

A DISCOURSE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN CHRIST.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.—JOHN XVII. 3.

THERE were two principal doctrines pitched on at the beginning of this discourse.

Doctrine I. The knowledge of God and Christ the Mediator is the necessary means to eternal life and happiness.

Doctrine II. The true and saving knowledge of God is only in and by Christ.

God and Jesus Christ. [Some make an hendiadis here, for ‘God in Christ.’ As 2 Peter i. 2, ‘Through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ,’ *i. e.* through the knowledge of God in Christ; and, ver. 3, ‘hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness,’ *i. e.* to a godly life; and, ver. 4, who hath ‘called us to glory and virtue,’ or *δια*, ‘through glory and virtue,’ *i. e.* through a glorious power. So Ps. xvi. 7, ‘Give unto the Lord glory and strength,’ *i. e.* the glory of his strength. Gen. iii. 16, ‘I will multiply thy sorrow and thy conception,’ *i. e.* thy sorrow in thy conception, or of thy conception. To know God in Christ his ambassador. To know God the Father in Christ the mediator, the Father being considered here as God, and Christ as mediator. To know God as Christ hath declared him, as he speaks, ver. 6, ‘I have manifested thy name.’

Since the lapse of human nature, no man that understands his fallen condition can have any knowledge of God from the book of the creatures and the dictates of nature but what is terrible without a mediator; and all notions of God out of Christ are below him, many times unworthy of him, and foul and undecent in themselves. Christ asserts it, Mat. xi. 27, ‘All things are delivered to me of my Father, and no man knows the Son but the Father, neither knows any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.’ All things were first delivered to Adam in the creation, viz. the knowledge of God and rectitude of nature, to be by him transmitted to his posterity. But since Adam so foolishly and wickedly threw it away for a little pleasure, he rendered himself and his posterity incapable to know and enjoy God.* God therefore pitches upon Christ in

* Chemnit. Harm. ex Athanasio.

his secret counsel, and stored up in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, to shoot his beams through him upon man, and convey by him those good things which Adam had made himself by his fall incapable to communicate to his posterity. When our Saviour saith universally, all things are delivered to him, he instanceth in none but the knowledge of God as the foundation of all those rich communications which men receive from him, for without the revelation of God the Father to man, man would be incapable to partake of those riches intended for him by the mediation and interposition and furniture of the Son of God; and therefore, John iii. 35, when it is said, 'The Father hath given all things into his hand,' it follows, 'He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life.' The end why all things are given into his hand, is to convey to man such a knowledge of God that men might be induced to believe in Christ, and in God through Christ. Between the Father and the Son there is a communion of knowledge. None knows the Son but the Father, none knows the Father but the Son; none makes known the Son, and what things he hath delivered into his hand, but the Father by the Spirit; and none knows the Father, and his mind and affections to man, and the relations his nature and perfections bear to him, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him by the outward preaching of the word, and the inward illumination of his Spirit. And upon this Christ makes a general invitation, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;' that labour under, and are heavy laden with, your ignorance and darkness in the things of God, as well as with other miseries, and I will give you such a revelation and knowledge of the Father wherein you shall find a rest and complacency. Another place is John xiv. 9, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,' where Philip, in his desiring of Christ to shew him the Father, takes it for granted that the knowledge of the Father was only to be expected by and from Christ. Though he discovers his infirmities in his petition, implying that the Father was to be seen with corporeal eyes, 'Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us,' Christ answers with a reproof for his ignorance and inadvertency, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' The Son hath rendered the Father spiritually visible in his person; his excellency, majesty, and unexpressible kindness to man, shine forth in Christ as a lively and clear image, and there is so exact a resemblance and so near a conjunction that, as he speaks, ver. 7, 'If we know Christ we know the Father also,' because Christ hath revealed him by his doctrine and word, and the holiness, righteousness, tenderness of God are made visible in the transaction of Christ, and God is represented in the person and doctrine of Christ more clearly than in all the apparitions and evidences of himself to the patriarchs and prophets.

One place more; 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6, Christ is said to be the 'image of God,' and that God 'had shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Where the apostle expresseth two things: 1, that Christ is the image of God; 2, that the knowledge of the glory of God, or the glorious God, is discovered in the face or person of Christ. He is the image of God; he is indeed the essential image of God, the natural image of God, possessing in one essence with the Father all the glories and perfections of the Deity. A substantial and permanent image, not vanishing as that in a glass; a natural image, as the image of a father in his son, who hath the lineaments of the father by participation from him, not as the image of a prince in his coin, which is artificial. Substantial image of God, not in regard of likeness, for every thing that is like another is not said to be the image of that thing which it is like, but that which

bears a figure impressed by another, and expresseth that whose figure it is, as one man may be like another, yet is not said to be the image of another, as a son is said to be the image of his father. Not such an image as man is, who is rather said to be *created according* to the image of God than to *be* the image of God; such an image as in creation was like to God, not one with God. Christ is such an image of God, as if shining upon the soul in the gospel, can turn the heart, which man, though the image of God, cannot perform. Christ is therefore the image of God, as a child is the image of his father, not in regard of the individual property which the father hath distinct from the child, and the child from the father, but in respect of the same substance and nature, derived from the father by generation. Christ is here called the image of God, not so much, saith Calvin, in relation to God, as the Father is the exemplar of his beauty and excellency, as in relation to us, as he represents the Father to us in the perfections of his nature, as they respect us and our welfare, and renders him visible to the eyes of our minds. And the Jews did often give this title to the Messiah.* So that in the sight of Christ we see God, as in the sight of the stamp upon wax we see what is engraven upon the seal, which answers to it in exact proportion.

Christ God-man is the image of God, because the humanity is taken into personal union with the Son of God. His humanity abstractedly considered was no more the image of God than Adam was by creation.† And he is so the image of God, that whosoever hath seen him and known him, hath seen and known the Father also, which cannot be said of a picture, for he that sees a picture cannot be said to see the object represented by the picture, which expresseth only the outward figure, form, and lineaments. But he is such an image as represents the nature, features, attributes, and inward virtues of God. A picture is but a shadow, but Christ is a substantial image of God, wherein the divinity dwells bodily, Col. ii. 9.

There is also a discovery of God in the face of Christ. Since the divine nature falls not under the perceptions of sense, nor can be immediately known in itself by the understandings of men; it shines forth and sparkles † in the face of Christ, and diffuseth itself about the world. By knowing Christ, who is man, we know God; § because the human nature of Christ is personally assumed by the Son of God. As he that sees the body of a man, sees the man consisting of soul and body, because the soul and body are united together and make one composition, though the soul in itself be invisible; so he that sees the human nature of Christ is rightly said to see God, because the human and divine nature are personally united in Christ, though the divinity itself be invisible; and indeed, we cannot conceive any other sight and knowledge of God in heaven, but in Christ. The vision of Christ in his glorified human nature, is a seeing of God face to face; so that whosoever sees Christ with his bodily eyes, or with the eyes of his mind, sees God; he sees and knows God, not immediately and directly, but mediately and consequently. As the prophets were said to see the Lord: 1 Kings xxii. 19, Micaiah 'saw the Lord sitting upon his throne; and Isa. vi. 1, 'I saw the Lord upon his throne.' They saw not God immediately, but in those forms wherein he was pleased to appear as the symbols of his presence: and as John Baptist saw the Spirit of God, Mat. iii. 16, in the form of a dove; not the person of the Holy Ghost, but in the form wherein he appeared, yet is said to see the Spirit of God; the Father and the Son, having one nature and essence, when the Son is known the Father is known.

* אִלֵּם אֵל.—Grotius in loc.

† Bayns on Col. i. 15, pp. 75, 76.

† ὁσπερὰς ἑστῆς.—Theod.

§ Gerhard, Harm. in John xiv. 9, p. 909., Col. i.

1. All the knowledge that any man hath of God, is from and by Christ. Every man that hath any saving light, hath it derivatively from him; he is 'the light that enlightens every man that comes into the world,' John i. 9. Every man that is enlightened, is enlightened by him. No other light can expel that darkness which is upon our minds in relation to God, but this light. What knowledge any man hath of God by reason and natural light, is by the mediation of Christ, whereby are kept up in men whatsoever gifts they had by their fall forfeited; and whatsoever saving knowledge any man hath of God, is by the special illumination of this true light by the virtue of his Spirit. Neither our natural reason is the true light, because it is blind in spiritual things; nor the word is the true light, because it cannot make men savingly intelligent without the shining of this true light upon them. And this the church expected by the Messiah: Hosea vi. 3, 'Then shall we know the Lord, at his going forth prepared as the morning;' when he 'shall come as the rain, as the former and the latter rain;*' when he shall instil into us the divine doctrine, and open our hearts as the rain doth the womb of the earth. We shall then know, when he shall come to teach men the ways of life, as a Jew expounds it.

2. No man hath, can have, or ever had, any knowledge of God without Christ: John i. 18, 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' Which is asserted by John Baptist against the Jews, who boasted much of Moses his sight of God, and knowledge of his secrets. No man hath seen God from the first creation of the world to this day, not a man of all the patriarchs and prophets ever knew God but by the revelations of Christ. By seeing, we must not understand a corporeal sight, for no man ever did or can see God with his bodily eyes, but an intellectual or spiritual vision, which the antithesis, 'But he hath revealed him,' manifests. Christ is only capable to declare to us the nature and counsels of God, because he is his only Son, had an intimate communion with him; was, and is continually in his bosom, wherein the secrets of God were laid up, and was before the world interested in his secret counsels, and knew the bottom of all. He hath expounded his will, unfolded his nature, *Ἐξηγήσατο*. None else can reveal him, nor can the revelations of any inferior to him in this privilege challenge a full credit with any man. Moses himself saw God only in Christ; he was put in a hole of the rock, Exod. xxxiii. 22, which, in the judgment of the ancients, and some moderns, was a figure of Christ. None can see and know God but in this rock Jesus; the name which God then proclaimed is only declared by Christ: John xvii. 6, 'I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me.' And that which we call the light of nature, and the light of the law, is gathered up and centred in Christ; as that light which was in the world before the fourth day of the creation was gathered and embodied in the sun, and from thence flowed to the world. All the light was created to be brought into that body, and to flow from thence upon the several parts of the world, and to be communicated from thence to other creatures; so that there is no clear light in the world but from and by the sun, and no clear light of the knowledge of God but from and by Christ. Some therefore make the sun a natural type of Christ. As the sun was created the fourth day of the creation, so Christ was incarnate about the four thousandth year of the world, the fourth divine day, a thousand years being as a day in God's sight. All light was only to flow from it; and indeed all the light of the knowledge of God that ever was did spring from Christ.

* Where the word which signifies the latter rain, *יורה*, signifies also a teacher.

None ever knew God by his own strength and natural abilities, but as they were kept up and animated by the mediator.'

And, by the way, we may observe, that the knowledge of God is more than the knowledge of the will of God. 'He hath declared him.' Christ declared more than the will of God, as it was a rule of obedience; he declared God's perfections as a ground of the creature's confidence, as an incitement to admiration, and a motive to obedience. He declared not only the will of God, what we are to do; but the intention of God, what we are to hope for; the glory of God, what we are to adore and admire.

In the prosecution of this, we shall shew,

I. What kind of mediums there have been to know God, and how they come short of this.

II. That the saving knowledge of God is attained only by the knowledge of Christ.

III. The necessity of this medium.

IV. What knowledge of God is discovered to us by Christ.

V. The Use.

I. What kind of mediums there have been to know God, and how they come short of this way of knowledge.

1. There is a natural knowledge of God.

(1.) By implanted notion. Some question whether there be any natural knowledge of God imprinted upon man, or the knowledge of any one thing naturally planted in him; but as he grows up (say they) he acquires a knowledge of things from the objects of sense, and improvement of them by the understanding he is endowed with; and making deductions and conclusions by the help of reason, arrives to an apprehension of things. Yet this knowledge of God may be called natural, because, by the view of the visible things in the world, natural reason frames a certain conclusion that there is a God, the cause of those excellences he sees in the creatures. But the Scripture seems to intimate a notion of God in the minds of men: Rom. i. 19, 'That which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewn it unto them;' a notion within, an excitation of it by objects without, that there is an internal light which doth manifest him, as well as an external evidence of him by the creatures. But whether this be the import of this scripture or no, most understand no more by manifest *in* them, than manifest *to* them; yet, since there is a law of nature in men, which is the rule of the excusings or accusings of the conscience, in regard of which they are said to be 'a law to themselves,' Rom. ii. 15, 'and the work of the law,' said to be 'written in their hearts,' the notion of a superior power to which man is accountable for his actions must be as natural as that, because it is the foundation of the actings of conscience; and the superstructure being from an implanted light, is not like to be without a foundation of the same kind. To what purpose should conscience accuse, if there were not a supreme being under whose censure such actions did fall? and since the heathens had a natural sentiment, that the extravagances they were guilty of were worthy of death, Rom. i. 32, they must also have as natural a sentiment that there was a judge of absolute power to inflict that death upon them, which their own consciences told them they were worthy of. Since there are, therefore, natural agitations of conscience raised up by the law of nature within them, the notion of a God seems to me to be as natural as that law of nature, and those motions of conscience. And though this was more clear in man at his creation, and while he remained in the state of innocency, yet it is not blotted out of the mind of man. Though the notions of God in men are

dimmed by the fumes of their corruption, yet they cannot stifle this inward light and impression, any more than the thickest fogs can blot out the sun, or hinder it from making day. And all the outward objects which we see in the world, whence we argue that there is a God, seem only to revive and awaken that implanted notion which lay covered with the rubbish of the fall.

or, upon the first view of things, with what ease doth this sentiment rise up in our minds? And nothing is more obvious, nothing more easily entertained, than this, that there is a God, and that this God is a mighty, powerful, and perfect being; which evidenceth that there is a spark of it in the mind of man, which catches the outward flame so quickly upon its approach, as the snuff of a candle, not quite extinguished, will snatch and attract the flame of another which comes near unto it.

(2.) By the creatures. The visible world, and every part of it, is a book, wherein we may read some syllables of God.* The heathens saw God in heaven, earth, fire, water, plants, and animals; all creatures being lines drawn from that centre. Though man hath not the knowledge which Adam had, since the flaw he contracted upon his understanding, yet there being some scattered relics of this knowledge, he may, by looking near to the creatures, discern, by his purblind and dim sight, something of the attributes of God, every creature being a glass which reflects some beams of God upon his mind; for no man in his wits can conclude that the world was made by chance, but by some being more wise than any being in the world can be, or than all the wisest men in the world put together. We know the courage, conduct, and power of a general by the sight of his conquests, the skilfulness of an artificer by the excellency of his work, and the eloquence of an orator by reading his speech, though we never saw the faces of any of them. There are very few attributes but the works of creation and providence discover in some measure to us; for 'the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead,' Rom. i. 20. These two perfections are clearly seen: his infinite power, which discovers also his eternity; and his incomprehensible goodness, which is the most signal glory of the divinity.† The beauty of the world acquaints us with the excellency of him that erected it, and the order of the world instructs us in the wisdom of him that composed it. This discovery hath been ever since the creation; 'from the creation of the world;' from the time the world and the things therein were first created. He imprinted some letters of himself upon this frame of things, at the first rearing of it, wherein they have been ever since legible; you may see by the letter whose print it was, and what skill he had who made the impression. Thus God brings the creatures successively upon the stage to Job, and reads a natural history of them; he sends him to consider the foundations of the earth, the bridled vastness of the sea, &c., Job xxxviii.—xl.

[1.] The *power* of God is evident: in bringing forth a fair world out of nothing, which manifests an infinite strength; in packing together all parts for conveniency of life and motion, in so little a creature as a fly and ant; in stretching out the heavens like a curtain, laying the beams of his chambers in the waters; in setting bounds to the mighty waters, that they turn not again to cover the earth.

[2.] The *wisdom* of God: in the order, variety, and beauty; in the great resemblances of reason in some little creatures, as the ants and bees, which could hardly be supposed to have bodies capable of spirits, for managing

* Jupiter est quodcunque vides, quodcunque movetur.—*Lucan.*

† Amyraut. Paraph.

those tasks they naturally undertake ; in the ordering everything to a particular and general end ; the subserviency of one creature to another ; the constant order they observe in their motions, as if they were sensible of a law, and were rational observers of it. The moon is appointed for seasons, and the sun knows his going down ; the observation of which drew from the psalmist that admiration, ' O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all,' Ps. civ. 24—a lecture of the creation.

[3.] The *goodness* of God. ' The earth is full of his riches,' Ps. civ. 24, full of the goodness of the Lord : in communicating to every creature various endowments for their usefulness to one another, and furnishing them with abilities to attain their ends (every providence is a witness of this attribute, Acts xiv. 17) ; in the plentiful provision he hath made for his creatures ; in causing ' the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth.' Whosoever was the cause of the creation, must have understanding, will, and power : understanding to contrive, will to resolve, and power to perform. Wisdom is the product of the understanding, goodness communicates the fruit of the will, power executes and brings the contrivance and resolve into act.

[4.] The *immutability* of God may be known by the creatures. Since every creature, the more subject to change, the more it partakes of imperfection, God, the cause of all, must be immutable, otherwise he would want that perfection which is in the sun and heavenly bodies, wherein no change hath been observed.

[5.] His *eternity*, which is inseparable from infinite power. He must be before what was made by him in time.

[6.] His *omniscience*. He must know everything exactly which he hath made, and nothing in his creatures can be hid from him ; as a workman knows every part and motion of his work.

[7.] His *sovereignty*. In the obedience his creatures pay to him, in observing their several orders, and moving in the spheres wherein he set them.

[8.] The *spirituality* of God. Because he is not visible ; and the more spiritual any creature in the world is, the more pure it is. Besides, if God were a body, he would be compounded of various parts, and the parts would be in order of nature before the whole, and God would depend upon those parts.

[9.] The *sufficiency* of God for himself. Since all creatures had a beginning, God had no need of creating them ; for being from eternity before the world, he had no more need of it in time than he had before time.

[10.] His *majesty*. In the glory and lustre of the heavens, which are his throne, Isa. lx. 1, and a clear looking-glass to represent in their essence, magnitude, and motion, not only the being but the glory of God, more majestically than any earthly creature.

From all which may be concluded, the manner how God ought to be worshipped : as a mighty being, clothed with all those perfections as with a garment ; so that he cannot be represented by the image of any one creature. For since he hath made all, he cannot be limited by the perfections of any one, because he is the boundless fountain of the perfections of all. Nature, therefore, can never teach men to worship God in images, unless they were able to frame one in which they could gather and store up the perfections of all creatures ; and that is as impossible for any or all creatures to perform as to make a God. All this is as intelligible to a rational creature by nature, as the shining of the sun is visible ; the one is as evident in the works of creation to our reason as the other is to our

sense. All this may be known of God by the creation, and it is a true (though not a full) discovery of God. It is called truth: Rom. i. 18, 25, 'Change the truth of God into a lie.' We may as truly conclude all this of God, by the prospect of the creation, as a man might conclude the wisdom, power, and magnificence of the Romans, by the sight of their pyramids, theatres, statues, buildings, and other conveniencies in the city for the people;* for it is a rational way of arguing, from the excellency of the effect to the excellency of the cause, and from the perfection of the creature to the perfection of God. No man can behold the visible world, and take a view of the excellency of any creature, but must conclude an higher excellency in God; because it is impossible for that which is a solitary cause to give that to another which it doth not possess in itself, in a formal way, or a way of eminency; yet, because there is an imperfection in every creature, we must sift the flour of the creature from this bran, when we would frame any conception of the excellency of God by it. As we know the nature of the sea by a drop of water from it, yet we imagine the sea a great mass of those drops inconceivably vaster than a drop; so when we conceive of God according to any perfection in the creature, we add a purity, spirituality, and infiniteness to that perfection which we conceive.

(3.) By the nature of our souls. Had God made only man, and one small place for him to be in, without those ornaments of the world, he might have arrived to more knowledge of God by his own being, and make, and glossing upon his own nature, than by anything in the world. The soul being a spirit, and the noblest of all beings upon the earth, approaching nearest the nature of God, the contemplation of that renders God more intelligible to us than all material things, whose nature is more unlike to the nature of God. As the sun is more visible through a thin cloud than a thicker fog and veil which obscures it, there is more of God to be found in the little central point of the soul than in the large circumference of the world;† and a clearer impression of some great and inconceivable being is upon our souls than upon any creature under heaven; and whosoever will retire within himself, cannot but perceive some characters of a supreme being in his own nature. The soul was lighted by God, and created according to the image of God, and is the exactest image of God under heaven.‡ By considering the nature of our own souls, we may come to some knowledge of the original and copy, as we have clearer apprehensions of the sun by the image of it imprinted upon a glass, or other transparent body, than we can have by any other creature, though the image of the sun be much less glorious than the sun itself, whose image it is. The mind of man can pierce every thing; it can conceive of angels, descend into the bottom of the deep, ascend to the battlements of heaven; it is not confounded by the mists of the air, or checked by the distance of the heavens. Command your mind to pass from one end of the world to the other, it will perform the order as soon as it is given. What is quicker than thought, which can skip from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth in a moment! Can there be a greater shadow of the omnipresence and immensity of God? The soul hath a memory to register actions and things done many years ago. It can bring out things new and old: what higher resemblance of the omniscience of God? It is not composed of the factious principles of elements. It hath not the dregs of matter mixed with it; in this it represents the spirituality of God. It is indefatigable in its motions; it is never tired in governing the body,—our bodies,

* Ochino Predict. par. ii. predic. ii. p. 5.

† The soul was therefore called by some philosophers *Deus in homine*.

‡ Τι ἁγίασμα Θεοῦ, a statue of God.

that are coarse pieces of earth, flag and languish when the soul remains vigorous ; and this represents the indefatigableness of God's providence. It can subsist without the body ; it doth not in all its motions depend upon it ; it can reflect upon itself without it, view and please itself in its own perfections abstracted from the body, which shadows to us the self-sufficiency of God. Thus, as a landscape or draught of a great house or kingdom represents all the parts of that land or house, yet in a far less proportion than the house or territory is in itself ; and when we see those models, we do not conceive the things represented to be of no bigger size than the pictures of them, but of a far greater proportion ; so we may contemplate God in the model of our own souls, and since we know that we have understanding and will, we conclude that God hath understanding and will in a more transcendent manner, still enlarging to infiniteness in him what we observe of ourselves, when we transfer it to God. Yet though we may have so much knowledge of God by the creatures and by our souls, how little do we contemplate God ! How far do we come short of this natural knowledge, and the improvement of it ! How much shorter of the knowledge of God in Christ, which is infinitely more excellent and glorious ! All the knowledge drawn from the creatures is insufficient to represent God. The knowledge of God by nature and creatures is necessary, as a foundation for higher apprehensions, and for turning to God. Men without it would be wholly brutish, and incapable of instructions in Christianity as an ox or a sheep ; and though men deserved by sin to be deprived of this natural knowledge, yet God kept it up as a stock on which in time to engraft other principles in the discovery of Christ. All nature is incapable of discovering God in a full manner as he may be known. Nature, like Zaccheus, is of too low a stature to see God in the length and breadth, height and depth, of his perfections. The key of man's reason answers not to all the wards in the lock of those mysteries. The world at best is but a shadow of God, and therefore cannot discover him in his magnificent and royal virtues, no more than a shadow can discover the outward beauty, the excellent mien, and the inward endowments of the person whose shadow it is. All that a shadow will inform me of, is whether it be the shadow of a man or brute. It discovers something of God, not so much of him as to give the soul a full complacency ; the fruit of it is but a thirst without a satisfaction.

[1.] Innocent nature could never have been, in that state, acquainted with the perfections of God, in such a manner as they are discovered in Christ.

(1.) Some perfections of God's nature could not have been known. Where had there been any place for the discovery of patience without a provocation, or for punitive justice without a transgression, or for pardoning mercy without an offence ? There had been no occasion for the exercise of any of them, and therefore we cannot conceive how there could be a manifestation of them without objects convenient for them to be conversant about. Innocent man was the object of God's goodness, offending man only of his patience. Innocence is the subject of love, injury of anger. All those glorious eminences of God's nature had lain under a thick veil, impossible to be discerned by the eye of man. But those attributes were brought upon the stage by the entrance of sin, which was permitted to enter for the manifestation of them in and through Christ : Rom. v. ver. 15, 20, 'The law entered, that the offence might abound,' to make way for 'the abundance of grace.' Some attributes of God could not have been discovered by any proceeding of his, at least in such an height and eminency, but in Christ, as the wonders of his grace, the loud sounding of his bowels and compassions,

the purity of his holiness, and the dreadfulness of his justice. His creating perfections might have been seen by Adam and his posterity, his redeeming perfections are only displayed in his Son. The world as created was not capable of giving occasion for the manifestation of those attributes, but the world as fallen. The not being of the world gave occasion to God to manifest his glory as a creator, but the lapsed state of the world gave occasion to God to manifest his glory as a redeemer; for how could there be mercy shewn, if man's misery did not need it? How could there be vindictive justice, if man's transgression did not deserve it? How could there be a promise of restoration by the seed of the woman, if man's degeneracy did not want it? God had not been known in one letter of his name, as it is set down, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7*, but in the Redeemer. Not one tittle of his name there described had been known to the sons of men, had they continued in innocency, nor after the fall, but in and by Christ the mediator. It is in him he discovers himself a God 'merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness, forgiving iniquity, and by no means clearing the guilty,' but exacting satisfaction to his offended justice for sin. As though God was infinitely happy in himself, yet this happiness could not have been discovered to any but himself, unless he had made creatures wherein to display his goodness, and no being could have known him but himself, if there had been no being besides himself; so without Christ, God had not been known in his redeeming perfections, because there had been no basis for the discovery of them, they had lain wrapped up in darkness from the creature; and as they were a mystery hid from ages till the discovery of Christ, so they had without him remained hid for ever from the notice of the world. And as those attributes had not been discovered, so the creature's duty in relation to them could not have been exercised. God had wanted the manifestative glory of his pardoning grace, and man had had no occasion to return a thankfulness to God for it. He could not have humbled himself under God's displeasure, had there not been an occasion to manifest his anger; nor could the infinite sufficiency of God for his creature have been known, nor prayers directed to him by his creatures for relief. Nature could discover no more than what was imprinted on it by the God of nature; the world stood in no need of redemption by virtue of its creation, but by virtue of its transgression and pollution.

(2.) Some perfections of God's nature could not have been so clearly and fully known. The creation was but the first draught of God's perfections, and came much short of the full declaration; as the first limning of a picture doth of expressing the features and beauty of the original, till the second and third draught, when the last hand is put, and all the lines completed. Though there were manifestations of God's power, wisdom, and goodness in the creation, yet not in such splendour as the occasion of bringing forth Christ into the world did administer for the illustrating of them. These attributes looked upon the world through a veil and lattice, but were not seen in their full lustre till the coming of Christ drew the veil, and set them forth in their richest beauty. Here was infinite power in its strength going forth like a giant to run its race, God's power over himself manifested, wisdom in a knot of royal designs, and goodness opening its richest treasures. The holiness of God could not have been clearly known: while man did not know what sin was, he could never have strong conceptions of the mighty hatred of God against it. Man had some understanding of it by God's threatening, but he could not have such clear notices of it by his commination, as upon the entrance of sin by the execution, and that upon our Saviour. Nor had the veracity of God been so evident. It would have been known but in the

half, or on one side, in the making good his promise upon man's obedience, but never would have been understood experimentally (which is the clearest and most infallible way of knowledge) in his threatening, unless sin had invaded the world, and so had given occasion to the manifestation of God's truth to his word of threatening, as man's persisting in an unerring and unspotted obedience would have given only occasion to manifest his truth to his word of promise. These virtues of God were in the creation like a lovely diamond under a piece of linen, which emits some sparklings, but is not discerned in its full lustre till the covering be removed. Christ drew the veil from them, and manifested them in their fullest glory. The angelical nature had no prospect of these things we have spoken of, by their standing before the face of God, but by the discovery of them to the church in their great head, Eph. iii. 10. And it is likely, from that and other places, that though they had a notice of the redemption of man by the first promise of the seed of the woman made to man, and by the glorifying some of mankind, and the providences of God in the world, yet they were ignorant of the great ways and methods of it, till they came upon the stage in the discovery of the Son of God's taking miserable flesh to die in it; so incapable is the best created nature to discern the glory of God without the face of Christ.

(3.) Innocent nature could never arrive to a full knowledge of God's nature by the attributes discovered in creation, without some further revelation of him. The whole creation was the work of God's hands, but no work can fully express the nature of the artificer. We may know by a watch, or clock, or a curious piece of tapestry, that the workman was skilful in his art, that a more exact piece never came out of any hand; but by his curiosity in his work, we cannot give a description of his person and disposition, without other acquaintance with him. We can know nothing of God by the creatures, but as they stand in the relation to God as effects to their cause, and when the cause doth much transcend the effect, the clearest understanding cannot, by the knowledge of the effect, arise to a full knowledge of the cause. God is infinitely above the fruits of his power in the world; therefore, man in innocence could gain but little knowledge of him by a bare prospect of them. Nature discovers that there is a God, but not fully what that God is; nor doth the creation furnish man with a notion of God suitable to the excellency and immensity of his nature: as a blind man who hears a discourse of the light and heat of the sun, being brought under the beams of it striking hot upon his body, feels the warmth and knows there is such a thing men call the sun, and is sensible of some effects of it, but hath not a full conception of the enlightening nature of the sun, nor knows what the body of the sun is, nor what kind of shape it appears in; and if he should declare his conception of it, it would be strangely different from the true nature of the sun, a monstrous mistaken description of it, not suitable to that planet; nay, what man is there that sees the sun every day, that is able to say he fully knows the nature of it by his sight, or the constant influences which he feels from it? The conception of God is infinitely more above innocent reason than the conception of the sun can be above lapsed natural reason cracked by the fall. Since, therefore, all the creatures cannot be a ground for man to frame a true and right conception of God, what Adam had of this nature was more from revelation than contemplation of the works of God; and, since Adam was of the species of man, what knowledge he had of God above what the effect of his power in the world did discover, he had by revelation from God, since no man hath at any time seen or known God (taking in the beginning of time, as well as the succession of time), but

whatever intellectual vision any had of God, was by the declarations of the Son of God, John i. 18.

[2.] Corrupted nature is less able to know God by the creation, as he ought to be known, since the fall. Since no natural light was strong enough to discover the wonders of God, corrupt reason can attain but a faint knowledge. The providence of God, after the entrance of sin, displayed some of his attributes which could not be manifested in an innocent state, viz., his forbearance and his justice. God did witness his patience and goodness to men in giving them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and 'filling their hearts with food and gladness,' while he 'suffered them to walk in their own ways,' Acts xiv. 16, 17. And many of the heathens were sensible of this goodness in some measure, when they observed how much the wickedness of the world deserved the contrary, though most of them, indeed, 'despised the riches' of it, Rom. ii. 3, 4. Now and then, some warning pieces of judgments were shot off, whereby the world was startled and made sensible of anger in God. He now and then shot his darts into the hearts of some, otherwise they would scarce have taken notice that there was a God that judgeth in the earth. But there was nothing in all their observation that could discover anything of God in Christ, the union of two natures, the doctrine of the trinity of persons, which was necessary to the notion of redemption, because there was to be a person satisfying, and a person to whom the satisfaction was to be offered, and by whom it was to be received; one considered as the rector, the other as the mediator. This transaction was a 'mystery hid in God from the beginning of the world,' Eph. iii. 9, and discovered to the Gentiles in the apostles' time, Col. i. 26, 27, 'Now made manifest to the saints;' not before, not a syllable of it communicated to nature; it had then been no more a mystery than any other thing that nature declares. There were, indeed, some confused notions among some of the prime philosophers of a trinity, and some prophecies among the Sybils applicable to the Redeemer. The latter might have some glimmerings by revelation, that thereby way might be made for the easier reception of the gospel by the Gentiles, when it should set foot in the world. The former, *i. e.* the philosophers, had also, from a converse with the Jews, into whose country some of them had travelled, or from the Jews which occasionally resided among them, or from the Phœnicians, which were the Philistines of Canaan, a trading people, who, by the neighbourhood of the Jews, might learn and discover some maxims of their religion; and there were also some of them acquainted with some parts of Scripture: nature cannot challenge anything in this affair. But the strength of their natural light was more seen in a knowledge of the duty of man to man, than in the searching out God in the duties we owe to him; whence there are many discourses extant of justice, temperance, prudence, and moral virtues, very few of God and his nature. And though men had by tradition some notice of a redeemer by the first promise, yet they were not able to conceive anything of the nature of God thereby, but that he was patient and gracious; but because they could not conceive how this work should be effected, they could not discern those other attributes of holiness, wisdom, mercy, justice, in their bright beams, till the discovery of Christ in the flesh and upon the cross. What knowledge men had by tradition from the first promise was quickly lost among the corruptions of the old world, and though revived in the legal ceremonies appointed to the Jews, yet they had not conceptions of the great intendments of them.

The insufficiency of nature is seen,

[1.] In that by nature we cannot know the things of nature perfectly,

much less the author of nature.* If we know not the nature of the effects, how can we know the nature of the cause, which infinitely excels them? There hath been a dimness in the reason of man ever since the fall, in reference to those things which are before our eyes. We know not the world, of which we are parts; we know not ourselves, though we daily converse with ourselves; we understand not well the nature of our own souls, nor the reason of our own motions and actions; how then can nature help us to the understanding of the greater, when it doth not to the understanding of the less? How can we arise by the strength of nature to the understanding of infinite wisdom and power? If we are not able to arrive to such a knowledge of the creatures by weak nature, so as to give an essential definition of them; if the nature of a stone, sound, colour, doth pose us; if all the questions put to us about a fly cannot be answered: how much less are we able to come to the knowledge of God, with the strength which is too weak for the other? If we are nonplussed by creatures, much more by the Creator.

[2.] Had nature been able in this affair, or had reason been sufficient to know God and his counsels concerning us, what need of the mission of the Spirit? It is he only 'searcheth the deep things of God;' 'no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God;' and the end of his sending is, 'that we may know the things that are freely given us of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 3, &c. All the reason of the world would never have arrived to the discovery of those perfections of God, they being infinitely above us, as our notions and thoughts are above the reach of a beast, which is never able to apprehend the nature of a man, or understand the language of a man, whereby to come to a knowledge of him. Though reason puts us into a capability of entertaining the discoveries of him, without which neither outward declarations, nor inward impressions, could work anything upon us any more than upon a man remaining out of his wits, yet of itself it is not able to ascend to the conception of God without the Spirit of God. If men could have redeemed themselves, what need of the expense of the blood of Christ? So if men could have instructed themselves in this great knowledge, what need of the Spirit to lead us into the secret chambers of God? Wheresoever, therefore, any man knows God, and the things freely given him of God, *i. e.* the things of the gospel, wherein the excellency and liberality of God most illustriously appears, it is the gift of the Spirit; and where any man hath an inward and spiritual taste of those things, it is the grace of the Spirit in him.

[3.] We find the highest improved nature had strange and unworthy notions of God, and was ignorant of him. If the Athenians, the famous people in the world for learning, and therefore of more refined understandings, confessed their ignorance of God in the inscription of the *Θεὸς ἀγνώστους* upon the altar, Acts xvii. 23, how could more clouded nature come within ken of him? Though by reasoning they concluded there was a supreme being who had the superintendency of the world, yet they could not tell what this God was; and when the redeeming perfections of God were discoursed by the apostle to them, they were the subject of the Athenians' scoffs rather than inquiry, ver. 32. The hidden wisdom of God 'none of the princes of the world knew,' 1 Cor. ii. 8; not the governing princes, though they were as ignorant as the rest, but the princelike and towering wits of this world knew it not; and though God had displayed before their eyes the wonders of the world, and given them both in the creation, preservation, and government of the world, a multitude of lessons concerning his nature, which they might in some measure have discerned by a diligent observation, yet

* Charron trois veritez, lib. i. chap. v. pp. 19, 20, changed.

in the wisdom of God, those lessons of his wisdom in the creation and providence, they did not by natural wisdom and the use of their reason know him, 1 Cor. i. 21. Sometimes their notions of God were rank, and they framed a misshapen God, modelled according to their own humours, not the nature of a deity, who could not possibly be of that hue which they represented him to themselves in. Sometimes they counted him cruel and unjust, sometimes too fond and indulgent; some confined him to heaven, others acknowledged his providence in the greater affairs of the world, but concluded it unworthy of him to descend to take notice of the fall of a sparrow or the hairs of the head, and that it was a disturbance of God's rest to intermeddle with worldly affairs. They stepped out of the way of reason into the paths of fancy, measured God according to their own imaginations to accommodate their lusts, and lie more at ease soaking in their sins. It were endless to tell the monstrous thoughts their corrupt minds had of God, and the multiplicity of their idols, whereby they 'changed the truth of God into a lie,' Rom. i. 23-25, whereas they might have discerned, by a reasoning from those excellencies they saw in the creatures, that God was an infinite, eternal, wise, and self-sufficient being. And such monstrous conceptions of God, after the light of the gospel superadded to that of natural reason, do often flutter in the minds of men among us.

2. There was a knowledge of God by or under the law. Before the giving the law by Moses, God instructed men by the apparitions of angels, visions to some prophets, by the holiness of some of his eminent darlings; under the law, by figures and representations, which the wisest of them did but darkly understand, and that by the assistance of some special revelation, which was successively cleared by the prophets, enlightened in several ages to that purpose. The moral law was a discovery of God, chiefly in his sovereignty, holiness, and justice; he enacts laws as a sovereign, righteous laws against sin as a holy one, annexeth threatenings and promises as a judge. In regard of the majesty of God in the discovery, the people were afraid of death at the promulgation: Exod. xx. 19, 'Let not God speak with us, lest we die.' And Moses, who was the most familiar person with God in the world, had not a less fright at the discovery of it: Heb. xii. 21, 'So terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.' The knowledge of God in the law was too terrible for the minds of men, and surprised Moses, the friend of God, the interpreter of his will, with an extreme horror. God here manifested the marks of his greatness and his justice, armed with instruments of punishment for sin. There was not a mite of his mercy discovered by the law, but to those that kept his commandments, *i. e.* to those that were without any guilt and crime; upon which account the apostle calls the law, the 'ministry of condemnation' and 'of death;' and a killing, not a healing letter; a sword to cut, not a balsam to close a wound, 2 Cor. iii. 7-9. Nothing of adoption and justifying grace pronounced in it. The holiness of God was discovered in his precepts, and his justice in his threatenings. There was also a daily prospect of the holiness and justice of God in the sacrifices exacted of man, in the groans, gaspings, and blood of beasts; they saw that sin was neither affected by God, nor would be suffered to remain unpunished; and their sight of those attributes in this ministration was greater than the world could have of them by the now and then sprinklings of judgments, which, being not often upon the worst of sinners, staggered the understandings, not only of the heathens, but of some of the intelligent Israelites, in their conceptions of the nature of God and his providence. But what was all this to the fuller discovery of the purity of his nature, and the terror of his wrath in the execution of the

curses of the law upon the Son of his bosom? All preceding times were times of darkness till the coming of Christ; they were but the shadows of the night in the figures of the law; but the morning light was in the rising of the gospel, Hosea vi. 3. This was a sufficient revelation of God to direct them to Christ, who could only render God visible and intelligible to man; but how insufficient in regard of the corruption of man's nature to imprint right notions of God! How often did the Jews warp and wallow in the sink of idolatry, notwithstanding this revelation of God! Much less sufficient is the knowledge of God by nature.

This natural, legal, and evangelical knowledge by Christ differ,

(1.) In regard of clearness.

[1.] Natural knowledge was dim. In the creation, God writ himself in hieroglyphics, in short characters; in Christ, in a plain and legible hand, which gave a substantial discovery of God. The power, majesty, and wisdom of God appeared in the 'heavens, the work of his fingers,' Ps. viii. 3, in maintaining their influences and conducting their motions. The foundations of the earth, the vastness and rollings of the sea, the habitations of light, the treasures of snow, floods of rain, the bottles of the clouds, order of the stars, provision for creatures on the earth, direct us to the knowledge of a great and glorious being. For upon all those God reads a lecture of himself to Job in the latter chapters.* That there is a God, may be seen in the dust of the earth, as well as in the brightness of the heavens; but by those works men saw little else but that there was a God: they could know but little of his nature, congruous to the state wherein they were. That glow-worm light could afford us at best but weak and languishing notions of God, and a relation to him fit for that miserable condition wherein the fall of Adam had involved us. And by reason of man's negligence, and not improving a number of those instructions concerning the nature of his virtues, which the creation furnished them with, and which they might have attained by a wise observation of that which God had revealed in his creation, preservation, and government of the world, they gave the bridle to their own imaginations, and knew as little of God by his works, as beasts know of the nature and reason of a man. The world, therefore, is called by some *enigma Dei*, and indeed the heathens often erred in their interpretation of it, and could not unriddle God in the creatures, but worshipped the creature for the Creator.

[2.] Legal knowledge was also dim. Though the temple, with all the ceremonies attending it, was a clearer representation of the nature and will of God than the whole frame of the world, yet obscurity was of the nature of the legal state; and the glory of God was wrapped up in a cloud of animal sacrifices, so that Solomon calls the house wherein God then dwelt, 'a thick darkness,' 1 Kings viii. 12. The law was given with smoke as well as thunders, obscurity as well as terror, Exod. xx. 18. The Israelites were under a cloud, 1 Cor. x. 1, and the mediator of the law had a veil upon his face, and the glory of God was so enveloped in clouds, that the Israelites could but dimly discern. There was more of shadows than substance, and the apostle in the Hebrews gives it no better a title than that of a shadow, opposing it to Christ the substance. And the gospel is said to be truth and grace, in opposition to the law, as if there were no truth and grace in that former dispensation, John i. 17. None, indeed, in comparison of the clearness of the revelation in the gospel; though in itself it was a true representation of God, as a shadow may be called a true shadow. The law being composed of shadows could not discover God as the gospel did, which was

* Κοσμικὰ φήγγματα.—Jamblichus.

made up of substance. Moses then did see his back parts, perhaps in the figure of a man, but in the gospel God shews himself 'in the face of Christ,' 2 Cor. xiv 7. That did discover the features of God more clearly than the works of nature; as the form and beauty of a man may be more discerned through grates and lattices, to which God's appearance in the law is likened, Cant. ii. 9, than when covered with a thick veil. Very few of them could have a ken of the substance for the multitude of shadows. If we, upon whom the glory of God hath shone in the gospel, are not able to comment upon every one of those figures, much less could they who never saw the antitype, and could not conceive the analogy between them.

[3.] The evangelical discovery of God by Christ is clearer. The brightness of the day dispelled the shadows of the night, and dispersed the clouds wherewith the sun was masked. As the fulness of the Godhead dwelt personally in Christ, so the fulness of the divine perfections sparkled in the actions and sufferings of Christ. The Deity shines out in a clear lustre, which was seen before only in the dusty clouds of creatures and ceremonies. In nature, we see God as it were like the sun in a picture; in the law, as the sun in a cloud; in Christ, we see him in his beams, he being 'the brightness of his glory, and the exact image of his person,' Heb. i. 3: as the rays of the sun, being the production of the sun, cause us by their lustre to see and understand more of the beauty and brightness of the sun; and the stamp upon the wax informs us what is upon the seal. We see what an infinite fountain of good God is, and what a dreadful thing sin is, which is a separation from him; as by the beams of the sun we understand the beauty of light, and the horror of darkness. Though it be not discerned in its glory through a mist of vapours, yet it may be known to be risen, and some effects of it are sensible to us. So it was in the creation and the law; but in Christ those vapours are dissolved, the clouds dispersed, and God appears in the sweetness and beauty of his nature, as a refreshing light. The creatures tell us that there is a God, and Christ tells who and what that God is.

So that the clearness of this knowledge consists

(1.) In the clearness of the medium. Nothing in the world can strike our sense or influence our minds, but by some medium. Though a man hath the sharpest eye, yet without an enlightened air he can behold nothing. The clearer the glass through which we look, the clearer discerning we have of the object we look upon. Christ is the clearest medium. As he is said to be 'a polished shaft in God's quiver,' Isa. xlix. 2, to pierce the heart by his grace; so he may be said to be a polished glass in his hand, to represent his majesty, and reflect the beams of God stronger upon us. The gospel, therefore, in the judgment of some, is meant by the 'sea of glass,' Rev. xv. 2, in regard of the transparency of it, through which we see God, and his perfections. It was the same God, Jehovah, who was known by the Jews, and under the gospel, but not in the same manner; they had the same faculties, but not the same light to discern the object. The faculty and act of vision is the same by sun-light and star-light; we have the same eyes in the day and the night, the same exercise and rollings of the eye; but not having the same clearness of the air, we have not that contentment in the exercise of our eyes. Things appear not so beautiful by candlelight as in the lustre of the day; hence Christ is called a 'Sun of righteousness,' Mal. iv. 2, as manifesting the righteousness of God, diffusing light and health by his wings or beams, and chasing away by his splendour the darkness of the world, and opening the glories of heaven to the sons of men, directing them to the knowledge of God, who before wandered in darkness. The coming of this light, and the rising of the glory of God upon us, are

knit together : Isa. lx. 1, 'Thy light is come, and the glory of God is risen upon thee.' The glory of God, *i. e.* the mercy and goodness of God, which is his glory, say some; the glory rather of all his attributes, which Christ is the medium to clear up to the minds of men. And indeed there is as great a difference between the knowledge of God by Christ, and the knowledge of God by the creatures and the law, as there is between the knowledge of a man by his footsteps, and the knowledge of him by his image. Christ is 'the image of the invisible God,' Col. i. 15, as a son is the image of his father, who is a better medium to know a father by, than his footsteps or his picture. Never an earthly son was so like his father, as Christ is like God the Father; he hath the same essence, the same attributes, the same operations.

(2.) The nearness of the object. Christ brings God near to us; he is Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature. The great comforting promises in the Old Testament were, that God should dwell among them, Joel iii. 17, Mal. iii. 1. God was not far from every one of us in the creation, Acts xvii. 27, in regard of his being, in regard of his goodness, though he was far from us in regard of a satisfactory knowledge of his nature; as when a man is at a distance from us in regard of any particular knowledge of him, yet he is near to us in regard of our knowledge of his existence and species, that he is a man, though we cannot perceive his shape and features, and what kind of man he is; but when he approacheth nearer, he appears greater, we see his dimensions and discern his age, yet obscurely; but when he comes close to us, we see him plainly, and by converse with him we come to know his temper.* Now, this man is one and the same man we saw at a distance, and we see near; he hath the same shape, the same features and disposition, but he appears in a different manner according to the greatness of the distance. God was the same in all ages of the world, but after he departed to a greater distance from man by reason of sin, and refrained converse with man, there were but small glimmerings of him in the creatures, and less to be discerned by the distempered eye of man.† He came nearer in the law, but that representation was obscure, and fitted more to the carnal conceptions of men; whence the apostle calls it 'the rudiments and elements of the world,' consisting in sensible representations of him, Col. ii. 20, Gal. iv. 3. Christ succeeded (in whom God came near to us, and conversed with us), as a prospective glass, which makes that which is afar off to seem near at hand, and manifests it in its dimensions; by him we can look through the veil, and be informed of the transactions in heaven between the Father and the Son on our behalf.

(3.) Fulness of the discovery. What was known before is better known; the knowledge is better for quality, greater for quantity. For by the light diffused by Christ in the world, since the ascension of the Redeemer, and the descent of the Comforter, the simplest believer comprehends more of the glorious nature of God in his understanding, than the most elevated believer in the time of the law, either by the figures of the law, or the features of the creatures could, with the assistances of the most learned doctors of the one, or philosophers in the other, which our Saviour verifies in the eulogy he gives of him that is least in the kingdom of God, *i. e.* in the gospel state, magnifying him above John Baptist, whom he confesseth, at the same time, superior to all that went before him, and indeed knew more than all the prophets, yet was inferior to the meanest believer under the New Testament.‡

* Castalio Dialog. p. 143.

† 'Ασθινούσι γὰρ ὁρθεῖν τοὺς πολλοὺς ἄνθρωποις.—Theodor. in 2 Cor. iv. 4.

‡ Mestrezat. sur. 8 Heb. Serm. 4, p. 424, much changed.

Mat. xi. 11, 'Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.' He indeed saw Christ in the flesh, beheld his person as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world; knew him as the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, come into the world for the declaration of him: a sight and day which Abraham and the prophets desired to see, and could not obtain; yet he saw him not dying, rising, ascending, pouring out the rich gifts of his Spirit, all which did clear up the righteous, true, wise, gracious nature of God to the simplest believer, after the accomplishment of them, more than the knowledge of his incarnation could to John. He that is least and most ignorant in the kingdom of God, is greater, *i. e.* more intelligent than John; he hath a fuller prospect and a diviner light; he knows what John knew, and he knows what John was ignorant of: he hath seen and known the performance of those things, whereof John only knew the beginning. And this full and plain knowledge Christ promised before his departure: John xvi. 25, 'The time comes, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father;' a promise that receives its full accomplishment in the life to come, but respects the death, and resurrection, and ascension of Christ, as the time wherein it was to begin to be of force; for those things were nothing else but the declarations of the transactions between the Father and the Son. That it is meant of a declaration of the Father in this life is evident by the following words: ver. 26, 'At that day you shall ask in my name.' Earth is the place for wants and petitions, heaven for vision and praises. The whole scope of the doctrine of Christ is to reveal God in his most illustrious perfections to man, and in the relation of a gracious Father to him. Christ speaking in proverbs, is understood by one* of the whole time of the Mosaic dispensation, wherein Christ was the angel to lead them, and conversed with them in shadows and figures, but now in the gospel would plainly declare the Father to them. Natural and legal knowledge is clarified by the gospel, which is a comment to explain what was before but darkly understood, and a new revelation to elevate the soul to a greater understanding; it fortifies the light of nature, and frames in us more pure and significant conceptions of God.

Though there be a clearness of the medium, a nearness of the object, and a fulness of the discovery, yet,

(1.) We must understand it, not of such a clearness as is possible in its own nature to be (for there may be a more sensible manifestation of God), but of such a clearness as the present state in this world is capable of. It is so plain that it can only be superseded by the light of glory; it is the fullest that we can meet with in this world, till we come to behold him in that light wherewith he clothes himself as with a garment; and whatsoever discoveries many may expect, they must be all built upon this foundation. They are still but beams issuing out, in this scene of things, from the Lamb, who is the light of the new Jerusalem in the best estate: Rev. xxi. 23, 'The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' Christ is still the medium through which the light of the glory of God conveys itself to the understandings of his creatures, and God will never be represented by any other light than his own. In his own light we see him who is the Father of lights.

(2.) Nor must we understand it of an absolute fulness of the knowledge of God. For the brightness of his nature is so great, that it cannot be fully known by a created understanding. The sun cannot be perfectly seen in the

* Ferus in loc.

brightest day, when it traverseth the heavens in its triumphant glories, and suffers not a vapour to waylay the beams he sends upon the earth; yet then he is clearer seen than when the air is clogged with vapours and over-spread with clouds. This is a comparative clearness more than in the little print of creatures, or than through the screen of ceremonies; not such a clearness as shall be on the top of the mount in the eternal transfiguration of the soul; nor ever shall there be an absolute fulness of knowledge of all that is in God, for to know him as he knows himself, requires an understanding as infinite as his own.

(2.) They differ in the certainty. Natural knowledge of God is but conjectural. No position was so firm but some wits of the world found out arguments to contradict it. Nor was there wisdom enough in the world to untie all the knots that were made by others. The whole world of nature lay in darkness; it is from that term every man is called that comes to Christ: 1 Pet. ii. 9, 'He hath called us out of darkness;' and the devil, that is the ruler of the carnal world, is 'the ruler of the darkness' of it, Eph. vi. 12, spreading his fogs upon the minds of men. The heathens arrived to the knowledge of God by rational deductions; but the most eagle-eyed among them, who could peer into the secrets of nature, could not reduce their apprehensions to any fixedness. They had a vanity in their imaginations and conceptions of his nature, and as those our Saviour speaks of, though they agreed in the unity of the Messiah, yet differed about the person. One saith, Here is Christ; another, There is Christ; so these, God is this, and God is that, according to their particular fancies. They acknowledged him an admirable being, but rather darkened than unveiled him. Nothing was satisfactory to the understanding, many of them saw not the creating power of God; one fancies the world eternal; another conceives it to be compacted by a multitude of atoms, or small particles of dust, meeting together by chance, and kneading themselves into this frame we call the world. But the doctrine of faith discovers God in his power: Heb. xi. 3, 'By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.' It acquaints us that the world was created by him; which, indeed, the reason of many informed them of, but not of the manner of the creation, by his sole word and will, or by the second person, the essential Word of God. This we know by Christ, which we could not know by nature: as Heb. i. 2, 'He hath spoken to us by his Son, by whom also he made the worlds.' But, indeed, that is not the meaning of Heb. xi. 3, for the word is there *ἐν ᾧ* not *λόγος*; the latter is a title of Christ, not the former; but it is clear from it, that, by the knowledge of Christ, we have a certain account of the manner of God's operations. The light of Christ is, as the light of the morning, stable.* It discovers things to us with as much certainty as the morning light doth the nature of the objects we doubted of in the darkness of the night. As the sense of vision is the most acute and exact sense, and extends further, and with more assurance, than that of hearing and smelling; so the knowledge of faith is the most infallible way of knowledge, it being built upon the revelation of the Son of God, who is the word of God, and the wisdom of God. It is therefore called 'the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1, 'the subsistence of things hoped for.' It is not an imagination or a fancy, but a demonstration, more firm than any natural demonstration can be. It is a subsistence in the mind, as sure, and as it were as real, as the subsistence of the unseen things believed without us: an evidence as if the things not seen had not a being but by faith. To an unbeliever, God seems not to have that power, wisdom, holiness, which are really in his nature: the perfections of

* As the word *בְּנֵי* signifies, as well as prepared, Hos. vi. 3.

God have no existence in the heart of such a man, so that he is without God, without the knowledge of God; an atheist in the world. Faith in Christ renders God as visible, as he was by the same grace to Moses: Heb. xi. 27, 'By faith he saw him who is invisible.' As the knowledge and faith of the ancient believers, under the figures of Christ, rendered God and the things of the New Testament visible to them, according to the measure of the revelation, so doth the knowledge of believers, under the New Testament, represent God and his perfections in a more certain manner visible to them, because the way of revelation is firmer: that from God by Moses; this from God by his Son. It is truth, because declared by 'the only begotten Son of God,' John i. 17, 18. And, upon the account of the greater sensibility of this knowledge under the gospel, it is the promise to the Jews, that 'then they shall know the Lord,' Jer. xxxi. 4. As though the knowledge of him in nature, and the knowledge of him under the law, had been a kind of ignorance in comparison of this, as it is indeed in regard of the clearness and certainty of this by Christ.

3. In nature, God is discovered for contemplation; in Christ, God is discovered to be embraced as well as admired. Nature never did, nor ever can, elevate one heart to a conformity to the holiness of God, because it could not make known his transcendent hatred of sin, and his rich condescending grace, as the discovery of Christ doth. If it cannot ken the mysteries of God, it can never conduct men to a holy compliance with God according to his nature. There is not a syllable of the naturalness of God's justice, and the necessity of a satisfaction of infinite value, in the whole book of nature. It discovers the existence of a God, but not the way of closing with God. Nature discovers a God of unconceivable excellency, but brings no saving message from him. It sets out God as a being to be adored, Christ sets out God as a being to be enjoyed. That presents notions of God to our minds, this imprints motions to God in our wills. Nature presents God in some of his creating glory, Christ presents God in his redeeming grace, with his arms open, his voice encouraging and directing his creatures to a way of fruition. Nature directs us to the admiration of God, because there is some resemblance of God in every creature; for whatsoever God hath created, he hath created according to his own *idea*, and with a print of his own goodness upon it. He at the first creation pronounced all things good, Gen. i. 31. But all created goodness is a participation of the divine goodness, and by consequence some kind of conformity to the divinity, and the more excellent any creature is, the stronger and fuller stamp it hath of the goodness and excellency of God; the consideration of which would rationally guide the mind to an acknowledgment of an infinite perfection in the author of them, but is unable to conduct men to a due compliance with God. Not that they have any greater insufficiency in themselves to perform the end for which they were created, than they had when they were first made; but because of men's inability to improve their natural instructions, since the crack of their rational faculties by the fall. The case is the same with them as with the law; the law hath the same virtue and power of direction and making men happy, as it had in the state of innocence, *i. e.* in itself; but man by his lameness, contracted by the fall, was unable to walk the pace of the law, and enjoy the blessings of it. The law was 'weak through the flesh,' Rom. viii. 3, not in itself. So the creatures are not unable of themselves to answer the end of their creation; but man, by reason of his darkness, is unable to make an improvement of what the creatures do dictate. Yet I cannot see that the whole book of nature presents us with that knowledge of God, which

is necessary for us in the present state wherein we are lapsed; for they were created to serve man as innocent, not as an offender; in which relation he stands now to God as a judge, and cannot know by all his natural learning, without revelation, what the nature of God is in this case, and what is necessary for him to do, worthy of God, for his restoration. Such a discovery of God and the way of compliance with him in such a manner as becomes God, in this relation, is only known by the revelation Jesus Christ hath made. Yet there is so much knowledge to be had of God by the creation, as to render men inexcusable before the divine tribunal. Though they never heard the sound of the gospel, they will be justly punished at last, not for the neglect of that which they never heard, but for their contradiction to the voice of their own consciences, the universal sound of nature, the lessons they might have learned from the whole creation, especially the heavens, which 'declare the glory of God;' for the thwarting the first principles and notions implanted in their hearts, and damping those secret motions and touches they had by a manifestation of his common goodness to 'seek after God,' Acts xvii. 26, 27. The creation of the world, and the mercies men are indulged with, are that they might seek the Lord. For there is not a drop of rain or a fruitful season, but is a witness of a God to be sought after, Acts xiv. 16, 17. All this will render men inexcusable at the last day. All men have such relics of natural light, more than are due to a fallen nature, as will condemn them in their own consciences, though there is not enough to render them so intelligent of God, as is necessary for their recovery from their lapsed state. Christ only opens the heavens to let out the beams of God upon mankind, and opens the heart and understanding to receive them, and reflect them back upon God in those several duties required at man's hands in his present broken estate.

The second thing is,

II. That the clear knowledge of God is attained only by Christ. The full revelation of God was promised to be given out by the Messiah, the grand prophet God promised, upon the Israelites' desire that God might not speak immediately to them: Deut. xviii. 16-18, 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, &c.; to him shall you hearken;' intimating thereby, that a higher discovery was to be made by him of the mind of God. Why else should they be bound to hearken to him more than any other prophet? He was to be 'a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes,' Isa. xlii. 6, 7. God would call them in righteousness, according to the promise he had made to Abraham, and afterwards to the Israelites, of a great prophet, to take off the veil and darkness in regard of God, and remove their erroneous conceptions of God, whence he is called 'the light of the world;' and ver. 8 seems to intimate, that the majesty of God and his name, and the incommunicableness of his attributes, were to be the subject of this discovery: 'I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory will I not give to another;' and John xvii., Christ asserts, that he had manifested the name of his Father, and would further declare it to the sons of men. So that the spring of all spiritual knowledge is in Christ: he is 'made wisdom' to us, 1 Cor. i. 30; from him we draw all sorts of spiritual understanding and revelation; by him we have the illumination of our minds, as well as the justification of our persons, the sanctification of our natures, and redemption from our enemies. He is the mirror that represents to us the perfections of God, being the brightness of his glory. Every beam whereby God is manifested is shot through him; as every pardon, whereby the grace of God is discovered and the soul refreshed, is dispensed through him. The Jews ex-

pected the discovery of the face of God by the Messiah, and to that purpose interpreted, Dan. ii. 22, 'He reveals deep and secret things, and the light dwells with him.' That light is the Messiah dwelling with God, and some of them call him by the name of light there mentioned, נֹרָא, though the words seem only to declare that God is the author of all knowledge, and sees by a clear light whatsoever is done among the sons of men. It is certain, that whatsoever tends to the glory of God, his sovereignty, wisdom, righteousness, grace, is fully revealed by Christ. He hath declared who is the creator, governor, judge of all; that he is the chief good, the last end, and revealed all the means whereby we may come to a conjunction with him, and fruition of him, and exchange our darkness and misery for light and blessedness; and this chiefly by his death, for by that the perfections of God, hid in the infinite depths of his own essence, were in their rays transmitted to us. He could not be known, either by creatures or bare Scripture, in such a manner as he is known in the cross of Christ, wherein his immense goodness, profound wisdom, severe justice, exact truth, infinite condescension, are manifested in such a manner, that it is as, or more, impossible to conceive how God can make an higher discovery of himself, as it was for men and angels to conceive before, how he should make so rich a discovery of himself as this is. The cross of Christ was the dissolution of the ignorance of men. The darkness which had lain upon the land of Egypt (a type of the ignorance of man by nature, as the Israelites' deliverance typified the redemption by Christ) was taken off in the morning on the passover day, a type of the death of Christ.

But take in these propositions, what is to be said about this.

1. Christ was only capacitated for this discovery of God.

(1.) In regard of his intimacy with the Father. Though Moses was a non-such for converse with God, and spake with him face to face, yet he had not that intimacy as Christ had, who lay 'in the Father's bosom,' John i. 18, in the depths of his counsels, the intimate knowledge of his nature, in the delights of his favour. The secret of the Father is called the bosom of the Father, wherein he not only was but is; he is in the bosom of the Father in heaven, while he is exposed to infirmities below. 'No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven,' John iii. 13, *i.e.* no man hath understood the secret mysteries of God but Christ. He only knows those counsels, eternal transactions, and condescensions of God, because he only was interested in them. He hath not things by revelation, as the prophets and apostles, nor from the law and Scripture, as other teachers. None of them had seen any but the shadows, and tasted some ravishments in the visions when they were revealed; none of them had been in heaven and seen those things in the fountain, in the counsel of God. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, acquainted men with many secrets of God, but they had not seen in heaven the things which they declared to others. Nor was the full scope and design of those revelations understood by the prophets themselves: 1 Peter i. 11, 'They searched what the Spirit of Christ did signify.' They were more prophetic instruments than prophetic agents; the Spirit rather spoke through them than to them. They saw things in images, heard them in obscure representations, and so delivered them as obscurely as they understood them; and those that were most familiar with God, as Moses, had their revelations on earth, not in heaven. But Christ saw all things in the secret of his Father in their proper form, without dreams and visions; he had sucked in the truth from the fountain, and drew that which he taught from the depths of wisdom in the bosom of his Father, which could not be in the power of any man; and therefore, John iii. 31, 32, 'He

that comes from above is above all, and what he hath seen and heard that he testifieth.' Others testify what they have heard; Christ testifies what he hath seen as well as heard. He did not only hear and report, but he saw the things himself; and in regard of his divine nature is above all teachers, as well as above all creatures. Was any else ever sealed with the brightness of God's glory? Was any else the dew from the womb of the morning? Did any else come out of the depths of the fountain and Father of lights? None was ever called the angel of God's presence or face but Jesus Christ, Isa. lxiii. 9.

(2.) In regard of his being the medium of the first discovery of God in the creation. 'All things were made by the Word of God, and without him was not anything made that was made,' John i. 3, 4; and being 'the life of men,' he was only capable to be 'the light of men.' Christ was the voice of God, whereby he exerted his power to bring things from nothing into being. 'The Lord said, Let there be light,' Gen. i. 3; and oftentimes, 'God said,' vers. 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, &c, which was not an external sound or voice, but the essential Word of God, whereby he communicated his goodness to the world in creation. A mere voice or outward sound of words could not be an instrument of itself to frame the world to such a beauty. And that the mystery of the second person lay in that often repetition of *God said*, in Gen. i., is obvious from John i. 1, which seems to be a comment upon and explanation of it: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' so that the story of the creation is deciphered to us by God's speaking, to signify unto us that eternal λόγος whereby the Scripture assures us 'God created the world,' Heb. i. 2, who was 'with him when he laid the foundations of the earth, stretched out the heavens, and digged a place for the sea,' Prov. viii. 22, &c. He is the wisdom and power of God in creation as well as redemption. Now, as in the creation the Son communicated to all creatures some resemblance of God, and the end of the creation being to declare God to the rational creature, it was most proper for the Son of God to make those further declarations of him which were necessary, who at first made the manifestation of God in the frame of the world. As the beautiful image of reason in the mind, breaking out with the discovery of itself in speech and words, is fittest to express the inward sense, thoughts, conceptions, nature, and posture of the mind, so the essential Word of God clothes himself with flesh, comes out from God to manifest to us the nature and thoughts of God. He which is the word of God is fittest to manifest the nature of God. The word in the mind of a man is insensible to others, but published with the voice is made sensible, and makes the person know whose word it is.

2. It was fit a higher knowledge of God should be manifested by Christ than by other prophets. It had not been for the honour of this prophet, who was greater than Solomon, greater than Moses, to have no more to discover of God than what was clearly known before in the church of the Jews; he had then been no prophet of note, a prophet without a discovery, a title without an office. As he is a king in name who hath nothing to govern, so he is but the echo of a prophet that repeats only what was declared before. The intimacy of our Lord Jesus with the Father had not appeared, if he had not something to manifest which was hid from the messengers that went before. That he might have an excellency above other prophets, and appear in the world with more eminent prerogatives, there was to be a greater effusion of light.* He had not been a Sun of righteousness if he had shined no brighter than an ordinary star. Since his coming was to be glorious, wherein

* Camero, p. 374; Col. i. 2.

could the glory of it be, if the greatness of the knowledge of God were not one excellent prerogative belonging to his incarnation, and in such a measure that the light that dawned before in the world, either from creatures, law, or prophets, should be as nothing compared with this sun? And though whatsoever was known of God by men was known by the mediation and direction of Christ, to whom, after the fall, God had committed all judgment (whence the 'Spirit of Christ' is said to 'speak in the holy prophets,' 1 Peter i. 11, and from him Isaiah received his instructions when he shewed himself to be sitting upon his throne, Isaiah vi. 1, compared with John xii. 41), yet some things were reserved hid for the gracing the office of this great prophet, as the doctrine of the Trinity, and real distinction of the three persons in the Godhead, the union of the divine and human nature, which were as clearly revealed by Christ under the New Testament as they had been obscurely under the Old. *Ante adventum Christi sciebatur Deus, Pater ignorabatur.**

3. The discovery of God was the great end of Christ's appearance upon the earth, his office. He was to declare things 'hid from the foundation of the world,' Mat. xiii. 35; to unfold the mysteries and secret counsels of God, and remove the shades and veils between him and the understandings of men, and reveal things which God never revealed before. In him who was God's light we were to see light, Ps. xxxvi. 9. In the Messiah, as the Jews expound it, or by the grace of God in him, we were to know God with clearness. The world was a dark chaos till Christ the Sun appeared in it, as the earth was till light was formed. Christ was not only to make a propitiation for us, but a manifestation of God to us; this was the design of his Father in sending him, John xvii. 6. As the sun hath not light only for himself, but for the world, so had Christ the knowledge of God in his human nature, not for himself, but to spread abroad in the world. He came out from 'the bosom of the Father to declare him,' John i. 18; *ἐξηγγισθαι*, to bring to light the hidden things of God, and comment upon the abstruse excellencies of the Deity. This was the common opinion of the Jews, that *adventu Messie res absconditas et profundas apertas fore omnibus*, as appears by the Samaritan woman, John iv. 25, 'When the Messiah is come, he will tell us all things.' 'Before him there was no God formed,' Isa. xliii. 10, no right notion of God formed in the minds of men, no conceptions of his power, wisdom, pardoning grace, and saving mercy. The knowledge of Christ is urged in Scripture, not as the ultimate term of our knowledge, but as the medium of our knowledge of God; for the term mediator, and the office of prophet, evidence this. A mediator is to discover the inclinations and resolutions of the party with whom we are at variance, in order to the piecing up an agreement; a prophet discovers something of the mind and will of God to us. We are to know Christ, as he is the only person appointed to direct us to the knowledge of God; therefore, though Moses and Elias were with him upon the mount of transfiguration, *i. e.* though the law and the prophets pointed to Christ and declared something of God, yet we are ordered by the voice of God to hear him only, as the great instructor of the world: Mat. xvii. 5, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I well pleased: hear ye him.' It is his incommunicable title as mediator, to be our only master: Mat. xxiii. 10, 'One is your master, which is Christ.' He is only the wisdom of God, as discovering the secrets of heaven to the believer without those clouds of Levitical rites.

4. The angels have the clearest knowledge of God by Christ, much more man. The voice of Christ extended to heaven as well as earth, and manifested the greatness of God to angels as well as men. As he was the medium

* Hieron. in Ps. ciii. 1.

of their creation, so he was the medium of the manifestation of God to them, that from the same hand from which they had their being they might have their happiness and perfection of their nature. The whole time they had seen the face of God in heaven, they knew little of him as he is known in Christ, nor could conceive him so admirable as the revelation of him by Christ represents him. If they had seen in *lumine gloriæ*, all that which may be known of God in *lumine gratiæ*, what need they bow down themselves (a posture intimating pains, curiosity, and earnestness of inquiry) towards the divine propitiatory, to dive, if they can, to the very bottom of it? 1 Peter i. 12. It was this way that God would give them a knowledge of the depths of his wisdom, and his other perfections: Eph. iii. 10, 'To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' It was one end of God in the manifestation of the riches of his grace to the Gentiles, to enrich the angelical nature with a greater light, that thereby they might be furnished with more ravishing matter of his praise. Not that the angels are present at sermons, to understand things they knew not before; but that by the effects of God in the world, gathering men into Christ, and framing a church out of lost mankind, they contemplate the manifold wisdom of God. God might have communicated this to them by immediate revelation, but he remits them to gather it from his effects, and to view it in the glass of Christ and his church. This was the purpose of God, to increase the knowledge and matter of the angels' praise, when he should pour out his treasures in Christ upon the world; not by the church's teaching them, but objectively, by a sight of those things acted in the church. If they then learn so much of the excellency of God by the calling of the Gentiles, how much more must they learn by the contemplation of the Son of God in his incarnation and passion? And to this purpose consider 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'And, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels,' &c., seen of, or appeared to the angels.* It cannot be understood of a simple vision; so was Abraham, Moses, Elias, seen of the angels. Every believer is seen of them, since they are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; all the world is seen of them. What grandeur is there in the mystery of godliness in this regard, that Christ was seen of angels, if it be meant of a simple vision? Nor is it meant of the sight that angels had of him at his resurrection and ascension; for so he was seen by the apostles and other disciples, and by the women that came to the sepulchre. And was this a mystery, for angels to see that which was obvious to the view of men? Not seen of angels, that they might be witnesses of his resurrection; to whom should they be so? To his disciples? Christ in his own person witnessed his resurrection to them. To the world? Angels were not made apostles by Christ for such a purpose. The apostles founded the witness they gave of the resurrection of Christ to the world, not upon the revelation of angels, but upon their own sight and knowledge of him. He was seen of angels, as he was justified by the Spirit; declared to be the Son of God, Redeemer of the world, as he was preached to the Gentiles; as mediator and reconciler, as he was received up into glory, approved of by God, settled as an advocate for mankind. Not seen of angels to receive from him any healing virtue, as the brazen serpent was seen of the Israelites to extract the venom of the fiery ones, because they had none of that poison in them; but seen of angels, as a mediator representing to them a greater knowledge of God in the mystery of redemption than the beauty and order of the world, their own glory in heaven, the variety of past providences, the

* Amyraut. Sermon sur cet texte.

former communications of God to the Jewish church, could possibly teach them. The angels could not behold the essence of God, though they stood before him in heaven. No finite creature in the most elevated condition can see that which is infinite. The glorious essence of God is too illustrious for any creature to behold without being overwhelmed by the brightness of it, and is so immense that it infinitely surpasseth the angelical understanding. Hence they are in the vision portrayed with wings to cover their faces as well as their feet, Isa. vi. 2, as not able to sustain the glorious lustre of his countenance, as we cover our eyes with our hands when we are invaded with too dazzling a light. They must therefore have some other medium of the knowledge of him than by a direct vision; this they have by Christ. They know something of him by the creation of the world, by Scriptures; they saw that, after the revolt of mankind, God expressed a care and tenderness towards the world; and thereby they know him to be a God of patience, as well as before they had known him to be a God of justice in the punishment of the apostate spirits. They saw that God employed them in many messages to the patriarchs and Israelites, and about the affairs of the world. They saw him bear with the idolatry of the Gentiles, and spare those arrows they had deserved to be shot against them. They might suspect there was some way of reconciliation intended. They knew the prophecies of a Redeemer, the promise of the seed of the woman, as well as Adam did by the knowledge of Scripture, yet the manner and methods of it were reserved as a mystery in the secret counsels of God. They were not ignorant in general of what God would do, but the predictions of it being obscure, their knowledge of it must be of the same nature. They knew the mystery of Christ's incarnation when it came to be accomplished, and knew then that the design of it was peace on earth, and the fountain of it good will to men. But all this knowledge was nothing to that which they had experimentally and clearly, when they saw the things themselves perfected. When they saw the Son of God remaining in his divine nature in heaven, and yet, by an admirable union to the human nature, manifested in the infirmities of our flesh; when they saw him in the divine nature sitting upon a throne of justice, yet exposed to the sufferings of the cross, injured by men, invaded by devils, deserted by his Father, heaven and earth in confusion at the groans and death of the Son of God; when they saw him justified in the Spirit, raised from death, ascending up to heaven with that body wherein he had suffered: they learned more of God and his nature, more of the depths of his wisdom, treasures of his grace, and power of his wrath, than they had done by all God's actions in the world, from the foundation of it, in all those four thousand years wherein they had remained in being.

5. The manner how we have by Christ the knowledge of God will also evidence it. Not to speak that the naked declaration of Christ is a manifestation of God, we have it.

(1.) By way of purchase. The declarations of the name of God are founded upon the expiation of sin, made by the merit of the death of Christ. All the knowledge of God we have by reason is not from nature, but is a part of Christ's purchase. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and is thereupon the light that enlightens every man that comes into the world. Sin made the veil between God and us, and Christ's sacrifice removed it. God shone out upon man, till a cloud of iniquity interposed; the Sun of righteousness dissolved the cloud, and made the nature of God visible to us. The propitiation made upon the cross is the cause of the knowledge of God under the new covenant: Heb. viii. 11, 12, 'All shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their un-

righteousness, and their sins and their iniquity I will remember no more.' God smelt so sweet a savour in the blood of his Son that he was appeased, opened his treasures, sent out his Spirit to acquaint men with his nature, counsels, and thoughts; and though the Spirit descended before, in some sprinklings and dews, yet not in a full shower, till Christ had died, and carried his perfuming blood to heaven, presented it to God; whereupon the veil was drawn, the heavens opened, the Spirit poured out upon men, and that light given to the souls of his people which was necessary for their instruction. It was after his death and ascension that he gave gifts to men, whereby some became apostles, some evangelists, that men might come to a knowledge of Christ, and by him to a knowledge of God.

(2.) By illumination. Our reason being impaired by sin, and the acuteness of it dulled by the disease of Adam, the understanding must be renewed, and reason must be repaired, to know the mysteries of heaven. For as there must be an eye to discern things visible, so there must be a mind to discern things spiritual, for 'the natural man receives not the things of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 14. Though they be propounded (for the word *not receiving* implies an offer),* yet such is the constitution of corrupt nature in every man, that he comprehends not the things of the Spirit of God; and so great is the disproportion between the excellency of the things propounded and the disposition of the carnal mind, that he judgeth of those things differently from their true nature; for the mind is carnal and the things are spiritual, and therefore there must be a spiritual faculty to enable for the discerning of them. Christ therefore tells the Pharisees, John v. 37, 38, that they had 'neither heard his voice, nor seen his shape, and had not his word abiding in them;' *i. e.* they had no knowledge of God, because they believed not. Their poring upon the law and the Scriptures was to as little purpose, till the darkness of their minds was removed, as a blind man's bending his face to a book till his eyes be restored. This is the work of Christ: he presents God to the mind, and fits the mind to take a prospect of God. He offers the object and prepares the faculty, he flasheth the light and dischargeth the mind of the films which hinder the reception of it: 1 John v. 20, 'We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true.' He hath given us an understanding,† is not meant of the natural faculty, which is the gift of God in nature and creation, and which grace presupposeth, but of an enlightened and purified mind, which is operative upon the will and heart, and imprints so firmly the glory of God upon the mind, that the will is carried out to love and fear him; which compliance of the will with an illuminated understanding is the formal act of our regeneration. This is given only by Christ, for 'who teacheth like him?' Job xxxvi. 22; who doth not only present but imprint the object, and of darkness makes us 'light in the Lord.' Hence Christ is compared to a roe or a wild goat,‡ which is a creature not only of an acute sight itself, but hath that humour in the bowels that expels dulness from the eyes and sharpens the sight. So Christ doth not only see the Father, but makes us see him, when he hath opened our understandings.

III. The third thing is, the necessity of this medium for the knowledge of God. This hath been evident already. For,

1. The insufficiency of other mediums shews us the necessity of some other, and God hath revealed no other but this of Christ, which seems to be a standing and eternal one, whereby God will transmit his beams upon

* Amyraut. paraphrase in loc.

† Mestrezat in loc.

‡ Cant. ii. 9 Δοξαῖς; (Septuagint), Voss. de Idolat. lib. iii. cap. 58.

glorified souls ; for so it will be in that state of the church in this world, which is but one remove from that of heaven : Rev. xxi. 23, ' The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'

2. The knowledge of the angels being by this medium evidenceth the necessity of it. For what is necessary to those unspotted understandings, is much more necessary for us, who have weaker intellectual eyes.

3. The immense glory of God, and our natural weakness as creatures, evidence the necessity of it. The glory of God would overwhelm the understanding of a creature, there is too great a disproportion between God and us, his infinite glory would dazzle and stupify us. The weakness of our sight hinders from a full prospect of the stars, much more from a sight of the body of the sun, which is more offensive than delightful to our eyes, both by its brightness and its heat, if we venture to lift them up without an instrument fitted for that purpose. If we cannot then gaze upon the sun with our bodily eyes without being oppressed by its lustre, how can we look upon God with the eyes of our minds, without being overwhelmed by that dazzling light wherewith he clothes himself as with a garment, since God is more transcendently excellent above the capacity of our understandings, than the sun can be too bright for the eyes of our bodies ? The sun, as glorious as it is, may be seen and viewed, not only by its effects, but in a glass or a vessel of water or a thin cloud ; but we can only see and know God in Christ his image, and the beam and ' brightness of his glory,' Heb. i. 3. The glory of God is refracted by Christ, and tempered to our weakness, whereby we may believingly behold his love without complaints of scantiness, and see his justice without fear of being consumed by it, and instead of being oppressed by his light, may be ' changed into the same image from glory to glory,' 2 Cor. iii. 18. Christ is the veil through which we may look upon God, as through a veil we may behold the sun. He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father : John xii. 45, ' He that sees me seeth him that sent me ;' and he that knows Christ knoweth the Father, because of the likeness of one to the other, John xiv. 9. He that spiritually knows the Son knows the Father. Not he that seeth Christ corporeally, for then the unbelieving pharisees might be said to see the Father ; nor he that seeth Christ intellectually, for then mere Christian notionalists may be said to see the Father ; but he that sees Christ spiritually with a knowledge of faith, knows the Father, for the majesty and bounty of God shine in Christ as an exact image.*

IV. The fourth thing is, what knowledge of God is discovered to us by Christ. We do not only know in Christ what we know by creation, but more than can possibly be known of God by the works of his hands. All his works in creation are but obscure flashes of his nature in comparison of this. God hath opened himself abundantly in the sufferings and exaltation of Christ, and done enough to raise himself from those common thoughts and apprehensions men have of him. He hath spread abroad the ensigns of his majesty, to clear the minds of men, raise their admirations, and elevate their thoughts and esteem of him. The church, therefore, in the time of the gospel, is called ' the throne of God,' Jer. iii. 17, and a ' glorious high throne,' Jer. xvii. 12 (the legal state was called the ' throne of his glory,' Jer. xiv. 21), because therein, by Christ, he doth, as kings upon the throne, shew himself in his royalty and magnificence, in the largeness of his bounty, severities of his justice, lustres of his wisdom, and the honour of his law, in Christ the head of the church, and this manifestation of God was chiefly in

* Non ut ipse sit pater qui filius ; sed quod a patris similitudine in nullo prorsus discrepat filius.—August. *in loc.*

the death of Christ : John xiii. 31, 'Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.' Now shall there be a manifestation of my good will to men, and obedience to God, and a manifestation therein of God's love to mankind and justice against sin.

In Christ, there is,

First, A collection of God's perfections.

Secondly, The harmony of all.

1. All the attributes of God are glorified in Christ. This was the petition of Christ, John xii. 28, 'Father, glorify thy name. Then came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again,' *i. e.* thy attributes and the perfections of thy nature, make them all illustrious in the work I have undertaken ; which petition God readily assents to, so much was his heart and delight set to make the brightness of his own nature appear in this way ; which glorification is not any addition to the essential glory of God, but the manifesting it and making it known in the riches of it to the sons of men. Christ added no glory to God's nature by his death and resurrection, but opened the curtains, and manifested that which had lain hid from eternity in the infinite depths of his own essence. In this regard he is called by the name of the 'glory of God' rising upon the world, Isa. lx. 1. For Christ is a certificate wherein the world may read how excellent, wise, bountiful, just, faithful, holy, God is. These are all visible in him in the noblest manner, so that we cannot deliberately view and consider Christ, but we are presently informed of the glory of the Deity. Since Christ was so loving, tender, holy, religious, we must conclude the Father is of the same nature ; he would not send one unlike himself, one that was not the character of his person, upon such an errand as the discovery of his own nature to men and angels. God had in several ages of the world pitched upon particular seasons, to manifest one or other particular property of his nature : his justice, in drowning the old world and firing Sodom ; his truth and power, in freeing the Israelites from the Egyptian chains ; his truth, in performing a promise which had lain so long dormant ; his power, in quelling his enemies by the meanest of his creatures ; his wisdom, in delivering them from the Babylonish captivity, by the ordering secondary means for the attainment of their end. In the creatures, one or other attribute seems to be more illustrious in one than another : in some appears more of goodness, in another more of wisdom, in another more of power, though his glory shines in all ; as not a star in heaven but sparkles, and discovers not only itself, but something of the heaven wherein it is placed, yet some with more lustre than others, according to the portion of light afforded them. But in Christ all the perfections of God are centred together, as if all the stars were made one body, and transmitted their light in one beam upon the world ; or as various streams gliding from several parts and circling large compasses of ground fall unanimously into the sea, and rest in the bosom of it. In him sparkle the justice of God in the punishment of sin ; mercy, in laying foundations of pardon ; bounty, in his love to his creatures ; faithfulness, in the accomplishment of his promises, and realising the figures of the law ; wisdom, in framing and managing the gospel design ; holiness, against the pollutions of the world in the condemnation of sin ; and power, in effecting what he pleased in his own counsel. Hence it is that God, so often speaking of his design of redemption, adds often, 'that I may be glorified,' Isa. xlix. 3, and lx. 21, &c, as though he had none, or but a retail glory by creation, but the riches and full sum of it was to be gathered in and laid out in the work of redemption by Christ. For of some of his attributes we could have no account by the creation, and of others not so apparently and de-

lightly as in the transactions of Christ. For as the sun excels all the stars in discoveries, dispersing his rays in all climates of the earth, so doth Christ, the Son of the Father's bosom, and the Sun of righteousness, exceed all creatures in the revelation of the excellencies of God. Christ is the stage wherein all the attributes of God act their parts: in creation, he was a God of goodness and power; in providence, a God of wisdom; in the law, a God of justice; in Christ, a God of all, and a God of grace, a Father of mercy.

2. As in Christ all the attributes of God are manifest to man, so they are manifest in an exact harmony. In Jesus Christ those attributes that seemed to look with an ill aspect on one another, are mixed together with unexpressible sweetness, and knit in an eternal amity. Patience rejoiceth at its indefatigable waiting, justice triumphantly flourisheth the bloody sword bathed in the heart of the Redeemer, and mercy as triumphantly kisseth it, justice glorying and mercy singing at the triumphs of justice, truth holding both threatenings and promises in conjunction in her bosom; all caressing one another, and applauding the designs and accomplishments of manifold wisdom and infinite power, which removed the seeming contrarieties, and tied a knot between time and eternity. Christ is 'the first-born of every creature,' Col. i. 15, or of all creation, *πρώτης κτίσεως*. As the first-born is the strength of the parent, so is Christ the strength of God. The glories of God scattered in the creation are gathered into him, all things in heaven and earth; the glories of God in the confirmed felicity of angels, and restored happiness of man. As he gathered angels and men into one family, 'all things in heaven and earth,' Eph. i. 10, so he gathered all the attributes of God into one sum, to conspire together for the welfare of believers. His justice made our iniquities meet upon him, that they might not remain upon us; wrath passed by us and seized upon him; wisdom contrived for his own glory and our good. His truth made good his promises upon our persons, and his threatenings upon our surety; he took the curse off from us to fulfil it on Christ, Gal. iii. 13, that he might be righteous as well as gracious 'to forgive us our sins;' 1 John i. 9, the treasures of his goodness and grace are opened in him, that we might receive 'grace for grace,' John i. 16; more grace from God in redemption than that we forfeited by transgression, more habitual grace for our establishment than Adam had in paradise for his standing. He is 'made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,' the power, wisdom, justice, holiness of God to us; goodness, grace, love, righteousness, whatsoever distinction they have in themselves, meet all in him in their glory and sweetness, combine together, and sing one and the same note for the happiness of man. All the treasures of them are laid open in Christ, to be laid out in all the fruits flowing from them for the eternal welfare of believers. How delightful a knowledge of God is this which Christ transmits to his people! How much higher and more ravishing is this prospect of God than that in the creation! All variety with harmony is pleasant; the choicest music is made up of discords skilfully fitted to agree with one another, and compose a charming air. This is that Christ, in whom God hath made all his attributes, which seemed to be in debate against man, 'and irreconcilable to one another, to be in league together for the good of every believing soul, and rendered all their ways 'ways of pleasantness, and all their paths peace.' Let our souls praise him, let us delight to view him; this is that prophet, let us rejoice in him, But in particular the patience, wisdom, purity, justice, mercy, power, and truth of God, with the reasons and depths of them, were manifested in and by Christ, as well as the nature and excellency of God.

1. The patience of God. We see the patience of God, as the first attribute,

coming to our view after the transgression of man, and the interposition of Christ. When Christ stepped out of the council of God, forbearance with a fallen world stepped out to meet him. This is the reason why he did not dash the world in pieces upon the sin of the first man, and raise another that should keep his law. Nothing of this glorious perfection had then been visible. This is the reason why, after forbearance with the first man, and after multiplied provocations by his posterity, he did not destroy the whole race of mankind, and turn a defaced world into flames, and make its smoke by the fire of his justice, as well as he had reared and preserved it by the arm of his power. He had not then manifested the long suffering, the unwearied duration of this attribute, nor answered the end of his patience, which was a discovery of himself in his Son. By this we come to know why we were not made a prey to the just wrath of God and the fury of devils; why the divine revenge was held back so many ages; why he 'winked at the times of ignorance' and corruption, Acts xvii. 30, 31: even because he had appointed a man to judge the world, whom he would first send to save the world; why he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, yet left them not without witness in the dispensations of his providence, viz., that in time he might be known in his Son to be 'the living God which made heaven and earth,' Acts xiv. 15-17. He exercised his patience upon this account, and would not take the forfeiture, in expectation of the fulness of time wherein his Son should be manifested to make up the breach, and the glorious design of his patience manifested in him. For the great ground of it was the discovery of his name, his loving-kindness in Jesus Christ: Isa. xlviii. 9, 'For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee that I cut thee not off.' And he bore with an infinite patience the affront of Jews and Gentiles, till the time came that his Son should be 'set out to be a propitiation for the remission of sins that were past, through the forbearance of God,' Rom. iii. 25. He discovered his patience in not pouring down upon every great sin destroying judgments; not for want of justice in himself or lowness of disposition, but for the demonstration of his justice and loving-kindness together in the sacrifice of his Son, wherein he intended to represent himself in a glorious manner to the world. His kindness was the end of his forbearance. He supported himself under the indignities of men, and deferred the time of the oblation of this sacrifice, that this attribute might be known, and that he might have a more glorious foundation for the display of his pardoning mercy, which he intended should follow after, and might bring forth his grace in its glory to take away the guilt of men's sins, upon the return of men to him, after the bearing with so many oppositions: 2 Peter iii. 9, He is 'longsuffering to us, not willing that we should perish.' It is highly discovered also, since the coming of Christ, that notwithstanding those repeated indignities offered to his Son by contempt and unbelief, and to himself in his Son, yet he keeps the world standing till he hath gathered in the objects of his eternal grace, and completed his family in his Son, whereby he hath rendered his long-suffering more clear and admirable than if he had sustained the rejection of millions of more prophets than ever yet were put to death or persecuted by the unbelieving world.

2. His love, and goodness, and pardoning mercy. John xiv. 6, 7, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also; and from henceforth you know him and have seen him.' As I am the way of access to the Father, so I am the *medium* of the manifestation of the Father: if you know me, my love and my heart toward you, you cannot but know my Father's heart and love too. Though man fell from his finite goodness and

duty to God, yet it is manifest in Christ that the infinite Creator could not fall from his infinite tenderness. If the manifestation of his goodness was his end in bringing forth the creatures, it was much more his end in bringing forth his Son.

(1.) This the creation did not discover. Man might know that God was bountiful in filling his heart with food and gladness by the creatures, but did not understand anything of pardoning mercy in God, if sin should enter upon the world. Had the creation had any inscription of forgiving grace upon it, why do we not find some supplications for it from the mouth of Adam after the fall? Do we not find his heart as naked of any thoughts of this nature, as he was of his original righteousness? He was seized with an horror of conscience after his sin, but not a groan for pardon; for how could it enter into the heart of Adam but by revelation? The law given him at his creation spake not a syllable of it; the voice of that was nothing but death, death: Gen. ii. 17, 'Thou shalt surely die.' Nothing else could be expected by him upon his eating the forbidden fruit, nor could he have the least sentiment of remission till the pronouncing the promise of Christ in the seed of the woman. The manifestation of Christ in the beginning of the book was the first notice of any such perfection in the nature of God. That same moment of time when Christ was given, wrapt up in a promise, did pardoning grace sparkle out, and not any time before.

In the law which God gave Adam for the rule of obedience, there was nothing but strict justice; and upon God's first inquiry after Adam, there was no proclamation of pardon by God, nor expectation of it by Adam, but an examination of matter of fact: 'Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?' Gen. iii. 11, 12; nor any offer of Adam falling upon his knees and imploring mercy; but standing upon his justification, wiping off the dirt from himself to discharge it wholly upon his wife. The treasures of this were so closely locked up in God, that Adam, just stepped out of a happy condition (who, though he had lost his righteousness, had not lost his knowledge and memory, as appears by his answer to God, of what had been done before his fall, and in the time of his fall yet), could not in the least imagine any mercy; and therefore the wittiest and most refined natural knowledge in the heathen, less than Adam had, could not have any sentiments of it barely from nature, without some traditional revelation at the least. This attribute could not possibly have exerted itself without Christ. Power, wisdom, goodness, did shine in the creation, holiness in the law of nature, justice in the punishment of fallen angels, and expulsion of man out of paradise; but this of forgiving mercy, if you respect the first economy of things, could not be evidenced without Christ; for, not to speak of the naturalness of God's justice, whereby he could not, in regard of his nature, pardon sin without a satisfaction, which is very probable; but only that the word of threatening being past for the death of a sinner, a satisfaction was necessary for the truth of God, honour of the law, and recovery of the creature, which could not have been performed by a mere creature, therefore it was necessary some person above a creature should undertake it, or else no such thing as pardoning grace, which is one of the greatest glories of the Deity, could ever have been known either by angels or men, but had remained undiscovered in unfathomable depths, unknown even to the angels in heaven, who know nothing of God but by the effects, because his essence is inaccessible to the understanding of any creature. As in Christ alone, and in his blood, we have the purchase of 'redemption, even the forgiveness of sin,' Col. i. 14, so in and by him alone we had the first discovery of it in the promise, and a full declaration of it afterward. When he was set forth

as a propitiation, it was not only to purchase our happiness, but to let into our knowledge the righteous and gracious nature of God thereby : Rom. iii. 25, 'To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins ; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and a justifier ;' which declaration was not made by nature and the creation.

(2.) This, then, was only discovered in and by Christ, both in the glory of it to God, and the sweetness of it to us. It was in Christ discovered to be God's nature, and our life. God is love, and the manifestation of it to us was in God's 'sending his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him,' 1 John iv. 8, 9, that the dead world might live through him. Hereby he did not only declare himself placable, not only desirous to manifest a scanty goodness to the creature, but to shew that his nature was enriched with the choicest love and grace, and his desire that it should flow out in the highest manner through a mediator to the polluted and rebellious world, and be screwed up to the highest peg. In him God opened his bowels, which lay secretly yearning, and 'brought life and immortality' for the creature 'to light through the gospel,' 1 Tim. i. 10. Both mercy and love were manifested. Love is a perfection of a higher strain than mercy ; mercy may be prevalent where love is absent. Mercy hath for its object a thing miserable ; love hath for its object a thing amiable ; pardoning grace hath for its object a thing criminal. The mercy of God is manifested in the death of Christ for us when we wallowed in misery ; the pardoning grace of God is declared upon us as we are loaded with guilt ; love is manifested in being well-pleased with us in the best beloved, after we are made comely and amiable by him. Christ is the *medium* of the manifestation of this. This was his main design, that his grace might be discovered with an emphatical phrase : Eph. i. 6, 'To the praise of the glory of his grace,' *i. e.* by an Hebraism, *his* glorious grace, and be known in its glory to men and angels in the height, breadth, length, and depth of it, that he might communicate his Spirit, his heaven, himself to them ; to be in them, and they in him ; to love them with such a love as he loves his Son, *i. e.* with such a love as he loves himself ; and all his other attributes were employed in the design of glorifying this. Wisdom contrives, truth designs the sacrifice, justice strikes, to render mercy and love triumphant. God constituted this his principal glory, and, in a manner, esteemed not all his other virtues, but as they were ordered to manifest this. Though he had manifested several perfections in the creation, yet this was utterly unknown to the world till he exposed his Son to death for them. The law manifested him to be just, the gospel manifested him to be just, and a justifier. In the law, he manifests the sovereignty of his justice in punishment ; in the gospel, he inflicts severe punishments upon his Son, the surety, and mercifully absolves the believing offender ; he is in Christ unveiled, and shines in the condescensions of his love.

Discovered,

First, In the freeness of it. His goodness shined in the creation, but with a weaker light. Goodness was communicated to *nothing* in bringing it into being ; which *nothing*, as it had not merited that goodness, so it had not deserved the contrary. It had as little of demerit as it had of merit. He made his goodness break out then upon nothing, but, in Christ, upon things worse than nothing. He manifested his goodness in giving life to man, but without the expense of the blood of his Son, and the loss of his life, by whom he conferred the benefit of life upon sinners. What goodness he manifested to man after his creation, in giving him the other creatures for his service, had not so beautiful a complexion as his goodness in Christ. Then he

gave creatures to him of the same mould with man himself, but in Christ he gives man's creator to man; his own Wisdom, whereby he created all things. When he gave creatures to man at first, he gave them to an holy, just, righteous man, pure as he came out of the mint of God's power and holiness; but he gives his Son to depraved man, who had affronted him, and cast those rich endowments of his nature behind his back. He finds out a way to glorify his mercy, when he might only have glorified his justice; takes rebels into his arms, who had merited the thunders of his anger; and, by an incomparable and unimagined kindness, gives his Son to save his enemies, and adopts them for his children; and that by a free act of his own, not being persuaded by any other: John iii. 16, 'He gave his only begotten Son.' Also, in taking occasion from so great an evil as sin, to manifest such an excess of love, as if the steams of dung and vapours from mire and dirt should be an occasion of the sun's emitting his beams with greater clearness and freedom. The heathens regarded God as severe; though they saw testimonies of his patience, they imagined the kindness he shewed to them wrung from him by their sacrifices and cries, and purchased by their services; but they saw not the springs of kindness freely bubbling up in his own breast. But in Christ we behold his compassions moving of themselves, and working together till the whole design of love was brought to perfection.

Secondly, In the tenderness of it. The gospel presents God in Christ under more tender titles to man than either creation or law. In the one, it was 'the Lord God;' in the other, 'the mighty Lord,' 'the Lord of hosts,' 'the terrible God;' names and marks of grandeur, sovereignty, and justice. In the gospel, he assumes the title of Father, a name of kindness and compassion; and is called in the New Testament more by that title of *Father* than that of a *Lord*, as if his sovereignty had been swallowed up in tenderness. This title of Father is ascribed to him in the Old Testament more rarely; once in regard of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, as typical of the redemption by Christ: Deut. xxxii. 6, 'Is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee and established thee?' and promised to be the familiar name whereby they should call upon God in the times of the gospel: Jer. iii. 19, 'Thou shalt call me, my Father, and shalt not turn away from me;' as, indeed, the name *Abba*, Father, is peculiar to the gospel, and the name wherewith we have access to the throne of grace; in giving, also, a new law founded upon better promises, repealing the threatenings in regard of any force upon a believer, and enjoining milder conditions than in the first covenant.

Thirdly, In the fulness of it, declared in the person of his Son. Rather than he would lose the whole race of mankind, he would spare nothing, no, not his best beloved, with whom though he were ever well pleased, yet he must suffer, that in him he might be well pleased with us. He advanced his mercy over all the difficulties which lay in his way, and to magnify it, would not spare his Son, that he might spare the sinner, but condemn him to death for the redemption of a servant. The immense goodness which appears in heaven and earth, sun and moon, and motions of them, and in every other creature, is nothing to the making him a creature by whom he made the worlds. To make him, who was the brightness of his glory, become as vile as earth; him who was God to be a man; the Lord of life to be the subject of death, whereby the souls of men sunk into the depths of misery are made capable of deliverance and enjoyment of an happy immortality, the possession of an heavenly paradise, a communion in glory with himself, is a love infinitely above that goodness which appeared in the

creation ; and so magnificent, that if angels and men had millions of years to busy their thoughts, they knew not how to imagine higher ; for it cannot enter into the heart of men or angels to conceive the grandeurs of affection and mercy which God hath not only prepared, but represented to our view in Christ. He hath hereby evidenced that he was so far from envying the happiness of man, as the devil had made Adam at first believe, that he would rather advance it at the expense and cost of the blood of his Son, and would give life more abundantly in Christ, John x. 10, in a greater plenitude and longer duration, than Adam had by creation and his own strength, or the patriarchs under the law. Here love spends itself in the conquest of death and hell, which had dissolved the happiness of man ; gives life a freedom from unrighteousness, the death of our innocent nature ; and from the severities and torments of justice, which is the death of our persons. And whereas in creation he gave creatures to man, which are the works of his hands, he gives now his Son to man, who is partaker of his essence, and sends him to be put in the place of the sacrifices, whose throats were cut under the law, and were unable to make an atonement for sin ; and not only to suffer for us, but to suffer as a curse and execrable thing in our stead, Gal. iii. 13. If God had sent an angel, one of the excellent creatures of heaven, to be clothed with our nature, and die in our stead, it had been admirable goodness not to spare for us one of those sublime and excellent creatures.* God had manifested a goodness, but had not been glorified by it in the fruits of it, which we could never have enjoyed, because no creature could pay a sufficient ransom for the sin of man. The ransom was to be infinite, but angels were limited and finite creatures ; and if they had undertaken, they must have suffered too infinitely, and never have emerged out of their misery. Yet, supposing an angel could have redeemed us, this love, which is the glory of his nature, had not appeared in its riches by such a grant, because the angels were formed of nothing, and were the works of his hands, but were not of the essence of God. But herein his love appears in the choicest dress, in that he sent one begotten of his substance, one with him, true God with the Father, to whom the Father had communicated his nature. We call not the works of an artificer his children, because they have not his nature, though they are the products of his art and industry. Herein he shows the lustre of his mercy, and that he is love indeed in his nature, as well as in his fruits, beyond the imagination of men and angels, and all that nature could instruct them in. His shooting his arrows into his Son rather than lose the rebel, and engraving upon him the marks of his anger, is the highest point his compassion to us could mount to, and the highest proof of the treasures of love and pity in his heart for us.

(3.) This knowledge of God's love is most comfortable to the creature. God is sweetened in Christ to our understanding. He lays by his fury to unveil his mercy, and sticks the sting of his justice in Christ, to receive us into the bosom of his love. It is a strong consolation, that if God kept to his own design, formed in his breast from eternity, and discovered to the world in Christ, to advance the riches of his grace, no penitent and believing sinner can despair, but rather have an argument that God will pardon him, because it is suitable to the design he had from eternity, and the manifestation of it in time. For why should he prepare all things for man's recovery before man's fall, foreseen by him, and decreed to be permitted ? Why should he provide a medicine before the disease, a solder before the crack, and fix upon a certain way to pardon the rebels, before they had beings wherewith to rebel, if he had no intention to apply it when they should have

* Mestrezat sur 1 John iv. 8, 9.

the grace to believe it? And is not this pardoning grace rather honoured by the pardon of great sins and many sins, than by the pardon of few sins and small sins? Therefore, as he suffered sin to enter into the world, that he might bring upon the stage his pardoning mercy, to the view and comfort of the creature, which else had lain in the abyss of the divine essence without any opportunity of discovery, so he suffers men to go on in sin a long time, that his grace may enter upon their souls with the greater magnificence and glory: 'The law entered, that sin might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,' Rom. v. 20. Not, or not only, that law the Jews had, but the first law to man in innocence; not as the *finis intentionis*, but the event in the fall of man and prescience of God. Men naturally think God will not pardon their crimes, cannot have a kindness for such notorious rebels, because their scanty natures are not capable of such a quality towards grievous offenders against themselves. But this declaration of love in Christ takes away all scruples from men, brings forth his love triumphing over all the objections of penitent souls, that heaven itself cannot find a stronger medium to assure them of an immense plenitude of love in the breast of God. The goodness of God is therefore proposed as an object of trust (as it may be understood) in the day of the gospel, Hos. iii. 5, which is a larger manifestation of his goodness than in the law, which was an object of fear. They shall fear or trust in the Lord, or run with haste unto the Lord and to his goodness, viz. Christ, in whom they taste the bounty and goodness of God, and this in the latter days, when the shadows of the law shall fly away and have their period. And, indeed, when a poor deluded sinner sees those treasures of mercy in Christ, that ravishing love doth as much surprise as delight him, so that, with an amazing comfort, he can cast himself into the arms of that goodness which are opened so wide in the Son of his love. So that here only was love in its willingness, grace in its freeness, mercy in its sweetness, goodness in its fulness of benefits, conspiring together to set themselves forth in their best attire.

(3.) The wisdom of God is admirably manifested herein. The sending of Christ being so stupendous, the wisdom of God must be admirable in the ends designed by it, which shoots forth with clearer beams in his Son than in the creation, in which regard Christ is called the wisdom of God: 1 Cor. i. 24, 'Christ crucified, the wisdom of God,' *i. e.* the highest discovery of his wisdom is in the crucifixion of Christ, in the death of the Son of God upon the cross. Wisdom shined in the creation, it glitters every day in providence; but the depths and riches of it are in Christ. In those there are some doles, some lesser sums, but the treasures of it are hid in him, as in the great exchequer. Here are the deep counsels of God, which the apostle cannot speak of without a ravishing admiration: Rom. xi. 33, 'Oh the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' 'A manifold wisdom,' Eph. iii. 10, in regard of the variety of effects in the glorifying his name, and dignifying his creature, in repairing the breach, and establishing the repair. Wherefore the apostle, speaking of this great mystery, breaks out into a doxology of the wisdom of God: Rom. xvi. 25-27, 'To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.' When the creation was despoiled by sin, not a jot of goodness left in it to give God any content, it was a greater wisdom to repair it without breaking it to pieces than to have created a new one. The wisdom in a new creation had been but of the same level, but that in restoring was of a higher elevation and a clearer gloss. To bring his glory out of the ashes wherein it seemed to be buried; to bring man out of darkness wherein he was, as to his own strength,

irrecoverably involved ; to put heaven and earth in tune again, which sin had made at discord with one another, was a high piece of skill. It is an admirable wisdom among men to unite two princes at variance, without invading either of their rights, but entirely preserving them ; to link them in a stronger peace than that they were in before they fell out ; to enlarge their empire, not only to a mutual satisfaction, but the increase of both their grandeur and glories. The case is the same : God repairs the breach between himself and man, and preserves his right ; he loseth nothing of his own honour, but enlargeth it ; man is restored to favour with a temporary diminution of his bodily happiness, but with an eternal increase of the felicities both of his soul and body ; all seeming contradictions are removed, and means fully proportioned to the ends intended are appointed. In this regard the apostle calls it 'all wisdom and prudence,' Eph. i. 8 ; wisdom drawing the platform, and prudence disposing the means consonant to the end. The work is done to the content of both, the glory of both, the rest of God, and the happiness of the creature ; and the skill was more wonderful in repairing the devastation in such an infallible way, past the reach of the tempter that defaced the first creation. Certainly that which shall be most admired at last will be the harmony and consent of things, by the skill of infinite wisdom, in conspiring together for the bringing about those ends God aimed at.

Wisdom takes large strides at every step.

[1.] In uniting the greatest extremes. In the creation God brought nothing to become something. In this he joins together beings at a greater distance.

First, The divine and human natures are united in one person. The highest intellectual nature, with the lowest rational nature, infinite and finite, glory and misery, time and eternity.* Christ calls himself the Son of man, to shew that he was really man in qualities,—John iii. 13, 'And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven,'—yet saith he *is in heaven*, to manifest that he is God ; man born of the virgin, yet the Son of God eternally begotten, the Word made flesh. God in heaven manifested in flesh upon the earth, each preserving their entire properties ; the Son of man by this union is become the Son of God, yet retains his pure and naked form as man ; the Word by this union is made flesh, yet without losing his infinity, eternity, and original being ; as a man hath two parts, an immortal and invisible soul, and a mortal visible body. As a man, he passeth through infirmities ; as God, he is above them.† The two natures are distinct, yet united in one subsistence, and make but one person, as the soul and body make one man. Yet not in such a manner as that the divine nature is the form of the human, for then Christ were not real man ; he was 'in the form of God,' yet 'in the form of a servant,' Philip. ii. 6, 7. Though there was no change in the divinity, yet the lustre of it was veiled by the infirmities of the flesh ; as when a thick cloud interposeth between the body of the sun and our eyes, it obscures the beams from our eyes, but defaceth not the body of the sun, or ravisheth its inherent beauty. And this union was made at the first conception ; ‡ if it had not been so, the virgin had not conceived God, but a pure man, contrary to Gal. iv. 4, 'God sent his Son, made of a woman.' If the humanity was not at that instant united to the λόγος, it did then subsist in its own created person, and the conception was then terminated to a created person, and in no sort to God ; and then it cannot be said that God was conceived

* Daille, sermon sur Jean iii. 13, p. 211.

† Daille, sermon sur Phil. ii. 7, 8, p. 411, &c.

‡ Suarez in tertiam Aquin. vol. xiii. diss. 16, sect. 1.

of the virgin. If the divinity did assume the humanity of that person after the time when Christ died, and the humanity had not before been united to the divine nature, his blood then shed could not have been said to be the blood of God, though the divinity should have assumed that humanity after the resurrection. An unexpressible wisdom in the uniting, in an unconceivable manner, two such vast distances, the divine and human nature in one person, that there might be a sufficiency to perform the task undertaken, and capacity to endure the suffering required to make up the breach; to unite one greater than a man to the human nature, that he might satisfy for man, and have that in himself which might exceed all the debt man owed to God! He provided a divine person to satisfy a God offended, a mediator, one with God that was wronged, and one with man that had sinned; partaking of the nature of both, that he might pay a price sufficient for the one, and acceptable to the other. In the creation, one creature was united to another, and all made up a world. In this, finite is united to infinite, to make up a complete and able mediator.

Secondly, The justice and mercy of God are united in a joint applause. He becomes merciful without being unjust, and just without impairing the honour of his compassion. Justice hath the highest right, and mercy its utmost intention; the cries of his justice, and the yearnings of his bowels, are united, without depriving either of their rights. No complaints can be found in the mouth of the one, nor any discontent in the looks of the other, but mutual smiles and mutual applauses. *Just* and *justifier* are joined in one justice and justification, Rom. iii. 26. The world is preserved, which in justice ought to be destroyed, without any reproach to the righteousness of God, as the governor of it; an eternal marriage is made between mercy and justice; both shake hands, and not only acquiesce but rejoice, for the sin is punished by justice in the surety, and pardoned by mercy in the sinner; both pleased and both gratified in seeing the honour of the law preserved, and the guilt of the sinner removed.

Thirdly, In uniting God and man in eternal fellowship. By this act he brings stubble to dwell with flames, and weakness to behold and enjoy glory without being overwhelmed by the weight and splendour of it, to draw near to the supreme majesty through the veil of the flesh of Christ. He causeth pardon and punishment to meet, that God appeased, and man acquitted, may come together. The punishment is inflicted upon the surety, that the offender might share in the glorious fruits of his mediation. God and man are brought to amity, angels and men are made one family, and more grace given to fit us for God than Adam lost. This was the point his wisdom aimed at, to make 'the riches of grace abound towards us,' Ephes. i. 7, 8. And to add to the wonder of his wisdom, God saves the sinner in the same way whereby he condemned the sin, and advanceth the offender to communion with him, the same way whereby he shewed his detestation of the crime. Sin is made the mark of the divine displeasure in the person of Christ, swallowed up and devoured by the flames of justice, that, the wall of separation being removed, he might meet his creature with arms widened by the dearest love.

[2.] In effecting this restoration without the perpetual prejudice of the mediator, and with his great honour and advantage. Had our sins been transferred upon an angel, he must have lain for ever plunged in that misery, for since his nature was not infinite to render his satisfaction infinite, an infinite duration of his sufferings was necessary to make that satisfaction valid, which his nature being finite was too weak to do. But the Son of God suffers a short time, to have an eternal glory for himself in his human nature as well as for his brethren. A satisfaction for sin is procured without a total

destruction of the person satisfying; for such an one was designed by the infinite wisdom of God, whom it was 'impossible for the bands of death to hold,' Acts ii. 24. His death, the punishment of sin, is but of a short duration in regard of the pains, yet eternal in regard of efficacy for those ends for which it was intended; God's glory is restored, man's happiness secured, without a perpetual impairing the mediator, but with an eternal exaltation of him.

[3.] In frustrating the subtlety of Satan. The devil thought he had brought a total destruction upon mankind, when he persuaded our first parents to eat of the forbidden fruit. But God orders it to bring about a greater glory to himself, and a firmer stability to his people, in introducing an everlasting covenant founded in a mediator, which could not be broken, and establishing their happiness upon surer terms than it was settled on in paradise, and afterwards outwits the devil in ordering him to be instrumental to that which he designed to hinder; for while he is filling the heart of Judas to betray Christ, and egging the heart of the Jews to crucify him, God, by his wisdom, over-rules him to a subserviency to his own glorious end, for by that very way he thought to stifle the good of mankind, he occasionally promotes their perpetual redemption. God turned the subtlety of the devil to his own praise, bruised the devil's head by letting him bruise the mediator's heel, and made his malice conduce to the restoration of mankind from that ruin he had before by a prosperous subtlety effected. God, by a mysterious wisdom, more signal than all that in the creation, gained the victory over the devil, who had defaced his work, and gave man also a victory over the tempter, who had depraved his soul.

[4.] In the propagating this means of the discovery of himself. The wisdom as well as the power of God is discovered in using the most unlikely means to bring about his great ends, as the skill of a man is more evident in the moving great bodies by small engines and wires, than if he engaged in it a strength proportionable to the vastness of the body he would move. God hath spread abroad this knowledge by such means as the world counts foolishness, and by such persons as are no better than fools in their esteem, 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. He lodged his treasures of wisdom first in vessels of earth, bended the world to himself by the sermons of fishermen, enlightened the world by men unskilful in the affairs of it; chooseth not to this purpose the cedars of Lebanon, but the shrubs of the valley; not the learned pharisees of Jerusalem, but the poor men of Galilee, whose education was not capable to ennoble their minds, and fit them for such great actions as they were employed in. But 'out of the mouths of such babes and sucklings he ordains praise' to his own wisdom, and makes the world know that 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men,' 1 Cor. i. 25. Now, what is the frame of heaven and earth to this? Just as his wisdom is in making a clod of earth to that which appears in the fabric of a man, or his yet more glorious wisdom in the frame of an angel. In the creation it is like a sunbeam through the chink of a wall in comparison of this, which, like the sun, faceth us in a brighter glory. There is counsel as well as will in the minute passages of providence, but a more glorious workmanship of wisdom in the discovery of Christ.

(4.) The justice of God is more evidenced than by all other judgments in this world, or that which is to come. God would be acknowledged in his justice after the fall, which was not known, and could not be known, in an innocent state any other way than in the threatening; God would therefore have bloody sacrifices which might signify man's demerit, and therefore, probably, God was displeased with Cain for offering only the fruits of the earth,

whereby he only acknowledged God's dominion and bounty, but not God's justice and his own offence, which required a bloody sacrifice; he did not acknowledge the rights of justice and the necessity of a mediator to bear his sin. Whence Abel, who offered a more significant sacrifice, is said, Heb. xi. 4, to 'offer a more excellent sacrifice,' *πλείονα θυσίαν*. And his justice was never so evident as in Christ crucified; he chose his Son to lay upon him the guilt of the world, subjected him in the state of a criminal, depressed him to the condition of a servant, sunk him into the misery of rebels, caused him to swallow the disgraces of men, and drink down the vials of his anger, rather than the sin of the world should boast of impunity, and men presume to think him disarmed of his justice. What if the whole world was drowned by a wrathful deluge, Sodom and Gomorrah consumed to ashes by a shower of fire? What if every son of Adam were to lie roaring in endless torments? What if not an angel in heaven had escaped the sin and punishment of devils? What if this world were multiplied into millions, what if every man upon earth, and every angel in heaven, were multiplied into thousands of millions of men and angels? What if every spire of grass, grain of corn, atom of sand, were made a rational creature, and for sin thrown for ever into devouring flames? Is not here inexpressible justice? But what is this justice upon creatures which were made, to that justice upon his Son, by whom he made the creatures? What is this to the Son of God trailing a weak body for thirty-three years in the world, suffering the indignities of men and devils, bearing the weight of an infinite wrath? What are all other judgments to his bloody sweat in the garden, or the groans of this divine person upon the cross, of more worth than innumerable worlds of creatures? Who ever knew before the power of God's wrath? Ps. xc. 11. For as there is no proportion of creatures to God, so there is no proportion of the death of the Son of God for a time, to the death of all men and angels together. Consider the circumstances to render the justice of God more visible.

[1.] He was innocent in his own person. He was beloved by his Father, had never displeased him; the sins he suffered for were none of his own by commission, he made them his own by a voluntary submission, and God made them his own by a penal infliction. God would have sin punished in the person of our surety, though he was his only begotten and perfectly innocent Son.

[2.] He was willing to pay the debt. He offered himself up with a design to glorify his Father, to restore the creation to its former loveliness, to renew the delight that God had in his works when he pronounced them good, a consideration which one would think might sweeten the severest justice; yet nothing abated him, he must groan and bleed to death.

[3.] Yet he endured sorrows unexpressible. The powers of darkness had their hour against him, all the curses of the law were thundered out against him, while he was clothed in the garb of a sinner, as if when he had been leading to the cross, God had particularly spoken that word to him, 'Cursed is he that hangs upon a tree,' Gal. iii. 13. He was condemned and tormented by his servants, and those whose salvation he sought and designed; he was subject to that which no man, no, not the wickedest man, had ever endured in this life: the heavens were darkened upon him, earth forsaking him, none seemed to have pity upon him; 'terrors took hold upon him, and pursued his soul as the wind; his soul was poured out in him, his bones were pierced, and his sinews took no rest,' Job xxx. 15-17. He had an angel to comfort him, but with no commission to remove the cup from him that his Father held out for him to drink. What a demonstration of the justice of God is here: that he in whom all nations of the earth were to be blessed, whom the

angels in heaven bless, the saints on earth bless, yea, and is the blessed of his Father, yet is made a curse by him!

[4.] Deserted by his Father. His prayers were not answered for deliverance, not the least ear lent to his cries in his weightiest distresses. He was deserted as to the comforts of a Father, to be given up to the strokes of his wrath, as if he had discarded all bowels of compassion towards him. God dealt not with him as a Father, but as a God of justice; whence Christ upon the cross calls not upon God by the name of Father, which was his wonted custom, and as he had used that title in the garden, but by the name of God: 'My God, my God.' God became as it were cruel to him, and 'with strong hands opposed himself against him,' Job xxx. 21. Nay, God regarded him not, as if he were for a time ashamed to acknowledge him for his Son. And when they taunted him upon the cross, 'He trusted in God, let him deliver him, seeing he trusted in him,' though they reflected upon the name and glory of God, he would not at present take notice of the sufferings of his own name in the reproaches of the Jews, nor remit upon that score anything of his indignation against the sins of men, when it was the fittest time to vindicate his Son's innocence, because for this he was condemned, his making himself the Son of God. But he was so intent upon revenging sin imputed to his Son, that he regarded not the present actual indignity offered to himself, so that our Saviour himself seems to be astonished at his Father's silence in such a case, since his words, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' are uttered a little after that reproach of the Jews in the story, Mat. xxvi. 43, 46. This was the highest act of justice that the arm of God could put forth, to make the soul of his dearly beloved an offering for sin, whereby he manifested that without blood there could be no atonement, Heb. x. 7. And since no other blood had a sufficiency in it to quench the flames of his justice, God would single out the best blood in the whole creation wherewith to satisfy it; a blood though created, yet the blood of the Creator. Never could earth or hell read such a lecture of divine justice as in this case. For if God should damn thousands of worlds, his justice would be glorified, but in a company of little creatures; it would be but a devouring a few drops of a bucket.* But in Christ it is glorified in the man that is his fellow, Zech. xiii. 7. It is a stronger testimony of a prince's justice to condemn his son, his only son, for a crime, than to condemn a shiftless and friendless creature that hath not wherewithal to live. This doth manifest God's nature to be as just as it is gracious, that he will be as severely intent upon the punishing obstinate offenders, as he will be graciously intent upon the pardoning penitent sinners. It is equally incredible to the presumptuous sinner to believe God severely just, as to an humble soul to believe God magnificently gracious. It is not without cause therefore that the apostle doth urge his discourse of the justice of God on Christ, and thereupon the justification of believers, with a repetition: Rom. iii. 25, 'To declare, to declare, I say, his righteousness.' For in Christ we see God doth declare as well the rigours of his justice as the grandeurs of his love; for that sin should not be pardoned without punishment in his Son, is the height of justice; that he should expose his Son as a sacrifice for rebels, it is riches of grace. It is clear that justice in God is his essence, not, as in us, a quality; and that he is to sinners a consuming fire. The knowledge of God, as thus represented in Christ, should stop the course of a daring sinner. God had not contrived the death of his Son but for the declaring his justice as well as magnifying his grace. The knowledge of God in his justice, on Christ is comfortable to a believer; and the more, since

* Gurnal, part ii. p. 658, somewhat changed.

that perfection of God which is most terrible is rendered a foundation of joy, for God is gracious in being righteous: Ps. cxvi. 5, 'Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.' If he had not been righteous in his Son, we cannot conceive how with honour he could have been merciful to us. The severity of his justice on Christ glorifies the greatness of his grace to the believer. By how much the punishment on Christ was the sharper, by so much his mercy to the believer is the fuller. This vindictive justice is joined with his pardoning mercy, Exod. xxxiv.; because his not clearing the guilty illustrates his pardoning the guilty upon the account of the Surety. It is a foundation of a plea for every believer. The justice of God hath drunk up the blood of Christ as a full satisfaction; it is therefore glorified in the highest manner, whereas in the damnation of men the debt had been always paying and never paid; and so justice had been always satisfying and never satisfied, and so had been always glorifying and never fully glorified. But here the debt is paid, and justice hath no more to demand; whereas in the other it would have been always receiving and always demanding more, because the payment could never have amounted to a full sum. In the punishment of creatures, justice would have had its due by parcels, but in Christ it hath its full demand; and this may be pleaded with God by a believer. This is the knowledge of God we have by Christ, which is as terrible to any impenitent as it is comfortable to a penitent believer.

(5.) The holiness of God is manifested by Christ. His justice is founded in his holiness: 'The holy God is sanctified in righteousness,' Isa. v. 16. His holiness is illustrated by his justice; he is exalted in judgment and sanctified in righteousness. Had not Christ died upon the cross, we had not had a discovery of the ingratitude and baseness there was in the first sin against God and in all that followed it; nor could we have had so full a prospect of the holiness and purity of God's nature as in the dreadful punishment of Christ for sin, because sin never appeared in its blackest and bloodiest colours, and nothing was ever able to shew us the true tincture of sin comparably to the blood of the Son of God. This perfection did sparkle in the commands of the law, which he gave angels and men for the rule of their obedience. The constancy of this holiness appeared in the renewing the law in tables of stone to the Jews, adding thereunto the ceremonial law, made up of sacrifices of beasts for the expiation of sin, as typical of a greater sacrifice, whereby he would declare that he would never be pleased with iniquity. But this manifestation was with a fainter light than in a crucified Christ. If ever sin appeared odious, it was in the death of his Son. Here we see nothing but frowns and displeasures against the breach of his righteous law, his detestation of sin to be as great as his indignation, his hatred of it to be as infinite as his wrath against it, both joining hand in hand together to declare the contrariety between the beauty of the one and deformity of the other, striking it to the heart, and condemning it for ever to that death and dissolution the greatness of the evil had merited, and publishing an irreconcilable enmity to the filthiness and loathsomeness of it, shewing that he would rather have his Son die than sin live. He never declared the heinousness of sin in itself, and its hatefulness to himself, so much by all the vials of judgments poured out upon the world, by all the flames and torments of hell, as by the humiliation, groans, and sufferings of his only Son. That was the hatred of sin in the persons of his creatures, this his hatred of it in the person of the man his fellow, bearing his indignation for sins never committed by him, wherein he was both 'white and ruddy,' Cant. v. 10, an innocent and a sufferer; pure in innocence and ruddy with blood. It was the intention of God to manifest

his holiness and his justice in this affair. When he was accused—Mal. ii. 17, 'Every one that doth evil is good in his sight'—that he delighted in evil men, and had stripped himself of his holiness and justice, and seemed to countenance the wicked in his providential dispensations, the answer the prophet by the Spirit of God gives to this charge is, Mal. iii. 1, that the Lord should come into his temple (a place approved to Christ in the Gospel), whereby I shall make a full discovery that I neither delight in evil nor will suffer it to go unpunished. And by righteousness which God declares in the death of Christ, Rom. iii. 26, some understand the holiness of God, which is evidenced by his being just and a justifier. He is first just, that he may, with the honour of his holiness and justice, justify the sinner believing in Christ, whence the great praises of God in the Revelations, as well as in Isaiah vi., a gospel vision, are for this perfection of holiness, Rev. iv. 8, xv. 4. And herein the holiness of God may be considered with delight, which did before affright the sinner, and make him deplore the impossibility of his own or any other's standing before so pure a majesty, 1 Sam. vi. 20. It is not only discovered in Christ, but honoured; and justice, the fruit of it, being satisfied, both smile upon men capacitated by Christ to stand comfortably before both of them. It is declared also in setting us so exact a pattern as the holy of holies visibly for our imitation in all ways of humility, self-denial, obedience, and love to God. The sum is this: Though God had manifested the purity of his nature in his threatening annexed to the law, and in the punishment of man after he had sinned, and in the law by the sacrifices of beasts, yet these manifested God's hatred of sin very little in comparison of the death of his Son. God being more willing to punish sin in his Son than to leave it unpunished, shews an extreme hatred of iniquity.*

(6.) The veracity and truth of God is manifested in Christ. Christ 'gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,' 1 Tim. ii. 6, τὸ μαρτύριον, for a testimony (it is a noun, not a verb): a testimony not only of his grace, and the abundant goodness of God in redemption, that he would have all men to be saved, ver. 4, excluding none who have the conditions of faith and repentance; but also a testimony of the truth of his first promise, constituting him the only mediator as the seed of the woman. His passion was a testimony of the veracity of God in that promise whereby it was accomplished. 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,' John i. 17; grace in regard of our pardon, truth in the regard of the promise. This attribute was highly discovered, in making good the promise of the seed of the woman, after so many revolutions of time, weary expectations of his coming, contrary appearances, a stay of four thousand years between the promise and the performance; whereby the faith of the ancient believer was almost nonplussed, had not God supported it by a succession of prophetic predictions, as assurances that he would make good his word; all which were to the utmost point fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ. His veracity, in the promises of assistance made to Christ in this great undertaking, which were the objects of our Saviour's confidence: Isa. i. 7, 9, 'The Lord God will help me;' which were accomplished in bearing up the human nature under such a sea and load of sufferings, making his arm bare rather than his truth should sink in the promises made either to his Son or his creatures.

Veracity in his threatenings; he had declared in paradise his certain resolution to punish the violations of his law, which he could not recede from, without making a breach upon the holiness of the Deity. This threatening, which Satan had made man believe that God would falsify, he kept up without any spot upon his truth, any breach of his word, and yet disap-

* Mestrezat in Heb. i. 3, pp. 98, 99.

pointed the devil of the great end he aimed at in his lie. He makes in Christ the threatenings of the law and the promises of the gospel kiss each other; both live comfortably together, and the honour of his truth is preserved in both, which have contrary aspects, as far distant as heaven and earth, east and west in the furthest points, so that it was an impossibility in the judgment of men, that God could be true to himself, and be merciful to men, if he were immutably true to his threatening. God starts not one step from his word, breaks not one tittle of his righteous commination; his threatenings are as certain as they are dreadful, and rather than one iota of them shall pass away, or be accounted an empty word, or a copy of his countenance, he will give up his Son for the breach of that law to which his sharp threatening was annexed. Herein the immutability of God is declared to be as great in his will as in his nature. It is impossible for him to lie, though for the saving his Son from death; which gives us such a representation of God in the infallibility of his promises, as affords us a strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. The soul that knows Christ cannot but without scruple rest upon his word, and think nothing more becoming him than to credit God, who hath been punctual in keeping his word, though the relation of a Son, the miseries to be endured by this Son of his love, and also the yearnings of his bowels, stood in the way to move him to a breach of his word, had it been possible; and since God hath not the same reason to fall back from this word of promise (which is a demonstration of his goodness natural to him), as he seems to have had to fall back from that wherein his justice, his strange work was to be manifested, the soul is carried out to a reliance on him beyond any rational possibility of a doubt. If ever he would have denied himself, it would have been in the case of his Son, whose prayer for the passing away of the cup could not make him alter one tittle of what had passed from his lips. When his own glory in the good of his creature was concerned, he could not deny himself, 1 Tim. ii. 13; no, nor in the concerns of his Son. He hath hereby declared, that if he be wanting to his faithfulness, he would be wanting to his nature; and to break his word, would be to deny his deity; which is such a discovery of God, as dreadful to an impenitent, as delightful to a believer; for he hath manifested his truth to be as much his nature, as his holiness, grace, and justice.

(7.) The power of God is manifested in Christ. Hence Christ is called 'the power of God,' as well as 'the wisdom of God,' 1 Cor. i. 24. Not only in the fruits of the gospel upon the hearts of men, but in his office, wherein was manifested the power of God in redeeming the world. It was in him God tore up the foundations of the devil's empire, disarmed all the curses of the law, overthrew the false conceits of the world, knocked off the fetters of their captivity, demolished the power of death, snatched souls from the flames of hell, unbarred the gates of heaven, prepared everlasting mansions, 'laid his beams in the waters,' the foundations of an happy eternity in the misery, afflictions, death, blood of his only Son. He restored man to glory by weakness, to wisdom by foolishness; he made the law lose its sting in the sides of him whom it struck, took away our captivity by misery, flung death to the ground by death, quenched hell by its own flames, opened heaven by a cross, cemented an everlasting habitation by blood, and condemned sin by a sacrifice for it. By a crucified man, and a weak flesh encompassed with infirmity, the God of heaven subdues the god of the world, destroys the empire of the proud spirits, and subdues principalities and powers under his feet, who besides their usurped authority had a vast ambition to preserve it, and a strength and subtlety unconquerable by the power of man; and hereby shews, that no evil was so great but his almighty arm could put in

execution, what his immense wisdom had provided as a remedy against it. By his strength he gives a being to his own word and promise, when neither angels nor man could conceive the methods of the execution, even after the promise of bruising Satan by the seed of the woman was declared. It is seen in raising Christ from the dead, after he had sustained the weight of the sin of the world upon him, and bringing him forth with success and glory, after that great encounter with the powers of hell; which power is called 'the glory of the Father:' Rom. vi. 4, 'As Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father,' διὰ δόξης; *by the glory of the Father*, as noting the efficient cause, or *to the glory of the Father*, as noting the final cause, being for the glory of God's power. In powerfully raising a church to him from the seed of his blood, in spite of all spiritual and secular enemies, defending it and supporting it under the most terrible waves of the world, that he might be acknowledged, adored, and praised in this world, and that which is to come. The power of God is not so manifest in laying the foundation of the earth, stretching out the heavens, turning the wheel of providence, as in this, which is the topstone of all his providences in the world, to which they tend, and wherein they centre. 'Twice we have heard that power belongs to God,' Ps. lxii. 11, 12. 'Also unto thee, O Lord, belongs mercy.' Once we have heard of it in creation; more gloriously in the work of redemption, wherein his power and his grace were linked together, as well as in creation his power and his goodness. And this is a comfortable manifestation of God, his power is as great as his mercy, and they join hands together. His power is known in Christ to be able to save us without giving his enemies any ground to reproach him; and his mercy is made known, whereby he is willing to save us.

Use. If the true and saving knowledge of God is only in and by Jesus Christ, it will afford us matter for our,

I. Information, and it informs us,

1. Of the insufficiency of reason without revelation. Though there be some relics of the law of nature, like Seth's pillars, standing in the heart, the mind of man paved with some broken pieces of the tables of the law, yet among all those fragments there is not one that hath the inscription of Christ the mediator upon it. Nature never preached the doctrine of a Saviour, and the necessity of faith; and therefore by all the endowments of nature the soul cannot be informed of the true nature of God. Mere reason in innocency was never a key fitted to all the wards of divine mysteries. The beauty of God is not discerned in the same way as we discern the beauty of nature. Reason, though it be 'the candle of the Lord,' Prov. xx. 27, yet it is but a candle, and can no more discover the nature of God as he is to be known in Christ, than a candle can help us to see the sun when it is masked by a thick cloud. We cannot comprehend what is revealed of God in the creature, much less can we arrive to that by our own reason, which no creature under heaven, nor in heaven, of the highest endowments, can make known to us without a revelation from God. Reason presents us but with some dark shadows or notions of God only.

(1.) Reason is blind in the things of God. Can we render a satisfactory reason of anything under our feet, and thoroughly uncipher the characters of nature? How can we then unlock the cabinet of God? If we understand not what is below us, how can we understand what is above us? If we could picture the soul of man in his lapsed state, it must be painted without eyes, covered with a thick mist, more crooked in his will and affections than anything can be misshapen and monstrous under the heavens. A clear-eyed

reason can only be in an uncorrupted soul. Never speak of right reason in the things of God without a supernatural illumination, and the guidance of revelation, till you can shew a soul free from all manner of corruption, as white as snow, and as innocent as a standing angel. Since the fall there is as little of pure reason in our minds, as there is of an exact holiness in our will, and the Spirit is as necessary to enlighten the one as to incline the other, the one being as full of prejudices and mistaken principles as the other of corrupt and perverse habits. Hence man is represented in Scripture, Eph. iv. 17-19, with a mind as vain as his will is crooked, an understanding as much darkened towards God as his will is alienated from the life of God, as great a blindness of heart as there is madness of affection, and therefore the apostle gives it no better a title than darkness, Eph. v. 8, comprehending thereby the race of all mankind naturally. And what can better express the deplorable nature of the mind and reason, which so many men are proud of, than darkness, the horror of the world, the cloud to the beauty of it, the distracter of the fancy, and the spring of fears? It is by darkness we are blinded from seeing the comeliness of things in the world; it is in darkness we have the most affrighting fancies; and such a dismal thing is man fallen, without any power to open his own eyes, without any more ability to become light in the Lord than darkness hath to change itself into the light of the sun. Man is said to have no more understanding in regard of the spiritual things of God than a beast, Ps. xlix. 20. Not a man as considered in Adam, and upon that root, that understands God, Rom. iii. 17. He is blind as to the object which he was created to know and contemplate. The world, by all 'the wisdom of God' discovered in the creation, 'knew not God,' 1 Cor. i. 21. By all those things wherein the wisdom of God appeared in creation and providence, in regard of the order, harmony, beauty, and effects of them, the world, with all their reasons and speculations, were ignorant of God. All worldly wisdom cannot remove that darkness which is upon the understanding as to heavenly things; for the corruption like smoke rising up still from the furnace of that hell in the heart, darkens the heavens from our sight, and it is as impossible that we should know God while our corruption remains in its full force, as that an eye, bemisted by an uninterrupted succession of thick vapours from other parts of the body, can clearly behold any object. Peter, whose eyes were something opened, thought he had great reason to dissuade Christ from suffering, but his Master sharply rebukes him, and tells him he did not 'savour the things of God,' Mat. xvi. 23, he understood not the nature and design of God. The blindness of reason is seen, by considering that most of the reason we have in the world is the fruit of education. What a miserable thing would a man be, if he were bred up among beasts in a desert! What a stupid statue of a man would he be, rather than a man! There is no knowledge of God, man since the fall can lay claim to by his own reason, without some common illumination. We know nothing of God by the creatures, but as God spreads an inward light upon the mind. In nature there is a manifestation *in us*, as well as a manifestation *to us*, Rom. i. 19, yet it is a common illumination.

(2.) Reason is uncertain. It is a wandering vagabond, coins lies, and reports falsities as truths. Is it not more often deceived in things of a divine concern which are above our natural capacity, than the sense is in sensible objects, which often mistakes things because of their distance? Is not the whole scene of nature troubled with janglings and controversies? What knowledge is there in the world that is not perplexed with a thousand doubts? Is not that interest, education, and often passion, which we call

reason? Are not our minds often seduced by our humours, and drawn aside by a faction of passions? How can that mind which is swayed by the bestial part of man frame right notions of God? Do the beasts that perish understand him? And man is no better since the fall. Is the knowledge of God bred and nourished by flesh and blood? Some of the heathens were so sensible of this uncertainty, that they counted it their only knowledge, that they knew nothing as they ought to know; and some of them believed that God from heaven could only be the revealer of truth. So much are men's thoughts entangled in divine things.

(3.) Reason in a natural man is an enemy to the knowledge of God in Christ. It receives not the light that shines upon it, John i. 5. It offers a strong resistance, it reflects it back, as a stone wall doth the beams of the sun, without suffering the light to pierce into any part of it. It is from hence the gospel hath not the same advantage upon men, as things of a moral concern, which are written in the law and have a counterpart in the remainders of the law of nature in the heart of a man. But the gospel finds nothing of kin to it in the soul, but rather principles that oppose it; the mysteries of Christ, wherein the grace, justice, wisdom of God are discovered, seem foolishness to a natural mind. It seems to them a folly to imagine, that God should put his Son to death for the demonstration of his justice, that man should be justified by his blood; and upon this account it is that the apostle saith, 1 Cor. ii. 14, that 'a natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.' He doth not say a *carnal* man, but an *animal*, a *soully* man; he doth not speak of one led by the affections of the flesh, but those wise men that are led by flashy reason, and by the common estimated wisdom and principles of the world, and order their lives according to the rational dictates of the world; such an one 'receives not the things of the Spirit of God,' he doth not say receives not the things of God, for he knows something of God; but not the things of the Spirit of God, *i. e.* he knows not God evangelically, embraceth not, apprehends not, affects not, the knowledge of God in Christ in the gospel spirit. The reason is, because 'they are foolishness to him.' If the apostle meant a man wallowing in sensual pleasures, and conducted by his bestial appetite, he might rather say, Such an one receives them not because they savour of wisdom, because they are against the pleasures of the flesh, than because he accounts them foolish; but he is one given to the study of wisdom, and disaffects them, because he thinks them contrary to that which he thinks wisdom, to that which hath prepossessed his mind. No sensual man in the world can in his own judgment and conscience disapprove of things morally good, and known so by the common light of nature as foolish; but such an one rejects and hates the knowledge of God in the gospel; for as a rich man hates nothing more than poverty, a sensual man nothing more than a seriousness and sobriety of life, so a wise man hates nothing more than that which he thinks to be folly. With what contempt did the Athenians reject the doctrine Paul preached to them, under no civiler a title than that of babbling! Acts xvii. 18. Carnal reason is the most furious beast in the world. A natural wise man is too lofty to know God in divine methods, who is best discerned in a way of humility and self-denial. And at the best, the notions of God, by the representations of reason without Christ, lose much of their majesty, beauty, and commanding power over the hearts of men, they are weak and faint, for it is a representation by a declining and disproportioned light.

From what has been said in this case, it follows,

(1.) That there is a necessity of revelation and illumination. There

must be first an external revelation of the object; and secondly, an internal illumination of the faculty. There is a *word* of revelation, which is the gospel revealed to the understandings of men; there is a *Spirit* of revelation requisite besides, which the apostle begs for the Ephesians, who had the object already revealed to them, that their understandings might be further enlightened, Eph. i. 17; so that the further understanding of God and his mysteries in the gospel, after the first illumination, is not a work of the bare reason and understanding of man, without further operations of the Spirit in and upon them.

Suppose that the light of reason were come to that point, to know that our chief good consisted in communion with God,* yet no man could know that God was of such a gracious and condescending nature, and were willing to communicate himself in the choicest manner, since man was a sinner and had incurred his wrath and malediction, without some divine revelation which must discover God to be of such an encouraging nature.

(2.) We ought to submit our reason to revelation. God doth not give us reason to quarrel with, but to discern and entertain divine revelation. He hath given us reason to examine revelations, whether they bear a divine stamp upon them. He hath not therefore imposed things upon men without undeniable characters of their divine authority. Whatsoever hath been revealed which reason could not of itself reach, has been attended with miracles which could not be wrought by any created power, and bore the marks of omnipotency upon them. We have not reason to comprehend all the parts of divine revelation, shall we therefore deny it to be from God? Adam, and the angels, too, in heaven, may with as much reason turn atheists because they cannot comprehend God. Some truths revealed may, if not be formally demonstrated by reason, yet receive some clearness and evidence from it after they are revealed. But as Adam had, and the angels have, clear reason to prove to themselves, and experience too, that there is a God, though they cannot fathom the infinite depths of his nature; so there is clear reason to manifest the Scripture which gives us a declaration of Christ to be the revelation of God, though we cannot grasp all the parts of that divine revelation, and make every *thesis* therein clear to a natural reason. There are such arguments for it that contradicting ingenious reason cannot but be startled at. We ought therefore to submit our reasonings to God's declaration. The rational creature was made to serve God. His reason, then, ought to be held in the rank of a servant; the light of reason ought to veil to the author of reason, and the light in the mind ought to veil to him who enlightened it when man came into the world. Reason ought to follow faith, not precede it. The stars borrow their light from the sun, not the sun from the stars. Reason, indeed, may come in with an auxiliary force after a revelation is made, for the maintaining the truth of it, and clearing it up to the minds of others, and may be a servant to revelation now under Christ, as well as it should have been to any revelation in the state of innocence. We ought therefore to submit our reason to God, not think to mate him in knowledge any more than we can in majesty and infiniteness, nor set up a spark to vie with the sun. Pride put out Adam's eye at first; and the pride of reason cherished will continue us as blind as beetles in the things of a heavenly concern.

2. Information. The excellency of the gospel and Christian religion. The Christian religion is a perspective wherewith to look to heaven, it presents us with that knowledge of God which neither all the angels in heaven, nor creatures upon earth, were ever able without Christ to convey

* Mestrezat.

to us. Christ's being the image of God is a reason why the gospel is so glorious, 2 Cor. iv. 4, 1 Tim. i. 11. It is called 'the glorious gospel of the blessed God,' wherein the glory of God's perfection shines forth, because in that Christ is made known to us, and in him the beauty of God is displayed to our view. The knowledge of God in nature was in darkness, in the law it was in shadows, in the gospel it is in light. In nature it was a light as at midnight, under the law as in the dawning, in the gospel as at sun-rising; for by reason the knowledge was by candle-light, in the law by torch-light, in the gospel by a sunbeam. The doctrine of the Trinity, obscurely delivered in the Old Testament, is more cleared up since the coming of the Messiah, which could never have been found out by reason, nor yet can be demonstrated by reason, though it be capable to furnish us with some illustrations of it. The heathens disputed about God, and the Christians know him. It answers the ends of all religion. Religion respects God; it must have the knowledge of God therefore for a foundation. If it hath not the right knowledge of God, it is superstition. All true religion conduceth to the creature's duty and happiness; our duty and happiness is to know and love God. This religion only gives us a knowledge of God honourable to him, and presents us with inducements to love him comfortable to ourselves; and whatsoever makes God known to man in his own glory, and for man's comfort, is certainly in reason the most excellent religion. Whatsoever renders God venerable and amiable to the minds of men is true; for it cannot be supposed that infinite goodness should create the world, and communicate itself with a design to be hated and condemned by his creatures, but to be feared and loved. Whatsoever therefore doth present God in the richest streams of goodness to the creature, with honour to himself, hath truth for the foundation of it.

(1.) This religion represents God with honour. It renders God as just as merciful, and as merciful as just. It sets forth the riches of the one without darkening the glory of the other. It presents God in the depths of his wisdom, heights of his love, equity of his justice, stability of his truth, beauty of his holiness, wonders of his patience, and glory of his power, without offering violence to any principle of reason. The gospel is most divine in the articles to be believed of God, most magnificent in its promises, unquestionably holy and advantageous to the world in its precepts. It unveils a God to encourage to duty, and twists our duty with God's honour. What can be more reasonable? or how can the creature honour God more than to fear his justice, trust in his goodness, turn to him because of his mercy, depend upon his truth, and glorify his grace, accept of a righteousness from him, and be freed from guilt by him? It pulls the creature from itself to make it all in and by God. It brings God to the state of a God, and the creature to a creature's posture; it sets God upon his throne and the creature at his feet, exalts heaven and depresseth earth. It shews us that God is all our repose, that our rest and felicity is to love him. It shews us the unreasonableness and folly of our natural conceits of God. It discourages everything that hinders us from a conjunction with him; instructs us to abhor everything that made our separation from him, to embrace everything that may further our return to him, and renders man incapable of any centre, any end by himself, any repose but in him. Where is God set out more illustriously, and with greater incitements to love him? Since his love to man hath reached the highest point, what is wanting to heat us, what is wanting to inflame us? But do we not disgrace this honourable religion by not elevating our souls to God, having hearts as cold as ice, and like salamanders, that cannot burn in the midst of such a fire?

(2.) It represents God with unspeakable comfort to the creature. The first notions of God in the gospel flash like lightning with comfort upon the disconsolate soul. He discovers himself as a Father of mercy, because the Father of Christ; as a God of tenderness and consolation; as a God that would enter into the heart with all his sweetness if we would but open; would spread his wings over our souls and dwell in the midst of us, unite us in eternal bands to himself. He sends to us 'the express image of his person,' Heb. i. 3, one of his own nature to take ours, that we may freely converse with him in that image, which we could not immediately with God because of the distance of our nature. A communion between man and a creature of different nature is hard; man cannot converse with an angel or a beast, much less with God. But the Godhead holds out his hand in the humanity of Christ, to take us by the hand and lead us into his chambers. In Christ, God condescends to shew his face to the creature, whereby he renders his nature amiable, and the believing creature comfortable. There is such a knowledge of God in it as can comfort a man upon a deathbed, appease his conscience, direct his eye to a delightful sight of another world, make him embrace death with joy; such advantages as the knowledge of God, in the whole book of nature, all political skill, and the choicest speculations, cannot afford a man. These things delight him at present, help him to pass his life with some content, but are unable to administer the least cordial dram at a dying hour. In other religions we may know something of God, little of our own misery, nothing of a remedy; but in the gospel we know God, ourselves, our misery, and our medicine. We see a God fit to be trusted by us, one that hath given the greatest evidence of his care of the world. No stronger testimony can be given than his sending his Son to declare it; acting so about his Son, and in his Son. Who can question the providence of God, and his taking care of human affairs? Who can dispute the tenderness of his bowels, when he hath writ his care and compassions in the blood of his only begotten?

▶ (3.) The knowledge of God in Christ hath in the gospel been mighty successful. Whatsoever discovery of God was among the heathens before the manifestation of Christ did soon veil to that which was discovered by him. The idols fell down at his feet, Dagon gave way to the ark, and that which was limited to the Jewish nation extended itself to the utmost bounds of the earth, and brought people to the acknowledgment of one God in his glory and sovereignty, as it had been predicted: Zech. xiv. 9, 'And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.' The mountain of the Lord's house was lifted up above all the idolatrous mountains, and the whole frame of idolatry the devil had erected and preserved so many ages in the world against the traditions left by Adam was demolished; and so much hath God been discovered in his truth, that not one of those heathen idols, so much famed in their writers, is acknowledged for a god in any part of the world. In the eastern parts, indeed, they have some idols where the Christian religion is expired, but the names of Jupiter, Apollo, &c., are wholly buried among those nations that before adored them, and scarce any part of the world that we know of doth acknowledge now a multiplicity of gods. The discovery of Christ hath been the cause of this. The Turks, who acknowledge Mahomet for a prophet, yet acknowledge him not for a god. The true God, that had been cast out of the world by the subtlety of the devil, and had confined himself in his worship to the small spot of Judea, is restored by Christ to the knowledge of men, and to a worship due to him, and the adored idols sunk at the foot of the cross. The knowledge of God covered the earth in respect of plenty and abundance, as the waters cover

the sea; superstition was demolished, and errors about God dispersed. Hath not, then, the gospel and the Christian religion the greatest trophies? Can anything claim an equal honour with it? Is there any religion in the world whereby God hath been so fully discovered, restored to his right, to that right which the common reason of the world must acknowledge due to God? It hath defaced no notions of God which were according to true reason, but cleared them, given us the reasons of those proceedings of God, obscure before, and added a worthy and satisfactory account of God, which innocent reason could not reach, and the most corrupted reason hath no firm ground to quarrel with; all which cannot be ascribed to any other profession in the world but the Christian. This is the glory of the gospel, this is the fruit of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

3. Information. How inexcusable is the ignorance of God in them that hear so often! God was but faintly discovered in the creatures, in the Jewish time was obscured by shadows, but that which was a mystery in former ages is clearly revealed, so that there is now no mysteriousness in the nature of God, so far as to hinder our direction to a happy enjoyment of him. The things of God are as plain as the sun, so that whatsoever ignorance there is of him under the preaching of the gospel is not invincible, but affected. Every man under the gospel may be greater in point of knowledge than John the Baptist. Shall any man behold the beams of the sun every day, and not cast his eyes up to see that body from whence they shoot? With what face can we call ourselves Christians, if we have no desire to know God as revealed in Christ? Shall we worship a God we know not? Are we created by God and preserved by God, yet are content to be wilfully ignorant of him, to whom we owe our being and preservation? Can we pretend any affections to him whom we desire not to understand? A worse charge will be brought against, and a sharper punishment inflicted on, such, than upon the heathens, who were 'given up to a reprobate mind,' because they 'liked not to retain God in their knowledge,' Rom. i. 28, when it was a knowledge only by the dim light of creatures. What do they deserve that will not embrace nor retain the knowledge of God by a clearer light in Christ? It was the end of the whole creation to point us to God, Ps. xix. civ.; it was the end of the work of redemption to bring us to an acquaintance with God. By a wilful ignorance of God, we cross both the end of creation and redemption, and slight God as our first maker, benefactor, and restorer. He that doth not know God in Christ has no true knowledge of God absolutely, because it is no God as conceived by him, and packed together of various inventions of his own; it is not a God according to Christ's revelations, but his own imagination and fancy.

II. Use of exhortation.

1. Let those that have the knowledge of God in Christ bless him for it. The seventh day was appointed to bless God for the discovery of his goodness and other perfections in the creation. The first day is ordained wherein we should bless God for the discovery of his perfections in redemption. The 'name of Christ' should be as an ointment poured forth, Cant. i. 3; we should delight in the fragrancy, and praise him for the odours and savours of it. The patriarchs had a knowledge of Christ, and therefore a knowledge of God afar off, Heb. xi. 13; they saw the promises afar off (*i. e.* the promises of the Messiah), obscure and dark: men have not a distinct sight of the objects they see at a distance. What reason have we to render the praise due to the name of God for bringing us, as it were, to see him face to face! Christ bestows a blessing upon such, which was denied to many prophets and kings, referring to the knowledge of the Father by his revelation of him,

Luke x. 22–24, as though the old believers saw nothing nor heard anything, yet they that were pronounced blessed then had not seen Christ dying and rising, and the coming of the Spirit, whereby the apostles had a clearer knowledge of the nature of God. We have the full testimony of it in the gospel. What blessing should we reflect back upon God, and how should our hearts be filled with veneration of him! And where there is the knowledge of God in Christ, it will be perfected in time in all the fruits of it. In Christ, God is our God in covenant, to communicate himself to us in all things we are capable of;* as when the sun communicates itself to us, it is to enlighten us with that light which it hath. When a knowing man communicates himself to one ignorant, it is to give him part of his knowledge. If creatures communicate their goods according to their condition, God will also render us partakers of a divine condition, which extends to the banishing all ignorance and errors, and to the bestowing on us a fulness of wisdom and knowledge, as well as holiness and happiness, as much as the condition of the creature will permit; therefore glory not in riches and strength, or anything else, but ‘glory in this, that you know the Lord,’ Jer. ix. 23, 24.

2. Let such as want the knowledge of God in Christ endeavour for it. It is by this we gain a union with God. When we have an understanding to know the true God, we are then ‘in him which is true:’ 1 John v. 20, ‘And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.’ God lives in such, and they in him. We are united to him who is truly discovered in his Son Jesus Christ. Calvin observes this intimation from the apostle’s expressing it without a copulative, for the particle *even* is not in the Greek. Those that seek to know God without Christ have not any light that can satisfy them; they know that there is one God, but they have no means of union to him, or communion with him, without the mediator. Without Christ we can neither know God nor know ourselves. Without him there is nothing but darkness and ground of despair, nothing but confusion to us appears in the nature of God, nothing but trouble and misery in our own nature.† We are desirous God should know us in our misery, and know our want and indigence we lie under; and is it not a folly for us not to know God in his fulness? We can make but slender guesses at God till we see him in the face of a mediator.

To this end,

1. Study the gospel. The gospel hath the same titles in part that Christ hath. It is called the power of God, and the wisdom of God; as instrumentally it declares Christ to the world, who is essentially the power and wisdom of God, and mediately and by way of excellency, as he discovers the perfections of God to the world; and the gospel is so by way of suberviency, to inform our understandings, conduct us to God, and excite our motions. It is in this God makes the church’s windows as agates, Isa. liv. 12, 13, or, as others, jasper stone, clear as crystal, more fit for windows than dark agates. And, indeed, the light of the church is compared to jasper, as Rev. xxi. 11. The issue of all is to be taught of the Lord. It is unworthy for any man to trifle away his time in the knowledge of human things, with a neglect of this. Should not an eye-salve be more desirable to a blind man for the restoration of his sight, than a purple robe? What comfort can learning, riches, greatness, yea, a thorny crown and sceptre, be to one as blind as a mole in spiritual things? Angels know more than any creatures, of the depths of God’s wisdom in creation; they see the several engines

* Mestrezat, ser. iv. sur. Heb. viii. pp. 407, 408.

† Pascal, Pens. p. 151.

whereby the creatures perform their motions, yet they are not said to inquire into those things, or please themselves with philosophical meditations, but to be students in the wisdom of God, in the mysteries of the gospel, which presents them with a scheme of God, more ravishing than that in creation. The knowledge of God in the gospel is more glorious than the knowledge of God by nature, as much as Scripture revelation is above natural reason. There hath been something of God in Christ known in the church, ever since the first promise of the seed of the woman. Abraham saw Christ's day afar off, the prophets predicted him, he was wrapt in types, the Israelites beheld him in their paschal lamb, the stricken broached rock, the nourishing manna, the divine propitiatory, and the daily sacrifices. But what is all this to the knowledge of him by the gospel, and consequently the knowledge of God by him since his incarnation, since the shadows fled away, and the sun hath appeared in its splendour?

2. Submit yourselves to the prophetic office of Christ as his disciples. He is as real a prophet now to instruct the soul, as he is a priest to intercede for it, or a king to rule it. As God is propitious through Christ, so he is only an instructor through Christ. As the power of God in the conversion of the soul, so the wisdom of God in the instruction of the soul, breaks out through Christ. He only that can bring us to glory, can guide us by his eye, Ps. xxxii. 8. He is the Lord that shews us light, Ps. cxviii. 27. If we would have light, we must use the beams of the sun. If we would be knowing, we must have recourse to some skilful person in the science we would learn. Resignation to Christ is the first step to divine knowledge. Christ will not teach any that proudly strut against his office. It is the master's delight to teach an inquisitive and humble scholar. It was 'given' to the disciples, those that had devoted themselves to him, 'to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God,' Mark iv. 11. Receive him, therefore, as the great prophet of God's appointing, furnished with skill to propose to you the knowledge of God, and efficacious ability to imprint it upon your minds by an inward illumination. Have a solemn veneration for the letter of the gospel; but lift up your eyes to Christ as a prophet, begging of him to open the eyes and seal instruction, to unlock the soul and enlighten the understanding; and say as Zophar to Job, 'Oh that God would teach and shew me the secrets of wisdom!' Job xi. 6. He is God's interpreter; to discover God was the end of his coming. His office is to teach; put him upon the exercise of it. He hath a charge from the Father to declare his name, he will not be unfaithful in it. Plead his charge, he hath promised to declare it; urge him with his truth.

3. Endeavour after suitable affections to whatsoever you know of God in Christ. Let the holiness of God in Christ be the awe of your souls. Let us not dandle any sin which God so hates, that he would not remit it without the price of the blood of his Son. Tremble at that justice which drank such draughts of precious blood in the punishment of sin, and consider every sin in its utmost demerit. Admire and bless that wisdom, which made itself so eminent in the untying so many knots, passing over such mountains of difficulties that he might shew himself a hater of sin and a lover of his creatures, that he might entwine his mercy and justice in perpetual embraces. Let us have as strong affections of love and joy, as the devils, by their knowledge of God as discovered in Christ, have of horror and hatred. We see in that, not only the manifestation, but the satisfaction of his justice; they see the manifestation of it, and the dissatisfaction of it for ever with them. They have such a knowledge of God in Christ, as to awaken their consciences; we may have such a knowledge of God in Christ, as to calm our consciences.

Their terrors are as much increased by that discovery, as a believer's comfort. They behold God in Christ, their implacable and inexorable judge ; we may behold God in Christ, a tender and condescending Father. They know a God in our nature, imparting his own nature to us ; and refusing their nature, to leave them to lie in their fallen state for ever. The terrible attributes become sweet in Christ to man, and more dreadful to them. Let the motions of your will, and the affections of your soul, rise according to the elevation of your knowledge of God in Christ, more or less.

To conclude ; let us behold his justice, to humble ourselves under it ; his pardoning grace, to have recourse to it under pressures of guilt. Let us sweeten our affections by the sight of his compassions, and have confidence to call upon him as a Father in our necessities. Not any discovery of God in Christ, but is an encouragement to a forlorn creature, lost in his own sense. His perfections smile upon man ; nothing of God looks terrible in Christ to a believer. The sun is risen, shadows are vanished, God walks upon the battlements of love, justice hath left its sting in a Saviour's side, the law is disarmed, weapons out of his hand, his bosom open, his bowels yearn, his heart pants, sweetness and love is in all his carriage. And this is life eternal, to know God believingly in the glories of his mercy and justice in Jesus Christ.