.* p. 294, 295.

own habitations, and had been confined within the narrow bounds of the land of Judea. But now it is carried to several remote nations, where any of those auditors then assembled had their residence.

As God chose the time of the passover for the death of Christ, that there might be the greatest number of the inhabitants of the country as witnesses of the matter of fact, the innocence and sufferings of Christ, so he chose the time of Pentecost for the first publishing the value and end of this blood to the world.

Thus the evangelical law was given in a confluence of people from all parts and nations, because it was a covenant with all nations. And the variety of languages spoken by a company of poor Galileans, bred up at the Lake of Tiberias, and in poor corners of Canaan, without the instructions of men for so great a skill, might well evidence to the hearers, that God, that brought the confusion of languages first at Babel, did only work that cure of them, and combine all together at Jerusalem.

*3dly*, The wisdom of God is seen in the instruments he employed in the publishing the gospel. He did not employ philosophers, but fishermen; used not acquired arts, but infused wisdom and courage. This treasure was put into and preserved in earthen vessels, that the wisdom, as well as the power of God, might be magnified. The weaker the means are which attain the end, the greater is the skill of the conductor of them.

Wise princes choose men of most credit, interest, wisdom, and ability to be ministers of their affairs and ambassadors to others. But what were these that God chose for so great a work as the publishing a new doctrine to the world? What was their quality but mean, what was their authority without interest? What was their ability, without eminent parts for so great a work, but what divine grace in a special manner endowed them with? Nay, what was their disposition to it? As dull and unwieldy. Witness the frequent rebukes for their slow-heartedness from their Master when he conversed in the flesh with them. And one of the greatest of them, so fond of the Jewish ceremonies and pharisaical principles, wherein he had been more than ordinarily principled, that he hated the Christian religion to extirpation, and the professors of it to death. By those ways which were out of the road of human wisdom, and would be accounted the greatest absurdity to be practised by men that have a repute for discretion, did God advance his wisdom. 1 Cor. i. 25, 'The foolishness of God is wiser than man.' By this means it was indisputably evidenced to unbiassed minds that the doctrine was divine. It could not rationally be imagined that instruments destitute of all human advantages should be able to vanquish the world, confound Judaism, overturn heathenism, chase away the devils, strip them of their temples, alienate the minds of men from their several religions, which had been rooted in them by education, and established by a long succession. It could not, I say, reasonably be imagined to be without a supernatural assistance, an heavenly and efficacious working. Whereas, had God taken a course agreeable to the prudence of man, and used those that had been furnished with learning, tipped with eloquence, and armed with human authority, the doctrines would have been thought to have been of a human invention, and to be some subtle contrivance for some unworthy and ambitious end. The nothingness and weakness of the instruments manifest them to be conducted by a divine power, and declare the doctrine itself to be from heaven.

When we see such feeble instruments proclaiming a doctrine repugnant to flesh and blood, sounding forth a crucified Christ to be believed in and trusted on, and declaiming against the religion and worship under which the

Roman empire had long flourished, exhorting them to the contempt of the world, preparation for afflictions, denying themselves and their own honours by the hopes of an unseen reward, things so repugnant to flesh and blood; and these instruments concurring in the same story, with an admirable harmony in all parts, and sealing this doctrine with their blood, can we upon all this ascribe this doctrine to a human contrivance, or fix any lower author of it than the wisdom of Heaven? It is the wisdom of God that carries on his own designs in methods most suitable to his own greatness, and different from the customs and modes of men, that less of humanity, and more of divinity might appear.

*4thly*, The wisdom of God appears in the ways and manner, as well as in the instruments, of its propagation. By ways seemingly contrary. You know how God had sent the Jews into captivity in Babylon, and though he struck off their chains, and restored them to their country, yet many of them had no mind to leave a country wherein they had been born and bred. The distance from the place of the original of their ancestors, and their affection to the country wherein they were born, might have occasioned their embracing the idolatrous worship of the place. Afterwards, the persecutions of Antiochus scattered many of the Jews for their security into other nations, yet a great part, and perhaps the greatest, preserved their religion, and by that were obliged to come every year to Jerusalem to offer, and so were present at the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and were witnesses of the miraculous effects of it. Had they not been dispersed by persecution, and had they not resided in several countries, and been acquainted with their languages, the gospel had not so easily been diffused into several countries of the world. The first persecutions also raised against the church propagated the gospel; the scattering of the disciples inflamed their courage and dispersed the doctrine, Acts viii. 3; according to the prophecy of Daniel, Dan. xii. 4. 'Many should run to and fro, and knowledge should be increased.' The flights and hurryings of men should enlarge the territories of the gospel. There was not a tribunal but the primitive Christians were cited to, not a horrible punishment but was inflicted upon them. Treated they were as the dregs and offals of mankind, as the common enemies of the world; yet the flames of the martyrs brightened the doctrine and the captivity of its professors, made way for the throne of its empire. The imprisonment of the ark was the downfall of Dagon. Religion grew stronger by sufferings, and Christianity taller by injuries. What can this be ascribed to but the conduct of a wisdom superior to that of men and devils, defeating the methods of human and hellish policy, thereby making 'the wisdom of this world foolishness with God?' 1 Cor. iii. 19.

V. The use; of information. If wisdom be an excellency of the divine nature, then,

1. Christ's deity may hence be asserted. Wisdom is the emphatical title of Christ in Scripture, Prov. viii. 12, 13, 31, where Wisdom is brought in speaking as a distinct person, ascribing counsel, and understanding, and the knowledge of witty inventions to itself. He is called also 'the power of God, and the wisdom of God,' 1 Cor. i. 24. And the ancients generally understood that place, Col. ii. 3, 'In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' as an assertion of the Godhead of Christ, in regard of the infiniteness of his knowledge, referring wisdom to his knowledge of divine things, and knowledge to his understanding of all human things. But the natural sense of the place seems to be this, that all wisdom and



knowledge is displayed by Christ in the gospel; and the words *ἐν αὐτῷ* refer either to Christ, or the mystery of God spoken of, ver. 2. But the deity of Christ, in regard of infinite wisdom, may be deduced from his creation of things, and his government of things, both which are ascribed to him in Scripture. The first ascribed to him, John i. 3, 'All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.' The second, John v. 22, 'The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son;' and both put together, Col. i. 16, 17.

Now, since he hath the government of the world, he hath the perfections necessary to so great a work. As the creation of the world, which is ascribed to him, requires an infinite power, so the government of the world requires an infinite wisdom. That he hath the knowledge of the hearts of men was proved in handling the omniscience of God. That knowledge would be to little purpose, without wisdom to order the motions of men's hearts, and conduct all the qualities and actions of creatures to such an end as is answerable to a wise government; we cannot think so great an employment can be without an ability necessary for it. The government of men and angels is a great part of the glory of God; and if God should entrust the greatest part of his glory in hands unfit for so great a trust, it would be an argument of weakness in God, as it is in men, to pitch upon unfit instruments for particular charges. Since God hath therefore committed to him his greatest glory, the conduct of all things for the highest ends, he hath a wisdom requisite for so great an end, which can be no less than infinite. If, then, Christ were a finite person, he would not be capable of an infinite communication; he could not be a subject wherein infinite wisdom could be lodged; for the terms finite and infinite are so distant, that they cannot commence\* one another; finite can never be changed into infinite, no more than infinite can into finite.

2. Hence we may assert the right and fitness of God for the government of the world, as he is the wisest being. Among men, those who are excellent in judgment are accounted fittest to preside over and give orders to others; the wisest in a city are most capable to govern a city; or at least, though ignorant men may bear the title, yet the advice of the soundest and skilfullest heads should prevail in all public affairs. We see in nature, that the eye guides the body, and the mind directs the eye.

Power and wisdom are the two arms of authority.† Wisdom knows the end and directs the means; power executes the means designed for such an end. The more splendid and strong those are in any, the more authority results from thence for the conduct of others that are of an inferior orb. Now, God being infinitely excellent in both, his ability and right to the management of the world cannot be suspected; the whole world is but one commonwealth, whereof God is the monarch. Did the government of the world depend upon the election of men and angels, where could they pitch, or where would they find perfections capable of so great a work but in the supreme wisdom? His wisdom hath already been apparent in those laws whereby he formed the world into a civil society, and the Israelites into a commonwealth: the one suited to the consciences and reasons of all his subjects, and the other suited to the genius of that particular nation, drawn out of the righteousness of the moral law, and applicable to all cases that might arise among them in their government, so that Moses asserts that the wisdom apparent in their laws enacted by God, as their chief magistrate,

\* I do not know whether this means that they cannot be commensurate with one another; or that they cannot be continuous, so that the one 'commences' where the other ends.—ED.

† Amyraut, Moral. tom. i. p. 258, 259.

would render them famous among other nations in regard of their wisdom as well as their righteousness, Deut. iv. 6, 7, 9. Also, this perfection doth evidence that God doth actually govern the world. It would not be a commendable thing for a man to make a curious piece of clock-work, and take no care for the orderly motion of it. Would God display so much of his skill in framing the heaven and earth, and none in actual guidance of them to their particular and universal ends? Did he lay the foundation in order, and fit every stone in the building, make all things in weight and measure, to let them afterwards run at hap-hazard? Would he bring forth his power to view in the creation, and let a more glorious perfection lie idle, when it had so large a field to move in? Infinite wisdom is inconsistent with inactivity. All prudence doth illustrate itself in untying the hardest knots, and disposing the most difficult affairs to a happy and successful issue. All those various arts and inventions among men which lend their assisting hand to one another, and those various employments their several geniuses lead them to, whereby they support one another's welfare, are beams and instincts of divine wisdom in the government of the world. He that made all things in wisdom, Ps. civ. 24, would not leave his works to act and move only according to their own folly, and idly behold them jumble together, and run counter to that end he designed them for; we must not fancy a divine wisdom to be destitute of activity.

3. Here we may see a ground of God's patience. The most impotent persons are the most impatient when unforeseen emergencies arise, or at events expected by them, when their feeble prudence was not a sufficient match to contest with them or prevent them. But the wiser any man is, the more he bears with those things which seem to cross his intentions, because he knows he grasps the whole affair, and is sure of attaining the end he proposeth to himself; yet, as a finite wisdom can have but a finite patience, so an infinite wisdom possesses an infinite patience.

The wise God intends to bring glory to himself, and good to some of his creatures, out of the greatest evils that can happen in the world. He beholds no exorbitant afflictions and monstrous actions but what he can dispose to a good and glorious end, even to 'work together for good to them that love God,' Rom. viii. 28; and therefore doth not presently fall foul upon the actors till he hath wrought out that temporary glory to himself and good to his people which he designs. 'The times of ignorance God winks at,' till he had brought his Son into the world and manifested his wisdom in redemption, and when this was done he presseth men to a speedy repentance, Acts xvii. 30; that as he forbore punishing their crimes in order to the displaying his wisdom in the designed redemption, so when he hath effected it, they must forbear any longer abusing his patience.

4. Hence appears the immutability of God in his decrees. He is not destitute of a power and strength to change his own purposes, but his infinite perfection of wisdom is a bar to his laying aside his eternal resolves and forming new ones; Isa. xli. 10, he resolves the end from the beginning, and his counsel stands; stands immoveable, because it is counsel. It is an impotent counsel that is subject to a daily thwarting itself. Inconstant persons are accounted by men destitute of a due measure of prudence. If God change his mind, it is either for the better or the worse: if for the better, he was not wise in his former purpose; if for the worse, he is not wise in his present resolve. No alteration can be without a reflection of weakness upon the former or present determination. God must either cease to be as wise as he was before, or begin to be wiser than he was before the change; which to think or imagine is to deny a Deity. If any man

change his resolution, he is apprehensive of a flaw in his former purpose, and finds an inconvenience in it which moves him to such a change; which must be either for want of foresight in himself, or want of a due consideration of the object of his counsel, neither of which can be imagined of God without a denial of the Deity. No; there are no blots and blemishes in his purposes and promises. Repentance indeed is an act of wisdom in the creature, but it presupposeth folly in his former actions, which is inconsistent with infinite perfection. Men are often too rash in promising, and therefore what they promise in haste they perform at leisure or not at all. They consider not before they vow, and make after inquiries whether they had best stand to it.

The only wise God needs not any after-game. As he is sovereignly wise, he sees no cause of reversing anything, and wants not expedients for his own purpose; and as he is infinitely powerful, he hath no superior to hinder him from executing his will, and making his people enjoy the effects of his wisdom. If he had a recollection of thoughts (as man hath), and saw a necessity to mend them, he were not infinitely wise in his first decrees. As in creation he looked back upon the several pieces of that goodly frame he had erected, and saw them so exact that he did not take up his pencil again to mend any particle of the first draught, so his promises are made with such infinite wisdom and judgment, that what he writes is irreversible and for ever, as the decrees of the Medes and Persians. All the words of God are eternal, because they are the births of righteousness and judgment: Hosea ii. 19, 'I will betroth thee to me for ever, in righteousness and judgments.' He is not of a wavering and flitting discretion; if he threatens, he wisely considers what he threatens; if he promises, he wisely considers what he promises, and therefore is immutable in both.

5. Hence it follows, that God is a fit object for our trust and confidence. For God being infinitely wise, when he promises anything, he sees everything which may hinder and everything which may promote the execution of it; so that he cannot discover anything afterwards that may move him to take up after-thoughts, he hath more wisdom than to promise anything hand over head, or anything which he knows he cannot accomplish. Though God, as true, be the object of our trust, yet God, as wise, is the foundation of our trust. We trust him in his promise; the promise was made by mercy, and it is performed by truth; but wisdom conducts all means to the accomplishment of it. There are many men whose honesty we can confide in, but whose discretion we are diffident of; but there is no defect either of the one or the other which may scare us from a depending upon God in our concerns. The words of man's wisdom the apostle entitles enticing, 1 Cor. ii. 4, in opposition to the words of God's wisdom, which are firm, stable, and undeniable demonstrations. As the power of God is an encouragement of trust, because he is able to effect, so the wisdom of God comes into the rank of those attributes which support our faith. To put a confidence in him, we must be persuaded not only that he is ignorant of nothing in the world, but that he is wise to manage the whole course of nature, and dispose of all his creatures for the bringing his purposes and his promises to their designed perfection.

6. Hence appears the necessity of a public review of the management of the world, and of a day of judgment. As a day of judgment may be inferred from many attributes of God; as his sovereignty, justice, omniscience, &c., so among the rest from this of wisdom. How much of this perfection will lie unveiled\* and obscure, if the sins of men be not brought to view, whereby

Qu. 'veiled'?—ED.

the ordering the unrighteous actions of men by his directing and overruling hand of providence, in subserviency to his own purposes and his people's good, may appear in all its glory? Without such a public review, this part of wisdom will not be clearly visible; how those actions, which had a vile foundation in the hearts and designs of men, and were formed there to gratify some base lust, ambition and covetousness, &c., were by a secret wisdom presiding over them, conducted to amazing ends.

It is a part of divine wisdom to right itself, and convince men of the reasonableness of its laws, and the unreasonableness of their contradictions to it. The execution of the sentence is an act of justice, but the conviction of the reasonableness of the sentence is an act of wisdom, clearing up the righteousness of the proceeding; and this precedes, and the other follows: Jude 15, 'To convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds.' That wisdom which contrived satisfaction, as well as that justice which required it, is concerned in righting the law, which was enacted by it. The wisdom of a sovereign lawgiver is engaged not to see his law vilified and trampled on, and exposed to the lusts and affronts of men, without being concerned in vindicating the honour of it. It would appear a folly to enact and publish it, if there were not a resolution to right and execute it.

The wisdom of God can no more associate iniquity and happiness together, than the justice of God can separate iniquity from punishment. It would be defective if it did always tamely bear the insolences of offenders without a time of remark of their crimes, and a justification of the precept rebelliously spurned at. He would be unwise if he were unjust; unrighteousness hath no better a title in Scripture than that of folly. It is no part of wisdom to give birth to those laws which he will always behold ineffectual, and neither vindicate his law by a due execution of the penalty, nor right his own authority, contemned in the violation of his law, by a just revenge. Besides, what wisdom would it be for the sovereign Judge to lodge such a spokesman for himself, as conscience in the soul of man, if it should be always found speaking, and at length be found false in all that it speaks? There is therefore an apparent prospect of the day of account, from the consideration of this perfection of the divine nature.

7. Hence we have a ground for a mighty reverence and veneration of the divine majesty. Who can contemplate the sparklings of this perfection in the variety of the works of his hands, and the exact government of all his creatures, without a raised admiration of the excellency of his being, and a falling flat before him, in a posture of reverence to so great a being? Can we behold so great a mass of matter digested into several forms, so exact a harmony and temperament in all the creatures, the proportions of numbers and measures, and one creature answering the ends and designs of another, the distinct beauties of all, the perpetual motion of all things without checking one another; the variety of the nature of things, and all acting according to their nature with an admirable agreement; and all together, like differing strings upon an instrument, emitting divers sounds, but all reduced to order in one delightful lesson; I say, can we behold all this without admiring and adoring the divine wisdom which appears in all?

And from the consideration of this, let us pass to the consideration of his wisdom in redemption; in reconciling divided interests, untying hard knots, drawing one contrary out of another; and we must needs acknowledge that the wisdom of all the men on earth, and angels in heaven, is worse than nothing, and vanity in comparison of this vast ocean. And as we have a greater esteem for those that invent some excellent artificial engines, what reverence ought we to have for him that hath stamped an unimitable wisdom

upon all his works ! Nature orders us to give honour to our superiors in knowledge, and confide in their counsels ; but none ought to be revered as much as God, since none equals him in wisdom.

8. If God be infinitely wise, it shews us the necessity of our addresses to him, and invocation of his name. We are subject to mistakes, and often overseen ; we are not able rightly to counsel ourselves. In some cases all creatures are too short-sighted to apprehend them, and too ignorant to give advice proper for them, and to contrive remedies for their case ; but with the Lord there is counsel : Jer. xxxii. 19, 'He is great in counsel, and mighty in working ;' great in counsel to advise us, mighty in working to assist us. We know not how to effect a design or prevent an expected evil. We have an infinite wisdom to go to, that is every way skilful to manage any business we desire, to avert any evil we fear, to accomplish anything we commit into his hands. When we know not what to resolve, he hath a counsel to guide us, Ps. lxxiii. 24 ; he is not more powerful to effect what is needful, than wise to direct what is fitting. All men stand in need of the help of God, as one man stands in need of the assistance of other men, and will not do anything without advice ; and he that takes advice, deserves the title of a wise man, as well as he that gives advice. But no man needs so much the advice of another man as all men need the counsel and assistance of God ; neither is any man's wit and wisdom so far inferior to the prudence and ability of an angel, as the wisdom of the wisest man and the most sharp-sighted angel is inferior to the infinite wisdom of God. We see therefore that it is best for us to go to the fountain, and not content ourselves with the streams ; to beg advice from a wisdom that is infinite and infallible, rather than from that which is finite and fallible.

*Use 2.* If wisdom be the perfection of the divine majesty, how prodigious is the contempt of it in the world !

#### 1. In general.

All sin strikes at this attribute, and is in one part or other a degrading of it. The first sin directed its venom against this. As the devils endeavoured to equal their Creator in power, so man endeavoured to equal him in wisdom. Both, indeed, scorned to be ruled by his order ; but man evidently exalted himself against the wisdom of God, and aspired to be a sharer with him in his infinite knowledge ; would not let him be the only wise God, but cherished an ambition to be his partner ; just as if a beam were able to imagine it might be as bright as the sun, or a spark fancy it could be as full fraught with heat as the whole element of fire. Man would not submit to the infinite wisdom of God in the prohibition of one single fruit in the garden, when, by the right of his sovereign authority, he might have granted him only the use of one. All presumptuous sins are of this nature, they are therefore called reproaches of God : Num. xv. 30, 'The soul that doth aught presumptuously reproacheth the Lord.' All reproaches are either for natural, moral, or intellectual defects ; all reproaches of God must imply either a weakness or unrighteousness in God. If unrighteousness, his holiness is denied ; if weakness, his wisdom is blemished.

In general, all sin strikes at this perfection two ways.

(1.) As it defaceth the wise workmanship of God. Every sin is a deforming and blemishing our own souls, which, as they are the prime creatures in the lower world, so they have greater characters of divine wisdom in the fabric of them ; but this image of God is ruined and broken by sin. Though the spoiling of it be a scorn of his holiness, it is also an affront to his wisdom ; for though his power was the cause of the production of so fair a piece, yet his wisdom was the guide of his power, and his holiness the pat-

tern whereby he wrought it. His power effected it, and his holiness was exemplified in it, but his wisdom contrived it.

If a man had a curious clock or watch, which had cost him many years' pain, and the strength of his skill to frame it, for another, after he had seen and considered it, to trample upon it, and crush it in pieces, would argue a contempt of the artificer's skill. God hath shewn infinite art in the creation of man, but sin unbeautifies man, and ravisheth his excellency. It cuts and slasheth the image of God stamped by divine wisdom, as though it were an object only of scorn and contempt. The sinner in every sin acts as if he intended to put himself in a better posture, and in a fairer dress, than the wisdom of God hath put him in by creation.

(2.) In the slighting his laws. The laws of God are highly rational, they are drawn from the depths of the divine understanding, wherein there is no unclearness and no defect. As his understanding apprehends all things in their true reason, so his will enjoins all things for worthy and wise ends ; his laws are contrived by his wisdom for the happiness of man, whose happiness, and the methods to it, he understands better than men or angels can do. His laws being the orders of the wisest understanding, every breach of his law is a flying in the face of his wisdom. All human laws, though they are enforced by sovereign authority, yet they are, or ought to be in the composing of them, founded upon reason, and should be particular applications of the law of nature to this or that particular emergency. The laws of God, then, who is *summa ratio*, are the birth of the truest reason, though the reason of every one of them may not be so clear to us.

Every law, though it consists in an act of the will, yet doth presuppose an act of the understanding. The act of the divine understanding in framing the law must be supposed to precede the act of his will in commanding the observance of that law ; so every sin against the law is not only against the will of God commanding, but the reason of God contriving, and a cleaving to our own reason, rather than the understanding or mind of God : as if God had mistaken in making his law, and we had more understanding to frame a better, and more conducing to our happiness ; as if God were not wise enough to govern us, and prescribe what we should do, and what we should avoid ; as if he designed not our welfare, but our misfortune.

Whereas the precepts of God are not tyrannical edicts, or acts of mere will, but the fruits of counsel, and therefore every breach of them is a real declamation against his discretion and judgment, and preferring our own imaginations, or the suggestions of the devil, as our rule, before the results of divine counsel. While we acknowledge him wise in our opinion, we speak him foolish by our practice, when, instead of being guided by him, we will guide ourselves. No man will question but it is a controlling divine wisdom to make alterations in his precepts, dogmatically, either to add some of their own, or expunge any of his. And is it not a crime of the like reflection to alter them practically ? When we will observe one part of the law, and not another part, but pick and choose where we please ourselves, as our humours and carnal interest prompts us, it is to charge that part of the law with folly which we refuse to conform unto.

The more cunning any man is in sin, the more his sin is against divine wisdom, as if he thought to out-wit God. He that receives the promises of God, and the testimony of Christ, ' sets to his seal that God is true,' John iii. 33 ; by the like strength of argument it will undeniably follow, that he that refuseth obedience to his precept sets to his seal that God is foolish. Were they not rational, God would not enjoin them ; and if they are rational, we are enemies to infinite wisdom by not complying with them. If infinite

prudence hath made the law, why is not every part of it observed ; if it were not made with the best wisdom, why is any part of it observed ? If the defacing his image be any sin, as being a defaming his wisdom in creation, the breaking his law is no less a sin, as being a disgracing his wisdom in his administration. It is upon this account, likely, that the Scripture so often counts sinners fools, since it is certainly inexcusable folly to contradict undeniable and infallible wisdom, yet this is done in the least sin. And as he that breaks one tittle of the law is deservedly accounted guilty of the breach of the whole, James ii. 10, so he that despiseth the least stamp of wisdom in the minutest part of the law is deservedly counted as a contemner of it in the frame of the whole statute-book.

2. But in particular, the wisdom of God is affronted and invaded ;

(1.) By introducing new rules and modes of worship, different from divine institutions. Is not this a manifest reflection on this perfection of God, as though he had not been wise enough to provide for his own honour, and model his own service, but stood in need of our directions, and the caprices of our brains ? Some have observed, that it is a greater sin in worship to do what we should not, than to omit what we should perform.\* The one seems to be out of weakness, because of the high exactness of the law ; and the other out of impudence, accusing the wisdom of God of imperfection, and controlling it in its institutions. At best it seems to be an imputation of human bashfulness to the supreme sovereign, as if he had been ashamed to prescribe all that was necessary to his own honour, but had left something to the ingenuity and gratitude of men.

Man has, ever since the foolish conceit of his old ancestor Adam, presumed he could be as wise as God ; and if he who was created upright entertained such conceits, much more doth man now, under a mass of corruption, so capable to foment them. This hath been the continual practice of men, not so much to reject what once they had received as divine, but to add something of their own inventions to it.

The heathens renounced not the sacrificing of beasts for the expiation of their offences (which the old world had received by tradition from Adam, and the new world, after the deluge, from Noah), but they had blended that tradition with rites of their own, and offered creatures unclean in themselves, and not fit to be offered to an infinitely pure being, for the distinction of clean and unclean was as ancient as Noah, Gen. viii. 20 ; yea, before, Gen. vii. 2.

So the Jews did not discard what they had received from God, as circumcision, the passover, and sacrifices ; but they would mix a heap of heathenish rites with the ceremonies of divine ordination, and practise things which he had not commanded, as well as things which he had enjoined them. And therefore it is observable, that when God taxeth them with this sin, he doth not say, they brought in those things which he had forbidden into his worship ; but those things which he had not commanded, and had given no order for, to intimate that they were not to move a step without his rule,—Jer. vii. 31, ‘ They have built the high places of Tophet, which I commanded them not, nor came it into my heart ;’ and Levit. x. 1, Nadab’s and Abihu’s strange fire was ‘ not commanded,’—so charging them with impudence and rashness in adding something of their own, after he had revealed to them the manner of his service, as if they were as wise as God. So loth is man to acknowledge the supremacy of divine understanding, and be sensible of his own ignorance.

So after the divulging of the gospel, the corrupters of religion did not

\* Strong of the Will.

fling off, but preserved the institutions of God, but painted and patched them up with pagan ceremonies ; imposed their own dreams with as much force as the revelations of God. Thus hath the papacy turned the simplicity of the gospel into pagan pomp, and religion into politics ; and revived the ceremonial law, and raked some limbs of it out of the grave, after the wisdom of God had wrung her knell, and honourably interred her ; and sheltered the heathenish superstitions in Christian temples, after the power of the gospel had chased the devils, with all their trumpery, from their ancient habitations.

Whence should this proceed, but from a partial atheism, and a mean conceit of the divine wisdom ? As though God had not understanding enough to prescribe the form of his own worship ; and not wisdom enough to support it, without the crutches of human prudence.

Human prudence is too low to parallel divine wisdom ; it is an incompetent judge of what is fit for an infinite majesty. It is sufficiently seen in the ridiculous and senseless rites among the heathens, and the cruel and devilish ones fetched from them by the Jews. What work will human wisdom make with divine worship, when it will presume to be the director of it, as a mate with the wisdom of God ? Whence will it take its measures, but from sense, humour, and fancy ; as though what is grateful and comely to a depraved reason, were as beautiful to an unspotted and infinite mind. Do not such tell the world, that they were of God's cabinet council, since they will take upon them to judge, as well as God, what is well pleasing to him ? Where will it have the humility to stop, if it hath the presumption to add any one thing to revealed modes of worship ? How did God tax the Israelites with making idols ' according to their own understanding,' Hosea xiii. 2, imagining their own understandings to be of a finer make and a perfecter mould than their Creator's ; and that they had fetched more light from the chaos of their own brains, than God had from eternity in his own nature ! How slight will the excuse be, *God hath not forbidden this or that*, when God shall silence men with the question, Where, or when did I command this or that ? There was no addition to be made under the law to the meanest instrument God had appointed in his service. The sacred perfume was not to have one ingredient more put into it, than what God had prescribed in the composition ; nor was any man, upon pain of death, to imitate it ; nor would God endure that sacrifices should be consumed with any other fire, than that which came down from heaven : so tender is God of any invasions of his wisdom and authority. In all things of his nature, whatsoever voluntary humility and respect to God they may be disguised with, there is a swelling of the fleshly mind against infinite understanding, which the apostle nauseates, Col. ii. 18.

Such mixtures have not been blessed by God. As God never prospered the mixtures of several kinds of creatures, to form and multiply a new species, as being a dissatisfaction with his wisdom as creator, so he doth not prosper mixtures in worship, as being a conspiracy against his wisdom as a lawgiver. The destruction of the Jews was judged by some of their doctors to be for preferring human traditions before the written word,\* which they ground on Isa. xxix. 13, ' Their fear of me was taught by the precepts of men.' The injunctions of men were the rule of their worship, and not the prescripts of my law.

To conclude ; such as make alterations in religion, different from the first

\* Vaisin. The Talmud takes notice that the court of Bethany was wasted three years before Jerusalem, because they preferred their own words before the words of the law.



institution, are intolerable busy bodies, that will not let God alone with his own affairs. Vain man would be wiser than his maker, and be dabbling in that which is his sole prerogative.

(2.) In neglecting means instituted by God. When men have risings of heart against God's ordinances, 'they reject the counsel of the Lord against themselves,' or 'in themselves,' Luke vii. 30, *ἡθέτησαν*. They disannulled the wisdom of God, the spring of his ordinances. All neglects are disregards of divine prescriptions, as impertinent and unavailable to that end for which they were appointed, as not being suited to the common dictates of reason; sometimes out of a voluntary humility, such as Peter's was when he denied Christ's condescension to wash his feet, John xiii. 8, and thereby judged of the comeliness of his master's intention and action. Such as continually neglect the great institution of the Lord's supper, out of a sense of unworthiness, are in the same rank with Peter, and do, as well as he, fall under the blame and reproof of Christ.

Men would be saved, and use the means; but either means of their own appointment, or not all the means of God's ordering.\* They would have God's wisdom and will condescend to theirs, and not theirs conformed to God: as if our blind judgments were fittest to make the election of the paths to happiness; like Naaman, who, when he was ordered by the prophet for the cure of his leprosy, to wash seven times in Jordan, would be the prophet's director, and have him touch him with his hand; as if a patient sick of a desperate disease should prescribe to his skilful physician what remedies he should order for his cure, and make his own infirm reason, or his gust and palate the rule, rather than the physician's skill.

Men's inquiries are, Who will shew us any good? They rather fasten upon any means than what God hath ordained. We invert the order divine wisdom hath established, when we would have God save us in our own way, not in his.† It is the same thing as if we would have God nourish us without bread, and cure our diseases without medicines, and increase our wealth without our industry, and cherish our souls without his word and ordinances. It is to demand of him an alteration of his methods, and a separation of that which he hath by his eternal judgment joined together. Therefore for a man to pray to God to save him, when he will not use the means he hath appointed for salvation, when he slights the word, which is the instrument of salvation, is a contempt of the wisdom of divine institutions.

Also in omissions of prayer; when we consult not with God upon emergent occasions, we trust more to our own wisdom than God's, and imply that we stand not in need of his conduct, but have ability to direct ourselves and accomplish our ends without his guidance. Not seeking God, is by the prophet taxed to be a reflection upon this perfection of God: Isa. xxxi. 1, 2, 'They look not to the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord,' &c. And the like charge he brings against them, Hosea viii. 9, 'They are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself, not consulting God.'

(3.) In censuring God's revelations and actions, if they be not according to our schemes. When we will not submit to his plain will, without penetrating into the unrevealed reason of it, nor adore his counsels without controlling them, as if we could correct both law and gospel, and frame a better method of redemption than that of God's contriving. Thus men slighted the wisdom of God in the gospel, because it did not gree with that philosophical wisdom and reason they had sucked in by education from their masters, 1 Cor. i. 21, 22; contrary to their practice in their superstitious worship, where the oracles they thought divine were entertained with

\* Pont. Medit. part iii. p. 366.

† Durant. de Tent. p. 403, 404.

reverence, not with dispute, and though ambiguous, were not counted ridiculous by the worshipper. How foolish is man in this wherein he would be accounted wise ! Adam in innocence was unfit to control the doctrine of God when the eye of his reason was clear, and much more are we since the depravation of our nature.

The revelations of God tower above reason in its purity, much more above reason in its mud and earthiness. The rays of divine wisdom are too bright for our human understandings, much more for our sinful understandings. It is base to set up reason, a finite principle, against an infinite wisdom ; much baser to set up a depraved and purblind reason against an all-seeing and holy wisdom. If we would have a reason for all that God speaks, and all that God acts, our wisdom must become infinite as his, or his wisdom become finite as ours.

All the censures of God's revelations arise from some prejudicate opinions, or traditional maxims, that have enthroned themselves in our minds, which are made the standard whereby to judge of the things of God, and receive or reject them, as they agree with or dissent from those principles, Col. ii. 8. Hence it was that the philosophers in the primitive times were the greatest enemies to the gospel ; and the contempt of divine wisdom, in making reason the supreme judge of divine revelation, was the fruitful mother of the heresies in all ages springing up in the church, and especially of that Socinianism that daily insinuates itself into the minds of men.

This is a wrong to the wisdom of God. He that censures the words or actions of another, implies that he is in his censure wiser than the person censured by him. It is as insupportable to determine the truth of God's plain dictates by our reason, as it is to measure the suitableness or unsuitableness of his actions by the humour of our will. We may sooner think to span the sun, or grasp a star, or see a gnat swallow a leviathan, than fully understand the debates of eternity.

To this we may refer too curious inquiries into divine methods, and ' intruding into those things which are not revealed,' Col. ii. 18. It is to affect a wisdom equal with God, and an ambition to be of his cabinet council. We are not content to be creatures, that is, to be every way below God ; below him in wisdom, as well as in power.

(4.) In prescribing God methods of acting. When we pray for a thing without a due submission to God's will, as if we were his counsellors, yea, his tutors, and not his subjects, and God were bound to follow our humours, and be swayed according to the judgment of our ignorance ; when we would have such a mercy which God thinks not fit to give, or have it in this method, which God designs to convey through another channel ; thus we would have the only wise God take his measures from our passions. Such a controlling of God was Jonah's anger about a gourd : Jonah iv. 1, ' It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.'

We would direct him how to dispose of us ; as though he that had infinite wisdom to contrive and rear the excellent fabric of the world had not wisdom enough, without our discretion, to place us in a sphere proper for his own ends, and the use he intends us in the universe. All the speeches of men—Would I had been in such an office, had such charge : would I had such a mercy, in such a method, or by such instruments—are entrenchments upon God's wise disposal of affairs.

This imposing upon God is a hellish imposition, and in hell we find it. The rich man in hell, that pretends some charity for his brethren on earth, would direct God a way to prevent their ruin, by sending one from the dead to school them, as a more effectual means than Moses and the prophets,

Luke xvi. 29, 30. It is a temper also to be found on earth ; what else was the language of Saul's saving the Amalekites' cattle against the plain command of God ? 1 Sam. xv. 15. As if God in his fury had overshot himself, and overlooked his altar, in depriving it of so great a booty for its service : as if it were an unwise thing in God to lose the prey of so many stately cattle, that might make the altar smoke with their entrails, and serve to expiate the sins of the people ; and therefore he would rectify that which he thought to be an oversight in God, and so magnifies his own prudence and discretion above the divine.

We will not let God act as he thinks fit, but will be directing him, and teaching him knowledge, Job xxi. 22 ; as if God were a statue, an idol, that had eyes and saw not, hands but acted not, and could be turned, as an image may be, to what quarter of the heaven we please ourselves. The wisdom of God is unbiassed ; he orders nothing but what is fittest for his end, and we would have our shallow brains the bias of God's acting. And will not God resent such an indignity, as a reflection upon his wisdom as well as authority, when we intimate that we have better heads than he, and that he comes short of us in understanding ?

(5.) In murmuring and impatience. One demands a reason why he hath this or that cross ? why he hath been deprived of such a comfort, lost such a venture, languisheth under such a sickness, is tormented with such pains, oppressed by tyrannical neighbours, is unsuccessful in such designs ? In these, and such like, the wisdom of God is questioned and defamed. All impatience is a suspicion, if not a condemnation, of the prudence of God's methods, and would make human feebleness and folly the rule of God's dealing with his creatures. This is a presuming to instruct God, and a reproving him for unreasonableness in his proceedings, when his dealings with us do not exactly answer our fancies and wishes ; as if God, who made the world in wisdom, wanted skill for the management of his creatures in it : Job xl. 2, ' Shall he that contends with the Almighty instruct him ? He that reproveth God, let him answer it.' We that are not wise enough to know ourselves, and what is needful for us, presume to have wit enough to guide God in his dealing with us. The wisdom of God rendered Job more useful to the world by his afflictions, in making him a pattern of patience, than if he had continued him in a confluence of all worldly comforts, wherein he had been beneficial only in communicating his morsels to his poor neighbours. All murmuring is a fastening error upon unerring wisdom.

(6.) In pride and haughtiness of spirit. No proud man, but sets his heart as the heart of God, Ezek. xxviii. 2, 3. The wisdom of God hath given to men diverse offices, set them in diverse places ; some have more honourable charges, some meaner. Not to give that respect their offices and places call for, is to quarrel with the wisdom of God, and overturn the rank and order wherein he hath placed things.

It is unfit we should affront God in the disposal of his creatures, and intimate to him by our carriage, that he had done more wisely in placing another, and that he hath done foolishly in placing this or that man in such a charge. Sometimes men are unworthy the place they fill : they may be set there in judgment to themselves and others ; but the wisdom of God, in his management of things, is to be honoured and regarded. "

It is an infringing the wisdom of God when we have a vain opinion of ourselves, and are blind to others ; when we think ourselves monarchs, and treat others as worms or flies in comparison of us. He who would reduce all things to his own honour, perverts the order of the world, and would constitute another order than what the wisdom of God hath established ;

and move them to an end contrary to the intention of God, and charges God with want of discretion and skill.

(7.) Distrust of God's promise is an impeachment of his wisdom, a secret reviling of it, as if he had not taken due consideration of it before he passed his word; or a suspicion of his power, as if he could not accomplish his word. We trust the physician's skill with our bodies, and the lawyer's counsel with our estates, but are loath to rely upon God for the concerns of our lives. If he be wise to dispose of us, why do we distrust him? If we distrust him, why do we embrace an opinion of his wisdom?

Unbelief also is a contradiction to the wisdom of God in the gospel, &c., but that I have already handled in a discourse of the nature of unbelief.

*Use 3. Of comfort.* God hath an infinite wisdom to conduct us in our affairs, rectify us in our mistakes, and assist us in our straits. It is an inestimable privilege to have a God in covenant with us; so wise, to communicate all good, to prevent all evil; who hath infinite ways to bring to pass his gracious intentions towards us. 'How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' Rom. xi. 33. His judgment or decrees are incomprehensibly wise, and the ways of effecting them are as wise as his resolves effected by them. We can as little search into his methods of acting as we can into his wisdom of resolving; both his judgments and ways are unsearchable.

1. Comfort in all straits and afflictions. There is a wisdom in inflicting them, and a wisdom in removing them. He is wise to suit his medicines to the humour of our disease, though he doth not to the humour of our wills. He cannot mistake the nature of our distemper, or the virtue of his own physic. Like a skilful physician, he sometimes prescribes bitter potions, and sometimes cheering cordials, according to the strength of the malady, and necessity of the patient, to reduce him to health. As nothing comes from him but what is for our good, so nothing is acted by him in a rash and temerarious way. His wisdom is as infinite as his goodness, and as exact in managing as his goodness is plentiful in streaming out to us. He understands our griefs, weighs our necessities, and no remedies are beyond the reach of his contrivance. When our feeble wits are bewildered in a maze, and at the end of their line for a rescue, the remedies unknown to us are not unknown to God. When we know not how to prevent a danger, the wise God hath a thousand blocks to lay in the way; when we know not how to free ourselves from an oppressive evil, he hath a thousand ways of relief.

He knows how to time our crosses, and his own blessings. The heart of a wise God, as well as the heart of a wise man, 'discerns both time and judgment,' Eccles. viii. 5. There is as much judgment in sending them as judgment in removing them. How comfortable is it to think that our distresses, as well as our deliverances, are the fruits of infinite wisdom! Nothing is done by him too soon or too slow, but in the true point of time, with all its due circumstances, most conveniently for his glory and our good. How wise is God, to bring the glory of our salvation out of the depths of a seeming ruin, and make the evils of affliction subservient to the good of the afflicted!

2. In temptations; his wisdom is no less employed in permitting them than in bringing them to a good issue. His wisdom in leading our Saviour to be tempted of the devil, was to fit him for our succour, and his wisdom in suffering us to be tempted is to fit us for his own service, and our salvation. He makes a thorn in the flesh to be an occasion of a refreshing grace to the spirit, and brings forth cordial grapes from those pricking brambles, and

magnifies his grace by his wisdom from the deepest subtilties of hell. Let Satan's intentions be what they will, he can be for him at every turn to outwit him in his stratagems, to baffle him in his enterprises, to make instrumental for our good where he designs nothing but our hurt. The Lord hath his methods of deliverance from him : 2 Peter ii. 9, 'The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation.'

3. In denials or delays of answers of prayer. He is gracious to hear, but he is wise to answer in an acceptable time, and succour us in a day proper for our salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. We have partial affections to ourselves ; ignorance is natural to us, Rom. viii. 26, we ask we know not what, because we ask out of ignorance. God grants what he knows, what is fit for him to do, and fit for us to receive, and the exact season wherein it is fittest for him to bestow a mercy. As God would have us bring forth our fruit in season, so he will send forth his mercies in season.

He is wise to suit his remedy to our condition, to time it so as that we shall have an evident prospect of his wisdom in it, that more of divine skill, and less of human, may appear in the issue. He is ready at our call, but he will not answer till he see the season fit to reach out his hand. He is wise to prove our faith, to humble us under the sense of our own unworthiness, to whet our affections, to set a better estimate on the blessings prayed for, and that he may double the blessing as we do our devotion ; but when his wisdom sees us fit to receive his goodness, he grants what we stand in need of. He is wise to choose the fittest time, and faithful to give the best covenant mercy.

4. In all evils threatened to the church by her enemies. He hath knowledge to foresee them, and wisdom to disappoint them : Job v. 13, 'He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.'

The church hath the wisdom of God to enter the lists with the policy of hell. He defeated the serpent in the first net he laid, and brought a glorious salvation out of hell's rubbish, and is yet as skilful to disappoint the after-game of the serpentine brood. The policy of hell, and the subtilty of the world, are no better than folly with God, 1 Cor. iii. 19. All creatures are fools, as creatures, in comparison with the Creator. The angels he chargeth with folly, much more sinners.

Depraved understandings are not fit mates for a pure and unblemished mind. Pharaoh, with his wisdom, finds a grave in the sea, and Ahithophel's plots are finished in his own murder. He breaks the enemies by his power, and orders them by his skill to be a feast to his people. Ps. lxxiv. 14, 'Thou brakest the head of the leviathan, and gavest him to be meat to the people in the wilderness.' The spoils of the Egyptians' carcasses cast upon the shore served the Israelites' necessities (or were as meat to them), as being a deliverance the church might feed upon in all ages, in a wilderness condition, to maintain their faith, the vital principle of the soul.

There is a wisdom superior to the subtilties of men, which laughs at their follies, and 'hath them in derision,' Ps. ii. 4. 'There is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord,' Prov. xxi. 30. You never question the wisdom of an artist to use his file when he takes it into his hand. Wicked instruments are God's axes and files ; let him alone, he hath skill enough to manage them. God hath too much affection to destroy his people, and wisdom enough to beautify them by the worst tools he uses. He can make all things conspire in a perfect harmony for his own ends, and his people's good, when they see no way to escape a danger feared, or attain a blessing wanted.

*Use 4. For exhortation.*

1. Meditate on the wisdom of God in creation and government. How little do we think of God when we behold his works ! Our sense dwells upon the surface of plants and animals, beholds the variety of their colours, and the progress in their motion. Our reason studies the qualities of them ; our spirits seldom take a flight to the divine wisdom which framed them. Our senses engross our minds from God, that we scarce have a thought free to bestow upon the maker of them, but only on the by. The constancy of seeing things that are common stifles our admiration of God, due upon the sight of them. How seldom do we raise our souls as far as heaven in our views of the order of the world, the revolutions of the seasons, the natures of the creatures that are common among us, and the mutual assistance they give to each other ! Since God hath manifested himself in them, to neglect the consideration of them is to neglect the manifestation of God, and the way whereby he hath transmitted something of his perfections to our understanding. It renders men inexcusably guilty of not glorifying God, Rom. i. 19, 20. We can never neglect the meditation of the creatures without a blemish cast upon the Creator's wisdom. As every river can conduct us to the sea, so every creature points us to an ocean of infinite wisdom. Not the minutest of them, but rich tracts of this may be observed in them, and a due sense of God result from them. They are exposed to our view, that something of God may be lodged in our minds ; that as our bodies extract their quintessence for our nourishment, so our minds may extract a quintessence for the maker's praise.

Though God is principally to be praised in and for Christ, yet as grace doth not raze out the law of nature, so the operations of grace put not the dictates of nature to silence, nor suspend the homage due to God upon our inspection of his works. God hath given full testimonies of this perfection in the heavenly bodies, dispersing their light, and distributing their influences to every part of the world. In framing men into societies, giving them various dispositions, for the preservation of governments ; making some wise for counsel, others martial for action ; changing old empires, and raising new. Which way soever we cast our eyes, we shall find frequent occasions to cry out, ' Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! ' Rom. xi. 33.

To this purpose we must not only look upon the bulk and outside of his works, but consider from what principles they were raised, in what order disposed, and the exact symmetry and proportion of their parts. When a man comes into a city or temple, and only considers the surface of the buildings, they will amaze his sense, but not better his understanding, unless he considers the methods of the work, and the art whereby it was erected.

(1.) This was an end for which they were created. God did not make the world for man's use only, but chiefly for his own glory ; for man's use to enjoy his creatures, and for his own glory to be acknowledged in his creatures, that we may consider his art in framing them, and his skill in disposing them, and not only gaze upon the glass without considering the image it represents, and acquainting ourselves whose image it is. The creatures were not made for themselves, but for the service of the Creator and the service of man. Man was not made for himself, but for the service of the Lord that created him. He is to consider the beauty of the creation, that he may thereby glorify the Creator. He knows in part their excellency, the creatures themselves do not. If, therefore, man be idle, and unobservant of them, he deprives God of the glory of his wisdom which he should have by his creatures.

‘The inferior creatures themselves cannot observe it.’ If man regard it not, what becomes of it; his glory can only be handed to him by man. The other creatures cannot be active instruments of his glory, because they know not themselves, and therefore cannot render him an active praise. Man is therefore bound to praise God for himself and for all his creatures, because he only knows himself and the perfections of the creatures, and the Author both of himself and them.

God created such variety to make a report of himself to us; we are to receive the report, and to reflect it back to him. To what purpose did he make so many things, not necessary for the support and pleasure of our lives, but that we should behold him in them as well as in the other?

We cannot behold the wisdom of God in his own essence and eternal ideas, but by the reflection of it in the creatures, as we cannot steadily behold the sun with our eye, but either through a glass, or by reflection of the image of it in the water. God would have us meditate on his perfections; he therefore chose the same day wherein he reviewed his work, and rested from it, to be celebrated by man for the contemplation of him, Gen. ii. 2, 3, that we should follow his example, and rejoice as himself did, in the frequent reviews of his wisdom and goodness in them. In vain would the creatures afford matter for this study if they were wholly neglected.

God offers something to our consideration in every creature. Shall the beams of God shine round about us, and strike our eyes, and not affect our minds? Shall we be like ignorant children, that view the pictures or point to the letters in a book without any sense and meaning? How shall God have the homage due to him from his works, if man hath no care to observe them? The 148th Psalm is an exhortation to this. The view of them should often extract from us a wonder of the like nature of that of David's: Ps. civ. 24, ‘O Lord, how wonderful are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all.’ The world was not created to be forgotten, nor man created to be unobservant of it.

(2.) If we observe not the wisdom of God in the views of the creatures, we do no more than brutes. To look upon the works of God in the world is no higher an act than mere animals perform. The glories of heaven and beauties of the earth are visible to the sense of beasts and birds. A brute beholds the motion of a man, as it may see the wheels of a clock, but understands not the inward springs of motion, the end for which we move, or the soul that acts us in our motion, much less that invisible power which presides over the creatures and conducts their motion. If a man do no more than this, he goes not a step beyond a brutish nature, and may very well acknowledge himself, with Asaph, a foolish and ignorant beast before God, Ps. lxxiii. 22. The world is viewed by beasts, but the author of it to be contemplated by man. Since we are in a higher rank than beasts, we owe a greater debt than beasts, not only to enjoy the creatures, as they do, but behold God in the creatures, which they cannot do.

The contemplation of the reason of God in his works is a noble and suitable employment for a rational creature. We have not only sense to perceive them, but souls to mind them. The soul is not to be without its operation. Where the operation of sense ends, the work of the soul ought to begin. We travel over them by our senses, as brutes, but we must pierce further by our understandings, as men, and perceive and praise him that lies invisible in his visible manufactures. Our senses are given us as servants to the soul, and our souls bestowed upon us for the knowledge and praise of their and our common Creator.

(3.) This would be a means to increase our humility. We should then

flag our wings and veil our sails, and acknowledge our own wisdom to be as a drop to the ocean and a shadow to the sun. We should have mean thoughts of the nothingness of our reason when we consider the sublimity of the divine wisdom. Who can seriously consider the sparks of infinite skill in the creature, without falling down at the feet of the divine Majesty, and acknowledging himself a dark and foolish creature? Ps. viii. 4, 5. When the psalmist 'considered the heavens, the moon and stars,' and God's ordination and disposal of them, the use that results from it is, 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him?' We should no more think to mate him in prudence, or set up the spark of our reason to vie with the sun. Our reason would more willingly submit to the revelation, when the characters of divine wisdom are stamped upon it, when we find his wisdom in creation incomprehensible to us.

(4.) It would help us in our acknowledgments of God for his goodness to us. When we behold the wisdom of God in creatures below us, and how ignorant they are of what they possess, it will cause us to reflect upon the deeper impressions of wisdom in the frame of our own bodies and souls, an excellency far superior to theirs. This would make us admire the magnificence of his wisdom and goodness, and sound forth his praise for advancing us in dignity above other works of his hands, and stamping on us by infinite art a nobler image of himself.

And by such a comparison of ourselves with the creatures below us, we should be induced to act excellently, according to the nature of our souls; not brutishly, according to the nature of the creatures God hath put under our feet.

(5.) By the contemplation of the creatures, we may receive some assistance in clearing our knowledge in the wisdom of redemption. Though they cannot of themselves inform us of it, yet since God hath revealed his redeeming grace, they can illustrate some particulars of it to us. Hence the Scripture makes use of the creatures to set forth things of a higher orb to us. Our Saviour is called a sun, a vine, and a lion; the Spirit likened to a dove, fire, and water. The union of Christ and his church is set forth by the marriage union of Adam and Eve.

God hath placed in corporeal things the images of spiritual, and wrapped up in his creating wisdom the representations of his redeeming grace; whence some call the creatures natural types of what was to be transacted in a new formation of the world, and allusions to what God intended in and by Christ.

(6.) The meditation of God's wisdom in the creatures is in part a beginning of heaven upon earth. No doubt but there will be a perfect opening of the model of divine wisdom. Heaven is for clearing what is now obscure, and a full discovering of what seems at present intricate: Ps. xxxvi. 9, 'In his light shall we see light;' all the light in creation, government, and redemption. The wisdom of God in the new heavens and the new earth would be to little purpose, if that also were not to be regarded by the inhabitants of them. As the saints are to be restored to the state of Adam, and higher, so they are to be restored to the employment of Adam, and higher. But his employment was to behold God in the creatures. The world was so soon depraved, that God had but little joy in, and man but little knowledge<sup>of</sup> his works.

And since the wisdom of God in creation is so little seen by our ignorance here, would not God lose much of the glory of it, if the glorified souls should lose the understanding of it above, when their darkness shall be expelled, and their advantages improved; when the eye that Adam lost shall be fully restored, and with a greater clearness; when the creature shall be restored



to its true end, and reason to its true perfection, Rom. viii. 21, 22 ; when the fountains of the depths of nature and government shall be opened, knowledge shall increase ; and according to the increase of our knowledge, shall the admiration of divine wisdom increase also.

The wisdom of God in creation was not surely intended to lie wholly unobserved in the greatest part of it ; but since there was so little time for the full observation of it, there will be a time wherein the wisdom of God shall enjoy a resurrection, and be fully contemplated by his understanding and glorified creature.

2. Study and admire the wisdom of God in redemption. This is the duty of all Christians. We are not called to understand the great depth of philosophy ; we are not called to a skill in the intricacies of civil government, or understand all the methods of physic ; but we are called to be Christians, that is, studiers of divine, evangelical wisdom. There are first principles to be learned, but not those principles to be rested in, without a further progress : Heb. vi. 1, ' Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection.' Duties must be practised, but knowledge is not to be neglected. The study of gospel mysteries, the harmony of divine truths, the sparkling of divine wisdom, in their mutual combination to the great ends of God's glory and man's salvation, is an incentive to duty, a spur to worship, and particularly to the greatest and highest part of worship, that part which shall remain in heaven, the admiration and praise of God, and delight in him. If we acquaint not ourselves with the impressions of the glory of divine wisdom in it, we shall not much regard it as worthy our observance in regard of that duty.

The gospel is a mystery ; and as a mystery hath something great and magnificent in it, worthy of our daily inspection, we shall find fresh springs of new wonders, which we shall be invited to adore with a religious astonishment. It will both raise and satisfy our longings. Who can come to the depths of ' God manifest in the flesh ' ? How amazing is it, and unworthy of a slight thought, that the death of the Son of God should purchase the happy immortality of a sinful creature, and the glory of a rebel be wrought by the ignominy of so great a person ! that our Mediator should have a nature whereby to covenant with his Father, and a nature whereby to be a surety for the creature ! How admirable is it, that the fallen creature should receive an advantage by the forfeiture of his happiness ! How mysterious is it, that the Son of God should bow down to death upon a cross, for the satisfaction of justice, and rise triumphantly out of the grave, as a declaration that justice was contented and satisfied ! that he should be exalted to heaven to intercede for us, and at last return into the world to receive us, and invest us with a glory for ever with himself !

Are these things worthy of a careless regard or a blockish amazement ? What understanding can pierce into the depths of the divine doctrine of the incarnation and birth of Christ, the indissoluble union of the two natures ? What capacity is able to measure the miracles of that wisdom, found in the whole draft and scheme of the gospel ? Doth it not merit then to be the object of our daily meditation ? How comes it to pass then, that we are so little curious to concern our thoughts in those wonders, that we scarce taste or sip of these delicacies ? that we busy ourselves in trifles, and consider what we shall eat, and in what fashion we shall be dressed ? please ourselves with the ingeniousness of a lace or feather, admire a moth-eaten manuscript or some half-worn piece of antiquity, and think our time ill-spent in the contemplating and celebrating that wherein God hath busied himself, and eternity is designed for the perpetual expressions of ?

How inquisitive are the blessed angels ! with what vigour do they renew their daily contemplations of it, and receive a fresh contentment from it, still learning and still inquiring ! 1 Pet. i. 12, their eye is never off the mercy-seat ; they strive to see the bottom of it, and employ all the understanding they have to conceive the wonders of it. Shall the angels be ravished with it, and bend themselves down to study it, who have but little interest in it in comparison of us, for whom it was both contrived and dispensed, and shall not our pains be greater for this hidden treasure ? Is not that worthy the study of a rational creature, that is worthy the study of the angelical ? There must indeed be pains ; it is expressed by digging, Prov. ii. 4. A lazy arm will not sink to the depth of a mine. The neglect of meditating on it is inexcusable, since it hath the title and character of the wisdom of God.

The ancient prophets searched into it when it was folded up in shadows, when they saw only the fringes of Wisdom's garment, 1 Pet. i. 10 ; and shall not we, since the sun hath mounted up in our horizon, and sensibly scattered the light of the knowledge of this and the other perfections of God ? As the Jewish Sabbath was appointed to celebrate the perfections of God discovered in creation, so is the Christian Sabbath appointed to meditate on and bless God for the discovery of his perfections in redemption. Let us therefore receive it according to its worth ; let it be our only rule to walk by. It is worthy to be valued above all other counsels ; and we should never think of it without the doxology of the apostle, ' To the only wise God be glory through Jesus Christ for ever ! ' that our speculations may end in affectionate admirations and thanksgivings, for that which is so full of wonders. What a little prospect should we have had of God and the happiness of man, had not his wisdom and goodness revealed things to us ! The gospel is a marvellous light, and should not be regarded with a stupid ignorance, and pursued with a duller practice.

3. Let none of us be proud of, or trust in, our own wisdom. Man, by affecting wisdom out of the way of God, got a crack in his head, which hath continued five thousand years and upwards ; and ever since, our own ' wisdom and knowledge hath perverted us,' Isa. xlvii. 10. To be guided by this, is to be under the conduct of a blind leader, and follow a traitor and enemy to God and ourselves. Man's prudence often proves hurtful to him. He often accomplisheth his ruin, while he designs his establishment, and finds his fall where he thought to settle his fortune ; such bad eyes hath human wisdom often in its own affairs. Those that have been heightened with a conceit of their own cunning, have at last proved the greatest fools. God delights to ' make foolish the wisdom of this world,' 1 Cor. i. 20.

Thus God writ folly upon the crafty brains of Abithophel, and simplicity upon the subtle projects of Herod against our Saviour ; and the devil, the prince of carnal wisdom, was befooled into a furthering our redemption by his own projects to hinder it. Carnal policy against the prescripts of divine wisdom never prospers. It is like an *ignis fatuus*, which leads men out of the way of duty and out of the way of security, and perverts them into the mire and dangerous precipices.

When Jeroboam would coin a religion to serve his interests of state, he tore up the foundations both of his kingdom and family. The way the Jews took to prevent a fresh invasion of the Romans, by the crucifying Christ, brought the judgment more swift upon them, John xi. 48. There is no man ruined here or damned hereafter, but by his own wisdom and will. Prov. iii. 5, 7, the fear of the Lord and departure from evil, are inconsistent with an overweening conceit of our own wisdom, and leaning to our own under-

standing is inconsistent with a trusting in the Lord with all our hearts. It is as much a deifying ourselves to trust to our own wit, as it is a deifying the creature to affect or confide in it, superior to God, or equally with him.

The true way to wisdom is to be sensible of our own folly : 1 Cor. iii. 18, 'If any man be wise, let him become a fool.' He that distrusts his own guidance, will more securely and successfully follow the counsel of another in whom he confides. The more water, or any other liquor, is poured out of a vessel, the more air enters ; the more we distrust our own wisdom, the more capable we are of the conduct of God's.

Had Jehoshaphat relied upon his own policy, he might have found a defeat when he met with a deliverance ; but he disowned his own skill and strength in telling God, 'We know not what to do, but our eyes are towards thee,' 2 Chron. xx. 12. Let us therefore, with Agur, disesteem our own understanding to esteem divine. Human prudence is like a spider's web, easily blown away, and easily swept down by the besom of some unexpected revolution. God, by his infinite wisdom, can cross the wisdom of man, and make a man's own prudence hang in his own light : Isa. xxix. 14, 'The understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.'

4. Seek to God for wisdom. The wisdom we have by nature is like the weeds the earth brings forth without tillage. Our wisdom since the fall is the wisdom of the serpent, without the innocency of the dove ; it flows from self-love, runs into self-interest. It is the wisdom of the flesh, and a prudence to manage means for the contenting our lusts. Our best wisdom is imperfect, a mere nothing and vanity, in comparison of the divine, as our beings are in comparison of his essence. We must go to God for a holy and innocent wisdom, and fill our cisterns from a pure fountain. The wisdom that was the glory of Solomon, was the donation of the Most High : James i. 5, 'If any man want wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not ; and it shall be given him.' The faculty of understanding is from God by nature ; but a heavenly light to direct the understanding is from God by grace. Children have an understanding, but stand in need of wise masters to rectify it, and form judicious notions in it. 'There is a spirit in man, but the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding,' Job xxii. 8. We must beg of God wisdom. The gospel is 'the wisdom of God ;' the concerns of it great and mysterious, not to be known without a new understanding, 1 John v. 20. A new understanding is not to be had but from the Creator of the first. The Spirit of God is the 'searcher of the deep things of God ;' the revealer of them to us, and the enlightener of our minds to apprehend them ; and therefore called a 'Spirit of wisdom and revelation,' Eph. i. 17. Christ is made wisdom to us as well as righteousness, not only by imputation, but effusion.\* Seek to God, therefore, for that wisdom which is like the sun, and not that worldly wisdom which is like a shadow ; for that wisdom whose effects are not so outwardly glorious, but inwardly sweet ; seek it from him, and seek it in his word, that is the transcript of divine wisdom ; through his precepts understanding is to be had, Ps. cxix. 104. As the wisdom of men appears in their laws, so doth the wisdom of God in his statutes.

By this means we arrive to a heavenly sagacity. If these be rejected, what wisdom can be in us ? A dream and conceit only : Jer. viii. 9, 'They have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them ?' Who knows how to order any concerns as he ought, or any one faculty of the soul ? Therefore desire God's direction in outward concerns, in personal,

\* Seaman's Sermon before the Parliament.

family, in private and public. He hath not only a wisdom for our salvation, but for our outward direction. He doth not only guide us in the one, and leave Satan to manage us in the other. Those that go with Saul to a witch of Endor, go to hell for craft, and prefer the wisdom of the hostile serpent before the holy counsel of a faithful Creator. If you want health in your body, you advise with a physician; if directions for your estate, you resort to a lawyer; if passage for a voyage, you address to a pilot; why not much more yourselves, your all, to a wise God? As Pliny said concerning a wise man, Oh, sir, how many Catos are there in that wise person! how much more wisdom than men or angels possess, is infinitely centred in the wise God!

5. Submit to the wisdom of God in all cases. What else was inculcated in the first precept, forbidding man to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but that he should take heed of the swelling of his mind against the wisdom of God? It is a wisdom incomprehensible to flesh and blood. We should adore it in our minds, and resign up ourselves to it in our practice. How unreasonable are repinings against God, whereby a creature's ignorance indicts and judges a Creator's prudence? Were God weak in wisdom, and only mighty in power, we might suspect his conduct. Power without wisdom and goodness is an unruly and ruinous thing in the world; but God being infinite in one, as well as the other, we have no reason to be jealous of him, and repine against his methods; why should we quarrel with him that we are not as high or as wealthy as others; that we have not presently the mercy we want? If he be wise, we ought to stay his time, and wait his leisure, because 'he is a God of judgment,' Isa. xxx. 18. Presume not to shorten the time which his discretion hath fixed; it is a folly to think to do it. By impatience we cannot hasten relief; we alienate him from us by debasing him to stand at our bar, disturb ourselves, lose the comfort of our lives and the sweetness of his mercy. Submission to God we are in no case exempted from, because there is no case wherein God doth not direct all the acts of his will by counsel. Whatsoever is drawn by a straight rule must be right and straight; the rule that is right in itself is the measure of the straightness of everything else. Whatsoever is wrought in the world by God must be wise, good, righteous; because God is essentially wisdom, goodness, and righteousness. Submit to God,

(1.) In his revelations.

[1.] Measure them not by reason. The truths of the gospel must be received with a self-emptiness and annihilation of the creature. If our reason seems to lift up itself against revelation, because it finds no testimony for it in its own light, consider how crazy it is in natural and obvious things, and therefore sure it is not strong enough to enter into the depths of divine wisdom. The wisdom of God in the gospel is too great an ocean to be contained or laved out by a cockle-shell. It were not infinite, if it were not beyond our finite reach; our reason must as well stoop to his wisdom, as our wills to his sovereignty. How great a vanity is it for a glow-worm to boast that it is as full of light as the sun in the firmament! for reason to leave its proper sphere, is to fall into confusion, and thicken its own darkness. We should settle ourselves in the belief of the Scripture, and confirm ourselves by a meditation on those many undeniable arguments for its divine authority; the fulfilling of its predictions, the antiquity of the writing, the holiness of the precepts, the heavenliness of the doctrine, the glorious effects it hath produced, and doth yet produce, different from human methods of success, and submit our reason to the voice of so high a majesty.

[2.] Not to be too curiously inquisitive into what is not revealed. There is something hid in whatsoever is revealed. We know the Son of God was begotten from eternity, but how he was begotten we are ignorant. We know there is a union of the divine nature with the human, and that the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily; but the manner of its inhabitation we are in a great part ignorant of. We know God hath chosen some and refused others, and that he did it with counsel; but the reason why he chose this man and not that, we know not; we can refer it to nothing but God's sovereign pleasure. It is revealed that there will be a day wherein God shall judge the world, but the particular time is not revealed. We know that God created the world in time; but why he did not create the world millions of years before, we are ignorant of, and our reasons would be bewildered in their too much curiosity. If we ask why he did not create it before, we may as well ask why he did create it then? And may not the same question be asked, if the world had been created millions of years before it was? That he created it in six days, and not in an instant, is revealed; but why he did not do it in a moment, since we are sure he was able to do it, is not revealed. Are the reasons of a wise man's proceedings hid from us, and shall we presume to dive into the reason of the proceedings of an only wise God, which he hath judged not expedient to discover to us? Some sparks of his wisdom he hath caused to issue out, to exercise and delight our minds; others he keeps within the centre of his own breast. We must not go about to unlock his cabinet: as we cannot reach to the utmost lines of his power, so we cannot grasp the intimate reasons of his wisdom. We must still remember that what is finite can never be able to comprehend the reasons, motives, and methods of that which is infinite. It doth not become us to be resty, because God hath not admitted us into the debates of eternity. We are as little to be curious at what God hath hid, as to be careless of what God hath manifested. Too great an inquisitiveness beyond our line, is as much a provoking arrogance, as a blockish negligence of what is revealed is a slighting ingratitude.

(2.) Submit to God in his precepts and methods. Since they are the results of infinite wisdom, disputes against them are not tolerable. What orders are given out by infallible wisdom are to be entertained with respect and reverence, though the reason of them be not visible to our purblind minds. Shall God have less respect from us than earthly princes, whose laws we observe without being able to pierce into the exact reason of them all? Since we know he hath not a will without an understanding, our observance of him must be without repining. We must not think to mend our Creator's laws, and presume to judge and condemn his righteous statutes. If the flesh rise up in opposition, we must cross its motions, and silence its murmurings. His will should be an acceptable will to us, because it is a wise will in itself. God hath no need to impose upon us and deceive us; he hath just and righteous ways to attain his glory and his creatures' good. To deceive us would be to dishonour himself and contradict his own nature. He cannot impose false injurious precepts, or unavailable to his subjects' happiness; not false, because of his truth; not injurious, because of his goodness; not vain, because of his wisdom. Submit, therefore, to him in his precepts, and in his methods too. The honour of his wisdom, and the interest of our happiness, calls for it. Had Noah disputed with God about building an ark, and listened to the scoffs of the senseless world, he had perished under the same fate, and lost the honour of a preacher and worker of righteousness. Had not the Israelites been their own enemies, if they had been permitted to be their own guides, and returned to the

Egyptian bondage and furnaces, instead of a liberty and earthly felicity in Canaan? Had our Saviour gratified the Jews by descending from the cross and freeing himself from the power of his adversaries, he might have had that faith from them which they promised him, but it had been a faith to no purpose, because without ground; they might have believed him to be the Son of God, but he could not have been the Saviour of the world. His death, the great ground and object of faith, had been accomplished, they had believed a God pardoning without a content to his justice, and such a faith could not have rescued them from falling into eternal misery. The precepts and methods of divine wisdom must be submitted to.

(3.) Submit to God in all crosses and revolutions. Infinite wisdom cannot err in any of his paths, or step the least hair's-breadth from the way of righteousness. There is the understanding of God in every motion; an eye in every wheel, the wheel that goes over us and crusheth us. We are led by fancy more than reason. We know no more what we ask or what is fit for us than the mother of Zebedee's children did, when she petitioned Christ for her sons' advancement, when he came into his temporal kingdom, Mat. xx. 22. The things we desire might pleasure our fancy or appetite, but impair our health. One man complains for want of children, but knows not whether they may prove comforts or crosses; another for want of health, but knows not whether the health of his body may not prove the disease of his soul. We might lose in heavenly things, if we possess in earthly things what we long for. God, in regard of his infinite wisdom, is fitter to carve out a condition than we ourselves; our shallow reason and self-love would wish for those things that are injurious to God, to ourselves, to the world, but God always chooses what is best for his glory, and what is best for his creatures, either in regard of themselves, or as they stand in relation to him, or to others as parts of the world.

We are in danger from our self-love, in no danger in complying with God's wisdom. When Rachel would die if she had no children, she had children, but death with one of them, Gen. xxx. 1. Good men may conclude, that whatsoever is done by God in them or with them is best and fittest for them, because by the covenant [in] which makes over God to them, as their God, the conduct of his wisdom is assured to them as well as any other attribute; and therefore, as God in every transaction appears as their God, so he appears as their wise director, and by this wisdom he extracts good out of evil, makes the affliction which destroys our outward comforts consume our inward defilements, and the waves which threatened to swallow up the vessel, to cast it upon the shore; and when he hath occasion to manifest his anger against his people, his wisdom directs his wrath. In judgment he hath a work to do upon Zion, and when that work is done he 'punishes the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria,' Isa. x. 12. As in the answers of prayer he doth give oftentimes 'above what we ask or think,' Eph. iii. 20, so in outward concerns he doth above what we can expect, or by our shortsightedness conclude will be done; let us therefore in all things frame our minds to the divine wisdom, and say with the psalmist, Ps. xlvii. 4, 'The Lord shall choose our inheritance' and condition 'for us.'

6. Censure not God in any of his ways. Can we understand the full scope of divine wisdom in creation, which is perfected before our eyes? Can we by a rational knowledge walk over the whole surface of the earth, and wade through the sea? Can we understand the nature of the heavens? Are all, or most, or the thousandth part of the particles of divine skill

known by us, yea, or any of them thoroughly known? How can we then understand his deeper methods in things that are but of yesterday, that we have not had a time to view! We should not be too quick or too rash in our judgments of him. The best that we attain to is but feeble conjectures at the designs of God.

As there is something hid in whatsoever is revealed in his word, so there is something inaccessible to us in his works, as well as in his nature and majesty. In our Saviour's act in washing his disciples' feet, he checked Peter's contradiction: John xiii. 7, 'What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' God were not infinitely wise, if the reason of all his acts were obvious to our shallowness. He is no profound statesman whose inward intention can be sounded by vulgar heads at the first act he starts in his designed method. The wise God is in this like wise men, that have not breasts like glasses of crystal, to discover all that they intend. There are 'secrets of wisdom' above our reach, Job xi. 6; nay, when we see all his acts, we cannot see all the draughts of his skill in them. An unskilful hearer of a musical lesson may receive the melody with his ear, and understand not the rarities of the composition as it was wrought by the musician's mind. Under the Old Testament there was more of divine power, and less of his wisdom apparent in his acts. As his laws, so his acts, were more fitted to their sense. Under the New Testament, there is more of wisdom, and less of power; as his laws, so his acts, are more fitted to a spiritual mind; wisdom is less discernible than power. Our wisdom therefore in this case, as it doth in other things, consists in silence and expectation of the end and event of a work. We owe that honour to God that we do to men wiser than ourselves, to imagine he hath reason to do what he doth, though our shallowness cannot comprehend it. We must suffer God to be wiser than ourselves, and acknowledge that there is something sovereign in his ways, not to be measured by the feeble reed of our weak understandings, and therefore we should acquiesce in his proceedings; take heed we be not found slanderers of God, but be adorers instead of censurers, and lift up our hands in admiration of him and his ways, instead of citing him to answer it at our bar. Many things in the first appearance may seem to be rash and unjust, which in the issue appear comely and regular. If it had been plainly spoke before that the Son of God should die, that a most holy person should be crucified, it would have seemed cruel to expose a Son to misery, unjust to inflict punishment upon one that was no criminal, to join together exact goodness and physical evil, that the sovereign should die for the malefactor, and the observer of the law for the idolaters\* of it. But when the whole design is unravelled, what an admirable conjunction is there of justice and mercy, love and wisdom, which before would have appeared absurd to the muddled reason of man!

We see the gardener pulling up some delightful flowers by the roots, digging up the earth, overwhelming it with dung; an ignorant person would imagine him wild, out of his wits, and charge him with spoiling his garden; but when the spring is arrived, the spectator will acknowledge his skill in his former operations.

The truth is, the whole design and methods of God are not to be judged by us in this world; the full declaration of the whole contexture is reserved for the other world, to make up a part of good men's happiness, in the amazing views of divine wisdom, as well as the other perfections of his nature. We can no more perfectly understand his wisdom, than we can his mercy and justice, till we see the last lines of all drawn, and the full expres-

\* Qu. 'violators'?—ED.

sions of them ; we should therefore be sober and modest in the consideration of God's ways : ' His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out.' The riches of his wisdom are past our counting, his depths not to be fathomed, yet they are depths of righteousness and equity ; though the full manifestation of that equity, the grounds and methods of his proceedings, are unknown to us. As we are too short fully to know God, so we are too ignorant fully to comprehend the acts of God. Since he is a God of judgment, we should wait till we see the issue of his works, Isa. xxx. 18, and in the meantime, with the apostle in the text, give him the glory of all, in the same expressions : ' To the only wise God be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever ! Amen.'