

THE PRINCIPLES  
OF  
THE ORACLES OF GOD,  
In Two Parts.

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

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PART I.

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CONTAINING

- I. AN INTRODUCTION, PROVING THE NECESSITY OF THEIR BEING TAUGHT, IN TWO LECTURES, ON HEB. 5. 12.
- II. THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, MANIFEST FROM THE CREATION, IN FOUR LECTURES, ON ROMANS 1. 20.
- III. THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES, IN FIVE LECTURES, ON 2. TIMOTHY 3. 16.
- IV. THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD, IN TWO LECTURES, ON JAMES 2. 19.
- V. THE TRINITY OF PERSONS IN THE DIVINE ESSENCE, IN FOUR LECTURES, ON JOHN 5. 7.
- VI. THE ATTRIBUTES AND PERFECTIONS OF THE DIVINE BEING, IN NINE LECTURES, ON MATTHEW 5. 48.

THE UNIVERSITY

# THE ORACLE OF GOD

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I.

1841

- I. IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AMEN.
- II. THE ORACLE OF GOD, AS REVEALED IN THE SCRIPTURES.
- III. THE ORACLE OF GOD, AS REVEALED IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.
- IV. THE ORACLE OF GOD, AS REVEALED IN THE CONDUCT OF THE INDIVIDUAL.
- V. THE ORACLE OF GOD, AS REVEALED IN THE CONDUCT OF THE NATION.
- VI. THE ORACLE OF GOD, AS REVEALED IN THE CONDUCT OF THE WORLD.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

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WHEN the Editor first announced a new edition of the Works of the Rev. John Howe, he promised one volume, at least, from unpublished manuscripts. The sources whence these are derived, are stated in his preface to the First Volume. His original intention, was to have published the sermons which he obtained from the late Rev. S. Palmer, of Hackney, with a selection only of such, from Dr. Williams's library, as might appear most worthy of publication. But, on further examination, he found these manuscripts to consist chiefly, of a regular course of Lectures on "The principles of the oracles of God," which were delivered weekly, and commenced in the year 1690. He therefore determined to publish the whole; a determination which he has no doubt, the religious public will approve.

The Author had, doubtless, intended a complete system of Theology, though the design does not seem to have been carried fully into effect. He has, however, continued a regular course, as far as to the consideration of "The general and special grace of God in order to the recovery of apostate souls." There are, in the whole, seventy Lectures: and about fifty Sermons on the most interesting and important subjects. Of their authenticity, the Editor is convinced there will be no doubt entertained by the public, when they are informed, that in addition to the evidence derived from their preservation in a public library, as the works of Howe, some of the lectures and sermons are in his own hand writing, (a fac simile of which will be given,) as appears from comparing them with the letters of a correspondence between him and the Rev. Mr. Baxter, which are preserved in the library. To those acquainted with his former works, the internal evidence of these lectures will be conspicuous. The Editor thinks it not too much to say, they bear all the marks of Howe's comprehensive, peculiar, and extraordinary mind. So strikingly is this the fact, that had he found them on a desert he conceives he could not possibly have mistaken their "image and superscription."

Chichester, August 16. 1815.





## LECTURE I.\*

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Heb. 5. 12.

—*Ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God ;—*

**M**Y design is to open unto you the principles of Christian religion, and for an introduction hereunto, I have pitched on this passage ; without any intention to accuse (much less to upbraid) any in particular, with ignorance of those principles : but only in the general and indefinitely to shew the necessity of their being taught. And considering the matter abstractly, without reference to this or that people, or to this or that age, whether they be Jewish or Hebrew christians that did need to be so taught ; or whether they be English or London christians in particular ; my design is only in general to assert, the necessity of being taught such principles ; that some time or other they be taught and we be instructed in them. And if they have been taught, that they be taught again (as the apostle's expression here is) that you be taught again, taught over and over, for these are things that we cannot too thoroughly have learned, or be too much versed in.

For the expressions here used,—“the oracles of God” and “the first principles” of those oracles—there is not much of obscurity in them. The word rendered *oracles*, doth by universal consent (as well in pagan, as christian and sacred writers,)

\* Preached November 7, 1690.

signify divine revelations. It was the word among pagans by which it was usual for them to express the responses of their gods, or those they took to be such. It generally signifies what is divinely revealed, or understood, or taken to be so, nor is therefore the addition "of God," needless or useless. Such pleonasm is ornative of speech, especially when they render the same thing more emphatically so, than if there were not that pleonastical addition. And besides, inasmuch as there are many (as the apostle speaks) that are called gods, and are worshipped as gods, the oracles of God are taken to be from God. And when he saith "the oracles of God," (as the article may be well held, and often is to be understood emphatically,) it may be understood, the oracles of *the* God. He that is really so called, or to be called, and so it is an expression of latitude enough to take in what is of natural revelation, and what is of supernatural revelation; for what is of natural revelation is as truly from God as the other. All truth is from the first truth, there is no beam of light but what proceeds from the Father of lights, in whatsoever way it comes.

And then for the word here rendered *principles*, that is wont to be mentioned in as great latitude as can be supposed: it signifies all sorts of principles, whether of nature, or of art, or science whatsoever: and whereas, the apostle speaks here (as we render it) of the *first* principles: literally, it is the principles of the *beginning*; and that imports to us, that he did intend those principles in a very great latitude, all from first to last that can come under that notion, or within that compass. There is a chain or subordination of principles, even in principles themselves, as we shall have occasion, more hereafter, to take notice of: there are former, and there are latter principles. First principles do suppose within this compass, that there may be latter and last principles, but plain it is, that the apostle doth here intend principles of religion, and chiefly of Christian religion, but not solely. That is, principles of Christian religion, partly whereof it doth consist, and that are peculiar and appropriate to it: and partly, such as it doth suppose, such as it doth necessarily pre-suppose, that may be common with it, either to the Jewish religion while it was to stand, and that still (as being common to that religion with Christianity) are to stand; as whatsoever is common with the Jewish religion, with Christianity must be perpetual; or which is common with natural religion, which we must understand in nature to be before Jewish or Christian. And even in time too, as to positive instructions, that which was natural did precede the other.

That therefore which I intend to ground upon this passage,

you may take briefly thus—That there are principles of religion that need to be taught—And in pursuance of this I shall here,

I. Say somewhat more generally of these principles.

II. Shew the necessity of their being taught.

III. Speak something of the way of teaching them : and then

IV. Make application.

I Of these principles themselves : I shall shew there are such—and what they are—and of what kind.

1. That there are such, is a thing without all doubt. There is nothing, no created thing but hath its principles : principles of being there are belonging to it. Every complete substance that exists in the world, and is a created one, must be supposed to have such principles, and hath such generative and effective principles, and constructive principles : the principles from which it did proceed, and the principles of which it doth exist. There are also principles of knowledge as well as being. There is no piece of knowledge, no sort of science, but hath its principles as you all know. And therefore religion, Christian religion, theology, Christian theology must have it's principles too. It is a science, a practical one and of most absolute and universal necessity, and its principles must therefore be supposed of the most absolute and universal necessity too. Every piece of knowledge is not every one's business; but this is every one's business, to know God, to know how he may be saved, how it may be well with him to eternity.

2. But what are these principles? It is my present business to tell you of what sort they are. What they are particularly, that we must do by degrees as we come to them. Now you may judge of what sort they are by what the apostle mentioneth in this context ; and by the reference this passage, in the beginning of the 6th chapter, hath to that we are upon, we must suppose him to be still speaking of the first principles of the oracles of God. It may be thought strange that he should mention here things so small in their own nature as baptisms (not baptism but baptisms) and the laying on of hands, as if they were to come into the number of the first principles : not of principles only, but of the first principles.

To this I shall only say, I cannot think that was at all meant by the apostle, that they should be so taken for any of those principles. You are to consider to whom the apostle writes this epistle, namely to the Jews. These two, baptisms and the laying on of hands were anciently and (as we know) originally Jewish rites, transferred into the Christian church afterwards. And so the meaning of the apostle is only this ; “ I will not

stand to lay again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, especially not to you who have been instructed in these things all along so distinctly, they being nothing else but the doctrine of baptisms, and the laying on of hands ;” and then goes on to the other two : that baptisms and laying on of hands did continually instruct them (as usages that did obtain among themselves) as to repentance from dead works and faith towards God, as it is here expressed. And so these words are very fitly to be rendered by way of parenthetical opposition to those that do immediately go before, that is, “not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith towards God, (being the doctrines of baptisms and laying on of hands, or the things which baptisms and the laying on of hands, heretofore so frequently used among you, did signify) or the resurrection of the dead or of eternal judgment.” So there are but four mentioned of the first principles of the oracles of God. Against this way of reading this passage I meet but with one objection, and that is, the want of the greek article, before doctrine here, but that is so little an objection, if we consider how many greater ellipsis there are, that are frequent in Scripture, that it seems too light to be put into the balance against the weighty reason that is to be given for the other reading.

But it may be said then, What ! Are there but four principles, as such, which have reference to the whole business of Christianity, which the apostle’s discourse here must have final and determinate reference unto ? “Repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment ;” are there no more than these ?

Yes undoubtedly there are, but it was none of the apostle’s design to give an enumeration of those principles, but to give an instance of such as he did not now intend to insist upon, but to wave and pass by. He only tells us this was not his principal business and design to deliver such principles, and he tells at the same time, what he thought fit to wave, while his discourse is moving forward to the information he would give them concerning the Melchisedekian priesthood of Christ : to which (after some warm discourse in the greater part of the 5th chapter) he comes in the close of that, and pursues in the seventh chapter.

3. But that I may shew more distinctly what kind of principles the apostle here hath reference to, take these considerations :

(1.) It is plain that they must be meant of doctrinal principles, principles of doctrine that are to be received into the

mind and understanding. There are those that are doctrinal, and there are those that are practical principles. It is true indeed, all principles of the Christian religion are remotely practical, because the main end of Christianity is practice. But the difference between a doctrinal principle and a practical, lies here, that supposing a doctrinal principle to have reference to practice, to serve towards it at a distance, yet a practical principle is that from which action doth immediately proceed. As now, if we speak to the very heads themselves that the apostle speaks of, "repentance from dead works, and faith towards God," the doctrine concerning these makes one sort of principle, and the habit another; the habit of faith, and the habit of repentance, that is a principle in the soul from which the acts of these immediately proceed. But the more essential doctrine concerning both these, must make the doctrinal principle concerning them; as there may be doctrinal principles about the most practical things, and those are the doctrinal principles, as such, that are here intended and which are to be the matter of teaching: which are to be taught, as the apostle speaks. It is very true that the papists do very industriously make it their business to overthrow that distinction of fundamental and extra-fundamental doctrines; of those that are essential and those that are extra-essential; such as are of absolute necessity, and such as are not necessary, or not so necessary. And they mightily insist and urge to have a catalogue particularly of those which we would have to go under the notion of fundamentals: because they think they could cavil and contend about any such catalogue that should be given, and look upon it as impossible there should be any so unexceptionably given, that nothing should be said against it, why this, or that, is taken in, or why such and such things should be left out. Therefore they would conclude there ought to be no such distinction; which is the most absurd thing that can be imagined; for to take away the distinction of fundamental and extra-fundamental is to suppose one of these two things. Either it must suppose that there is nothing necessary in Christian religion, which is a very strange supposition that there should be any such religion wherein nothing should be necessary; or it must suppose all things equally necessary, all necessary alike: and so that it were equally necessary that we know Salathiel to be the son of Neri, as to know that Jesus is the Son of God. But there needs no more to be said at present to this, than that whatsoever is necessary in point of doctrine to the soul's acting of "repentance from dead works, and faith towards God", (for the two

things that follow are no matter of our exercise. The raising of the dead and the eternal judgment are no part of our duty ; but our duty is summed up in these two, repentance and faith ! ) whatsoever, I say, is necessary in point of doctrine to the soul's being exercised in one or other of these with the understanding and judgment of a reasonable creature, so much is necessary to make a doctrinal principle : whatever leads the soul into the exercise of repentance and faith, so much must be necessary under the head of doctrinal principles concerning our duty. It is true we must know the other things too as motives to it, but these are to have the immediate influence upon things to be done. And I might more shortly say, whatever is necessary to bring the soul into union with God through Christ, all that knowledge that is necessarily antecedent to this, so much comes within the compass of what is fundamental in our religion, and indeed nothing comes within that compass but what is one way or other reducible to this, that must not one way or other have influence upon repentance and faith. And I add,

(2.) That as concerning these, some may be more deeply fundamental than others are, even of those that are of equal necessity. That is, there are principles that in reference to things depending on them have that notion of principles and are to be so considered, that yet may be consequential to other things on which they do depend. As in the building of a house (which is the metaphor the apostle, in this context, makes use of) there may be some parts that may be both fundamental to what is upon them, and superstructive in reference to what lies under them. And,

(3.) These principles may be partly of natural and partly of supernatural revelation. Of natural, that there is a God. Of supernatural, that Jesus is the Son of God. Though what is of natural revelation doth not comprehend what is of supernatural, yet all that is of supernatural takes in and includes all that is natural too. The same thing may be supernaturally revealed, and naturally ; as the same conclusion may be both believed and known. And again,

(4.) They are generally the plainest things that are to go for such principles. God hath so graciously ordered it, that that which is most necessary should be most plain. Indeed some may object themselves here, the doctrine of the Trinity, but as concerning that, I hope when we come to it, it will appear that what God hath said about that is very plain ; though what men have said and devised about it, is obscure and intricate

enough, even what they mean for the explication of it. And I only add this, for the present, concerning these principles,

(5.) They must be supposed to be but few. The first principles, or the great principles of religion, do lie in a very little compass: as that which goes amongst us in the name of the apostles' creed (you know) is very short. And (if antiquity deceive us not) was much shorter than it is. Though it is true that the variety of apprehensions and sentiments, and the great dissensions and manifold errors, that have in after-times sprung up in the Christian church have occasioned the enlargements of creeds and multiplying of articles of faith; varying them this way or that, to meet with this or that wrong sentiment as they have been apprehended; yet the things that are in themselves necessary, must needs be but few. And if the Christian religion ever return to itself, and be what at first it was, simple, pure, plain, and unmixed, undoubtedly the sum and substance of it will be found to lie in very little compass. It hath sadly degenerated in point of efficacy, and vigour, and power, as it hath been increased and augmented in point of necessary doctrines: men rendering such doctrines necessary, or bestowing that notion upon them arbitrarily as they have thought fit. And indeed the state of Christian religion hath never been flourishing since (as one very accurately observes in the last age) it became *Res Ingeniosa fore Christianum: a thing of wit to be a christian*. So much at present for the kinds and sorts of these principles. But now,

II. For the necessity of their being taught; as to that, little needs to be said.

1. That the things themselves are necessary is out of question. If any religion be necessary, it's principles must be much more so, especially if first principles. And

2. This doth plainly infer therefore the necessity of their being taught: else how should we come by them? And though there is somewhat pre-supposed to our religion that is natural, it is but pre-supposed as fundamental to all that was necessary to be super-added, for there is not enough within the compass of nature to lead men to blessedness, if there be not great super-additions. And what we have not by nature, how should we come by it, if we are not taught it? if we do not learn it? We read of great promises in Scripture of being taught of God. "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me," as it is in that, John 6. 45. quoted from the prophet Isaiah 54. 13. "Thy children shall be all taught of the Lord." And "It is written in the prophets, they shall be taught of God:" and then it followeth, "Every one that hath heard and learned

of the Father cometh unto me." And so we read, Jeremiah 31. 34. as that which is foretold to be the great blessing of a time then future (and for ought I see, yet future) that there should be no saying "Know the Lord." They should not need to teach one another saying, "Know the Lord: for they shall all know me from the least to the greatest:" quoted by the apostle Heb. 8. 11. But even such teaching is teaching still. He is the great Teacher: and who teacheth like him? But as to subordinate teaching or human teaching there is nothing in all these promises that can exclude it. And when it is said "They shall all be taught of God:" and that they shall not need any to teach them, the meaning is, that there shall be a greater inclination in men's spirits to learn. Not that they shall know it without teaching, but that an aptitude to learn, shall be given them more generally than had been given, and (so far as we can observe) than is yet given. Men shall not need to be urged and pressed to know the Lord. No, there shall be a greater promptitude in men's minds to learn, and to use, and improve the means of knowing him, than had been before. But that there shall always, to the end of time, be use of human teaching, our Lord's own words just before his ascension plainly enough speak. Mat. 28. and the close: "I am with you to the end of the world." In this work it must be, "to assist you in this teaching through all successions of time, to the very end of the world." But if there should be any such time or state of things on earth, wherein men should no way at all need to be taught the knowledge of God, supervening and coming; that is not yet come, we are sure we see no such time: and if any such time should come, and we should see it, I verily believe there are none of those that now are intent upon the business of teaching, but would be glad in those times to resign their office. And in the mean time nothing is plainer than so it is, and indeed nothing is plainer than so it will be to the end of the world; that there is and will be need and use of human subordinate teachers, to teach and instruct men in the principles, even the first principles of faith in Christ. But,

III. I would say somewhat concerning the way of this teaching. And there be several ways about which we might distinguish and speak to you in distinct heads: there is private teaching and public teaching; and teaching from house to house, and teaching in public assemblies: there is teaching by continued discourse, and teaching in a way of interlocation, by way of question and answer, that to which the name of catechising is now generally appropriated, though indeed without ground from the word itself, or the proper significancy of the word. And this is indeed, in the ac-



count of many, a very formidable and frightful work, the work of catechising. I do not know why it should be so formidable a thing for one person to converse with another, to put questions and return answers; for is not this the usual way of common conversation? And why should it be more formidable to us to converse thus about the things of God, than about other things, that we count necessary, and about many things that we cannot so much as count so? But there can be surely nothing more necessary than religion and the things that concern it. I am for my part very far from that imperious and terrifying way of managing such a work as this, to affright people and make them afraid of it. And indeed were I engaged in such work, I should as leave they should catechise me as I them, if questions could be so judiciously put as to draw forth a full explication of the matter proposed. It would be all one to me, who were the questionist and who the answerer, supposing the question be aptly put so as to draw forth the explication most fully. I should like well it should be said, Pray how is such a thing understood, or what help may be given to understand that point more distinctly and more clearly?

And some considerations I shall give you, at present, about this way of teaching by familiar interlocution; and which indeed the exigency of the case doth require to be in a public assembly, where many meet and are convened together for that very purpose and upon that account. I would not insist upon the word, though it is a very significant word, that serves the purpose for which it is used well enough, but we find divers passages in Scripture where this word is used that fully refers to that way of teaching. And

1. Let that be considered, Gal. 6. 6. "Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth." The word there is catechised. Let him that is catechised in the word communicate to him that catechiseth: this implies it to be a stated business, that there must be continued catechising, and being catechised. The apostle, in 1 Cor. 14. 19. useth the same word when he tells us "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I may teach others also, (the word is catechised and he speaks of doing it in the church) than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

2. That though another sort of word be used in that other language, when Abraham is so highly commended for instructing his household, (in Genesis 18) yet we are to consider what his household was, an household out of which he could draw forth (as we find upon occasion) three hundred fighting men. How vastly numerous must that family be? And when they met to-

gether for the worship of God, that must be a greater assembly than our's usually are : and his instructing was so that they should be all brought to know God and the principles of religion ; which must be supposed and (as the thing speaks) must mostly be when he had them together, though there might be occasion for private instruction and admonition too.

3. There ought certainly to be a very great deference given to usages in the Christian church in the purer and primitive times of it, when Christianity was most of all itself ; and we find very ancient records, even of teaching by this way of interlocation, and in public too. Origen lived very early, and it is matter notorious that he was eminent under the notion of a catechist in his time, whose business it was to teach and instruct in a catechetical way, and we are informed of divers catechists that they had in the church of Alexandria at the same time, that being, it is true, a numerous, great church, and requiring the help of many to that purpose. And all along, in the best times of the Christian church, (before popery was born into it) we find hereupon that there were these two distinct orders of christians, the *catechumini* and the *fidelos* : those that were catechetically instructed and those that having been for a competent time so instructed, were found fit to be admitted into full communion : and hereupon there were particular places appointed them in the assemblies, wherein they were to stand apart by themselves in a sort of inclosure, but in the view of the rest of the assembly. And the nature of the thing doth speak, that there must always be these two orders within the compass of the Christian church, those that are under instruction are *catechumini*, and those that as they are fit, are taken out of them and received into full communion. A thing that nature and common prudence will so much dictate, that long before the Christian name was ever heard of in the world, we read that Pythagoras's school had the same orders, where the business was principally to teach and instruct in virtue. There were those that were *Extra-synodonem* and those that were *Intra-synodonem* ; there was a *septum* or inclosure that did receive those that were looked upon to be thoroughly virtuous. His school indeed was like a church, upon that account, and commonly there were kept seven years expectants without the inclosure, not to be received (as it were) into full communion till they were very well confirmed in virtue and goodness. And thereupon, if any of those that had been received within the inclosure should afterwards degenerate and be guilty of any crimes, there was as solemn an excommunication of them as we read of any among christians, and a funeral besides held for

such a person ; that is, a coffin was brought into the *auditorium* and lamentation made over it as over one dead, dead from among them ; and so such were to be humbled that way and wrought upon. And there can be no such thing as the continuance of Christianity in the world, on other terms than that there must be two such orders. And I add,

4. That it is very apparent that our Saviour's way of teaching when he was here on earth was very much in a way of interlocation, and that often in great public assemblies, as it is obvious for yourselves to take notice in evangelical history. And,

5. That christians generally are under an express charge to be ready to give an account of the reason of their hope and faith, to any one that shall ask it, with meekness and fear : as in that, 1 Pet. 3. 15. And if they were to do it (as that direction hath more especial reference) even to enemies, to persecutors, and when it was to cost them their lives, much more to instructors and teachers, when they desire it, only in order to their own help and to the promoting and furtherance of knowledge among men. And,

6. It is very plain that they who by office are to make it their work and business to instruct others, are obliged to use all the most apt and likely means that may be most profitable and most conducing to that end and purpose. How solemn a charge is that the apostle lays on Timothy ! 2 Tim. 4. 1, 2. "I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom ; preach the word, be instant in season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." With all doctrine, (as it is referred undoubtedly to both the things that go before and that follow the long-suffering) must in all reason intend, not merely the matter of doctrine, but the manner also, for there may be matters of doctrine materially to be considered, that are not so necessary to be so very much inculcated and urged. But that same all-doctrine is every way a teaching that is likely, or by which it may be more probable that good may be done ; and if there be such an obligation upon teachers, there is a correspondent obligation upon hearers to attend thereto : yea, and that not only implied ; but expressly required : "Obey them that have the rule over you." Heb. 13. 17. Hereupon no doubt they are obliged to comply with, and to concur to, set on foot all such means and methods of instruction as may be most conducive to this end. And that this is a means proper to this end may be manifest upon several considerations. As,

(1.) That it most evidently tends to engage the minds of them that are immediately dealt with in this way, to be intent on the matter in hand, as when a question is put to me I am bound under a kind of necessity to consider it, that I may know how to make one answer or another as it is particularly and personally directed to me. There are many things that pass us by in a continued and transient discourse, that a wandering mind takes little notice of, gives little heed to ; but when it is called by a particular question to this particular point, it cannot but make the mind intent upon it. As when the apostle, in the midst of his apologetical discourse before king Agrippa, applied particularly to him with that question, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?" the king thought himself obliged to consider his question, and you see what kind of answer he gives, so as he never else would have thought, if that question had not been directed to himself. Such an impression did that question make on his mind.

(2.) It tends manifestly very much to engage the attention of all that hear, at such an exercise as that we are now speaking of. Every body presently gives his ear when there is a question put, "Come what will be answered to this question?" and if it need explication, "What will be said in this case?" It makes men exert their minds, and engage their spirits a great deal more, as every one's reason and experience must tell him.

(3.) It tends very much to fix things and make them continue with those that hear and do attend on such a kind of exercise, for that very reason, because it hath set the animadversive faculties so much the more on work ; and if the matter be considered, nothing is plainer, than that people do many times blame their memories very causlessly, when it is really the animadversive faculty is not used ; for things that once are earnestly attended to are much more likely to be remembered, but people find fault with their memories because they do not mind what they hear at first. If they earnestly minded what they heard, and considered things, and took them to heart, it would contribute a great deal towards the fixing of them in their memories, towards their retention of them. I believe, for the much greater part, when the badness of the memory is complained of, the fault lies elsewhere, that they did not seriously attend at the first, for things will be retained longer that have been well considered at first.

(4.) Hereupon, through the blessing of God, much more may be done towards the conversion of souls by the gospel dispensation, when the things needful to be understood in order hereto, are *well* understood for it ; for while they are not so, we speak in the dark and people hear in the dark, and what we say to

them hath an uncertain sound, as the apostle speaks. 1 Cor. 14. 17. They cannot tell what we mean when we speak of the weightiest and most important things belonging to the kingdom of God, but if such things be well understood at first (as it is to be hoped they will be in this way) then there is one great step made, one main difficulty is got over : and so it obtains in discourses that have more directly that design, to make men intend this business, and impress things upon men's hearts to the utmost, which had passed through their minds before or were received clearly and distinctly there before. Again

(5.) It is likewise, by consequence, likely to be the means of introducing a much more fruitful Christianity among us, for undoubtedly, religion is more lively by how much the more it is well grounded : they that do believe this or that doctrine without a ground, they commonly believe it too without fruit. If it have not a good ground it is proportionably inefficacious, and a languid thing ; as seed that is sown and hath no depth of earth, (as our Saviour speaks) brings not forth fruit unto perfection. Therefore is that charge given unto the Colossian christians : "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him." Col. 2. 6. One notion under which we are said to receive him is as a teacher, and to receive him (though that be not all) is to receive his truths, his doctrines. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built, up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." And therefore, so rationally doth the apostle pray for them in that chapter, that they might be "fruitful in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God." And in 1 Phil. 9. 10, 11. those christians are there prayed for after the same method, that they might abound in judgment and in all knowledge, (that they might become knowing and judicious christians) and then, that they might abound in all the fruits of righteousness that would be through Christ, to the praise and glory of God. And,

(6.) This would be a very great and likely means to bring christians generally to a great deal more of seriousness in the temper of their minds and spirits, that is, to exclude and shut out vanity, replenishing their minds with great and weighty things, things that deeply concern them : for in this way, undoubtedly, such things would come to be more inwrought into their hearts and to have a more settled abode and residence there. Then it would be as ordinary a thing when christians did meet, to catechise one another about the things of God and about the eternal kingdom (if I may use that phrase) as to catechise one another about news, or about the state of the times :

what is doing now in the country, or in the court, or in this or in any other nation or kingdom : the kingdom of heaven surely would look as great as any earthly kingdom or country, or greater, if we were more taken up about the things that relate thereunto. And so might the ancient Christianity come to be restored in some measure among us, wherein (as antiquity tells us) it was so ordinary a thing when christians did meet, presently to fall upon the matters of their religion : and it was usual in their families, even all the day long, when people were about their affairs either in the shop or at the distaff, to mention the great things of the Christian religion, from morning to night mingling discourses of that kind with all their affairs, as they could admit of their being mingled. This was primitive Christianity, and it was in these early days that this course that I now speak of did obtain, even when such familiar interlocutions for the instruction of candidates to Christianity were carried on in their assemblies. And,

(7.) It were much to be hoped that by this means, that faulty shyness would be overcome which doth appear too generally of discoursing at all about the things of God and the matters of religion, and what men find in their own spirits of savour and impression of such things. It is very strange and unaccountable that there should be so peculiar a shyness in reference to the matters of religion, to take discourse of them, especially as to one's own sentiments about them, what one apprehends and what one feels in himself, in one's own breast. There is not such a shyness in reference to things of any other concerns besides, as there is in reference to those concernments that relate to men's souls and their state Godward and for eternity. Nobody is shy to speak of his own or other's ails, for the most part, nobody is shy to speak of an aching head, or an aching tooth : but what a shyness is there to speak of spiritual maladies, a bad heart, a blind mind, and the like ? If discourses were in this way more frequently introduced, so as to become familiar, this shyness would be gradually overcome. We find in public assemblies it is usual to give an account of things that are of another concernment, of a most inferior concernment ; as in courts of judicature, where persons of the meanest capacity are called frequently to speak their knowledge, to tell what they know about such and such a matter that doth concern *meum* and *tuum*, this or that man's right ; or concerning a question depending between the government and any particular person concerning a criminal matter. Nothing more ordinary than to have persons catechised about such things as these in public assemblies, and it is not thought strange. And why should there be a particular shyness, strangeness, and aversion to give an ac-

count of things relating to the kingdom of God? As if it were a criminal thing to have one's mind engaged and taken up about matters of that nature, or as if persons were afraid to be thought guilty of religion, as if it were a dreadful thing, a thing to be dreaded, to be thought guilty of minding God, and the concerns of another world. And

(8.) It would surely be a very likely means to prevent apostacy, especially in a difficult and trying time: indeed there is continual danger of apostacy: there is much danger from daily conversation with this world, there is much danger especially in a prosperous state and condition in it, least there should be heart apostacy, a heart secretly departing from the love of God. And there is great danger in times of persecution for religion's sake, for Christ's sake, and for the gospel's sake. But there is nothing (in point of means and in subordination to the grace and Spirit of Christ) likely to be a better security against it, than in such a way as this, to be once thoroughly instructed in the great "principles of the oracles of God," to have them well inlaid. They that are so instructed at first are not like to be as "children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine," or entangled by the cunning craftiness of them that lie in wait to deceive. Some are withdrawn by seduction, some by persecution: there will be the same fence against both in such a way as this. "Nay," will such a one say "I have (through the goodness of God) understood the grounds of my religion well: I did not trifle when I took up this profession;" as the apostle speaks concerning his trust in God, "I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him until that day." So for a christian to say, "I know what I have believed, and I mean to abide by it through the grace of God," this will preserve him under suffering. It is a very uncomfortable thing in point of suffering to be called to suffer for that I never understood and which I never savoured or relished. To suffer for what I never had any clear understanding of, and to suffer for what I never had any taste or relish of in my own soul, though it is possible to suffer upon such an account, yet it is uncomfortable. A man may "give his body to be burned" without love, but it is very uncomfortable so to suffer. And the one of these things is the way to the other; I am likely to savour what I understand in those things that have a real bottom and are in themselves substantial. There are some things indeed that have so little in them, that the more I understand them the less I shall mind them; the more I understand them the more I shall despise them, but it

is not so in the great things of God and that do relate to his kingdom. And,

(9.) It is that which will certainly be a great ornament to the Christian church, and an honour to it, when there is a succession coming up, a rising generation of them that do understand themselves and appear to do so, make it evident that they do understand themselves in the great things of religion; that they receive them and take them in. As it was the reproach of the Christian church (as it was still called) when that barbarous age was upon it, and so great and gross darkness and ignorance did cover the face of it, so will the contrary be it's honour. And when times of greater knowledge do come, then in one sense (though these words have more meaning than that) it may be said to Zion "Arise, shine; for thy light is come; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Isaiah 60. 1. Light signifies holiness too, and a prosperous state, but it signifies knowledge as that which is inchoative of all the rest. And,

(10.) Lastly. It is one of the most comfortable presages that can be, when once the spirits of those that are to be learners (as it were) in the school of Christ, come to be engaged and intent upon getting in the knowledge of Christ, and have their souls impressed thereunto. I say it is one of the most comfortable presages of the approach of that time and that season drawing on, when one shall say to another, and even people to people, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will shew us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." Micah 4. 2. It is a comfortable pre-signification of the approach of that time when "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased:" when there shall be very much of inquiry and concern to know God and the things of God, then the time will be drawing on, when the knowledge of the Lord shall abound and cover the earth as the waters cover the seas. Isaiah 11. 9.

IV. But to make some brief use of all this. There are principles of religion, or of the oracles of God, which are needful to be taught. Then here,

1. Let us consider and adore the goodness of God towards a wicked and apostate world. How strange a sound should such a word carry with it to us. "The oracles of God!" How transporting a sound, for the oracles of God to be mentioned and spoken in such a world as ours is! when it would be thought that it's so universal revolt from God, should everlastingly have cut off all intercourse between him and it, that he should never have regard for this world any more; not more than for the



angels that fell and kept not their first station. Do we hear of any oracles of God sent down into those infernal regions? Oh! how great thing then is it, that there should be among us the oracles of God! Indeed it argues very great stupidity, if there be not a mighty sense of this upon our spirits. Pagans have had the most grateful sense that could be imagined but of a mock pretence hereunto, the very notion of oracles carries a sacredness and venerableness in it; any thing that is divine, any thing that is of heavenly descent, and so such things, though but feignedly such, have been reckoned of among pagans. Oh! what veneration had those poor Ephesian idolaters for that thing (we read it *image*, but there is no such thing in the greek) that dropped down from Jupiter, how mighty a zeal was there among that people, so as that the city, is said to be a whole *neochoron*; "All Ephesus is a worshipper;" so it is expressed, as if that mighty city were but one worshipper of the great goddess Diana. So great was their zeal, so high their veneration for a thing that their deluding priests made them believe dropped down from heaven. And we know how high their value was, of how much they did magnify themselves for the diabolical oracles they had among them in former days before Christ's time; and how mighty a concern there was among them when these were silent at his coming. So as that some of their wisest men (Plutarch for instance) was fain to write discourse upon discourse to qualify their minds thereupon. Two treatises we read of, written by that author, one why they ceased, which he wrote in verse: the other why they did so totally cease as upon the matter they did.

And when the privilege of having the oracles of God, was a more confined and limited thing, Oh! how did the Jews (to whom they were so great a treasure) magnify themselves upon them, how did they glory in it! And it was acknowledged that they had a mighty advantage. "What advantage had the Jews? Much every way, chiefly as that to them were committed the oracles of God," Rom. 3. beginning. Oh! we do not enough consider the kindness of heaven towards our world! that there should be any beams of divine light (whether by natural or super-natural revelation) shining in it. We do not enough consider that we are quite cut off from God. He doth hereby shew he hath yet a desire to the work of his own hands, in that he will have his oracles known to men upon earth; as elsewhere it is said of his tabernacle: "the tabernacles of God are with men;" and in what a transport doth Solomon break forth (1 Kings 8.) in that seraphical triumph of joy: "Will God indeed dwell upon earth?" Oh! that there should be any abode

of the divine presence upon earth ; and these are some of the most expressive tokens of such a visible presence vouchsafed ; his placing these oracles among us and diffusing the most impressive light that reveals him, and that reveals the great things that relate to his kingdom. And,

2. We may collect hence, that it is a very apt method and accommodated unto intelligent creatures, that God doth make use of, in conveying to them the necessary knowledge of the doctrine of Christ ; for there are principles that are to be begun with ; (first principles as you see) you had need to be taught which are the first principles of the oracles of God. There are the oracles of God, there are principles of these oracles, and the first of those principles. God doth apply himself to us suitable to our nature, he aims to draw us by the "cords of a man, and by the bands of love," to make reason and love, engineers by which he would take hold of us, sanctify the one principle and the other, that we may be brought nigh to him and held in with him.

And it ought deeply to be considered that there are (as you see) principles wherewith we are to begin, and by which we are to be led on (as the apostle's expression here is) towards perfection. Principles of truth, principles of doctrine, such as a "form of sound words," wholesome words may be expressive of. Though (by the way) I am against being tied to a form of words ; in matters of this nature I would have words used for helps, not for bonds. And if I were to inquire how any have profited in the things of God, even in this very respect ; in respect of their knowledge relating thereto, if they could express a sound and good understanding about these things, in their own words, in words of their own choosing, and not which they found in this or that book, I should like it a great deal better. It would argue them so much the more understanding and knowing christians, and likely to prove more stable ones. As I said before, I would have you to make use of other men's words (as you may any good book you read or sermon you hear) for helps but not for bonds ; to help your understandings, not to limit them. Again,

3. This lets us see the presumptuous and preposterous rashness of such persons as do at random, at all adventures take up the Christian profession, when they never as yet understood the principles of Christianity, and so they really profess they know not what : as if the name christian were a name of nothing, a name that had no signification, a name that did import no real thing. Those that can give no account of their knowledge of principles, and yet will be christians, call themselves christians, what an usurpation is this ! How groundlessly and presump-

tuously do they usurp a glorious name ! a title that carries with it a great deal of glory ! and I would have you understand it so. A christian is a glorious title, and they will be made to understand it to be so another day, who have usurped it they know not why, who have prophaned it, and could never justify the pretence. It is a far greater presumption than for any man to call himself king or emperor, who is a mean peasant, an ordinary fellow and can have no such pretence. "I will bring them to worship at thy feet (it is spoken to the Philadelphian church Rev. 3. 9.) who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie." For a man to take up a profession that is a mere lie, what a presumption is it ! a man to call himself a christian ! but he lies, and must do so upon one account, if he live in the continual violation of the Christian precepts, and upon another, if he understand nothing of the Christian principles. It is a lie : it is to suppose that *christian* is a name without a meaning, a name that means nothing. And,

4. We may collect hence, that it is very stupid folly for men to live all their days under this profession, without ever concerning themselves to understand the principles of Christianity. It is very presumptuous rashness to take up that profession, when a man will commence christian all of a sudden without ever having understood its principles. But it is far more stupid folly if a man will all his days, live under the Christian profession in continued ignorance of the principles of the Christian religion. How ridiculous doth that man make himself that will all his time go under the name of a merchant, and yet never understand any thing of merchandize ? or if a man will be called a philosopher, when every one that knows him, knows that he understands not any of the principles of philosophy ? But,

5. It is of so great importance to understand well the principles of Christian religion, that they need to be taught. Is there so great weight laid upon the teaching of them ? are they hereby represented to us to be matters of absolute necessity ? then by the importance of the principles judge of the excellency of the end of the Christian religion. And so consider, Hath God thus brought it about that we should be all of us in one degree or other under the Christian institution ? What is it for ? That which hath so very important principles must have a proportionable end. Then let us see what that is. Religion is a thing that terminates upon eternity, that runs into another world : they therefore that are under the Christian institution (as we all are to be in the church of God while we are here in the world) are to look upon themselves as so many candidates

for the blessed eternity. Here in this world we are training up for heaven, for everlasting glory; and hereupon are the principles of religion, of the Oracles of God, represented as the most important things, that have their final and determinate reference to another world, the glories of the heavenly and eternal state. This were a great thought for us to carry about with us, whensoever we are under gospel teaching, to think that God hath provided and taken care that I should be trained up for heaven and fitted for the eternal kingdom, and for an everlasting abode in that blessed glorious state. And when you are training up your child, Oh! how great a thing is it to be training it up in the knowledge of God! for there are some steps that must be taken with it, to make it meet for partaking "of the inheritance of the saints in light." You know there is great care taken about the education of great heirs. The very children of the church are God's children. He calls them so, (Ezekiel 16. 20, 21.) "Is this a small matter that thou hast slain my children?" speaking of Jewish parents making their children pass through the fire to Moloch. In the degenerate state of that church and people, he calls them his children: now I say, great care is wont to be taken in the education of great heirs. Those that are the children of God and are really so, if children they are also heirs; and they are begotten to a lively hope, to an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled. And they are, by "the sincere milk of the word" which they receive from time to time, to grow up to a fitness and capacity to partake of that inheritance. We should never think of the principles of the Christian religion, but it should put us in mind of the end of it, and what it refers to. And yet again,

6. We may further learn from hence, that since there is such need that such principles should be taught, men should take heed of neglecting, and much more of opposing any fit methods wherein they may be taught. And why do they so? Why they think themselves too wise to learn, they understand too much already to need being taught. But while they account themselves so very wise, see how the Spirit of God counts them, what notion they pass under with him; "fools despise instruction." Prov. 1. 7. And that is certainly a very ill character, that the contempt of instruction brings upon persons: they think themselves wise, and God thinks them fools; and certainly his judgment is the most discerning and true: and as it draws on a bad character, so it is very likely to draw on a bad end and issue. To hate instruction is to hate knowledge: and he is said to love knowledge that loves instruction. Prov. 12. 1. But to be brought in under the notion of a hater of knowledge,

divine knowledge, Oh ! how dreadful a thing is that ! “ They shall call but I will not answer, they shall seek me early but they shall not find me.” Why what is the matter ? what is all that resolved into which you read to that purpose in the 1. Prov ? Why in the 29th. verse it is said, Because they hated knowledge and would not choose the fear of the Lord ; therefore he would be deaf to all their cries and importunities, when destruction was coming upon them as a whirlwind. Why is God so inexorable towards them ? Because they hated knowledge, they would not endeavour to learn. And

7. Lastly. If there be so absolute a necessity of being taught such principles of religion or such “ Oracles of God,” there surely ought to be a very peculiar temper and disposition of spirit in order to learning. And that I would have you to take an account of in a few heads which I shall only name. We are all to be learners here in this world, we must learn as long as we live. And if it be of so absolute necessity that we learn such things we should,

(1.) Apply ourselves to them with very great reverence, for they are “ the Oracles of God ” that we have to do with : it is something sacred and divine, that we are conversant and taken up about. When any thing of these oracles was to be first given in writing, though it was but a little, to a peculiar and select people of his, we see what an awful business was made of it. God comes down ; manifests his glorious presence in the mountain that he had selected for that purpose, the people are there assembled and cast about the foot of the mountain ; the mountain is enclosed, and they are forbidden, on pain of death, to approach the borders ; “ Touch not the borders ; for whosoever toucheth them shall die.” *Exod. 19. 20, 21.* In that assembly of that people, on purpose to hear the divine oracles that were to be preached among them, there was a glorious revelation that came from heaven. And do we think the gospel revelation that we have is less glorious ? No, saith the apostle “ The glory wherewith the law was given upon Mount Sinai, was no glory in comparison with this glory that so much excels.” Oh ! we should be learners with the greatest reverence imaginable, as having from time to time the divine oracles to be opened among us. Here is the most glorious appearance of God. When there was comparatively an unspeakably less appearance even than that on Mount Sinai, that is, when some of the divine glory shone in one bush, it is charged upon Moses (to strike his mind with a due awe) presently to put off his shoes. This was to be significant to us, with what great and profound reverence we are to have our souls impressed and possessed upon an appearance of God ; and

these are the brightest and most glorious appearances, in the kind, that we know above any besides.

(2.) We should apply ourselves to learn the things of the kingdom of God with very deep humility; with a most humble sense of our own ignorance, and that we know so little. "He that thinks he knows any thing knows nothing as he ought to know," saith the apostle. And nothing was a more ignominious brand upon a sort of men that did start up early in the Christian church, that affected to be called by the name of gnostick, than that they so much valued themselves upon that knowledge to which they pretended, and but pretended; as that name did signify. Whether they were so soon called by that name, as some imagine, is a matter of doubt, but the genius and spirit of the men undoubtedly appeared early; and many passages in the epistles of the apostles have a direct reference thereunto, as particularly that (1 Cor. 8. 2.) "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth." But (I say) it was the ignominy and reproach of that sort of men that they did so highly glory in an airy kind of knowledge, that they were never the better for, nay, that made them undoubtedly upon the whole matter much worse men: it doth always so where there is not great humility, which doth accompany and go with knowledge. That is, they who are learners ought to consider themselves as such, as we must all of us always be while we are here in this world, such as "know but in part." Here we are to have very self-diminishing thoughts of our own knowledge. Surely it is but little that we know, as we find Agur speaks concerning himself; "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man." And so the Psalmist speaks of himself (73. Psalm) "So foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee." Such diminishing thoughts it becomes us to have of ourselves, as to look upon ourselves, under such a self-despising notion, (as I may so speak) that while we are here we are but in a state of learners, and must be so as long as we are in this earthly state. But then,

(3.) We should be learners still with fervent desire of learning more and more; and this agrees well with a humble sense of our yet knowing so very little. It hath always been mentioned concerning one eminent heathen, as an honourable character he went under, that he was known by that motto, "*Hoc tantum scio, me nihil scire:*" *this only I know, that I know nothing*: though he was one of the greatest and most learned men of his age. If there be a sincere desire of increasing knowledge, nothing better agrees with it than such a sense as this, Alas! it is little I know and I am to be

still aiming to know more and more, in reference to things wherein I am so much concerned. "I opened my mouth and panted," saith the psalmist, "for I longed for thy commandments." Psalm 119. 131. We are to be continually desiring that which is to be the means of our growth in knowledge. "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby:" and these principles are called "milk," as you see in the close of this 5th. chap. of the epistle to the Hebrews, where the text is.

(4.) It ought to be with a continued pleasant savour and relish of divine knowledge, that we should be driving the design to increase: to increase and grow in it. "Grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" labour to have a continual intermixture of grace with knowledge that may give it a pleasant savour. There is very little delight in dry notions that never influence a man's heart. "When wisdom enters into the heart and knowledge is pleasant unto the soul" (saith the wise man) "then understanding shall preserve thee, discretion shall lead thee." Knowledge doth its office effectually, to guide and lead us in our way when once it becomes of a grateful taste and relish to our souls; if it be taken and digested, and we relish a sweetness and pleasantness in it, then it will have power to do its work, that is, to be our guide and director in our way and course, as you have it Prov. 2. 10. And then,

(5.) It ought to be with continual gratitude, adoring and blessing God that he makes any of his light to shine in this dark world; especially that it should shine to any of us; that we have this "sure word of prophecy" put into our hands that makes up the "Oracles of God" in an eminent sense; "till the day dawn and the day star arise in our hearts." And

(6.) Lastly. It must be (or else we do nothing) with a serious design of getting a holy impression in our hearts by the truth we know, or else all is lost. There are too many, (the Lord knows) that if they take pleasure in knowing, and increasing knowledge, they do yet know but for the knowledge' sake, and aim no further. It is a fine thing to know much, to understand more than one's neighbour, more than such and such; and so be able superciliously to look down upon them as comparatively very ignorant. But to know on purpose, that I may be accordingly and do accordingly, is the true end of Christian knowledge. "I desire to know more that I may have a better heart, and that I may be able to love God more, that I may be more like God, more fitted to serve him, and walk with him in this world and enjoy him in the next:" if this be not the design we drive at, in aiming to know, in all our desire of knowing

much of the things of God, and Christian religion we do but labour for the wind and shall at length reap the whirlwind. In what a transport is the apostle (in that 3. Phil:) in the thoughts and estimates that he expresseth there of the knowledge of Christ, "I count all things loss and dross and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord!" Well but what sort of knowledge was it he aimed at? See what it was in what follows, such a knowledge as by which he might be transformed into his likeness, whereby he might be conformable to his death and to his resurrection, such a knowledge as to have the image impressed by it of a crucified and glorified Jesus. And no other knowledge would serve his turn, "I count all things but loss and dross and dung in comparison of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord," so to "know him" as to "be found in him," as to have "the fellowship of his sufferings and the power of his death," and to attain with him the resurrection from the dead.

And I desire in the close of this discourse to leave this with you. It is a dreadful thing to trifle with sacred matters. If at any time we open this book, or any thing out of it be opened to us, and we have not that serious design before our eyes and upon our hearts, that we would know more of divine things, that we may be made more like God, and be more fitted for his service and communion both here and hereafter, we shall be found guilty of trifling with that which is sacred: and though in this world the punishment may not be so visibly severe, yet the guilt is undoubtedly great with, (and indeed incomparably greater than,) what Uzzah lay under when he rashly laid hold on the ark, and the Bethshemites when they opened and would be curiously prying into it. And what! do we therefore make light of God, and the sacred things of God, because in the gospel-days there are not so terrible examples set in view before our eyes? But if we look into the great mysteries of the divine kingdom, with a slight mind and a vain heart, without any serious design of the same thing that these discoveries, these truths, these doctrines that are brought to our knowledge are designed for, we are all that while deserving that, which will be worse in the issue and end, than to have the name put upon the place "*Perez-Uzzah, the breach that Uzzah made,*" and it will be a more dreadful thing than if he did signalize the place by a terrible stroke from heaven upon us. When a man meddled with the great things of God and can give no account for what, but only to satisfy his own curiosity, and the idle fancy of a vain mind; this will have a sad issue. But let it be for this, and my heart bear me record that it is for this, that I may become a serious, holy, knowing christian, a useful christian;



that I may live up to Christianity through the whole of my course while I am here upon earth, and then shall I be fitted at length for the heavenly inheritance with the saints in light, who shall possess that glorious inheritance.

Our next great work will be to fall upon the first principle, the very first of these principles, that which is the principal of principles ; and that is concerning the Deity ; the deepest foundation of all our religion.

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## LECTURE III.\*

Rom. 1. 20.

*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head; so that they are without excuse.*

OUR business (as we have proposed you know) is, with God's gracious assistance, to open to you the principles of religion. Christian religion (which we finally intend) is founded in natural : and the principles of the former must be understood, therefore, to comprehend the latter, as things at least necessarily pre-supposed unto the doctrine of Christ. Now it being our design, in the general, to open to you the principles that do any way belong to that doctrine, we choose (as it is most fit) to begin with HIM who is the beginning of all, the principle that is most firstly first, *primo primum*, as they use to speak. Such is the Deity whether we speak of principles of being or of knowledge : for there is no being that depends not upon the Divine Being, and no knowledge, rightly so called, which some way or other depends not upon divine knowledge. He is not only the first being, but the first and primary known, the *primum esse* and the *primum cognoscibile*, as he is justly to be reckoned.

\* Preached December 5. 1690.—The preceding discourse was, doubtless, preached in two Lectures : but the division, and the time when the 2nd was delivered are not noticed in the manuscript. Edit.

Now this text shews us the true method of arriving to the knowledge of him, the unmade Being, by the things that are made ; and not only to the certainty of his existence, but of the excellency of his nature ; both discoverable by the same light, by the same evidencing mediums, which that you may see, let us view the contents of this text briefly. We have in it

First, What is revealed concerning God, expressed *first* of all more indefinitely, “ the invisible things of him.” This must not be understood distinctively, as if some things of God were visible and some invisible ; that is, of things belonging to the divine nature ; but it must be understood adversatively, that is, though they are invisible, and notwithstanding their invisibility, they are yet clearly demonstrable by the things that are made. And then, *secondly*, they are declared to us more expressly, first, in one great instance of his eternal power, the effects whereof we see (as is here said) in the things that are made. But the cause itself is still invisible. And this is most fitly instanced in reference to the creature and the creation, which is said to be demonstrative thereof. All this vast creation, with that great variety of creatures that do compose and make it up, having lain in that, as in the pregnant womb thereof, from all eternity ; out of which it is at length produced by it as its mighty creative cause. And then, *secondly*, besides this instance of one peculiar excellency of the Divine Being, (his eternal power) to save a long and a particular enumeration, all the rest of the divine excellencies, are summed up in that one expression, “ Godhead :” his eternal power and Godhead, comprehending all his other excellencies and perfections besides. This is the first thing we have to note to you from the text—what is revealed concerning God, even the invisible things of him, particularly his eternal power, the immediate cause of all things, and his Godhead which comprehends all his excellencies together. And,

Secondly : We have to consider here the revelation hereof, these things “ are clearly seen,” seen, and *clearly* seen. This indeed looks like a riddle ; invisible things seen ! and clearly seen ! things seen that are invisible, or that cannot be seen ! But the next words solve it, “ being understood by the things that are made.” Seen ! How are they seen ? Not ocularly, but intellectually, they are seen as being understood. They are seen by the eye of the mind, though they cannot be seen by the bodily eye. God, and every thing belonging to the nature of God, being in that respect by the excellency thereof invisible. But it may be said, How are they so seen and clearly seen by the

minds and understandings of men? when the complaint is concerning men generally, even in the very context, "their foolish hearts are darkened," and "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not;" as it is in the beginning of John's gospel. How then are they intellectually seen? Why nothing is more usual than to express a matter of right (where that right is most evident) by matter of fact, and by such forms of speech as signify the fact. "No man liveth to himself;" that is, no man should. It is so plain a case that no man should live to himself, that when the design is to speak the reason of the thing, this is the expression of it, "no man liveth to himself," that is, is allowed to do so; and indeed in common language it is usual to express the passive future by the present or the preterit, as we say, *vir spectatus*, for *vir spectabilis*, or *spectundus*; one that is very much regarded, for one that ought to be or deserves to be so. And a thing that we say is *indubitata fidei*, of undoubted faith and certainty: we mean by it *indubitande*, that ought not to be doubted, or that there is no reason why it should be doubted. So "clearly seen" here, is clearly to be seen and understood, that is, such as might be understood, that ought to be understood, and there is no reason why they are not understood, but because men will not understand; shut their eyes and are willingly blind and ignorant, "not liking" (as it is afterwards expressed in the context) "to retain God in their knowledge." Or, there are here things so clearly to be understood, that they are manifestly left (as the close of this verse is) without all excuse who understand them not. And upon that account, in the words presently following, "that which may be known:" (so we read it) the expression is, that which is known of God; but the meaning is, that which may be known of God, as we translate it. Then,

Thirdly: We are to consider the evidencing medium in the text, "by the things that are made:" the made things that are visible, are clearly demonstrative of their unmade Cause, of the excellency of the power and Godhead of that invisible Being, who is the unmade Maker of them. And

Fourthly: You have the constancy and continuedness of this concealment and revelation, "from the creation of the world." It is not *ex out of*, but *απο from*; and notes the term of time and not casualty, which is expressed in the other phrase of speech, we noted to you before, "the things that are made." But all along, ever since the world began, ever since there was a world in being, the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead: they have been concealed and revealed: concealed in one respect; that is, they have been in-

visible to mortal eyes : and revealed in another respect ; that is, have been visible to mortal minds. And then you have

Fifthly : In the last place, (which will be fit to be considered as the use of all,) the inexcusableness of those that receive not this revelation ; so that they are without excuse, that do not acknowledge and adore the invisible Godhead, so demonstrating himself by the things that are made.

As to what we intend, you may take the ground of the whole discourse from this scripture thus,

That the sundry excellencies of the Divine Being, all-comprehending Godhead, are clearly demonstrable by the things that are made. And you may take in (as that which gives the greater lustre to the truth) that which is put adversatively, if you please, notwithstanding their invisibility in themselves.

In speaking to this, these two things are principally to be insisted on :

I. They shew you what the Godhead comprehends, as far as is needful or possible unto us, or what are the excellencies that belong to the nature of God. And then,

II. To shew how these are demonstrable of him by the things that are made.

I shall not dispute the reasonableness of that method in speaking to other subjects, first to inquire about the *an sit*, and then about the *quod sit* or rather the *quid sit* ; to inquire first whether such a thing be, and then to inquire what it is. There may, indeed, as to some confused knowledge of a thing, be an inquiry concerning it's existence, and afterwards a descent made to inquire more particularly into its precise nature. But simply speaking, it would be the most absurd thing in the world to inquire first whether this or that be, before there is any apprehension at all what it is : for then we inquire about a shadow ; and neither he that demonstrates, nor he to whom the demonstration is made, can do other than beat the air ; the one understands not himself, nor can the other understand what he goes about. But it would be much more absurd in this case, to follow such a method as that, because by universal consent, the divine nature includes existence in it, which some therefore rely upon as sufficient demonstration of the existence of God, that is, that his very idea doth include existence, so that it is impossible to conceive of the Divine Being, but we must conceive of it as existing, inasmuch as the very idea and notion of it is inclusive of all perfections, whereof existence cannot be but one, and a very fundamental one too to all the rest. And therefore it must be a manifest

contradiction, so much as but to suppose, that the most perfect Being must not exist, because a possibility of not existing is a very great and manifest imperfection.

But that is not the method of demonstration which I choose, but that which the text lays before us, that is, to demonstrate by that which is made, both the certainty of God's existence, and the excellency of his nature. But the latter we must have some understanding of first, otherwise neither do I nor you know what we are doing, if we have no apprehension among us, who or what a one he is, whose existence we speak of.

I. This therefore comes to be considered and inquired into, what excellencies we must suppose the Godhead or divine nature (which is all one) doth comprehend. And here it must be acknowledged, we enter into a vast and most profound abyss ; and you and I have all of us great reason to apprehend our need of much forgiveness, that after so great opportunity as we have had to learn better, we understand and know little yet of what we are to speak and hear of ; and we have great need to supplicate and look up, that we may be enabled to speak and hear worthily concerning the blessed and eternal God, and to speak things of him fit to be spoken, and to hear them as it is fit to hear such things.

Why, in general it is certain the name of God doth import a Being absolutely perfect, a Being comprehensive of all perfections.

And now here it may be said, This throws us into a sort of despair ; for certainly a Being comprehensive of all perfections, must be to us altogether incomprehensible ; we can never comprehend what doth itself comprehend all things.

I answer, Very true indeed : and yet there is a knowledge of this incomprehensible and all-comprehending Being, which is necessary as our first step, not only in what we are now about, but in reference to whatsoever else we have to go about to do, or to enjoy in all time, or in all eternity. But to relieve our thoughts here a little, you must know that we are not to treat of this incomprehensible and all-comprehending Being, in the way of metaphysicians and philosophers, who must have notions of things, ideas of them (it is that which they profess and pretend to) adequate to the things themselves whereof they treat ; but our business is to speak of this ever-blessed Being as persons professing religion ; not as philosophers, but as religionists ; and so we are to consider him as the Object of our religion, the first thing to be considered in all religion ; and so the name of our inquiry comes to this : Have we an object for our religion, yea or no ? And if we cannot reach to com-

prehend (as it is impossible we should) all that doth belong to the Godhead, if yet we can reach to apprehend, so much as will represent and recommend him to us, as a worthy, deserving Object of our religion, our business is done: that is what we design, and we may know so much concerning him as to know him to be a fit Object, or worthy of religion, without knowing all of him, which is impossible: and if it were possible it would undeify him. He could not be God if we could comprehend him. He could not be a Deity if a finite mind were comprehensive of him.

And that you may a little understand the reasonableness of what I now say, do but consider what knowledge of man it is necessary for you to have in order to your conversing with men. Is it not possible for one man to converse with another, without having a full and entire knowledge of the full and entire guidity (as I may so speak) of human nature? must a man know all the properties and attributes of human nature, or he cannot converse with men? I hope there are many men converse one with another besides philosophers. And so, I say, it is equally possible for you to converse with God, without knowing every thing belonging to his nature. It is enough in order hereunto, and that so you may be in a possibility of conversing with him by religion, as the great Object of your religion: the only Object of your religion, that you know him to be more perfect than any thing else, or all things else, though you do not fully know how excellent or perfect he is, or ever can. But this our conception of him in the general, that he is a Being absolutely perfect, or universally perfect, must comprehend all that can be thought, and all that can be said concerning him. Yet, in the mean time, this is too general to denote to us the Object of our religion. We must have more particular and more distinct thoughts of him whom we are to worship, to whom we are to pay all duty, and from whom we are to expect all felicity, than only this one general notion doth furnish us with. That is, that he is one that is universally or absolutely perfect; we must necessarily descend and come down to particulars; and think what particulars are necessary to constitute and make up for us the object of our worship and religion. And so you may take this more particular (though yet short) account.

When we inquire, What doth the idea or notion of God include? what are we to conceive of the nature of God, as he is the Object of our religion? we must have such a representation of him as this in our minds; that he is an eternal, self-subsisting Being, himself unmade, and the intelligent and free Author

and Original of every thing that is made. Conceive him so, and you have before you the Object of your worship, the Object of religion, one that claims by a natural right that you fall down and adore him. This is some answer to the former of these inquiries,—What we are to conceive by that name of God as represented and held forth to us under that name, or what is it that the Godhead doth comprehend, so far as is answerable to our purpose, that is, of stating before you an object of religion.

II. And now the second thing we have to do, is to demonstrate all this concerning God, by the things that are made : which is that method of demonstration that the text furnishes us with, and directs us unto. If such a Being as this doth exist in reality, have actual existence in such a Being, or he doth exist such and as such, then we can be in no further doubt, whether we have an object of worship, an object of religion yea or no. But now the demonstration of the existence of such a Being, by things that are made, must be done by parts, according as there are parts, that this representation of the object of religion is made up of, and so we shall proceed gradually part by part. As

I We have this to demonstrate to you, that there is existing an ETERNAL BEING, that was of itself, depending upon nothing for its being or existence ; and this we have to demonstrate to you by the things that are made ; that is thus ; though that eternal Being is invisible ; you see him not with your eyes ; it is a Being of too high an excellency ever to be seen of mortal eyes, or by the eyes of the flesh, or by external sense ; yet there are things in being that are visible, and of the existence whereof you can be sure. You are sure that yourselves are, and that you are some of the things that are made ; for you very well know, that you began to be, that you have not been always, and that you have been but a little while ; then I say, from that which you may be sure of, that it is a being, you may be likewise sure, there is an eternal Being that was from everlasting of itself. And I would not have you herein to debase your own minds and understandings, as if they could not be at a certainty about such a thing as this, though the matter falls not under the sight of the eye. As to what is to be inferred, to be collected and concluded, it would be too great a debasement of human nature and the mind and spirit of a man, to suppose or imagine that this mind and spirit cannot be as certain of its object, as external sense can be of its object. You think you are very sure of what you see with your eyes, and you have reason to think you are so : and you are so. But I would have you to



apprehend too, that you may be as sure of something that you only know with your mind as you can be of any thing that you see with your eyes : and you wrong your own understandings if you will not think the one sort of things to be as certain as the other sort. You think (for instance) we are all very sure that we see one another, and are here present together at this time: you see me and I see you. No man but will think this a very absolute certainty of what falls under sight. But let me appeal to you now, whether you cannot be certain of something that only falls under the view of your mind, and not under your sight at all. Are you not as sure that two and two make four, as you are that you and I see one another? the one as an object of the mind only, the other as an object of sense. And pray is not the one of these as certain as the other? Am I not as certain that two and two make four, as that we see one another? Have you not as much satisfaction of the truth of the one as of the truth of the other? Well, that being now laid, I doubt not but if you will use your understandings, you will see and confess that you are as certain, that an eternal Being is, which you see not, as you are that any being is, that you do see.

Why! How can we be as certain? you will say.

Why, plainly and shortly thus, from this consequence, If any thing is, something hath always been. Do but consider and weigh in your own minds the clearness of this consequence. If you can be sure that something now is, you may be as sure that something hath ever been, been from eternity, or (which is all one) that there is an eternal Being. Well but how will this consequence be made out? Why, plainly, by taking the reverse of it. Do but suppose with yourselves, nothing more is ; then the manifest consequence will be, that to eternity nothing can ever be, and of this (if you will think) you may be as sure, as you can of this, that two and two make four. That is, do but lay down this, and suppose it : there is nothing now in being no where, or any where ; whatsoever there was, there is now nothing of one sort or another in being ; you then may be sure, that to all eternity nothing can ever happen to be : for nothing can spring, or start up out of nothing into being of itself. Can you be surer of any thing than of this, that if you could suppose the whole universe of being not to be, or that from eternity it was not, to all eternity it would never be, it could never be. Then how plain a consequence is this, if something now is, something hath always been : if there be any being, there is an eternal Being. For if there had been any time, or any moment, in all conceivable eternity wherein there was nothing in being, nothing had ever come into being,

or could possibly have done so. This then is the first step, there is an **ETERNAL BEING**, and nothing can be plainer. But now,

#### LECT. IV.\*

2. We come in the next place to prove to you the *self-existence* of such a Being. There is such a Being first, and now secondly, that eternal Being must be of itself, could no other way be, but of and from itself. Now here you must conjoin these two things in your own thoughts, that so (as you will see in the sequel) every thing that is thus proved, may be found to be proved of one and the same being. Now then it is evident, that this eternal Being is the first of all beings, there can be nothing before it, and therefore it cannot have its existence from another, there being nothing before it, from whence it could have its existence, and therefore it must have its existence from itself: not by once beginning to exist, for we have shewn already, it is impossible, that if there were nothing in being, any thing should of itself rise up out of nothing into being. And therefore this is such a Being, as must be understood by the excellency of its own nature, to have been always in being without beginning, and so it will appear to be an eternal Being, and to be a self-existing Being both at once: or (which is all one) a necessary Being, a Being that doth not depend upon will and pleasure, as all made things do. All made things depend upon will and pleasure; "for thy pleasure they are, and were created." But the unmade Being must needs be self-existent, no way depending upon the pleasure of another, there being nothing before it, and so (which is the same thing) itself necessarily existing, as that excellency, that peculiar excellency of its own nature, to which it was simply repugnant not to exist. And so for the same reason if there have been an eternal self-subsisting Being, there must be still an eternal self-subsisting Being, for it is upon these terms, and for that reason for which it was impossible to it ever not to be. And so that nature which he is pleased to assume to himself is most admirably expressive of this peculiarity of his nature, "**I AM THAT I AM**," or simply "**I AM**." Exod. 3. 14. All beings besides, being but (as it were) shadows of being in comparison of this. And

We are further to conceive and to prove concerning this Being, its causation of all things else, this is an attribute of the Divine Being as it is itself without cause, so to be the Cause of every thing. Itself unmade, but the Maker of all things that are made. A thing the blessed God doth justly and often glory

\* Preached Dec. 12. 1690.

in, in sundry parts of Scripture : “ The Maker of heaven and earth.” The first as well as the last. He of whom and from whom all things are ; and we are told again and again how, in the beginning of Genesis, and the beginning of the gospel of John and elsewhere, to wit, by a word’s speaking. He spake and they were made. He commanded and they stood forth. That there are made things is a proof to us that he was their Maker. A made thing and a maker are relatives one to another, and there can be no maker of that which was of itself. Whence should that which was made not of itself come, but from that Being that was of itself?

4. We must conceive and may clearly prove from what is made, the vast *power* of the Eternal Being. The things that are made prove that he is a Being of the greatest conceivable power, the greatest that we can conceive, and indeed unspeakably greater than we can conceive. This appears in that, first, he hath made all things out of nothing : as nothing can of itself arise out of nothing, so it is the greatest power that is conceivable to bring any thing out of nothing : if all the contrivance and all the power of this world were put together to bring the least thing out of nothing, you would easily apprehend it impossible to all. If all the force that is in this whole earth, and even in the whole creation, should be exerted together to bring a grain of sand out of nothing, you would easily apprehend it would never be, and therefore how vast is that power of this Eternal Being ! he to whom the eternal Godhead belongs, (as the text speaks) to bring things into being that were not ; that were nothing immediately before. But then, secondly, consider also the vastness of the creation. To bring the least thing out of nothing must require the greatest power, but to bring so great a creation as this out of nothing, is that which doth render the power of the Creator, both perspicuous and admirable at once. To have such a frame of things as we behold with our eyes from day to day made to rise up out of nothing, and only by a word speaking, how perspicuous and admirable doth it evidence his infinite power ! But

5. We are to apprehend, and may prove the admirable *beneficence* of him that made them. If we cast our eye through the universe, and consider, that the first order of creatures that have life are made capable of pleasure ; some kind of satisfaction to themselves, that is, that are capable of the meaner life, the sensitive life ; and that the creatures beneath them are made to afford the matter of that pleasure, when it was very easily possible for a Being of vast, immense power to have made creatures only for self-torment ; upon this account it appears that

the whole earth, the whole creation is full of his goodness. So that rising a little from the meanest sort and order of creatures, you immediately ascend to such a sort and order of creatures as hath, every one, its suitable delectation. That all the repasts of that life that are given to the several orders of creatures, are mingled and sweetened with so much delight, speaks all to be full of his goodness. Whatsoever is necessary for the support of it, is generally taken in with delight and complacency. If this Being who is the Author and Spring of all other beings, were not a being of admirable goodness and beneficence it had been as easy a thing to him, that what should have been necessary for the support of inferior beings should always have been accompanied with torture as well as pleasure. That whereas we and the creatures beneath us find it needful in order to the support of life to eat and drink, he might have ordered it so that there never should have been eating and drinking without torment: now we find it is with continued pleasure, for the greater part, with all sorts of creatures whose case doth require it. And again,

6. We must understand from the things that are made, this Eternal Being to have been their *intelligent* and *designing* Maker. We are to prove this intellectuality from the things that are made; that he is an intellectual Being, that he did not give rise to this creation by an effort of vast and resistless power alone; but by a power that was guided and governed by wisdom, so as to know and design all his work throughout. And (as I have told you) it being our business in speaking to this head, to evince and make out to you an object of religion, to give you a plain and satisfactory answer to this first question, Have we an object of religion yea or no? this is most absolutely necessary to the resolution of it. We have not an object of religion without this, that is, without the supposition of an intellectual designing Maker of all things. If we should suppose only an Almighty Maker of things, who made them without wisdom, without design, intending no such thing; if the effort of such a power as we could not resist, and it could not of itself withhold, had thrown up such a creation as this is, out of nothing into what it is, if that had been possible, here had been no object of worship, no object of religion, that is, there would have been nothing that would either deserve or could receive religious homage from us: nothing that could deserve it, because the thing was altogether (upon this supposition) without design. If a mighty violent storm had thrown in upon the coast some vessel full of rich treasure, and I was passing by it, and (it being without an owner, no one laying claim to it) it

were thrown into my lap, would I fall down and worship the storm? though I might him that guided and directed it. Nor indeed as an undesigning cause of all things could not deserve religious homage, so neither could he receive it. It would be an absurd thing to pay a religious homage where there could be no reception of it, where no notice could be taken of it. But nothing is more evident from the things that are made, than that the Maker of them hath done all with most profound and wise counsel; he hath therein displayed an infinite understanding and thereby made known that his understanding is infinite. By wisdom are the heavens stretched forth and the earth established and founded. Which appears several ways :

(1.) In the order which is every way observable in the creation of God. Wisdom only is the parent of order, and order the product of wisdom. It cannot be, that there should be accurate and continued order by chance. When the letters of the alphabet are put into such an order as to express such and such sense, will any man say this was by chance, and this was without design? especially when this is continued, when they are repeated over and over again, in such order as to make a volume : the very thing (I remember) that the pagan, Cicero takes notice of and urgeth for the proving of a Deity; the creating of the world by a wise and designing cause, against the epicureans who would have it arise only out of the fortuitous jumble of several particles of matter, called atoms. "You might as well (saith he) suppose that the letters of the alphabet in great numbers shaken together in confusion, and thrown out, should fall into the order of Ennius's poems, so as of themselves without design to compose such a history as his, all in verse." When we consider the order that is between things and things, how exact a course and motion, the sun, moon, and planets and other stars do hold, so as that a man of weak understanding can tell you at what hour, in such a month and such a day of the month, the sun will rise and set, and so of the moon; and so (those that do observe them) of the planets and other stars besides; and then to see the constant succession of summer and winter, spring and autumn, day and night amongst us : whence comes all this order? What! from no designing cause? And again,

(2.) Consider the aptitude of things to their end, the several ends they are appointed to serve for, as, who can comprehend that such a thing as our eye was made for any thing else but to see with, and our foot but to walk with, and our hand but to work with, and such a thing as the ear was made for any thing else but to hear with? Who can comprehend that there should be that strange and exact aptitude in every thing for the ends and

purposes that they do serve for, without a design that they should serve those purposes? And this would be a great deal more convictive, if it were so obvious to every one to take notice of, and observe many things that are more latent, and lie out of common view: to think how the several veins and arteries do receive and distribute and return back again the blood from its fountain, the heart, so as continually to renew strength and vigour in the body as the matter doth require: to think of the admirable variety and suitableness of those things that we have in our bodies, called muscles, and all the several sorts of motion that are to be performed; about six (as is observed) belonging to the eye itself, without which it were impossible it should move in the several ways it doth: and about four hundred and thirty of these in one human body. If any man did by chance see a watch, who had never seen one before; but he finds upon observation, what uses and purposes it serves for in the general, and what purposes the several parts it was composed of do serve for, in order to that general end, will he not with the greatest confidence imaginable pronounce, "this was made with a design:" or would a man blame him for his confidence? Or if a man take upon him to pretend to such an excessive measure of wit as to say, "these things serve to such a purpose, for this general end, the measuring of time; and the several parts serve for several ends, this and that motion by which the whole is made useful to that common end: but this was never made by any human art or with a design, but the several parts of which it is composed being agitated variously by the wind, or motion of the air were thrown by mere chance into this figure, and so there resulted out of the whole such a little engine as this, that now you see serves these purposes;" who would not think that man with his pretences to wit, a madman that should give such an account as this, how a watch came to be made, when he sees what it serves for, and what its several parts do serve for, in subserviency and reference to the common end? And which way would you judge and pronounce with confidence that such a thing was made with a design, but by having so manifest characters upon it of a designing cause? so as that every one but a madman would presently say, this was done with a design and for such a purpose. But there is no one that hath given himself but to look a little into the composition of a human body but could see a hundred times more curiosity in so many hundreds of things that go to the composition of it. As I have told you, in each several muscle of a human body there is as much curiosity as can be taken notice of in a watch, and much more in the fabric and structure of the eye and of the ear. So that nothing can be imagined a greater ab-

surdity than to suppose such things as those that we see are made, were made without design or otherwise than with design, and by a wise cause that was first productive of them and continues to be productive of them in the stated way that he hath set for them. And,

(3.) We may conclude an intellectual designing cause of the things that are made, from very many of the things themselves, that not only have characters of a design upon them, and so thence appear to be made with design, but are made capable of design themselves; that is, the whole order of intelligent reasonable creatures. We are all of us convinced that we are not of ourselves, that we are made things, that our minds and spirits which we carry about with us are made things by one unmade. It is but a little while ago that they were not. But besides, they are things themselves capable of design: you know we lay our designs this way and that, we have our contrivance what we will do to-day and to-morrow and (it may be) the third day. And whence should a designing effect proceed but from a designing cause? If there be such a thing as wisdom among the things that are made, there must certainly be a wise maker; otherwise that wisdom being itself a made thing, was made by that which had nothing in it, out of which it could arise. But (as I told you before) it is altogether impossible for something to arise out of nothing itself. Therefore wisdom being somewhat and a made thing, it doth not arise of itself out of nothing, or that is of late beginning. A little while ago they were not, how comes wisdom into such a created kind of being? Why it shews the wisdom of an uncreated Being from whence it came. And,

7. We may further hence collect the *spirituality* of this Being, that this Being is a Spirit, an eternal Spirit, an eternal mind; otherwise it were not capable of design. There are but two sorts of beings in general that we can so much as conceive of. These are mind and matter. Since we have proved to you, this Being is a designing Being, a wise intelligent Being, that proves it to be a mind, and spiritual Being, because matter is capable of no such thing as design: some indeed may apprehend that though gross matter cannot design, (a clod of clay we know can design nothing,) yet perhaps some finer sort of matter, pure and defectless matter may. But I would have it considered what nearer approach to wisdom and reason there is in a flame of fire, than in a clod of clay. Can any man conceive that there is any greater disposition to reason or the exercise of wisdom in a blast of wind or a flame of fire than in a piece of dirt? Therefore we are here to attribute to the Deity that, that God is pleased to attribute to himself; to wit, that

he is a Spirit, which further represents him to us as the Object of worship, and of suitable worship, forasmuch as he is to be worshipped, and worshipped in spirit and in truth. John 4. 24. And indeed, otherwise it had been altogether impossible that this world should be made by a cause that were not purely mental, in its own being a mental and spiritual thing: for most manifest it is; matter as such is altogether inactive; and if you could suppose never so vast a collection of mere matter it would always remain a mere dead lump, as even the light of more intelligent and considering heathens could dictate to them: *Mens agitat molem*; it is the mind that doth actuate, and did at first this mighty *moles* of matter, so as to bring things out of it, appearing in such an order as we do behold, and that we may not go on further in particular enumerations, which we see the apostle, in the text, cuts much shorter, summing up all in the word Godhead,

8. In the last place we may collect from the things that are made that this Being is absolutely *perfect*, or such as wherein all excellencies do concur in their highest perfection whether they be natural, intellectual, or moral, or those that we may conceive under these distinct notions.

(1.) Natural, as life, original self-sprung life in the highest perfection of it, as it imports both a self-active and self-fruitive principle. And again, pure simplicity and uncompoundedness; the necessary exclusion of all composition that may import any thing of diminution or debasement, to that Being we are speaking of. And again, most absolute immutability and unchangeableness, as that mentioned name; "I AM THAT I AM" imports. And again, immensity, unconfinedness to any space whatsoever; so that "heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain" this Being. These are natural perfections that we must understand do belong to him. And then,

(2.) All sorts of intellectual perfection that are truly such; as perfect knowledge of all things, even of minds and spirits themselves; and of future things that no eye can look into, but the divine eye. Most exact wisdom in all things else, as well as what appears in the making of this world, there is also requisite what doth appear in the continual government of it in changing the times and seasons, ordering things so as that they shall hit into their proper juncture, and meet in all their necessary circumstances that were needful to concur for such and such purposes. And then,

(3.) Those that are called moral excellencies, such as truth and righteousness, and holiness and the like: these must be understood, upon the same grounds, all of them to meet and con-



cur in their highest perfection in this Being. And the demonstration whereof is still too, from the things that are made, because there are ideas, images, vestiges of these things to be found up and down in the creation among the things that are made. We find that some things are more fickle than others, and some things more steady. And we find (as I said before) there is such a thing as wisdom, as knowledge, as holiness, as righteousness, to be found among the creatures; and this shews all these things must be in the highest perfection in the unmade Being.

And I might add hereupon (as that which will be most necessarily consequent) that this Being must be *infinite* in all these perfections, because there is nothing in being, and nothing supposable ever to come into being, that doth not result and proceed from it. And that which comprehends all being and all perfection and all excellency, actual and possible, cannot be less than infinite; for there can be nothing more than all: but it is altogether impossible that there should be any thing, either that is in actual being now, or that can hereafter come into being, that comes not from this radical Being. This Being therefore, which must virtually comprehend all that is actual and all that is possible, within the compass of its own power, cannot be less than infinite, because there can be nothing more than all, nothing beyond all.

And for the same reason it will be most evident that this Being can be but *one*. But that I shall not now insist upon: it will fall into the discourse most suitably when we come to shew, though it be essentially but *one*, it is personally *three*, and that is only to be shewn from the Scripture. The *unity* of the Deity is indeed demonstrable from reason, but that there should be a *trinity* in it, is only to be known from his saying so who best knows his own nature. As "the things of a man" are only to be known by "the spirit of a man that is in him," so the things of God, and what is in his holy nature (otherwise not revealed) can only be known by the Spirit of God, as he shall think fit to reveal and make it known to us. But first, it will be needful to lay the foundation thereof in revealed religion, which is the great superstructure that is raised upon natural religion, or the natural notices of God, to wit, to evince to you that the Scriptures are of divine revelation which will be the next work we have to do.

## LEC. V.\*

Before we come to evince to you the authority of the Scriptures, I reckon nothing can be of greater importance than to enlarge somewhat in the use of that we have been upon: for if we let what God is pleased to make known concerning himself, his own nature and existence, slightly pass without improvement, and lose that, we lose all. All our time is lost, and all our labour is lost if we can let so great a thing slide away without some proportionable improvement and impression: and herein lies the proper improvement of it. The state of things is sad among us, upon this account, that there is so little knowledge of God in the land: for this it hath cause to mourn, and I doubt will be made to do so: but if we had ten thousand times more of the knowledge of God than we have, if it be not a lively and impressed knowledge, it is all to no purpose: the increase of our knowledge would be but the increase of our sorrow, as it is said upon another account. You have heard from this scripture, that the existence and nature of God (though invisible) are clearly demonstrated by the things he hath made. The improvement I desire you to make of it, will be partly by way of information in some particular truths that may be deduced from it: partly by way of expostulation, touching sins repugnant hereunto: and partly by way of exhortation to agreeable duties.

I. For truths that may be collected and *inferred* hence for our information, you may take such as these:

1. That the mind of man is capable of arriving by way of argument unto the knowledge of God; it is capable of attaining in a way of argumentation to the knowledge of God's existence and in great measure of his nature too. For we are told, the eternal power and Godhead are to be clearly seen by the things that are made. Things in themselves invisible, and while they are in themselves invisible, if we are to come to the knowledge of them by the things that are made, how can that be but by way of argument? In themselves they are said to be invisible: those visible things that are beheld are not the eternal power and Godhead themselves, therefore we can come to the knowledge of the former by the latter no way but by intervening arguments, not immediately, for the things that are made are the medium. Therefore it is by way of argumentation formed from this medium, that we come to this knowledge of God's eternal power and Godhead, and this is that which con-

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cerns us very deeply to consider, that if in such a way as this we are to arrive at the knowledge of God, then it is of much importance to us to make a reflection upon ourselves, and understand that from hence, much is to be learned of our own nature. If in this way we are to understand any thing of God's nature, we must by consequence understand so much of our own nature: that is, that it is a reasonable nature, that it is an intelligent nature, that it is a nature capable of improving itself in point of knowledge, by ratiocination and discourse; and even of knowledge concerning the highest and greatest, and first knowable, that is God and the very nature of God. Indeed here the foundation lies of all obligation that can be upon us to be religious, to be obedient, to be subject, to the common Ruler of this world; that is, that God hath given us a nature capable of knowing him, and of arriving to this knowledge of him by this way of ratiocination, as the text implies: that is, to collect that there is an eternal power, and an essential Deity, from things that are made and extant to view. If we are to come by it, so we are to come by it in a reasoning way, and it is impossible for us to receive conviction concerning our own duty towards God, if we have not a right apprehension of our own natures, and what they are susceptible and capable of. God will deal with us at the last day, according to the nature that he hath given us; and therefore we ought to consider ourselves too according to that nature. There will be a judgment-day for men, when there will not for brutes; and if God will difference us in the final judgment, and doth difference us in the way of his present government, from inferior brute creatures, it concerns us to understand the difference too, and to know that we have natures capable of being so dealt with, and as God will finally deal with us; that he doth not deal with us unsuitably to the natures he hath first given us. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding." And if so, then he is to be dealt with accordingly; not like a stock or a stone, or a brute creature. It is a great signification to us of the capacity of the nature of man, that it should be said here, to all those that will use their understandings, the eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen by the things he hath made. And that is one thing we have therefore to collect and infer for our own information, that the mind and understanding are capable of arriving by ratiocination and arguments to the knowledge of God. Indeed it would be a strange kind of perverseness to hesitate at the reception of this, because it is plain, that even lower things than our mental capacity are subservient to our reception of divine know-

ledge ; for faith (that hath to do with the same kind of objects) comes by hearing : and if external sense is to be subservient to our reception of the knowledge of divine things, then certainly much more our understanding, which is a thing far nobler than our external sense, and therefore it is a higher and greater talent that we are to be accountable for. We are to be accountable for all our faculties, as so many talents that God hath intrusted us with ; the faculty of seeing, the faculty of hearing, the faculty of remembering and the like. And what do we think, among the rest, the faculty of understanding in so plain and important a case as this, is to be exempted and left out ? that God should have distinguished us by this in so great a measure from the beasts that perish, and we take no notice of the difference and not think ourselves accountable for it ? No, if we are in this way capable of coming to the knowledge of God's eternal power and Godhead, certainly this ability of coming this way to this knowledge, is that which must be strictly accounted for another day ; that we have such a power and use it not, such a capacity and endowment belonging to our natures and never use it, let it lie asleep, never exert and put it forth to so high and to so great a purpose as this is. But,

2. We may further learn hence, that none who have the use of their understandings can ever be innocently ignorant of God. No, saith the text, there is so clear a representation of the eternal power and Godhead in the things that are made, that if men will not yet know God they are left without excuse, without apology, the case admits of no apology. That there should be so clear a representation to an apprehensive creature, and he will not know God ; there is nothing to be said for it. There is nothing to be said why they do not know him, why they do not live in the eternal adoration of him. The matter will be resolved entirely and only into this at the last, they have not known, because they have not liked to retain God in their knowledge, as it follows after, in the 20th. verse ; and into that which we see in that of Ephes. 4. 18. that men are " alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them and the blindness of their hearts." Pray what kind of blindness is the blindness of the heart ? That can be no blindness but voluntary blindness, affected blindness, chosen blindness ; that men are blind because they will be blind, because they will not see. A blindness of the mere speculative understanding is quite another thing, but such a blindness as is referred to the heart, as having its seat and subject there, must mean a blindness that men voluntarily do continue themselves in, as he that stiffly and resolutely winks that he may not see the light.

3. We may further infer hence, that the clearest rational knowledge of God is by no means so acquiesced in, as if that would serve the turn, and be answerable to the saving purposes and necessities of our souls. The rational knowledge of God; it may be had and it must be had, but it must not be rested in; for even this knowledge that doth in the means, the objective representation, lie so fairly compassable, (for the discovery is clear) is supposed to be clear; the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, clearly to be seen, and there may be a reception in some measure, and proportionable to the representation of the object. Besides the objective representation, there may be a subjective reception; it is a supposable thing, and it is frequent (though not universal) that these things here spoken of under the notion of invisibles, are not only clearly to be seen, but seen: and yet, though this knowledge do lie so fairly compassable and may be actually obtained and received, men, for all that, may be left without excuse, for the reason referred to in the verse next but one foregoing, that is, that the truth that is received is held in unrighteousness. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." And by this truth (it is plain by what follows) is principally and chiefly meant the truth concerning the existence and nature of God, "that which may be known of God" (so it immediately follows) "is manifest in them: for God hath shewed it unto them:" for the invisible things, such truths as these, may not only be represented but received; and being so, yet held in unrighteousness, defeated of their proper design; so that such are left without excuse; it not attaining the end that such a representation doth finally aim at. Indeed God would never be angry without a cause, therefore if they be under wrath, if the wrath of God be revealed from heaven, and flame against a wicked, atheistical world, it is plain they are without excuse.

But now, will that knowledge of God serve ourturn that will only leave us inexcusable? will that answer the purposes and necessities of our souls? It is a supposable thing that the clearest merely rational knowledge of God, may but leave men without excuse, therefore somewhat more is necessary, another sort of knowledge. That which is rational, may be had and ought to be had, and we shall most dearly answer for it, if we have it not: but then when we have it, that is not enough, it is necessary, but not sufficient.

But then it may be said, What more is there wanting than to know clearly the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead? Why I shall tell you in one word: To have that clear knowledge made vital. It is not the mere clearness, but

the vitality, of the knowledge of God that must do the needful work in our souls, in order to our present serving of God, and walking and conversing with him in this world, and our final felicity and blessedness with him in the other world. Light there must be, but it must be the light of life, otherwise we shall never be the better for it. A light that is not vital will serve to condemn, but only a light that is vital will serve to save. There is, it is true, a light universally shining in every intelligent mind, in every conscience of man, but it is a light so little profitable to the necessity of an immortal soul, that that light is said to be but darkness, as in that 6 Mat. 23. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" That is, serves for the advantage of souls (if they do acquiesce and take up their rest there) no more than mere darkness would have done. It is but equal to darkness, as to any thing of fruit, emolument and profit to them. And therefore, that light which is truly salutary and finally saving, is the light of life, such is the light which comes by Christ: "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8. 12.

But you will say, What is the difference? One man knows God, that is, he is well assured and able rationally to prove and demonstrate to another man, the existence of God and many particular things concerning his nature; and perhaps can speak more rationally to such a purpose than many another man that carries the reputation of a pious man, whilst perhaps this man is not so: Pray what is the difference?

Why truly, this is a thing (because I must not insist in such a course as I am in, upon particulars) that may (I should think) be easily understood by any one. One, he knows the kind or nature of this or that food, or this or that drink, he is able to discourse rationally of it, and give an accurate description of the kind and properties of this or that sort of meat, or drink: another, he eats and drinks of it. Let the former, discourse as long as he will and never so understandingly and knowingly, and not eat or drink, he will be famished for all his knowledge: the other, he knows this is good meat, and this is good drink; and he eats and drinks heartily and is refreshed, and lives by it. Is not here a plain difference? Why here is the very difference as to the knowledge of God. One, he can discourse rationally and learnedly about many invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, but he never closeth with them, his soul never inwardly unites with him as his best good, never subjects to him as his highest Lord, never fears him, never loves him, never trusts in him, nor delights in him as the other doth. Do you not begin to apprehend, here

is a vast difference between knowledge and knowledge ; one sort of the knowledge of God and another ? How plain is it that with many men, the clearest and truest notions of God are only dead notions ; lie dead in their minds, operate nothing there, make them no other sort of men than they would be, if they knew no such thing ; or if they thought or believed quite the contrary ? Take out all those notions of God which some men have in their minds, and put in the room of them quite contrary notions ; a scheme of mere atheism, and the men are found not at all to differ. That man whose head before, was full of theism, is just the same man as when his head was full of atheism. There is knowledge, but no vitality : all his notions of God lie dead, and so are as if they were not. But here is the great difference when the light of life concerning God and the invisible things of God comes into the soul of a man, when these vital beams strike into the very centre of a man's heart, that the man not only hath light about these things, but is light. A wicked man hath light, but it is said of a good man, a regenerate man, he is light. "Ye were darkness but now ye are light in the Lord:" it hath quite altered his temper, begot a new frame and habit in his soul : that is, the knowledge of God hath begot an impression of godliness ; and this is that you are to be driving at, and not to take up with any knowledge of God short of this. "He hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true." 1 John 5. 20. We know him, and by that knowledge are wrought into a vital union. "We are in him, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

But it may be said, If such a further super-added knowledge of God be so necessary, what is the former rational knowledge worth ? what doth it signify ? and what doth it serve for ?

Why let me bring you back to the former illustration that I gave you before, about the knowledge of meat and drink. You see a plain difference between barely knowing that this is good and useful food, that would be proper and suitable drink ; and knowing the same thing by taste and reception in order to nutrition : there is a very plain difference. But what ! is the former knowledge therefore useless ? that is, to know that this is good meat and drink, is it useless ? Is it not a very necessary knowledge that a man should know what is fit to be eaten and drank and what not ? If you had not so much knowledge of the former sort as to be able to say, "this is good food which, being duly received, may do me good ; and that is poison ; if I meddle with it, it will destroy me ;" you could not distinguish

bread and a stone : you could make no distinction. In what a case were that man in, that did not know bread and a stone asunder ? So here, without such a rational knowledge of God, you cannot understand why one ought to be worshipped more than another, why more to be trusted, more to be loved than another. If you had not that former knowledge of God you would not be able to distinguish between a proper object of adoration. But what can be plainer than this, that many things may be necessary for such and such a purpose, that yet are not sufficient for that purpose ? We must distinguish between necessity and sufficiency. A rational knowledge of God is necessary, it doth not therefore follow that it is sufficient. If one of you did design, in coming hither, to come to the seat where you use to sit, it is necessary that in order to your coming to the seat, that you come to the door. But is therefore coming to the door sufficient ? No, you cannot come to your seat unless you come to the door, but it doth not therefore follow that you had nothing more to do when you come hither to hear a sermon than only just to come to the door. Pray apprehend this, that many things are necessary that are not enough. It is necessary that you have this rational knowledge of God as the door, as an intermission into that vital unitive knowledge of him which is also necessary and which only is sufficient. And if the former of these be aimed at, with a design for the latter, with a humble dependance and sense of our own nothingness, blessing God that he is pleased, in that natural way, to reveal so much of himself, but also humbly craving, "Lord do not leave me here, let this vital light shine into my dark soul : " where his further communications are not despised, they will be had ; where they are valued, where they are sought, an inquiring soul will not be left destitute. If indeed you think that your case is well already, and that you need no more of God, and that all is well enough, you may sit still and perish till you sink into perdition. But know that the benignity of his nature, and the methods he hath set on foot for the recovery and saving of lost sinners, will not let him throw away any soul that doth cry after him ; will not hide himself from them that value the vital efficacious transforming knowledge of him as life itself, and beyond this natural life, which is the true sense of every sincere soul.

4. We may collect hence, that the objection against the acknowledgment of a Deity, from his invisibility, must be most absurd, and contemptibly weak and silly. Nothing can be more so ; "for the invisible things of him are clearly seen by the things that are made." Therefore, nothing can be more fool-



ish than for one to say "I will believe there is no God, because I see him not: I see not the brightness of the appearance of his glory that should make me apprehend such a Being perfect, superior to, and more excellent than, all other that I have had the knowledge of:" nothing can be more childish than this, for it is very plain that if God could be seen, he could not be God. The thing carries a repugnancy in itself; so mean a nature as can be visible cannot be the divine nature. As a heathen said, we are not to ascribe unto God, body or colour or quantity, or any such thing that belongs to objects that fall under our sense. "If we know (saith he) that there is a corporeal nature, and if we know that there is an incorporeal nature, in which of these shall we place the Divine Being? Certainly (saith he) in the incorporeal nature, which is higher and more excellent than to be seen with eyes, or to be heard with ears, or felt with hands, or expressed with human voice." It was the saying of Maximus Tyrius, the heathen philosopher. And I pray you, why should we be so averse to the entertainment and reception of invisibles in our minds? For which is nearer a kin to our minds, invisible things, or visible? Are not our minds invisible? He thinks with himself, "I am not to acknowledge a Deity unless I see him," Pray what is it in you that thinks so, that is so sensible: and capable of thinking at all? Did you ever see your own souls? Did you ever see your own minds? Are not we, as to the most noble and excellent part of ourselves, rather to be accounted ourselves among invisibles than among visibles? It was the saying of a poor pagan, when the season of his dying approached, and his friends about him were discoursing of his burial: "Bury me" saith he "Do you talk of burying me? what do you think this body is to me? Do with it when I am gone what you please: if you can catch me, bury me, but you shall never do that, for do you think this body is me?" And pray will you think so basely of yourselves as that this body is you? If it be not, it is a mind, a spirit, a soul in you, that is you: and is not that nearer of kin to invisible things than visible? That there should be an averseness and shyness to entertain in our minds invisible things because they are invisible, when our minds themselves are invisible, nothing can be more unaccountable and unreasonable than this. It shews us to be very low sunk, that the minds and spirits of men are become strangely degenerate things, when any thing because it is invisible is therefore reckoned unsuitable to them, for a reason for which they should be reckoned most of all suitable. And alas! how little things are we capable of comprehending by our sight, in comparison of the things that we cannot see?

Is our sight fit to be the measure of all realities ? How small a part of this universe can we measure with our eye ! and must all the rest because we see it not, go for just nothing ? Surely there are unspeakably greater things which we see not, than there are that we see. Therefore, a thing should not be reckoned less real, or less considerable, or less excellent, because it is invisible to us, that is, to the eye of our flesh : but unspeakably the more excellent and great for that very reason, for its not being seen.

5. We may hence learn the unjust and mad presumption that is in sin. When the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen in the things that are made, that is, they are clearly to be seen by the things that are made, that they have an invisible Maker, and the eternal power and Godhead of this their Maker is clearly to be seen, then how unjust and mad a presumption is it to sin ! For is not that an affront to thy Maker ? What doth sin signify but ungovernableness to him that hath power to govern me ? And who hath a right to govern you, if not he that made you out of nothing ? Are not you one of the things that were made ? and who therefore shews the eternal power and Godhead of your Maker ? How unjust a presumption then is it to sin ! But how mad a presumption is it besides ! That is, to consider a world of sinful creatures in an apostacy from God and a rebellion against him : from whom have they revolted ? against whom have they rebelled ? They are things that are made, that have rebelled against him that made them. An amazing thing, to consider the inhabitants of this world, the intelligent inhabitants of it ! They are a company of made things, and this world that they inhabit is a made thing. A made thing ! what doth that signify ? Why a thing depending upon will and pleasure : a thing that may be, or not be ; a thing that may continue in being or be thrown into nothing, thrown into destruction the next moment. Why here is a company of creatures, that have taken upon them to revolt from their Maker, to rebel against him that made them. A strange thing ! they have not (as the expression is) a footing for their feet ; they are made things, and this world a made thing ; all which may be swept away with a breath. For men to take upon them to rise up against the authority of him that made them, when they cannot command a breath, not so much as a breath : for that which hath been made, how presently can he unmake it ! That which hath been made by him can be unmade by him in a moment : all this world gone in a moment : how easily may that be done by him ! Therefore sin, considered in its general nature, is the most unjust and mad presumption that ever could enter into the

mind of a rational creature ; unjust towards God, and mad as to ourselves. Oh ! think whither we are sunk, and what a sort of creatures we are become, and how admirable the divine patience is, that lets such a sort of creatures as we are, live in this world : a world which we did not furnish, which we did not make, and which he can in a breath blow away into nothing, as he raised it up out of nothing, by a breath the other way.

6. See here the admirable greatness of God. Oh ! how we should hence apprehend and adore the divine greatness ! The things that are made clearly demonstrate his invisible power and Godhead : and do but consider these two things—the greatness of the things that are made and—how little they yet represent God. And then see what cause we have from hence to admire his most adorable greatness.

(1.) How great the things are that are made. Alas, what a spot, a point is this earth of ours in comparison of the universe ! If our thoughts should go no further than our own vortex, in which the sun and moon and planets have their course, how much more unmeasurable to our thoughts is that vortex than this earth of ours ! This earth, in comparison of that vortex, is no more than a spot to the universe. It is a far less considerable point to the whole universe than this earth is to our vortex, or that circle that doth immediately encompass it. And then to think of the vastness of this universe ; all which, and all that it contains are but things that are made. How mighty a One then is their Maker, their invisible Maker ! The greatness of the creation gives us a great representation of the greatness of the Creator. But it adds unspeakably more if,

(2.) We consider, that yet all which creation can represent unto us of the Divine Being, is a mere nothing in comparison of what it represents not : for there is a whole infinitude of being besides, that was from eternity, everlasting of itself. And it is but a minute effort of the divine eternal power that is seen in this universe : for all the universe is but a finite thing, as great as it can be supposed to be, it is still but a finite thing : but then, there is an infinity of being besides, that is from all eternity, the being of the invisible God. Take this whole created universe and it is but a shadow in comparison of “ I AM.” That Being that claims to itself the name of “ I AM,” and there is nothing besides ME ; nothing fit to be called being besides my own : for all made being is but at will and pleasure, raised up by a breath and capable of being reduced to nothing by a breath. The whole creation, the whole universe but a bubble created by the breath of the Almighty ; and may be let to sink again, if he please, by the retraction or withdrawing of that

breath. If then the things made, clearly demonstrate the invisible things ; even the eternal power and Godhead of their Maker, how great a one is HE, first, that could make so great a world as this, and yet, secondly, when that is done, it can represent so little of him ! There is yet an infinitude of being appropriate to himself. Besides, how little a portion do we take up of him, as it is said, Job 26. 5—14. when we view his ways, take notice of such and such things in the course of nature, (as he there speaks of) how “hell is naked before him; and destruction hath no covering;” how “he stretcheth the north over the empty place,” how “he collects the waters into the clouds, and the clouds are not rent under them : these (saith he) are part of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him ?” Oh ! how great a thing were it, if we did but once learn to apprehend the difference between beings unmade and made, between made beings and the eternal unmade Being. And again,

7. We may learn hence the impudency of the tempter, the deceiver and the destroyer (as much as in him lies) of the souls of men ; that he should ever go about to make any one believe that there is not a God. How strange impudency is it, that he should ever presume he can make an intelligent mind apprehend that there is not a God, when the invisible things of God even his eternal power and Godhead are so clearly seen in the things that are made ! Think of this if any of you are vexed at any time (as perhaps many of you may) with malicious injections from that wicked one, that would fain make you believe there is no God ; why turn upon him with disdain : “Thou impudent liar, wouldest thou make me believe against my own eyes, against the clear apprehensions of my own mind ? What doth not every thing I see, doth not every thing I hear, proclaim the Godhead to me, could there be any thing of being, any thing of motion, any thing of life through this whole creation, if there were not an original Author of all this ? Doth not every being speak a first being, and all wisdom speak the first wisdom, and all love the first love, and all goodness speak the first goodness ? Can any thing of itself come out of nothing ? Nothing is more obvious to a considering mind (as hath been urged before) than that we can be surer of nothing than we are of this—that suppose nothing at all were in being, to eternity nothing could ever be in being. But something is in being now : and if that be the account that is to be given, how there comes to be any thing in being ; that is, that there hath been something eternally in being, then that which was eternally in being is the cause of all things that are in being. The

cause that was eternally in being, must bear proportion to the effect. If wisdom and goodness are to be found amongst made things, they are not nothing, you cannot say that wisdom is nothing, and knowledge nothing, justice nothing, for then there would be no difference between a wise man and a fool. If they are something, they could not of themselves come out of nothing; therefore there must have been eternal goodness, wisdom and life; that, that in itself lived, and lives to all eternity: for you see there are such things as these among what is made. Why then it is fit to retort upon the tempter with disdain, "Dost thou go about to make me believe, against the clear light of my own mind, that there is not a God, when it is clearly seen from the things that are made?" If there were nothing else, this proves the eternal Being, that there must be an eternal Cause that hath in it something proportionable to the visible effects that are to be seen, impressed even upon the things that are made. Characters appearing in the effect must have something correspondent to them in their cause, otherwise something must come of itself out of nothing, which is simply the most impossible thing that can be thought. I would only add this in the last place,

3. Whosoever they are that do terminate their thoughts upon this visible world, and look no further, they resist (nay as much as in them is) defeat and destroy the very design of the creation. Why hath God made such a world as this, and set such creatures as we in it? It is, that this world may be an extant, continual standing representation to us, an evidence, a proof of his invisible eternal power and Godhead who made it. We have our concerns and business lying here, within this visible world from day to day; here we are too apt to take up our thoughts, our desires, our designs; they terminate upon this visible world. If we let them do so, if we tolerate ourselves in such a course as this, it is (as much as in us is) to defeat and destroy the design of the creation. God hath designed this visible frame of things to be to us a continual monument and representation of himself, but we look to the things that are made, and there we let our eyes stay and terminate, and never look through them to that which is unmade. This would be a like case, as if one should have a very curious perspective put into his hands, that was very much adorned and beautified with every thing of external ornature that art could confer upon it, and holds it in his hand, turns it this way and that, and views it on every side for a long time together, and then lays it aside, never looks through it: he would see a vast country that now appears to him nothing else but a dark shadow;

just so men deal with this visible creation and frame of things ; they look upon it, take notice of the variety of creatures that are in it, they look on every side of this visible world, as it doth apply itself to them and as they have opportunity to view the things therein : but whereas it was intended as a perspective, that they might look through it into the invisible eternal power and Godhead of him that made all : this never comes into their minds. How preposterous a course is this ! It is little apprehended how guilty we make ourselves in this kind, every day, when we let our minds stay upon any creature of God, this or that man or woman, or house or star, (if we should go so high) and never think of God ; while they are all made things, that tend to represent to us their Maker. Oh ! how little is the end answered and considered, why we have such a frame of things set in view and kept in view continually before us, that we might look through them and adore, look up and adore, that we might through all, view and behold the great Author of all, and bow our heads before him. When we eat and drink, and never think of God, commend the food and drink, and never think of God ; here we take up with the creature, the made thing, and never consider the unmade Maker of it and of us. The end is defeated and lost, for which this world was made and we placed in it, while we look not through things visible and made, unto him that is invisible and unmade.

### LECTURE VI.\*

II. There are hereupon most apparent and very blamable things, about which it is needful that we should be *expostulated* with, and that we do expostulate with ourselves concerning them : otherwise it would be in vain that another should reprove us, if we be not brought by it to reprove ourselves ; or that another should expostulate with our own souls. And this we should do upon that which hath been opened and improved in respect of such things as these : as

1. Why are we yet so much in doubt concerning what is so clearly demonstrable ? the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, which are things so clearly seen (though they are in themselves invisible) by visible effects, by things that are made. Why are our minds yet pendulous and in suspense about so very plain and demonstrable things ? For what, can it enter into our minds to think this world rose up out of itself, without a Maker, out of nothing ? Who of us can endure (if

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he consider) the gross absurdity of such a thought? And since we may so easily be at a certainty, why are we not at certainty in so plain a case? why do not our minds come to a settlement? why are they so off and on? why do we hover and halt between two opinions, as we did not know whether God be God yea or no? or whether he were to be stuck to as such? as the prophet deals with that people so much divided in opinion between God and Baal. But indeed ours would be a worse division and more absurd for if we are divided in our own minds in this case it must be between a God and no God. There was no question among them, but there was and must be some God or other, but only the question was, whether that God the people owned, or another were the God; that was all the doubt, but this is a much wider case, when the question is between a God and no God; and nothing can be more evident than the things that are made, must have had some maker and author; it is a comfortable thing to ourselves to feel the ground firm under us as to this first and deepest fundamental; a very comfortable thing for us to feel that it shakes not. But know withal, it is a very dutiful thing towards our Maker to be at a point, and not to be always disputing, or to have perpetual disceptations within ourselves about that which is prerequisite to our duty; for that suspends all duty, and lays a restraint upon every thing of duty towards him; while we waver and hover in our spirits about so plain a thing as this. Let us be all at a certainty, when we may be so easily at a certainty; as certain (as I have urged to you) about this as we can be of any thing whatsoever: for we cannot be more certain of any thing than we can be of this, that we ourselves are made things; for whatsoever is unmade must have been from everlasting, inasmuch as nothing that is made but it hath received a beginning of being. Whatsoever is unmade must have no beginning of being, must have been from everlasting. But can you be surer of any thing than that you have not been from everlasting? You know you have not been from everlasting, therefore you are made things. And again; you cannot be surer of any thing than you are of this, that you are such a sort of made things as can think, as have a power of thought: you are not more sure that you can see, than you are that you can think, and therefore you do know and are sure, that you have minds and spirits about you; for you are sure that flesh and blood and bones cannot think: you cannot be surer of any thing than you are of this, that this bulk of a body of yours, cannot exercise a thought. Well then, if you be a made sort of thing, and you find you have a power of thought belonging to you, and therefore that you have a mind and spirit

belonging to you, you must then have proceeded from an unmade mind and Spirit, an unmade self-subsisting mind and Spirit : and this is God, and can be nothing but God, this is all as plain as any thing is that we see with our eyes, therefore do not pretend to be uncertain in a matter wherein it is so easy to you to be at a certainty, when so much also doth depend upon it. And blame yourselves for this, if you have been pendulous in so plain a case hitherto. Why am I in doubt when I should have been loving, serving, fearing, and adoring this invisible Deity all this while ? Why have I suffered doubts to hang on my mind in so plain a case ? And,

2. Let us expostulate with ourselves about this, that our apprehensions of the eternal God are so feeble and languid and ineffectual as they have been hitherto, and for the most part (the Lord knows) yet are : that our minds have not only been in a dubious uncertainty, but that the apprehensions we have had, have had so little of vitality and efficacy and power in them, to form our spirits and govern our way and course agreeably thereunto. For (as was told you by way of inference) there needs not only clear knowledge, but vital knowledge of the Deity. And now let me a little further insist upon it, that is, that there is something more requisite, than certainty, somewhat besides a certainty of apprehension and knowledge about it. Such things as there are to be superadded thereto ; that is efficacy, energy, and operative power. I may be certain of those things that do concern me Godward, or that do concern me in reference to my soul, and yet feel little of efficacy and power in the most certain and undoubting thoughts that I can have about such things : that is, though I may have as great a certainty about the objects of my mind as I can have about the objects of sense ; yet the objects of sense do always strike with more efficacy than the objects of the mind do. Experience speaks this plainly, and I need but appeal to every one's experience about it. I might illustrate it to you by a very plain and obvious instance or two, how much more the things that fall under present sense do affect us, than the things do that fall not under sense. Though we are not more certain about the one than we are about the other. As in reference to these bodies of ours, we are not more certain that we do at present feel any thing whether it be grateful or ungrateful to our sense than we are certain that at one time or other we shall die. But is there any one that doth sensibly fear death, and set himself thereupon to prepare for it, as he doth feel pain when that is upon him ? Therefore I say, we do need something to be superadded to our certainty to enliven our apprehensions, a power



and energy is needful to be superadded to them. As I told you before, we are as certain we can think, as we are certain we can see; we are not more sure we can see with our eye than we are sure that we can think with our minds: yet the things we do see with our eyes, do affect us more than the things we only apprehend with our minds: therefore do we need to have a great deal of efficacy and power superadded to the apprehensions of our minds concerning the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead. And since it is plain we do need it, that is, that such apprehensions often lie in our minds, and work nothing; but the case is with us as if we had them not, as if our minds were vacant of such apprehensions; surely we should not lie still patient in such a case as this; when these apprehensions of God are the most important that can have place in our minds. Why are we so pleased with ourselves and so much at ease concerning this thing, that our apprehensions of the Godhead should have so little efficacy with them as they have to command our spirits? It is a relievable case as well as there is a necessity there should be relief sought and had in it. If he is pleased to shine into our minds himself, then there will be efficacy go with our certainty; when he is pleased to strike through the consistent darkness that doth inwrap our hearts, and to shine into our hearts by giving us the light of the knowledge of his own glory, then there will be power in our apprehensions of the invisible God, and then in his light we shall see light, as in that Psalm 36. 9. Therefore, for this should we supplicate every day more earnestly than we do for daily bread; "I need thy delivering influence, O Lord, to quicken dead notions of things that lie in my mind, that they may have power and be operative in me, as much as I need daily bread, and momentarily breath." This should be our sense, and with waiting and craving eyes should we be looking up daily and continually: for it is dutiful, that this should be the posture of made spirits towards the unmade Spirit, of produced spirits towards their great Parent, the original universal Spirit that is the Parent of all; that they may be continually maintained and held in life by vital communications from himself, this he would take well: it is childlike, it is filial deportment towards the supreme, original, eternal Spirit, whose offspring their spirits are. A parent is pleased to have a child express and own his dependance upon him. When we cut off these spirits of ours that are made from the unmade eternal Spirit, this is apostacy, disloyalty; this is to set up ourselves and for ourselves, and no wonder if we languish and perish by it. And,

3. We should expostulate with ourselves about our so frequent

unmindfulness of the invisible eternal God, when we have so much occasion to mind him every hour; for the things that are made, reveal him to us continually: we cannot open our eyes, but we must see something or other that should put us in mind of God: we shall behold some of the made things, that should be still putting us in mind of their Maker, theirs and ours. And,

4. Why are we so little conversant with God, so unconvertible towards him, when he is continually surrounding us, compassing us about before and behind, in all the made things which do encompass us? God is in them, or they are all in him, all living, and moving, and having their being in him. This conversableness with God, or a disposition of spirit to converse with him, it imports more than bare minding of him, thinking of him; it carries in it an application of faith towards him. It is a thing that involves complacency in the nature of it, as you can any of you easily apprehend. I converse electively with whom or what I converse with, out of choice, and for a complacential inclination of my own mind. Oh! why is there no more of this with us towards God, the unmade and eternal Being, while he continually besets us in the things that are made, and who is nearer to us than we are to ourselves! He is in us if we would but look in, and meet with him, and apply ourselves to him. It was first the saying of a heathen, (taken up since and improved by many in the Christian church, both ancient and modern writers) "God is more inward to us, than we are to ourselves, and yet we will not converse with him." It was Plato's saying first. But will we not converse with him? How inexcusable a thing is this, his own creature to be a stranger to him; a creature that he made! "I that have made thee, (may he say) and made thee as thou art, given thee a reasonable, intelligent, apprehensive, immortal mind and spirit, and wilt thou not know me? wilt thou not converse with me? wilt thou not acquaint thyself with me? wilt thou not lead thy life with me?" What have we to say to this?

5. Why do we not more frequently do him homage, when we dwell in a world that is all his? Every thing that we can use and enjoy in it, are all made things, and made by him, and this world that contains and inwraps them all, itself a made thing, and we are made things; why are we not more frequently doing him homage? We can take up nothing, we can use nothing, we can enjoy nothing in all this whole world but what he hath made. And what! not do him homage, deep, inward, profound homage, how inexcusable is this! We know we did not make or furnish this world, we were brought into it,

placed in it, and we find ourselves supplied with all things necessary for our support and for our accommodation, suitable to that sort of being that God hath given us. And shall we not do him frequent homage? Suppose a man should rush into one of your houses and set himself by your fire-side, and make use of such and such provisions of your house, as he can lay his hands on, and take no notice of you, would you long bear so barbarous a usage as this? And is not this the very case? You come here into this world that God hath made, and not you; and every thing is his that you can lay your hands upon, or make any use of, and to take up and use this and the other thing, and never look up, or not often look up to him; or not look up with a more delightful sense of your obligation to him, than (God knows) is too common with us; how can we defend ourselves against our own thoughts, against our own reasonings in this case? And further,

6. Why do we drive designs here in this world, apart from him, without reference to him? This, and that, and the other thing I do to please myself, or to advance myself without any thoughts of God, without any referring to him. I lay my designs without him; I will go to such and such a place, I will abide there so long, I will there do so and so, I will "buy and sell and get gain," when we "ought to say, If the Lord will, I will do so and so." He that is the Author and Lord of all this made world, what! do you think to move to and fro in it without reference to him, and drive designs for yourselves apart from him? Sure, the forming of a design should always be accompanied with an act of worship, there should still be a dedicating of our designs to him, as well as of ourselves: for what is plainer, than that he that is the Alpha, must be the Omega too? Hath he not made himself known to us by those conjunct titles, the first and the last? "Of him, and by him, and to him are all things," that he alone might have the glory. There should be a tribute of glory paid him, in every thing we design, and more especially in reference to his design. When we come to take notice of that great design of his, Oh! how it might make our hearts shake within us, to think what sort of acknowledgments God hath in this world, even in that part of the world that is called Christian, in reference to some of the great things, and even the greatest thing that ever was done since there was such a world in being. That is, that extraordinary descent of God into the world, in the person of his own Son, taking upon him human flesh, becoming the Emmanuel, the divine nature, the invisible Godhead, in the second person,

uniting itself with the manhood. Here are acknowledgments of this made amongst us ; but it might make our hearts shake within us, to think of what kind. That is, according to the usage of too many, the descent of our blessed Lord, the eternal Word in human flesh, they seem to think (that their practice expresseth) that the nativity of our Lord is not to be celebrated fitly, but by a debauch ; they cannot fitly celebrate the nativity of Christ, but by being drunk. Monstrous wickedness ! To think that the great God is to be worshipped so unsuitably to himself ; when he is to be made the end of all things. The Former of all things ; how is he made the end, otherwise than as he is glorified ? But to glorify him, to pretend to glorify him by breaking his laws, by violating his known and most sacred precepts ! By breaking the law, dishonourest thou God ? Rom. 2. 23. That was bad enough : but it is much worse, by breaking the law, to dishonour God under the pretence of doing him honour, to think that I honour him by so palpably dishonouring him. And,

7. Why are we so prone to blame and censure the methods of his government over this world, which he hath made, and when by it, and the things in it that he hath made, he is proclaiming to us his eternal power and Godhead ? Is he not able wisely and well to govern his own creation ? Could he bring such a world as this out of nothing into being, and doth he not know what to do with it, now he hath made it, and how to order the concerns of it ? Oh ! how little is God revered as the Creator and Former of all things, when we take upon us to censure, and blame, and tax his doings ? Why do we strive with him, when he gives not account of any of his matters ? Job 33. 13. He is far above it. And like it, is that 40. 2, “ Shall he that contends with the Almighty, instruct him ? He that reproves God let him answer it.” What ! for man to take upon him to reprove God, to say he might have ordered things better, so and so, things might have been brought about in a fitter season, might have been done sooner, they might have been compassed by fitter methods, by more suitable instruments, and the like. Sure we forget ourselves when we consider not, that “ the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead,” are all testified by the things that are made. And what ! cannot “ the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead,” guide and manage things more wisely than we ? “ Woe to him that strives with his Maker ! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth.” Isaiah 45. 9. Let them choose their match. And those many ex-

pressions we have from himself in the latter end of the book of Job ; "Canst thou do so and so?" doth intimate this all along to them and tous, that unless we could do such and such things, unless we could lay the foundation of such a world as this ; unless we could stretch out such another heaven, and form and establish such another earth, unless we could span the heavens with our hands, and measure the dust of the earth, and gather the winds in our fists, and set bounds and limits to the sea as we please, "You are not my match (saith God) unless you can do such and such things. And if you are not my match, why will you strive with me ? why will you contend with me ? why should your wisdom vie with mine, and your will with mine, and your interest with mine ?" And again,

8. Why do we so little covet him for our portion, who is plainly proved by the things that are made to comprehend, in himself virtually, all the perfections of this world, and formally, infinitely more ? For there must be infinitely more in himself than is laid out on creation. Do you think he did exhaust himself in making such a world as this ? The world when all is done is but a finite thing, all that is made is but finite, but that which is unmade is still infinite. He that comprehends in himself all excellency, all goodness, all perfection, created and uncreated, must certainly be a sufficient portion for us. The absolutely perfect Being, or (which is all one in Scripture) God all-sufficient, must be a competent satisfying portion (one would think) for any one. Why then do we not covet him more for our portion ? why is this not more the sense of our souls, "Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and who is there on earth that can come in comparison with thee ?" "When heaven and earth are all made things and made by thee, there must be in thee infinitely more than in both." But when we take up with so mean and little things in our thoughts, (inasmuch as we know it belongs to the Deity to be the portion and blessedness of a soul) let us hereupon think with ourselves, what an affront we put upon the infinite eternal Godhead, to think it possible for any creature to fill up his room. It is a most insolent affront to the infinite eternal God, to think that any creature can be to you instead of God : an affront that you can never expiate with your blood. This is to undeify him. Him, whom in all your thoughts you should deify, you nullify, for make him any thing less than God and you make him nothing. And,

9. Why do we no more fear him as an enemy, when he hath demonstrated his eternal power and Godhead by the things that are made ? and all the invisible things that belong to his

nature besides, are all demonstrated by the things that are made? Why do we not more fear to have such a one for our enemy? "Fear ye not me (saith the Lord) who hath bound-ed the sea that it cannot pass : and though the waves there-of toss themselves they cannot go over," (giving that one instance when he could have given thousands as great in that 5 Jeremiah) "what stupid creatures are you that you will not fear me, when ye have such an instance as this and thousands more always in view before you, of my invisible eternal Godhead, that hath in time displayed and shewed itself forth? And,

10. Lastly: Why are we so prone to fear men, the creatures of God, while we so little fear and stand in awe of him? It is still a wrong to our Maker, a wrong done to God, considered under the notion of Creator. Look to that Isaiah 51, 12 "Who art thou, that art afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man that shall be as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, who stretched forth the heavens?" inasmuch as he is the Maker and Lord of all. This shews that it is an insolency against him and the rights of his Godhead, to place your supreme fear on any thing besides him. Therefore the form of speech there is very remarkable, "Who art thou, that art afraid of a man?" The form of speech is reprehensive and expostulatory, "Who art thou?" When people find themselves seized with any im-moderate fears, they are wont to pity themselves, and to look upon it as an infelicity: but they forget it is a crime; and those words represent it as a crime, "who art thou that art afraid—who art thou?" what doth that signify? Why it signifies thus much, Thou takest too much upon thee, while thou thinkest thou art only to be pitied, thou dost little consider how faulty thou art, thou dost transpose the government, thou deposest the Lord thy Maker, and settest up a mortal thing upon his throne. Who art thou that takest upon thee at this rate, to undeify God and deify the creature, a mortal worm? Who art thou that turnest all things upside down, to depress the Maker and to exalt a little piece of animated clay into his place? This is very deeply to be considered, that to have our spirits more liable to be awed by a man, a mortal thing, than by the eternal immortal God, is a doing violence and a wrong to, and encroaching upon, the rights of the eternal Godhead. Well now, about such things as these we should expostulate with ourselves.

III. I shall shut up all with some particulars of most apparent duty, to which we need to be exhorted in reference to what hath been hitherto said. As,

1. Since "the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead," are so clearly demonstrable by the things that are made, let us learn more to contemplate these invisible things of God, in the visible things that we have before our eyes : and know that it is an argument of very great spirituality so to do. Let the examples we have in Scripture engage our minds more this way. To look over such psalms as psalm the 8th. the 104th. and the 148th. all full of admiration of the works of God: and a great many more, with multitudes of passages of Scripture besides in other places ; shewing how much the spirits of the saints of old have been exercised and taken up in admiring God upon those conspicuous appearances, that have been of his glory in the creation. I doubt there is altogether a fault among us that we so little apply our minds this way. But know it is our duty to be exercised in it, to take times on purpose to contemplate God in the creature, to behold and view the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, in the things that are made. And,

2. Hereupon joyfully acknowledge this God for your God ; considering the case of the blinded besotted pagans, who worship stocks and stones for deities, or the sun, moon, and stars ; who pray to a god that cannot save : the generality of the more besotted of them ; though it be true indeed, among pagans there have been those that have been much wiser and of more refined minds. But since it hath pleased God more expressly to manifest himself to you, joyfully acknowledge it, as his people of old have been wont to do. "Their gods are idols, the works of men's hands ; but our God made the heavens." And as it is in that Jer. 10. 11. "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens." When there are such multitudes of fictitious deities under a doom to perish, all the idols of this world, and this world itself, that great idol, that is most set up and exalted against God ; Oh ! do you joyfully acknowledge this God for your God, that you are sure is the only living and true God. Our God that made the heavens ; own your relation to him, walk in his name, as "all people will do, every one in the name of his God."

3. Resign and devote yourselves absolutely to him, for you are made things, and he is your Maker. And can one have a greater right in any thing than that which he hath made, and made out of nothing ? not given it an external accidental form only, but given it its whole being. And so is the matter between him and you. Wherefore it is to God you must give

yourselves : give him your whole being, body and soul and all that you have : for it is all but made, and it is the right and property of him that made you.

4. Trust in him with all your hearts, commit yourselves entirely and cheerfully to him. Who would scruple to do so to so kind and benign a Maker? for was it not in his choice and power once, whether he would have made you or not? was it not determinate by him? by his pleasure, whether you should be or not be? If you have devoted yourselves to him, so as to be his by choice and consent, as well as by natural right, know then that you have all the encouragement in the world to intrust and commit yourselves to him as to a faithful Creator; as the expression is 1 Pet. 4. 19. This is a thing not enough understood, the obligation that lies upon us to own God more frequently and solemnly, under the notion of our Creator. We think the notion wherein we should own him, more to be that of a Father, and as in Christ he hath been a Redeemer to us : but these things are not to exclude one another by any means. It is very true indeed, that all the interest we had in him as Creator, was lost and forfeited by the apostacy : but that matter being, by the Redeemer, made up between him and all those that, in the Redeemer, accept him and take him for their God, we are not now to think his Creatorship is to be absorbed and swallowed up in any other supervening notion, by any means. We are now, by redeeming grace and mercy, brought to that state and pass, that we may own him comfortably as a Creator again. So that whereas, we had lost all right and interest in him, as such, by our apostacy : a restitution being made, now we are to commit ourselves to him, as a faithful Creator. Faithfulness hath reference to a promise, and a covenant. We are to commit ourselves now to him as a Creator, under obligation. There was a covenant made at first, between himself and his innocent creature; that covenant was broken by the apostacy; so that he could be challenged upon faithfulness no longer. But now, that matter being composed and made up by the Redeemer, by a Mediator, there is a new covenant made, and now faithfulness hath place in reference to him as a Creator, and we are to own him as such, and trust in him, and commit ourselves to him as such. And,

5. You should hereupon, cease from solicitude about the issue of things in reference to yourselves, or in reference to the whole community that you profess to be of, even that people that he hath in this world. Solicitude should cease about private and more public concerns; you should reckon that yourselves and all things, are in the best hands in which they could



lie, or into which they could be put. In reference to things devoted yourselves, intrusted yourselves to him upon invitation; not presumptuously, but as being warranted and encouraged by himself. Then it is a wrong to him to be anxious what he will that relate to yourselves, you have committed yourselves to him, do with you. What! will he not shew mercy to the soul he hath made? Indeed, his having made it, if there be no expiation of sin, would have availed nothing; for there is a case when "he that made them would not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour:" Isaiah 27. 11. That is, when they are in rebellion against him and will not be reconciled to him; but when a reconciliation is brought about, and you have surrendered to him the soul that he hath made, it is a great iniquity and wrong to him to suppose, that he will not now deal with you as a faithful Creator. Therefore, though now you know your soul is lodged in flesh, and within a little while this mortal frame must drop in pieces and fall into the dust, yet never be solicitous what he will do with your soul, or what will become of it after all: you do betrust, you have committed it to him, who is the most absolutely perfect God, and the most absolutely perfect Being. All things that he hath made demonstrate him to be so: and who would be afraid to let his soul rest in the midst of infinite, immense goodness? "His soul shall dwell at ease:" (as it is said of one that fears God) but very faintly, and beneath the significance of that expression it is rendered, Psalm 25. 13. "His soul shall dwell in goodness (that is the expression) who feareth God," shall take up its rest, sweet and pleasant rest as men are wont to do at night. Who would be solicitous when he is to commit and put his soul into the midst of immense and boundless goodness, as his must be who is the Author of all made things? for they all spring from goodness, goodness that would diffuse itself and flow arbitrarily and freely in such a creation as this. And,

6. Live more adoring lives. Let us labour to habituate ourselves, our spirits more to adoration, seeing the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead are continually seen in things that are made. Let that sentence be engraven as a motto upon each of our hearts and inwrought into our souls: "Come let us worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker." Let every thing that serves to put us in mind of him, prompt us immediately to worship, and bow down the head before him, upon such apprehensions of God, such demonstrations of his love, of his power, and goodness and

greatness as offer themselves to our view. Let us presently bow and worship, take notice and adore.

7. Let us subject ourselves most absolutely to his government, both legal and providential. Doth it not belong to him to give laws to his creatures that are capable of government by law, that have been entirely and wholly made by him? Should not he give laws, even to our minds and to our spirits, and lay them under the obligation of his laws? This is sure the most reasonable thing in the world. Why should he not prescribe to my mind, who is himself an unmade mind, while mine is but a made mind? Why should not he prescribe to me how my spirit should work this way or that, while he is an eternal Spirit and Mind. My spirit that sprung from him, why should not he direct it, even by a law, how to think, how to dispose of my thoughts this way and that, when he hath given me a power to think? Why should I not use my apprehensive power and knowledge for him from whom I received it? He that knows my mould and frame, and hath given me that intelligent spirit that I have, shall I not keep it in perpetual subjection to him, receive laws from his mouth, never think myself at liberty, and in an indifferency to use my thoughts as I will, and let out my affections as I will; but all under his law? And then, as to his providential government, shall not he do what he will with his creatures, with the thing that he hath made? How reasonable is it, how just towards him and how good for itself to be subject to him? Then I am quiet if I can live under his government, to be disposed of by him as he pleaseth: otherwise there is a continual war between him and me: and so a continual war between me and myself; affection against conscience, passion against judgment: for there will always be something in me as long as I live, as long as I have a reasonable intelligent being, that will take the part of God against unreasonable rebellious passions, and I shall be a self-judged creature before him in his sight. And,

8. Lastly: Let us always propound him to ourselves as the Object of our religion: and take pleasure in the thought of this, that we have found out an object of religion, which we have revealed to us, that he hath himself, revealed to us himself as the great and only Object of religion: the one indisputable One, so as no controversy remains now concerning it. And whereas, it is the business of all religion, to pay all duty to God and expect and seek all relief and felicity from him, let us demean ourselves towards him accordingly. And consider with ourselves, that in making his mind known to us, giving

us to know himself, he hath given us to know ourselves also, so as to understand that being creatures, made things, we are made for another. That which cannot be by itself, must not be for itself: what more reasonable thing in all the world? Therefore, our business must be with him as the final, ultimate, animative Object of our religion; and that designing duty to him and felicity to ourselves, we have to do with him as the Object of religion under that twofold notion, as one that we are to glorify, and as one whom we are to enjoy for ever. And this now shews us much of ourselves. That is, shewing us what our nature and state are, it shews us what our end of business must be, and that is a very great thing. And this is, we must understand, what we were made for. And this being the first head of Christian religion, (indeed of all religion) it resolves the first question that every one is concerned to make to himself: What was I made for? What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and to enjoy him: to pay all duty to him and to expect all felicity and blessedness from him; and to seek it. It is thus only that you can come to know what you are here in this world for: and it were a lamentable case, to know the several powers and faculties that belong to our natures, and not to know what all these are for. To know I am such a creature, of such a mould and frame, and not to know what these are made for! This would be a very sad consideration to a serious and considering mind, if it were not to be collected and found out what they were made for. As if one that never saw a watch in his life before he finds it by casualty and chance, and sees a great deal of curiosity in the workmanship, yet cannot imagine what it is intended for, what it was made for; it stands still and he knows not how to set it going, or if he did, he doth not understand the use of it. Here is the case with an intelligent creature, a man if he should contemplate himself, and not contemplate his Maker, his end. Here I have a strange kind of being, I have a body and I have a soul inhabiting that body; but I do not know why such a creature as I came to have a place in the world, why I have such a being, what I am to do, and what I was made for. But now by this you come to know what it is you were made for. If you know you have a Maker, you must know you were made for him, to glorify him and to enjoy him for ever: and it is a great thing to have made this step; when we have taken notice of our own faculties and powers, and what our structure and frame are. Now to know whose we are, what satisfaction is it to the mind

of man! to know this, that I am made to glorify and enjoy him that made me. But when you come to be at a loss, (as all in the fallen state are) "what course shall I take to glorify and enjoy God?" Why, we that are here wandering in such a wilderness as we are in, and so benighted, so bemisted as we are: if we have no instruction, no guidance, no rule, we are at a sad loss. Therefore it is the greatest joy in the world to a considering mind to have it plainly evidenced to him, that there is a discovery come forth from God, suitable to the forlorn state of the creature, a word from heaven, a written word that he himself hath delivered down to us, to teach us how we are to glorify him, and how we are to enjoy him—which will be the next thing we shall come unto.

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## LECTURE VII.\*



2 Tim. 3. 16.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*

**Y**OU have had an Object of religion ; the only competent and deserving Object (I hope) with some efficacy presented to you ; an absolute perfect Being, an eternal infinite Mind or Spirit, self-existing and unmade ; demonstrating himself to be so, by the things that are made. And now the business of that religion that is to be exercised towards such an Object (the glorious and blessed God) is continually to render to him a due homage, and to expect from him blessedness for our own souls. Religion stands in serious endeavours (as the learners among us are taught to speak and understand) “to glorify God and enjoy him for ever.” Under this twofold notion, we are to go and aet towards him as our chief end : as one to whom we owe all the duty we are capable of performing, and by performing whereof we glorify him ; and from whom only we must expect all the felicity we are capable of partaking of, and in the participation whereof we enjoy him ; so we are to consider and move towards God as our end, in such a motion of heart and spirit. This is present religion, that is, the religion of our present state. The religion of the way (as it is called) or the religion of *viatores* ; those that are travelling, and yet short of their final perfection. And therefore is the whole

\* Preached January 9, 1691.

of that religion, to wit, the religion of the present state in contra-distinction to that of the eternal state, expressed by a term that denotes continual motion; that is, a coming to God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." We are to be continually in this motion all the while we are in this world; coming to God. In order whereto that great fundamental is to be forelaid—the belief that God is; as that which is prerequisite, upon which we have been insisting already. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But now, whosoever have it in design thus to come to God, and move towards him, they will find that they need a rule to guide those motions by which they may direct and steer their course: there is no coming to God but as he is pleased to render himself accessible, but as he will be approached; and therefore our religion which consists in this motion, in this coming to God, cannot be a self-devised thing, or an invention of our own; we cannot come to God as we please, but as he pleases, as he will have us come: we can never glorify him, but by doing his will, nor can we ever come to enjoy him but by compliance therewith. Therefore, this must of course be the next inquiry, with any considering person, any one that doth seriously design to do any thing in the business of religion: "What course shall I take to know God's will, concerning my approach, my coming, my tending towards him through the whole course of my life in this world?" It is a very rational inquiry, and that which the exigency of the case must urge every one to, that doth intend seriously and in good earnest to be religious. For admit, that there be internal principles, from the very reason and nature of things, truth and falsehood, good and evil, right and wrong, yet besides that such as are needful are taken into the constitution, or among the determinations of the divine will, so there are other things super-added with respect to the varied state of our case: and it is the divine will that doth determine and constitute what we shall do in this course of our motion towards him, and consequently what shall be required of us to believe and know that we may so do, and so we do need a signification of his will concerning our faith, and concerning our practice. Though it is true, that the determinations of his will are not (as to the most principal things that do concern us) arbitrary, but they are determinations of his will, according to most excellent wisdom, most perfect judgment, and counsel, for he "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will;" and so doth will such things concerning us, and in reference to us, as the state of our case doth require and need, and without which

there could be no cominmerce restored, and brought about between him and us. And now, whatsoever will express and signify to us the divine will about such things as will be our fit and useful rule to guide our motion towards God as our end, we are to seek after. And concerning this, the inquiry must needs be made by every serious person ; “ What is there that I may look upon, as such a sufficient signification to me, of the divine will touching my great concernments with him ? ” Now we have a book among us, that calls itself, and is commonly styled *THE WORD OF GOD*. This very book, if it be not the word of God, truly, to call it so, and to attempt and endeavour to spread it as such, is one of the boldest cheats that ever was attempted to be put upon the sons of men. But if really and truly it be so, then it doth our business : you find it doth so, by looking into it, for this is the business it doth profess, and the intent which it doth own and avow, to acquaint us with the divine will and pleasure in order to our serving and glorifying him, and being finally happy and blessed with him. If it be his will indeed, it will most undoubtedly serve for this end and purpose ; that being all the end that professedly it hath to serve. Nothing can so well serve this purpose as his word, if there be such a word : for who can so well tell us what God’s will is, as he himself ? Sure he best knows his own mind, and what judgment he hath made of things, and which (after him) he will have us to make, in order to our practice.

I might (indeed) have driven the inquiry a great deal further into the principles of religion, upon a merely rational ground, or according to the ducture of natural light ; as it was necessary to be done, upon what hath been done already, in representing and evidencing to you an object of religion : which was necessary first to be proved, before we could with any colour of reason go about to assert the divine authority of this book. It would have been a very absurd thing to go about to prove from this book, the authority of it, that there was such a thing when he which should give that authority, and from whom that authority should be derived, should be unknown to us ; or it should be a matter of doubt with any, whether there was such a one, yea or no. But that being once proved and out of question, now it comes in the proper and natural method, and next of course to be considered : Is there such a revelation from this God, as this book doth pretend to ? hath it really that divine stamp upon it from him, which by those who do profess and own themselves christians, it is apprehended to have ? And if that can be found, it supercedes any need of following the line of natural light (as such) further ; because

there is nothing more now to be discovered that way, which is not more clearly and fully contained in this book. And therefore all other things that might be referred thither, I shall rather satisfy myself to deduce and insist upon as they come in our way from thence. In order whereto, our first business must be to assert the authority of them. And for that purpose it is, I have pitched upon this passage of Scripture, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." All Scripture is *θεοπνευστος*. It is only that one word that is said of it, *God-breathed*. All Scripture is (as it were) the breath of God. That indeed is the very literal sense of the word here used, *breathed from God*.

And so the words are a formed proposition to our hands, we need not vary them in any other phrase, but take them as they lie. Our business must be to assert, from them,—The Divine Authority of the Scriptures. In order whereto, I shall premise,

First : That I design not herein to meddle with divers lesser collateral questions, as touching the Hebrew points, and Hebrew translations, the various readings, etymological and other differences, which are things much fitter for the schools than for the pulpit. And therefore,

Secondly : My main design must be to evince to you, that this book doth contain in it a sufficient revelation of the divine mind and will, touching what we are to believe and do in order to our glorifying God as our supreme Lord, and our enjoying him, and being happy in him as our best and only satisfying good. And in order hereunto, the course that will be fittest to take, will in short be this—To state the subject to you that is spoken of under the name of Scriptures, with its universality, "*all Scripture*:" and then—To prove to you from that subject, the thing affirmed of it, that it is *God-breathed*, that it is inspired from God, or (which is all one) that it is of divine authority, and that God is the Author of it.

I. For the stating of the subject here spoken of, Scripture, with a universal term, "*all Scripture*;" that universal term cannot be absolutely universal, (as you may be sure) cannot signify all writing. Every writing cannot be pretended to be *God-breathed*, or of divine inspiration; therefore the limitation of this universal term is to be taken from the immediately foregoing words, "*From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures*." It is therefore holy Scripture that is here spoken of. All holy Scripture, the whole of that which is called holy Scripture; it is of divine inspiration. Well, what is that, that is here called



holy Scripture? Undoubtedly it must be that which in those days was immediately known by the name of the Scripture, and many times the Scriptures: nothing was more familiar with our Saviour, when he was conversant here on earth, than to speak of this book by the name of Scripture, and sometimes the Scriptures as being so in the most famous and eminent sense, according to the account that went of that part of them, among the Jews, of whom he was one, and among whom he conversed. Every one knew none could be ignorant what was meant by the Scriptures at that time, or in those days: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life:" (saith our Saviour, John 5. 39.) And this and that was done (as you often find in the evangelist historians) that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And the Scripture cannot be broken, saith our Lord, in one of his contests with the Jews. John 10. 35. Now it is very evident here,

1. Therefore, by the Scriptures, that is, holy Scriptures (as the apostle's words in this place do expound themselves) must be meant the books of the Old Testament. That (I say) in the first place must be meant by it, which then by universal consent among that people, went under the name or notion of the Scriptures. That is, those books of the Old Testament which go with us at this day under that notion, and come into that censure and account, without the apocryphal books which never came into that account among the Jews, and therefore are justly left out of that account with us. They never took them. The ancient christians did not take them into that account at all, nor the Jews before our Saviour's time, or at any time: they were not written in the Hebrew tongue (unless some little parts) as the books of the Old Testament were; and have many things very fabulous in them, that shew them to have proceeded from human authority; though divers of them (some of those books at least) proceeded from very pious writers. After that, the full compute of these books of the Old Testament was gathered up and digested by Ezra since the captivity. It was very plain the Jews never took any writing into the account of canonical Scriptures from the time they took in the prophecy of Malachi; never after that, did they add any thing to the sacred canon, and so much we find Josephus against Apion most expressly to tell us. And therefore the apocryphal writings could be none of the books that went under the name of the Scriptures here, when the apostle saith, "all scripture is given by inspiration of God:" nor indeed, did they come into that account in the Christian church in the purest times. The account that is given us of the Scriptures by Origen and Athanasius leaves

these books quite excluded : though we have an account too in ancient records of some use made of them as certain ecclesiastical books, but not as the holy Scriptures ; they were not accounted the holy books. That then is part of this subject here to be spoken of, when it is said, "all scripture is given by inspiration of God," that is, the books of the Old Testament, which was the Scripture in the eminent sense at that time. But,

2. There comes within the compass of this subject too, the books of the New Testament. For we must consider about what time this was written by the apostle to Timothy ; this was the second epistle you see ; and that was most certainly written a considerable time after the greatest part of the New Testament was written. You may take notice in the next chapter, (2 Tim. 4. 6.) that he speaks of the time of his departure being near at hand. He had once appeared before Nero already, and we are told that this was written near about the time of his appearance before Nero the second time : so we have it in the conclusion of this epistle, that is, in the adjunct to it. And though those subjoined adjuncts to the epistles, are not always of unquestionable authority, yet the matter of this epistle leading so much thereto, it puts this thing out of doubt that this was written very near the close of the apostle's life, "I am ready to be offered," saith he, "and the time of my departure is at hand." Now it is evident that all the gospels were written a considerable time before this. The last of them, undoubtedly, was the gospel of John, and that he is supposed to have wrote about the eighth year of Nero, whereas the apostle suffered (as we are told by history) in the last year of Nero about seven years afterwards. So that in all likelihood this was the last, or the last save one, that he wrote of his epistles ; Paul here speaking of the time of his departure as near at hand : and we find that what was written by him, is elsewhere referred to, under the name of Scripture : as by the apostle Peter (2 Pet. 3. 15. 16.) where he speaks of his "beloved brother Paul" who had "many things in him hard to be understood, which," saith he, "ignorant and unstable minds wrest, as they do other scriptures to their own destruction," and we find the apostle James in his 4 chap. 5 ver. refers, under the name of Scripture, to another passage of his "the spirit in us" (as saith the Scripture) "lusteth to envy." You find nothing any where to answer this but that Gal. 5. 17. There, having spoken of envy, particularly before, he addeth, "the flesh lusteth against the spirit." And whatsoever was to come within that character and sacred stamp must come within the compass of this subject too.

The book of the revelation plainly shews it was written by the apostle John when he was in Patmos : and after his return from thence, history informs us, that upon the request of the Asiatic churches, he did collect and gather together and put into order all the books of the New Testament, and so (as it were) did seal up the canon. And a considerable time after that, we are informed of his taking a journey to—— \* on purpose to collect the Sacred Writings he found among the churches there, with whom, he conversed : and he there found the books punctually as we have them, and in the same order wherein they now stand in our Bibles. And in the fourth century, they were all recognised by the council of the Laodiceans ; therefore at this time, when this epistle to Timothy was written, there must be understood to be a reference had to all the books of the New Testament already written, and any to be written by inspiration of the same Spirit. And so this makes up together, the subject here spoken of, when it is said “all Scripture,” all holy Scripture “is given by inspiration of God.” All God-breathed, (as it were) breathed from heaven, the issue of divine breath, for those great and glorious purposes that it was to serve in this world. And now,

II. We come to prove the thing affirmed concerning this subject—that these Scriptures were inspired from heaven, by God himself, or are of divine authority ; which is the import of this assertion, as to the way of God’s communicating his mind to those that delivered them. The expression is large and extensive enough to comprehend any, wherein there might be a certain signification of the divine will, whether he did communicate it by voice, (as he did divers things we find upon record in Scripture) or whether it was by dream, or by vision, to the penman, that is, asleep or waking : or whether it were (as the Jews distinguish) by immediate irradiation of the intellect, the understanding faculty : or whether it were by impression or signature upon the imagination or fancy, as a thing intervening between the divine mind and the intellect ; which way soever it was, the expression will reach it. It was of divine authority ; it proceeded from him, be it one or the other of these ways. And in order to the evincing of this by argumentation, I shall briefly say somewhat to justify the undertaking, of proving the divine authority of these Scriptures by that argumentative way :

\* This is blank in the manuscript : and after examining every document to which he could gain access, the editor has not been able to ascertain the place alluded to, nor the authority on which the author states this circumstance. The fact, it must be admitted, is extremely doubtful.

and then shall proceed to the proof thereof, in that way which the case itself doth best admit of.

1. Something may be needful to be said to justify the undertaking to prove the divine authority of these writings, in a way of argumentation. In order to it, do but note these two things.

(1.) That undoubtedly there can be no effectual believing of the things contained in the Scriptures, unto salvation, without the special operation of the divine Spirit. It is only the Spirit that makes the sanctifying impression of these Scriptures upon the soul. The apostle expresses his great thankfulness to God, on the behalf of the Thessalonian churches (2 Thes. 2. 13) that "God had chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." There is no sanctifying belief of that truth but by the divine Spirit; that is out of all question: "Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth:" John 17. 17. "Do thou sanctify them by it: the sanctifying them by this truth, or by the truth of this word of thine, must be thine own work." There is that vicious prejudice in the minds of men, against the design and tendency of all sacred truth, and that power of corrupt inclination, to comply and comport therewith, that it must be a great power that must overcome; and none is great enough that is inferior to the power of the Almighty Spirit. It is by a certain spirit of faith in the soul that men do believe to the saving of their souls. "We, having the same spirit of faith, believe and therefore speak." There is none can arrive to this belief, a divine belief of the Scriptures, without the operation of that Spirit. This very notion, in general, that the Scriptures are the word of God, is a dead and insipid and ineffectual thing: as all other notions of truth comprehended in that general are also. But,

(2.) I must add, that the operations of the divine Spirit are not necessary to bring men under an obligation, or to make it become their duty to believe the Scriptures to be God's word, or of divine authority: which therefore certainly doth infer, that there is a way of proving this by argument, that these Scriptures are of divine authority, so as to hold men under an obligation to believe them to be God's word; that it becomes their duty to believe them so, so that they are culpable if they do not, if that light that may shine into them that way about this matter be not received and comported with accordingly. And to evidence this briefly to you, do but consider these things:

[1.] If there be not enough to be said by way of argument to prove the divine authority of this sacred book, without the special immediate operation of the divine Spirit, then every one that hath not the operation of the divine Spirit, would be

innocently an unbeliever under the gospel. Then it would be an innocent thing to be an infidel under the gospel, notwithstanding the clearest light that can be supposed to shine amongst us, supposing only the absence of the special influence of the divine Spirit: and then the mere retraction or withholding of that influence, would be enough to justify the infidel and to make him therefore not guilty of a crime in his infidelity, barely because he hath not that Spirit; than which, nothing can be supposed more absurd or more prejudicial to the Christian cause and interest.

[2.] This is to be considered too, (to the same purpose) that if the special operations of the Spirit, were necessary to make it become a man's duty to believe these Scriptures to be the word of God, then they must be necessary in reference to every particular thing which he shall be bound to believe. But you know, the whole is made up of all the parts: and when we speak especially of the necessary parts, it is plain, that if the operation of the Holy Ghost be necessary to make it a man's duty to believe these Scriptures, it must be necessary in order to his believing every more principal part, every sentence that doth more immediately and directly, concern the salvation of his soul; and then upon that supposition, every person that should be under an obligation to believe these Scriptures to be the word of God, must himself be an inspired person or a prophet. And then, this would be the consequence, that these Scriptures would be of no use at all, one way or another; not to them that have the Spirit of faith to enable them to believe them; because every thing that is contained in them, and necessary for the end for which they are written, must be supposed to be suggested and dictated to them by that Spirit, and therefore the believer would have no need of the Scripture; and to the unbeliever they would be no use at all, because while the Spirit doth not give his influence to make them believe, they (upon this supposition) never could believe. And therefore, consequently, the Scriptures would be of no use, do no good, either to believer or unbeliever. And therefore, as I have asserted in the first place, that there can be no effectual believing of these Scriptures unto salvation, without the sanctifying influence of the divine Spirit, so I further do assert, that such an influence of the divine Spirit, is not necessary to make it become a man's duty to believe these Scriptures; but it will be his duty to believe them upon such light about this matter, as may in an argumentative way be supplied and furnished unto any that will make it their business attentively to consider. And now,

2. In the second place, I shall proceed to tell you in what

way this proof must be attempted and undertaken, that is, inasmuch as the subject here, Scripture, all Scripture, is so complete as you have heard: that is, is made up of the books of the Old Testament and the New. The method that is reasonable to be taken, is to endeavour to evince these two things to you,—that there were Scriptures in our Saviour's and the apostles' time, and many of them a great while before, which were certainly of divine authority: and—that the books which we now have among us, in our time and in our hands, are the self-same books, in substance, (without any material corruption or alteration) that those were, which went for the holy Scriptures, of divine authority at that time. These are the two things that are to be evinced and made out to you, and with such evidence as may leave little ground or pretence of cavil to the understanding and honest christian: which I doubt not (through the blessing of God) may be done.

#### LEC. VIII.\*

(1.) Now to prove that these books in the days of our Saviour and his apostles, even unto the last of them, went into the account of those Scriptures that were of divine authority: and within this compass, must come the books of the Old and New Testament. We shall give some considerations in reference to this; and shall afterwards in the close of all, (having spoken to the latter proposition too) give you some additional considerations concerning this book as now we find it.

[1.] For the divine authority of the books of the Old Testament, I shall not trouble you here with the various divisions that the Jews made of these books. And here, whereas, they reckon no more of them, than there were letters of their alphabet, two and twenty, which most apparently excludes the apocryphal books. It would be tedious and trifling to trouble you with the account how they did severally refer all those to the several letters; only it is plain that the minor prophets they made all but one book. But this division only will serve our turn (though they did not strictly hold to it, but varied from it commonly, making a third member which we find no mention made of in the evangelists, or the writings of the New Testament,) that is, the division of the books of the Old Testament into those of Moses and the prophets. The Jews indeed made the Hagiographia, or third class, that is, accounting none prophetic, but those which were sent by special mission from God. And so all those books (besides the five books of Moses, and those written by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets,) they called Hagiographia, that is, other holy writings, sacred writings; such as the historical

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parts of Scripture, the books of Job, Proverbs, Canticles, Ecclesiastes and the like. But our Saviour comprehends all under the name of the law and the prophets, or sometimes, Moses and the prophets : (Mat. 22. 40.) "On these two hang all the law and the prophets:" and that other place (Luke 16. 29.) "they have Moses and the prophets." Now take here the books of Moses first, and there can be no doubt at all but he was an inspired person, and that his books were written by very peculiar inspiration. If you do but admit the truth of the historical relation, as to him, and that people he had the conduct of, I say, supposing that there can be no doubt of his having written those books by special inspiration of God, for (admitting the truth of the history) you find how familiarly conversant he was with God, from time to time ; that he did nothing of any concernment in reference to that people, but always by divine monition. Nothing then is more un-supposable than that he should do so great a thing as this, digest such records, and stamp them with the name of sacred and divine, and call them the word of the Lord, and the law of the Lord ; and all this, without special instinct from God. Do but think how manifest and observable and adorable a divine presence, shewed himself to that person. How peculiarly God took him nigh to himself, sustained him forty days and forty nights together, (whether once or twice I will not here dispute) in the sacred mount, by miracle ; supporting him by his own glory, speaking to him from time to time, giving him free recourse to him, directing him to consult him, and take his responses from him, upon all occasions. And that the history that relates to him, as to the matter of fact, must be true beyond all exception is evident if you consider, such things as these :

First. The very honourable mention that is made of this Moses, and some of the most remarkable things relating to that people (the Jews) whom he had the conduct of, by some of the most ancient and celebrated pagan writers, magnifying him as a most wise and prudent legislator, and a very great man ; and remarking very considerable things with reference to this people. I need not trouble you with them ; it is known to scholars, what of this kind is written by Diodorus Siculus and others. And,

Secondly. That which is above all demonstration : it is notorious to all the world that the people of the Jews were under the government of a Theocracy for several centuries of years successively, which puts the matter out of all doubt, that the history of that fact must be unquestionable upon which they became so. They were continually directed by God himself ;

their laws were made by God himself. He appointed the means of being consulted in every place, and it was through a long continued series of time : and so these records in all that time were known to be sacred things, having a divine stamp all along upon them. And again,

Thirdly. It is to be considered that the very matter of the history itself (considered in its circumstances) doth speak its own truth : considered, I say, in its circumstances, that is, the bringing of the people of Israel out of Egypt, and bringing them out by so strong a hand, inflicting so many miraculous plagues upon that Egyptian people and their prince, till they were forced to a manumission of them : the dividing of the red sea, the most stupendous way of giving the law upon mount Sinai, which (with the additional precepts that were given to Moses in the mount itself) make up (you know) the most considerable parts of the Pentateuch. The very matter of itself speaks, (if you consider it clothed with its circumstances) that there could be no fiction as to these things ; for there is nobody but must grant, upon an ordinary view and judgment of those characters that do appear of Moses, that he was a prudent man at least, a very prudent man. But certainly he must needs be a madman that would report a fiction of things said to be done by, and before six hundred thousand men. When men do feign and forge things, they do it with the greatest privacy imaginable. As the portentous stories about Mahomet, there are no witnesses quoted, but all goes upon the credit of his word. It is not said, there were such and such thousands that saw such and such things, for then, if it were false, it were the easiest thing in the world to be disproved. Now when the law is said to be given from such a mount, clothed with so terrible and august a glory at that time, and the voice heard uttering those ten words, as they are called, by six hundred thousand men, at once, besides women and children, (for these words are said to be heard spoken from the mount, by all the people ; whereupon they could not hear that God should speak to them any longer. "We die," say they to Moses, "if God speak to us any more, but do thou speak and we will hear,") no man that hath but the ordinary understanding of a man, can think, that one of common prudence would inform of things that he saith were done in view of so many thousands of witnesses, if they were not done ; if there were any design in saying so, that design were presently blasted, and lost out of hand ; especially if it be considered that among those ten words there are so express precepts against idolatry ; and that people had so marvellous propensions to idolatry, as their frequent relapses into it,



and their running into it, even in Moses' absence, when God ceased to speak with an audible voice, do testify. It had given them the most gladsome opportunity they could have wished for, could they have detected a fraud in the case. When it is said there were such and such, and so many thousand witnesses, they could have said, there was no such thing. Could not this have been transmitted to posterity for a notorious cheat? by a people so prone to idolatry as they were. And when they were urged by the prophets (in a time of great degeneracy) with the authority of the divine law, how easily could they have replied, "No, there was no such law, it was a fiction, and what is said to be given by God's voice; and our fathers are said to be quoted as witnesses to, they all renounced it, said there was no such thing?" And then,

Fourthly. That holy men succeeding this time, (and unto whose inspiration it hath been sufficiently attested, as we shall see afterwards,) did attest unto Moses, still calling that law written by him, the law of the Lord, and the word of the Lord, and the testimonies and statutes of the Lord. With what reverence and with what delight and complacency do you find them so mentioned in the book of Psalms, in multitudes of places, when there was little else of Scriptures yet extant, besides those books of Moses? Would such a man as David, with adoration have called these writings, the law of the Lord, and the word, and statutes and judgments and testimonies of the Lord, if they had not been most certainly so? And would he have expressed so high delight in them, and veneration for them as such, counting them more precious than thousands of gold and silver, and expressing the heart-breakings and longings of his soul after them from time to time upon all occasions? And then, for what was written by him (David) and other holy men, (besides the prophets) though it is not known who wrote every book, yet there is no doubt but all may (as our Saviour did design they should) be comprehended under the name of the prophets; Moses and the prophets. And for the prophets, that they were reckoned prophets speaks their inspiration; the distinguishing character of true prophets and false, being so well known among that people. And for the things themselves that they prophesied, the accomplished events did from time to time prove the inspiration of the prophets.

But then take the whole Old Testament together, and that hath received its confirmation abundantly from the New: so that if the New can be proved to be of divine authority, all our business is done, the matter is out of question. The whole Old Testament, it is most expressly owned and proved by the New. For,

What is the New Testament, but a commentary upon the Old? it is an application of the religion of the Old Testament. The Old was nothing but a veiled gospel. The New is nothing else but the same gospel unveiled. And again,

It is plain, that our Lord himself doth frequently and expressly confirm to us the whole Old Testament, taken together under the name of Scripture, or the Scriptures, Moses and the prophets, and the law and the prophets. As when he saith "I am not come to destroy the law: no, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil:" (Matth. 5. 17) and in the next verse "Heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or one tittle of the law pass"—so that he hath confirmed the whole Old Testament to a tittle, to a very tittle, not one tittle but is sacred, it cannot be lost, cannot pass away, it is a more stable thing than heaven itself, and therefore now,

[2.] We pass to the books of the New Testament. And how will it appear that there were such books written by divine inspiration, so as we ought to reckon the authority of them is stamp't thereon by God himself? Why,

First. Much of what we find in these writings was delivered by our Lord himself. The most material things contained in the gospels, that is, the doctrinal parts, were his own words still from time to time, upon all occasions.

Secondly. It is very plain that he did inspire his apostles, that were to be witnesses of him, and whose business it must be to be planters and propagators of the Christian faith afterwards in the world. He did purposely inspire and direct and authorise them to publish those very things that make up the substance of those books; and therefore, no doubt, did direct them to write those very books themselves; for who can suppose, he having a design that the Christian religion should obtain and take place in all succeeding times to the end of time, but that he should intend that it should be wrote, it should be put into writing, and therefore when he laid that charge upon his apostles, upon whom he breathed at parting, or a little before, saying "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and to whom he gave this charge, "Go and teach all nations this doctrine;" certainly within the compass of that charge must be comprehended the charge of writing these things, as one means of publishing them to all nations, and so necessary a means, as that all besides (as to succeeding ages) must be ineffectual. And then,

Thirdly. For the authority of what was contained in these books, or the divinity thereof, he did endow those he made use of, as his apostles and first planters of the Christian faith after

him, (even their very inspiration itself, their very mission as well as the several parts of that message upon which they were sent) with a power of working stupendous miraculous works : that it might be seen by all men, that a divine power did attest to divine truth, as it was published by those men. And upon this you find that mighty stress laid, that these first propagators of the Christian faith, “preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,” And the same Holy Ghost that did assist them in preaching, did prompt too, to write the whole New Testament. And that it was the Holy Ghost that did actuate them in all this, was shewn by that power of working miraculous works, which God gave at the same time ; because the Holy Ghost is entitled to those works by our Saviour himself, saying, “If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come unto you,” then is that religion true, and it is the kingdom of God that I am here setting up among you, and hereupon is that great weight laid upon this matter, (Heb. 2. 2. 3. 4.) “If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward ; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him ; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?” This was the divine seal, the seal of heaven affixed to these writings and what was contained in them : that is, that when men should come abroad upon such an errand, into strange countries and other nations besides their own, and speak things that such and such people had never heard of before, hereupon, suppose it should be inquired of them, “What shall induce us to believe, that what you say is true and comes from God ?” Why immediately they do such and such works that could only be done by divine power, and so they testify to men, that this was a divine truth that they uttered to them. They preached such a gospel, and at the same time they healed the sick, by the speaking of a word, and sometimes raised the dead to life, as our Saviour himself did, who had so confirmed the truth before, by that and other most wonderful things that referred to his own person, by his death especially, and by his resurrection. Here was the greatest question among the Jews : he gave himself out to be the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God ; all the question was, “Is this the Christ, or is he a deceiver or impostor?” He must be one of the two : either the Christ as he said he was, or one of the most notorious impostors that ever was upon the face of the earth : all the

dispute rested upon this one thing: "Whereas, he gave himself out to be the Son of God, is he the Son of God or no?" The means by which many were wrought upon before his death, to believe in him, were his most miraculous works; but I say they were but the means: and to bring any effectually to believe in Christ, there must be something more than external means. When he preached to the multitude, he confirmed his word, sometimes by feeding thousands by very disproportionable means; by healing the sick, by opening the ears of the deaf and the eyes of the blind, loosening the tongues of the dumb, and raising up the dead to life and the like: and when at length he came to die, you know with what circumstances his death was accompanied; all the powers of heaven and earth were shaken, the sun withdrew his head, the veil of the temple was rent, the dead arose; and a poor pagan centurion, (who was appointed to guard the execution) upon sight of these things gives up the cause; "Verily this was the Son of God, I see he was in the right, the Jews persecuted him wrongfully," (for here was the question between them, Was he the Son of God or no?) "They crucified him for a blasphemer, in saying he was the Son of God, which they denied him to be, but now I see he was the Son of God." And he was afterwards "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the Spirit of holiness by which he was raised from the dead." Now his apostles' going forth, in the authority of this divine Person, to testify nothing but what they saw with their eyes, and what they heard with their ears, and being appointed by him to be witnesses of what they saw and heard, and to preach the doctrine which he had preached and delivered to them before; and they themselves working so miraculous works to prove the truth of what he did assert; this proves the matter out of all question, that what was written concerning all this, must be by divine inspiration. And further too,

Fourthly. It manifestly appears how the prophecies of the Old Testament (the greatest and most important of them) did receive their confirmation that they were divine, by the events that fell out in the time wherein the books of the New Testament were written, and which came to be reflected on afterwards, by the wisest and most considering, the ablest and most competent judges the world had in those days. Many of them were hereupon converted to the Christian faith: and some others that were not so, merely as wanting that opportunity to be informed of matters of fact which the others had had, who yet did acknowledge the convictiveness of the Mediator: as for instance, those prophecies concerning Christ, and that one express

one, among the rest, of Daniel, about the seventy weeks : that great pagan, (and one of the most considerable enemies for reason and learning that ever the Christian cause had in the world) Porphiry, having opportunity to view over this prophecy said, it must needs have been written after the event, it was so very punctual. So that he only wanted an opportunity to know, that this prophecy had been written above five hundred years before his time, and was four hundred and twenty years before its accomplishment, in the hands of the Jews, and kept so safe that it was impossible to be a fallacious thing. And therefore, that being his case, (he being a heathen and not a jew and not having opportunity to know) that must (by his own confession) be the only reason of his not being a believer, upon that one single prophecy, so punctually accomplished by the coming of our Lord ; and his being cut off at such a time as the prophecy did say concerning the coming of the Messiah, the Prince, and that he was to be cut off at such a time. Well, upon all this there is little doubt to be made as to the *first proposition*, that is,—that those books that went under the name of Scripture, or the Scriptures, in our Saviour's and the apostles' time, to the last survivor of them, were certainly of divine authority.

(2.) But now to the second proposition—that this book that we have now in our hands, containing such and such writings in it, is the same, or those Scriptures are the very same that were so owned and acknowledged for the Scripture, in those days. It may be said, and no doubt will be, by any that shall consider, that if this be out of question, the whole business is out of question: for nobody can think, if all that hath been said be true, about these books of the Old and New Testament, (said to be extant together at least within the time of the evangelist John) as to matter of fact, as was reported, but these books must unquestionably be of divine authority. But how should we do to know that we have the matter of fact rightly deduced and drawn down to us, and so that we have reason to believe the books that we now have are the same ? If we could be sure they are the same, it would be unquestionable: now as to that, there is one thing that I must premise to you, and it carries its own evidence with it. That is, that that knowledge that men may have of any thing by ordinary means, we are never to expect should be given us by extraordinary. Pray do but take this, and weigh it well, as a thing needful here to be forelaid. Whatsoever may be sufficiently evidenced by ordinary means, it is very unreasonable to expect, that God should afford extraordinary means for the evidencing of that thing. If you do but observe the constancy of his methods of government, over this

world, how sparing he hath been of doing extraordinary things, that ought to come by just account into the class of miracles, of miraculous works, you would see, that the divine wisdom and power have been always very sparing of doing such things, unless where the exigency of the case did require it, and where the end was not otherwise attainable. But it is foolish, to think that the wisdom of God and the power of God should be exerted upon no necessity: what is it for? only to please curiosity? That which is done not to answer necessity, can only be supposed to be done to please and gratify curiosity. Now to think that the wisdom of God, should make infinite power, ever and anon, to stoop to do miraculous works, only to please and gratify a vain and curious humour, without any need, this were the most unworthy of God of any thing we could suppose: and therefore, this is never to be looked for. If then there be sufficient ordinary means to beget a certainty concerning this, it would be a very foolish thing to expect that miracles should be wrought to prove it to us at this day, that these books we now have are, for substance, the same that those were, which were owned for divine, in Christ's and the apostles' days. For if any one would assert, that it was needful a miracle should be wrought to this purpose, to assure us that these books were the same they were in former times; I would know who it is that should have opportunity of seeing this miracle? Must every one that should be obliged to believe these books to be the same, see such a miracle wrought himself? That were to make miracles more necessary than ever they were, for even in Christ's and his apostles' days, it was never thought necessary that every person should have the sight of a miracle himself, but it was enough that it was notoriously known that such and such miracles were done. But if it were not thought necessary in Christ's and his apostles' days, that miracles should be wrought in the sight of every person, that every one for his own satisfaction should have the sight of such a miracle himself, then the testimony of such persons must be relied upon in this case, as it would be supposed could have no inclination or design to deceive others, by misrepresenting things to them: and that is such a testimony as upon which all matters among men do depend. "It is said in your law, (saith our Saviour to the Jews) the testimony of two witnesses is true;" that is, is credible, is not to be doubted: the whole frame of government depends upon witnesses. There would be no law, no justice, no society kept on foot in the world, if the testimony of credible witnesses were not to be respected and attended to. Now if in this way, there must be reliance on credible witnesses

somewhere, that is, if some few should in our own time see a miracle done, and they make report of it, and their testimony is to be believed, why may we not believe as well the credible testimony of former times, as believe the credible testimony of persons in our own time? If the sober reason of men be yielded to in this case, no man can imagine what reason of difference is assignable, but that we may as well rely upon the testimony of our forefathers, concerning matters of fact, as upon the testimony of those that live in the same age with us; but have seen with their own eyes, what we have not seen with ours. And do not we know that 'most of the estates in which persons do claim property, do depend upon the testimony of witnesses that are dead a hundred years ago? Certainly, men would have very bad titles to their estates, if the testimony of witnesses, dead many scores of years or some hundreds of years ago, were not to be relied on even now. This is plain, that we have the same rational way and method of knowing these books to be the same they were, that is, by such testimony as is the very means of setting on foot all property, and all the administration of law and justice, in civilized nations, all the world over. And we have the same means to know this, as by which we come to know, that any other writings are theirs whose names they bear: such as the writings of Seneca, Aristotle and the like. We have the same means to know this by, as we have for other things that are of greatest importance to mankind in this world, and by which we come to know, other men's works that we have now in our hands, are the same which were written so many hundred years ago. And if so, then it were the most unreasonable thing, that miracles should now be reckoned necessary to be wrought to prove this thing to us, and if a miracle were now to be wrought, there must be a relying upon present witnesses, upon the testimony of this present age; and why might we not as well rely upon witnesses of the former age, as on witnesses of the present age? No reason can be assigned. Therefore, it would be absurd to expect God should extraordinarily prove this to us, when it could be sufficiently proved otherwise. That is the first thing to be forelaid.

And being forelaid, this one general consideration will prove, that these books are the same that they were in Christ's and his apostles' time, and cannot be otherwise; that is, that material alterations of them were altogether impossible. When I say material alterations, I only mean this, that there may have been some very minute undesigned alteration in transcribing of copies; a word may have been mistaken, or a letter may have been mistaken, somewhat here or there left out. But this can

be no material or hurtful alteration, because they had always other copies to correct such mistakes by, but there could be no material alteration with design, that is the thing I deny to be possible, and assert to be impossible. There could be no designed alteration either of the books of the Old Testament, or of the books of the New Testament, since the time of Christ and his apostles. And,

[1.] Not of the books of the Old Testament.

First. It is impossible they can have been altered, since it is plain they were preserved before, and for a considerable time afterwards, with the greatest care imaginable. And that it is one of the great wonders of providence that God, for the preservation of these books, should make use of that scrupulous, and I might say, almost superstitious care that was among those Jews, whose office it was to keep the books of the Old Testament. As,

It was known, they used to count all the letters of the Old Testament, that they might be sure never to miss a letter. Again,

In transcribing copies, (which was frequent) every copy was always examined by an appointed number of their wise men, as they termed them. Further,

If any copy should have been found, upon examination, to have four or five faults in it, in one copy of the whole Old Testament, that book was presently adjudged to be buried in the grave of one or other of their wise men. And lastly,

For those books that, upon examination, were found to be punctually true, it was very plain from the history of those times, that there was the greatest reverence paid to them imaginable. They never used to touch those perfect copies (taking them into their hands) without kissing them solemnly; nor to lay them down again without solemn kissing of them. They were never used to sit upon the place where one of those books were wont to be laid. If one of them by casualty fell to the ground, they appointed a solemn fast to be kept for it, as an ill-boding thing, that such a thing should happen. So that it is most plain that these keepers of the books of the Old Testament could never have it in design to corrupt any of them; but it was that which they did abhor above all things. And it was a principle (as Philo tells us, and Josephus much to the same purpose) instilled into the youth of that nation, and even those of the best quality, that they should run the utmost hazard and incur a thousand deaths, rather than they should suffer, to the utmost of their power, any alteration or diminution of any of those books: or that any of them should be lost any



other way. And then, besides all this scrupulous care of the keepers of the books of the Old Testament, (with which a design of corrupting would no way consist) we may add,

Secondly, That the thing itself was afterwards impossible, simply impossible. If they would before, when it was in their own hands, they could; but afterwards, if they would, they could not; because that in Christ's, and his apostles' days, a great number of them were (you know) converted to the Christian faith, who knew all the books of the Old Testament as well as themselves. Therefore, it was impossible now, for the infidel Jews, those that were not converted, to make any alteration, but it must be presently spied and exclaimed against: therefore it was a vain thing for any to attempt it, after so many were converted to the Christian religion. And thereupon we may further add,

Thirdly. That the testimonies that were contained in these books against themselves, and with which contained in them, they are transmitted to us, do shew that they never went about to corrupt them. The many testimonies against idolatry, contained in these books, whereby their forefathers from age to age, for many ages, were witnessed against, would have induced them to expunge all things that were therein contained against idolatry, (so tender were they of their reputation) if there had not been a great awe upon their minds, never to attempt the corrupting or the alteration of any thing in those books. The wickedness of their forefathers was, in these books, so highly remonstrated against, in respect of the testimonies they so often give against their idolatry, and yet these books we find in their own hands, with these testimonies in them, against the Jews and their forefathers, for many foregoing ages through sundry times and divers intervals; though we do not find after the second temple, that people relapsed into that crime. And then, there is the fullest testimony against their infidelity in these books that can be. Who would not wonder that these books should come out of the hands of the Jews, with these testimonies, in the great controversy between the christians and them? that is, of Christ being the Messiah, in which you have so punctual assertions against them, that nothing can be more. Those many testimonies that do concern the Messiah, particularly that famous prophecy, that the sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shilo should come: and those numerous pre-sages in many of the latter prophets, (Isaiah especially and sundry others,) make it one of the greatest wonders of providence, that such a book should come, with these things in it, out of these men's hands, against whom they are a continual remonstrance. But however, this proves that they did never design any alteration: either they saw it impossible for one while, and before

that, they had no inclination or inducement that would be prevailing with them to go about it, that is, that there should be an alteration with design. And then,

[2.] For the books of the New Testament ; that they cannot have been corrupted is most evident too. It is impossible they can, for you must consider in what time they were written: they must be written in Christ's time and the apostles'; now within the compass of that time, things were brought to that state, that such a corruption was impossible upon two accounts, upon account of the distance of places into which the gospel was spread, and upon account of the divisions that were so early fallen out among christians.

First. Upon account of the distance of places whereinto, in the first century of years, the gospel was spread. That is, into a vast part of Asia, and some considerable parts of Africa and Europe; some think into Britain itself, into our land. There are not very improbable grounds of conjecture, that it was so, even within the compass of Paul's own age. That made it impossible there could be any designed corruption or alteration in the writings of the New Testament; so considerable a number of men at such a distance from one another, could not agree to make such an alteration; and if they could not agree in it, one part must remonstrate against the other. And,

Secondly. The divisions that so early appeared in the Christian church made it likewise impossible. That passage of the apostle (it may be) is not greatly enough pondered according to the weightiness of the expression, that there must be heresies, there should be heresies, there must be heresies. This great use that hath been of the divisions in Christian churches is not (it may be) considered as it should be by many. But nothing can carry a clearer evidence and demonstration with it, than that, because of those divisions, any depravation of the said records, (that is, any material, general, successful, continued depravation,) is altogether impossible: because the one party would be continually declaiming and crying out against the other: and then how soon would it be espied? So for that particular instance, 1 John 5. 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." It is true it hath been found to be wanting in some few copies; and what an outcry was against it in the Christian church? So that if that alteration was made by the design of the arians, (and if it were by any design at all, it must be by their design) the very supposal of it brings the greatest blot upon them and their cause, that could be imagined; it being very plain that it was to be found in equally ancient

copies. But it seems more likely, it was never left out by design at all. But because the matter at the beginning of the 8th verse, was just the same with that of the beginning of the 7th verse, a more negligent transcriber, having his eye on the beginning of the 8th verse, might write on and slip over merely casually the whole 7th verse. This being more likely that a verse, beginning as the following verse does, and ending like it, should be left out, than that a verse more than ought, should be put in. And thus, the design of making such an alteration would be defeated upon the attempt; so that upon that consideration it is altogether impossible, that there should be any alteration at all. And therefore that this be stuck to, that there is no designed alteration in these books, and so can have been no material alteration in them.

It is true that in translations, persons have laboured to serve their own purposes, by translating this way and that, as they thought fit. But for alteration of copies, that is what never entered into the mind of any body to attempt; which is a thing so easily spied out, that nothing is more so; and so must needs blast and disserve the cause and interest of that party it was designed to serve, and therefore could never be. And the impossibility of any such alteration, it is easy for any man that useth his understanding, to apprehend from a familiar instance. As thus, do but take any one people that are under the same government, and that have their laws by which they are governed, digested into some system or other; as for instance, our statute book; why suppose any ill-minded men in the nation should have a design to corrupt and alter the statute book; every one would see it to be impossible. Which way should they go to work to impose a false statute book upon a nation, wherein every man's right and property is concerned? And if any such should have such a design, they would soon give it up, as finding it impossible, and a thing not to be done, and therefore a vain thing to attempt. But the difficulty is a thousand times greater, of making any designed alteration of these sacred books and records, that are spread so unspeakably further than a nation, and wherein the concerns of all that have them in their hands are recorded, not temporal only, but eternal. Here is their all for eternity, and another world: so that it must be altogether impossible that there could have been such a thing effected; and therefore it is the most unlikely thing, that such a matter should ever be attempted. And then, I say, if there be that plain evidence, that for that reason, these books must be the same, that they cannot have been altered with design, and consequently not materially, then it were the most unrea-

sonable thing in all the world, to expect, that God should confirm it to us otherwise than he hath done, or that the nature of the thing doth admit of: because otherwise, there must have been miracles wrought for every one to see, and take notice of: nay, that would altogether lose the usefulness and significancy of miracles themselves, because it would make miracles so common in such a case. If every man must have a miracle to prove to him, this is God's book, it would take off that particular thing for which they are only significant with men, that is, because they are rare and extraordinary things: and then they would cease to be so. It might as well be expected that every man should have a Bible reached him down by an invisible hand from heaven, as that there should be a miracle wrought to prove to him, that this was the same book that was so and so confirmed and sealed in our Saviour's, and his apostles' time. And therefore I reckon, that upon the grounds that have been laid, it is very plain, both that these books, that were extant, under the name of the Scripture, in our Saviour's and his apostles' time, were of divine authority: and that the books that we now have in our hands, are the same with those books, and therefore are of divine authority.

### LEC. IX.\*

Now what we shall further say, as to the two things laid down before, will be to answer an *objection* which possibly may arise in the minds of some: to wit,

That this way of being ascertained of the divinity first, and then secondly, concerning the identity and sameness still of these books, doth seem to resolve our faith, at length, into a human testimony and so, at length, to make only a human faith. That is, that all rests upon this—that we have been truly told, and by such as lived before us in the world, that there were such books in their time, and we are led by testimony in following ages, to collect, that these are the same books. Is not this (may some say) to resolve our faith into a human testimony, and so to make it only a human faith? In answer to this I have several things to say.

1. That it is very plain, that a human testimony must be depended upon *aliquatenus, some way or other*, in reference to all the concernments of religion. That is a point out of doubt, some dependance there must be upon human testimony.

\* Preached January 23, 1691.

Suppose a preacher came among a company of illiterate men, men that could never so much as read ; or if any of them were so, (which is a thing not unusual in Christian congregations) and he takes a text and produces (it may be) many more parallel ones out of the Bible for the doctrine which he preacheth ; how can these men know that this is a Bible he preacheth out of, but by a human testimony? And even for those that can read, they must depend upon a human testimony, that what they read is a true translation : supposing them not to be learned themselves in, or not having opportunity to consult the originals, they must depend upon the testimony of the learned, who have viewed those books in the originals, such as lexicographers, and the like, for the true signification and translation of the words they read. This therefore is plain and out of question, that some use there must be of a human testimony in reference to the concernments of religion. And I add,

2. It is no more strange that God should state our case, so as to oblige us to some dependance upon human testimony, than that he should state it so as we must have a necessary dependance upon our own sense. We are told that “faith comes by hearing;” we can have no ordinary way to come to the knowledge of the things contained in these books, but by the use of our eyes, and the use of our ears. And I could fain know why there should be a greater sacredness in these organs of our own, than in those of other men. Why should mine eye or ear be thought a more sacred thing than the voice or tongue of another man? And again,

3. It is one thing to use a human testimony, in a case wherein God hath ordained and appointed to do it, and another thing to do it besides, or against his ordination and appointment. Here we are to distinguish between matters of fact, and matters of right. We are to make use of the testimony of men, even by God’s own appointment, in reference to matters of fact; to inform us only of mere matter of fact. This is an institution of God. “It is written in your law (saith our Saviour) that the testimony of two or three witnesses is true.” “I come unto you in the mouth of two or more witnesses,” saith the apostle, “and in the mouth of two or three witnesses, shall every word be established.” This is a divine ordination : it is not an arbitrary thing taken up by men at random, and of their own choice and pleasure ; but it is God’s stated medium and way, wherein he hath appointed, that persons are to be informed concerning matters of fact, which they are concerned to know, and of which they have not the immediate knowledge themselves. “It is written in your law (saith Christ to the Jews)

that the testimony of two men is true." What law was that? It was the divine law. God hath enacted, that the testimony of a competent number of witnesses should be relied upon, to assure us of the truth of those matters of fact, that they do testify, and you do well know, that upon this ground (so material a thing this is) depends all the administration of justice throughout the world. Otherwise, no judge would determine in reference to any case, which came not under the sight of his own eye, or whereof he was not an ear-witness. And so this would subvert the very foundations of all human society. There could be no such thing as human society in the world, upon these terms, and therefore we must look upon this as a holy, wise constitution of the great Ruler of this world, who hath ordained and appointed, that in reference to such matters of fact, as we are concerned to have the knowledge of, and have not the immediate knowledge of ourselves, we are to depend upon the testimony of others. And this is not an arbitrary thing that we take up of ourselves, but a thing that the wisdom of heaven hath constituted and set for the preserving of common order here, among men in this world. And

4. The difference is unspeakably great, between relying upon men's testimony, as to mere matters of fact; and relying upon it, as to matters of right. We may have a difference upon the authority of one or two credible witnesses, reporting to us such matters of fact, when as to which is right and wrong, we will have no dependance upon them at all. As now suppose any of you receive a letter from some person of very great authority and quality, and for whom you have great deference and duty, this letter comes to you by the hands of a footman; do you pay a deference to the man, in believing what is contained in the letter? No, all the belief of what is contained in the letter, is resolved into the authority of him that wrote it, and from whom it comes. Only you may look upon this as a fit medium to convey it to you; and you rely (if there be occasion to do so much) no more upon the footman, as to matter of fact, but that he received this letter from his lord or master to deliver to you; but his testimony hath no influence upon the contents of the letter, one way or other.

And this therefore, leads you sufficiently to understand how to answer yourselves, if any should further inquire—Pray how doth this differ from the notion that runs among them of the Romish church, that is, that we are beholden to their tradition for the Scriptures we have, and for our Christianity, and for all that we have any knowledge of in the things of God and religion?—Why it differs the most that can be. For,

(1.) The papists do not only claim to be witnesses in the case, but they claim to be the only witnesses : which they most pretencelessly and injuriously assume to themselves : for we do not rely upon them as the sole witnesses, nor as witnesses at all, but only as they join and fall in with the concurrent testimony of the rest of the Christian churches, that have the same books among them that we have. We are no more beholden to them, than we are to other christians. Nor,

(2.) Do we rely barely upon the testimony of Christian churches, as to the matters of fact contained in these books, but we rely upon the concurrent testimony of the rest of the world, Jews and pagans themselves, as to the truth of matters of fact, which we need to be informed about, in the matters of our religion. The papists do engross to themselves to be the only witnesses, most falsely, and without the least colour of pretence. But we reckon the testimony of an enemy, an avowed, professed enemy is of the greatest strength in such a case imaginable. That is the testimony we have from the Jews, and the testimony we have from the pagans, of matters of fact, when the matter of fact is against, plainly against them. This we think we have a great deal of reason to lay much stress and weight upon. Now it is very plain as to mere matters of fact, pagans themselves have owned the truth of those matters of fact, upon which the christian doth depend : to wit, the wonderful works wrought by our Saviour and his apostles to prove the doctrines that they preached, and that are contained in these books. Pagans do not deny these matters of fact, we have them in divers of their own writings. For as to those miracles wrought by Christ, in his own time, to prove the truth of Christianity, (which was done on purpose that they might know that Jesus was the Son of God : that men might believe this and that by believing it, might have life through his name,) Celsus, that great enemy of the Christian religion, never goes about to deny the matter of fact : he knew that would be vain. All the world knew the truth of the matter of fact ; only he takes a great deal of pains to shew how it was possible that such things might be done by other invisible powers. Just the same conceit that the Jews had among themselves, when they tell our Saviour, that he cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. That is, they did suppose the devil to have fallen out with himself, and that all his business was industriously to destroy his own kingdom. Indeed, the greatest and most momentous matters of fact, by which Christianity was confirmed at first, are freely granted by the most considerable pagans. We find in their writings, an acknowledgement of those things

that filled the world with so much wonder, and they labour partly to turn off all by referring the great wonders to other causes and agents ; and partly by pretending, that as strange things have been wrought by their own hands : as the setting up of Apollonius Tyanæus, that great magician ; whereas, the disparity is so great that nothing is more so, nor can be to any, who consider, that those tricks wrought by him, were easily detected of fraud and imposture, and were pretended to be wrought to no considerable purpose. But the others were frequent and often repeated, and in common sight, and without any design of hiding ; so as that when men that have been concerned have canvassed and searched as much as possible, to know whether they were true or no, the light hath shone into their faces, and they have been forced to yield and own that a great and notable work hath been done, “ and we cannot deny it.” And with great dread and consternation they beheld the world running after Christ and his apostles, these works carrying so great a light in them, that were wrought for that design. And,

(3.) There is this difference besides, in what the papists do arrogate to themselves about this matter of testifying, from what we admit and assert ; that is, that they assume to themselves the making of doctrines that shall be of equal authority with these books. And one of their greatest men among them, is known to have used that blasphemous saying, that this book hath no more of authority than Æsop’s fables, other than what it hath derived from their church. And if it were not for the authority it fetcheth from their church it were no more to be regarded than Æsop’s fables : which is so great an insolence that indeed one would wonder, (but that divine patience will magnify itself till the time of taking vengeance upon that apostate church come,) that a thunderbolt from heaven should not have vindicated such a blasphemy, with all things else that are of the same piece among them, and carry the same import and signification : for we know they take upon them to say and unsay, to do and undo, to maim and mangle this book, and set up contrary institutions to it ; as is particularly known in that great ordinance of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper. And then,

(4.) As to the business of being mere witnesses of matter of fact, there they have proved themselves false and unfaithful ; that is, in foisting in the apocryphal books into the canon of the Scripture, against the authority both of the Jewish church and the ancient church, as the world may judge at this day that read them.



So that there is no parity at all in these two cases, the relying by God's institution and appointment upon a human testimony, but as a medium to convey and transmit to us our knowledge of bare matter of fact, and their assuming to themselves to be the only one to be relied upon, not only as to matter of fact, but as to the authority by which right and wrong, and the truth and falsehood of doctrine are to be finally decided and judged of. And thus far then we think, that the way of proving the sameness of these books with those that bore the character of sacred books, or books of divine authority, is altogether unexceptionable, and so strong, as that there can lie nothing against it to the common reason and understanding of men, when we have such a way of being assured of this matter, as must be convictive to any that do allow themselves the liberty and use of their understandings. And it would be a very foolish expectation, to think that God should gratify the fanciful curiosities of men, by working wonders among them continually and repeatedly to no purpose.

Upon all this I shall superadd some considerations that may give strength to all that hath been said before. As,

1. By common consent of all mankind, some divine revelation or other is necessary to the ends of religion, besides mere natural light. We do not find or read of any sort of people under heaven that have pretended to any thing of religion, but have likewise also pretended to somewhat or other of divine revelation, besides what was natural and common to men as men, as necessary for the conduct of the affairs of religion, or for which such a thing as religion was to be kept on foot in the world. Look back amongst any sort of people as to the most ancient accounts we have in the world of any thing of religion and we shall find it so: as for instance, if we go to the Egyptians of old, the Phœnicians, the Assyrians, the Persians, the Grecians, the Romans, the ancient Gauls and Britons; nay, if we carry it as far as China: for such accounts as we have of their religion and what it hath been for some hundreds of years past, nay, and some thousands of years backwards. All these people have pretended to somewhat of divine revelation, over and besides natural light, none of them but have had those among them whom they always took to be inspired persons. I am not considering now, whether their pretensions be right or wrong, true or false, but all have agreed in this sentiment, that there did need some other revelation besides the light of nature, in order to the ends and purposes of religion. They always had some sacred persons among them. Their priests, their magi, gymnosophists, their brah-

mins, their bards, their druids, whom they always took for inspired persons; and received dictates and directions from them still in reference to matters of religion: yea, and in reference to other matters too, as so many inspired persons: thus still by their own confession, owning mere natural light insufficient for the purposes of religion. Famous it is, (besides all that hath been intimated before,) concerning those several sorts of sacred persons, that the several nations had amongst them, that when Numa began to settle religion at Rome, in the first forming of that people he pretended to have all his directions from his goddess Egeria whom he conversed and met with in the woods, and consulted of those affairs from time to time. And the people of the Chinese are reckoned to have all their methods of religion and all their notions of it from that Confucius for whom they have the greatest veneration, that ever any people could be supposed to have of one as an inspired person, so as that deference was never paid by the Turks to their Mahomet, which is paid by these Chinese, to their Confucius whom they had their religion from, at least one thousand years before ever the other was known in the world.

Now this, to me, is a very great thing, that by the common consent of mankind in all the known and noted nations of which we have any record or notices among us; they should pretend constantly to somewhat or other of divine revelation, in reference to the affairs of religion; thereby giving us, as the common sentiment of mankind, that mere natural light was not enough, but some divine revelation was further to be superadded, for the conduct and management of the affairs of religion in the world. And to that is to be added,

2. That as this would be *argumentum ad hominem*, (it being the common sentiment of mankind,) so it is very apparent from the nature of the thing, that really and truly it is a matter of plain necessity in itself, that there be some superadded revelation to the mere light of nature. For notwithstanding the pretence of it, (that pretence of it to be sure, can never do the business or answer the end for which the thing itself is necessary) yet it is plain, that the very thing, that is, a real and divine revelation is necessary over and besides mere natural light, as that lies now so much corrupted, depraved and obscured, among the sons of men, if you do but consider into how miserable delusions, men have generally fallen, where such a real divine revelation was wanting, in reference to the greatest and most important things of religion. As what can we suppose greater or of more importance to religion than these two, the object of it, and the end of it? The Object of it is the God

we are to worship, and the end of it is the felicity that we are to design and aim at in all the exercises of that worship, and in the whole course of our religion. Where there is not a real divine revelation, what monstrous conceits have been taken up concerning the object of religion! The polytheism of the gentile and pagan world, is a plain and pregnant proof what a necessity there was, that over and besides the mere light of nature, God should reveal himself as the peculiar and sole Object of religion, according to what he is in himself. For though it be true indeed, that many of the wisest philosophers among the pagans, have had right sentiments of the one Deity, the supreme *Numen, God*; yet for the generality of the people how much otherwise hath it been? And with whom those wiser men have been forced to comply and fall in, temporising with them whose own wicked and gross conceptions have led them to worship for deities, the sun, moon and stars; or heroes, the souls of men departed from among them, and sometimes to come so low as to worship dogs and cats, weasels, apes, serpents, onions, leeks and garlic, fountains and rivers and the like, for gods. So apparent need was there for a divine revelation to inform men about the object of their worship, above that light that is common to men as men. And then as concerning the end of religion, felicity, the great diversity of opinions among the pagans, (and even the wiser of them) no less than two hundred, eighty and eight, about the *summum bonum, chief good*, shews how great need there is of a particular divine direction, as to what that is which we are to design for ourselves as our final and eternal felicity. To these I add,

3. That supposing the necessity of a divine revelation about matters that relate to religion and our future blessedness, it must some time or other have become necessary that it should be a written revelation, put into writing upon record. Some time I say, I do not say always necessary. It is plain it must be less necessary in former ages of the world, when by reason of the vast longevity and length of life, about three or four persons might see through two thousand years and upwards, and so give an account but by three or four hands, of the most material and important things, that were of common concernment for men, as such, to know about the beginning of the world and the like. And no doubt there was great care taken to preserve the memory of what was necessary to be known, by monuments and the like, as Seth's pillars were, of which Josephus gives a particular account in his time. But I suppose there were only oral traditions, for that time, passing from hand to hand; and that of things of so apparent, common impor-

tance and necessity, that none can imagine but if the persons were persons of tolerable prudence, (and we have no reason but to apprehend they were persons of great prudence, some at least that were more especially concerned, as Adam himself, Enoch, Noah and Shem,) there could not but have been very distinct accounts transmitted from such hands, of what was necessary to be known concerning the original of the world, and what the pleasure of him that made it was, concerning the affairs of his worship in those days. And we may easily apprehend ourselves if, in any family among us, any thing of great concernment to the nation, (much more to all mankind,) should have come to the notice of an ancestor of ours; as, suppose any of you could say, "My grandfather or my great grandfather had certain notices, some way or other, conveyed to him of such and such matters of fact, of the greatest importance imaginable to the whole nation," Do you think that that would be forgotten in three or four ages in that family? And as little supposable is it, that in three or four ages of so long a duration, all that concerned the original of the world, and revealed will of its Creator, how men ought to live, and order their course in the world, would be forgotten.

But afterwards, when the lives of men grew shorter, it is most apparent, there was a necessity that such things as were most requisite to be known, and were of most common use, should be digested into records in writing. And so we find first, the books of Moses written; and afterwards, there was an addition of more and more made, as God thought fit, in following ages, till the fulness of time, when we have the clearest light of an entire gospel revelation handed to us from our Lord himself, who came from the bosom of his Father to reveal and make him known, and his whole mind and will to men. And indeed, for them that would substitute tradition, and particularly that of oral tradition in the room of this sacred written rule, they do it with the greatest absurdity that can be imagined: and indeed with the greatest immodesty, in them that now a-days pretend to it. It is true, we read the apostle did take order with Timothy that some particular things which he had seen and taken notice of, and heard from him, he should commit to faithful men that might be able to teach and instruct others. There were many useful things that were not presently put into writing. But as for these men, under the notion of faithful witnesses, they have the least reason of any men in the world to lay claim to that office and dignity, of being the conveyancers to us of the things that concern us, in reference to our salvation and our eternal well-being: for when they take upon them to be authors, they

cannot be looked upon to have done the part of faithful witnesses. How strangely have they innovated upon that religion which they boast to have been the conveyers of to us! How much another thing have they made it, to what it was, in doctrinals and worship, and even in reference to the affairs of common conversation itself? So that we may see, even by the insolvency of this pretence of theirs, enough to assure us of the necessity of such a written rule to resort unto. And indeed, in what case had the Christian religion been at this day and the professors of it in the world, if we had not had this written rule in our hands, to correct and discover plainly wherein they have prevaricated and corrupted the Christian religion? So that we may seek Christianity in the Christian world, as was said of old concerning the City of Samium, it was so altered that Samium was to be sought in Samium itself; so we would still be to seek Christianity among christians, if we had not these records to set us right, and let us know what Christian religion was at first.

And upon the whole matter, as to those that would so officiously substitute their traditions in the room of the clear light of this written word, it is much a like case as if any of you should fall in with one travelling on the way, and he offers himself to be your companion and guide, and tells you that you have eyes that you make use of in choosing your way, but these eyes are only troublesome to you, they represent to you diversities of objects that draw this way and that, so that you cannot mind your path. "And pray (saith he) let me put out those eyes of yours and submit yourself to my conduct;" and all that he may guide you into a pit. Or a like case it would be, as if you should have writings in your hands, any of you, that were ancient, and did concern the title to an estate of yours from ages past, and one should say to you "These writings have a great deal of obscurity in them, pray let me have these writings and dispose of them as I see good, and you need not doubt but that there will be witnesses enough to prove your title if there be occasion; and you do not need to question but I will take care to defend you and make out your title;" and to think to rob you of them by such a fraudulent artifice. Just thus would they deal with us about the sacred records, in which our all for eternal life do lie. But very plain it is, upon all these grounds, that it was necessary there should be somewhat of divine revelation superadded to mere natural light; and was also necessary, some time, that it should be a written one.

4. Supposing this, that it is necessary there should be a

written revelation of the mind of God, about matters that do concern our present religion and future felicity, then we have none at all extant in the world that can come in any plausible competition with this book, unless you will bring the Mahometan Alcoran into competition with it. Nothing else doth pretend to be a rule of faith and light to men. And for that Alcoran, (besides what it hath borrowed, or stolen, rather from the Bible) it is a book full of so gross absurdities, that they who have but common sense, would soon discern the difference between them; and how little of pretence there could be to bring that into competition with this, much less to carry it against this upon such a comparison. There are things in it so manifestly contrary to the common light and reason of men, as there would be ground enough for a most contemptuous rejection of it upon that score:—such as its asserting the corporeity of the divine nature; and that the felicity of the future state in the other world doth consist only in bodily pleasures and the like; things manifestly refutable by common natural light. And besides the contradiction that there is to the common reason of men in so great things as these, it is made up of contradictions and repugnancies to itself. For it doth say even that concerning him, upon whom, you know our great hopes depend, which it doth, in the most substantial things, afterwards gainsay and contradict, for it owns him to be a great and a holy prophet, sent by God into this world. But if their religion should be true, he must be the falsest prophet (one of them) that ever was upon the face of the earth, or that ever pretended to prophesy; for did not he avow and give himself out to be the Son of God? If he were a true prophet he did truly say this, that he was the Son of God, and that he and his Father were one: and if he were a true prophet he did truly say this also, that the religion he taught and the professors of it, should continue, and he with them, to the end of the world; and then the Mahometan religion was never to subvert and root out the Christian.

It is plain therefore, that nothing under the name of a divine revelation can with any, the least plausibleness be brought into competition with this book. And therefore, if a divine revelation were necessary, and a written revelation were necessary, this must be it and there can be no other. It is true indeed, some enthusiastical persons have pretended to inspiration as to this or that particular thing: but none have undertaken to pretend, that they are so inspired of God as to give a full, particular, perfect system and model, of all that is to be believed and done, in reference to worship and religion. So that this book hath really no plausible pretender or competitor against it.

5. Whereas, it doth pretend and avow itself to be divine, and of divine original; it hath those inimitable characters of divinity upon it, which most plainly justify that pretence: I shall, before I instance, only forelay this—That we must consider, when we would make a judgment upon this thing, whether this thing be a godlike thing, yea or no, and carries visible characters of divinity stamped upon it, we are, in making our judgment about this matter, to consider, not barely what is spoken or contained in this book, but also to whom such things are spoken, whose use this book was designed to serve, and what use it was intended for. We are not to consider, in this case, how God should speak if he were to publish an edict, or make an oration from the throne of glory to the innumerable company of angels, those glorious creatures that surround him above. That is none of the case that we are to consider. But we are to consider how we would expect him to speak, or how he would direct things to be written, that were intended for all sorts of men, here in this world, from the highest to the lowest, of all capacities and of all conditions, that have any exercise of reason and understanding. We are not to expect that one sort of Bible should have been written for learned men, and another for unlearned; or that one sort of Bible was written for citizens and another for country people; but we are to suppose that there was to be a book written that should suit the capacities of all sorts of persons from the highest to the lowest. And what could have been more Godlike, more suitable to his wisdom and goodness, and more agreeable to the capacity and necessity of men in general, than what we have here in this book? And consider the use that it was to serve, what it was indeed to be written for. It was for the saving of miserable creatures that were in a lost perishing state. It was never intended that such a book should be written, only to please men's fancies or gratify their humours, or tickle their ears. It was intended for saving lost miserable souls, from perishing for ever; and those of all sorts, of all capacities, from the highest to the lowest: and so nothing could have been imagined more worthy of God, than the composure of this Book, for such persons and for such uses. And now to particularize a little, as to such divine characters which are conspicuous in it, and which I call inimitable, that could have proceeded from none but a divine Author.

—As,

(1.) The majesty of the style: How great, how august and Godlike it is! in the whole of it: take it entirely in the whole frame, and nothing could appear, in respect to the style, more majestic or more worthy of God. Though the case must be

considered with a diversity, that is, that he did make use of human penmen, and it is never to be supposed, that he should direct every word and every phrase, by an extraordinary immediate inspiration : for then it were impossible there should have been a diversity of style, but all the parts must have been in one and the same style. But there was that influx of the divine Spirit that did most certainly guide the writers, as to all the substance, of what was to be written and recorded by them; which did attemper itself to the natural genius of those that were made use of as the penmen, so that the communication of the Holy Ghost, received by such and such men, of such and such a constitution, temper and genius, comes to be diversified in that manner, as if one come to pour a quantity of water into such and such a particular vessel, the water in its form will resemble the figure of the vessel: if the vessel be round, the water falls into a round figure; if the vessel be square, the water is formed into that figure unavoidably. And so the same communication of the Holy Ghost, being poured into such a vessel as this or that man was, comes to be accordingly diversified. That very communication to such a one as Isaiah, for instance, receives one sort of figure there, and a communication to such a one as Micah, receives another figure there; when yet all these communications are from one and the same Fountain, and serve for one and the same common purpose. And indeed upon the whole, it doth appear, that the greatness of the way of speaking it, doth so suit the majesty of God as nothing could do more, when men have come forth and spoken and written in the name of the Lord; and have from time to time pronounced, "Thus saith the Lord;" and when they have been directed to personate God, "I am the Lord; do so and so, I am the Lord," this is so becoming the greatness, the grandeur of the Author of this book, that it is not a supposable thing that there should be any, that would assume the confidence, in reference to things of this nature, to take upon them at such a rate; that is, comparing the confidence of such a pretence with the matter that is spoken of; and nothing is more evident than that this is agreeable to God only, or to one immediately directed by God only, and none else. And upon what was noted to you concerning the difference of styles, for such parts of this book wherein God is represented to be the immediate Speaker, himself making this use of man, it is evident in such cases, when he hath appeared more immediately as the Author of what was said, nothing beneath God can be supposed to have spoken like him. As now to instance, there is that song called the song of Moses in the 32. of Deuteronomy; God doth give immediate directions to publish the



words of such a song to this people, and to keep it as a record among them. It seems most likely that every word there, was dictated immediately by God himself. And who did ever read any thing so great and so august as the words of that song are? And so when we find God immediately speaking to Job, in some of the latter chapters of that book, Who can imitate the majesty of what is said? which is there spoken unto him, when God speaketh to him himself out of the whirlwind. And,

(2.) Consider the sublimity of the matter: How mighty, great things are contained in this book! As in that Hosea 8. 12. "I have written unto them the great things of my law." To take such a summary as that, 1 Tim. 3. 16. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." How mighty things are these, of how sublime a nature! And these make the principal contents of this book. And then,

(3.) Do but consider again, the comprehensiveness of this Sacred Volume, of how vast extent it is. And what mind, but the mind of God could have comprehended and collected together so great a variety of things as we find in this book? So as that nothing can be pretended to be wanting; not one thing can be so much as alleged is wanting that is requisite to be put into such a book, to serve the end it pretends to serve, and that it avows itself to be designed for. Things that suit all states of men from the highest to the lowest, all ages and each sex. Things we have that make up the system of what we are to believe, and things that compose and make up the system of what we are to do, and what makes up the system for us of what we are to desire. Do but look to the *credenda*, and the *agenda* and the *petenda* or *speranda*: where we may have the collected *digesta* of the one kind and the other, and who can pretend any thing to be wanting here? The comprehensiveness of this book speaks the divinity of it, having that in it which suits every case and every purpose for which such a book can be desirable, or can be pretended to be so. And then,

(4.) Consider too, its correspondency to the spirit of man, which it was designed to rectify and set right, and be a measure unto, if you look upon the spirit of man under a threefold capacity. That is, look upon it as merely rational, or look upon it as corrupt and depraved, or look upon it as regenerate and renewed; and the contents of this book do most admirably suit

it every way, Look upon it as merely rational, and nothing so adequate to the mind and reason of a man ; so as that, though things in it there are indeed, that the reason of man could not have found out ; there is nothing in it which the reason of man would not approve, being represented and laid before it. If we consider the condition of man as corrupt, what delineations have we of the corrupt frame and temper of the spirit of man in this state ? And nothing, to me, is a greater argument of the truth of our religion in general, than to find such exact descriptions of the state of man, suiting the temper in which he is now to be found upon the original depravation in all his conditions in this world. So that just such a thing as a carnal man was, and was represented to have been five thousand years ago, just such a one he is now ; all the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart of man are evil, and continually so. And when God looks down from heaven upon man, to understand who it is that seeks after God, there is none that is found doing good, no not one ; none seeking after God ; for that good must be chiefly meant : as if all the world did agree in that one common sense, to say unto God “ Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways : let not God molest or disturb us in our course.” Just so is the degenerate spirit and temper of man represented, and how true a representation is it ! And then look upon the spirit of man as renewed, and how lively a description is there of the regenerate man, the renewed man ! just so desiring after God, the living God, as this book doth express ; there placing its sole felicity and highest delight, there reposing its treasure, there placing the study of the heart, to be sincere and upright in his sight : who but God could have made such a representation of man ? And that I take to be a further consideration which shews the divinity of this book, even those most inimitable characters of its divine Author that are most conspicuous to every discerning eye. But I add,

(5.) The wonderful efficacy this word hath had upon the souls of men, from age to age. It hath shewn itself to be “ the power of God, through faith unto salvation.” What multitudes has it subdued ! This sword of the Spirit, and arrows taken from hence, how “ sharp have they been in the hearts of the King’s enemies,” by which multitudes have been thrown down and made subject ! what conquests hath it made ! Though indeed there have been sad dark intervals : but no more but what have been foretold long ago, wherein the progress of the Christian interest and religion should be slow and little : no other was to be expected, according to what was long ago foretold of. But

if you consider the vast increases that were within the first and second centuries, so that some of the ancients have taken notice, and one particularly, by way of apology, to the emperor that then was, "we grow so numerous" (saith he) "that were it not for the peaceableness of our spirits and principles, you could not subsist in opposition to us." It were easy for us to overturn the empire : and were it possible for us to retire and draw from the world, the world would wonder at its own emptiness." And Pliny writing to Trojan, another of their emperors, tells him, that rigorous and severe practices against the christians were now altogether impracticable and might be dangerous : for he tells him, every where the way to the temples was overgrown with grass, and there were none to buy up their sacrifices, and there was no way in the world to keep peace in the empire, but to be very benign to the christians. And he did procure by that epistle, a great suspension of the rage, and cessation of the persecution that was at that time. And then, all this was done, not by the power of arms, (as the mahometan religion hath spread itself in the world,) but only by the power of this very word, the doctrine of Christ ; whereby it appears to be "the wisdom of God and the power of God." I have discoursed to you at large before, of the strong and irrefragable evidence that is given to the truth of this book by the prophecies, and by the miracles we find recorded in it ; the punctual predictions of the former, and the obsignations given to divine truth, given by divine power in the latter. But this seal, set upon the souls of men by the sanctifying Spirit, (whereof this word hath been continually the instrument) carries to seeing and discerning persons, the greatest evidence imaginable in it. It was the saying of Plato, that "the world is God's epistle to men ; the characters of his invisible power and goodness being so visible upon it." And how raised would his thoughts have been, and how much transported would he have been beyond the transport in which he was on this occasion, if he had but known and viewed this divine and sacred book ! But then, to find it again, copied out and transcribed in men's hearts ! "You are," saith the apostle, "the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart. 2 Cor. 3. 3. What a demonstration is here of the divine Author that hath made work, even by his word, upon the hearts and souls of men ? So as that the same apostle speaks in that, 2 Cor. 13. 3. "Do you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but mighty in you ?" "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith," "Do you seek a proof of Christ

speaking by me?" See him in this book, and look into yourselves, such of you as have been converted and turned by my ministry; see if you be not Christ's epistle? See if he hath not written out the greatest and most necessary things about him and his religion, out of this book into your own hearts. And I add,

(6.) That the high complacency that the best men take in this book, must needs prove it to be divine to their own sense. It is true, that there wants not rational evidence to demonstrate the divine authority or divinity of this book, to any that shall at leisure impartially consider the thing. But it is a far more lively proof that any one hath of this in himself and in his own soul, when he is made to taste, in the word, how gracious the Lord is, when he hath the pleasant relish of it in his own spirit: when he can say by his own experience, "Oh, how sweet are thy words to my mouth, yea sweeter than honey to my taste!" when it is to him a recreation to retire and set himself to think and consider and study upon these great and deep things of God; when once he comes to experience this, that the law of God is his delight, and that therein he can exercise himself night and day. So it was, when much less was written of this book than what we now have. If David had seen all the writings of the New Testament, and of the prophets that succeeded himself, and had had the complete, entire volume in his hands that we have, with what transports would he have spoken of the ravishing pleasures of this book! how delectable a study must it have been to his soul! I hope (though it is much to be lamented indeed that there are no more) there are many at this day that find it thus: "We approve it ourselves, in our own hearts; this must be, this cannot but be the divine word, it is so delectable, so refreshing to our souls." And,

(7.) Lastly. Take this by way of addition, the plain and manifest design it hath to make men holy and good; and consequently to make them blessed and happy at length, proves it to be divine. It hath manifestly this design; and can have no other. This is a thing that speaks itself to every conscience of man that doth consider, that is, that this book in the general composure of it hath a design to make men good and holy; and consequently to make them blessed and happy; and can have no other design. Every one must suppose that such a book as this, came not by chance into the world; if not by chance, then it came by design; and if it came by design, then something or other must be designed in it. It doth serve this end manifestly, aims at this, to make men holy and pure, and fit them for heaven and a blessed eternity; and it hath no other

design, it aims at nothing else. This then must be of God ; this must either have been a divine revelation from God himself, (as it avows itself to be,) or it must be one of the most horrid forgeries that ever was contrived under heaven, ever since the creation of the world. But I would appeal to any man's conscience, whether it is likely any one would be guilty of so audacious a wickedness, to entitle the holy God to be the Author of an imposture, for no other end than to make men holy and good ? would men be so wicked as this, for no other end but to make the world good ? Their own fact would fly in their faces. Here is a design to make the world holy and happy ; and if the world were thus, as this book would make it, if it were suitable to it and the contents of it, if there were that love to God and Christ and our neighbours, that holiness, that righteousness upon earth that are expressed in, and designed to be promoted by this book, what a blessed world were this ! The very image and idea of heaven itself. But to think that men should be guilty of the greatest wickedness that ever was done under the sun, with so good a design, is the most inconsistent and unimaginable thing that can be.

These considerations, superadded to what was largely spoken to before, I reckon will prove the matter out of doubt, (with all that impartially consider and weigh things,) that these Scriptures are of divine authority.

## LEC. X.\*

That which we have further yet to do upon this subject, is only to say somewhat by way of answer to an objection or two ; and then to conclude and shut up all in some use.

Objection 1. Some such thought may possibly arise in the minds of some, that if these books be indeed of divine revelation in order to the salvation of souls, as you have heard they are, it may seem strange that they have been confined to so little a part of the world, to so small a portion of mankind. As for the books of the Old Testament, while they only were in being, that they should be shut up in so narrow limits as Palestine, a very little, inconsiderable spot, compared with the rest of the world. In Judah, it was said God was known, as being unknown to the rest of the world. Psalm 76. 1. And he gave his word to Jacob, and his statutes and judgments, to Israel ; and did not so to any nation. Psalm 147. 19. 20. To the Jews were committed the oracles of God, as the apostle

speaks. Rom. 3. 2. And afterwards, when Christianity came, in the fulness of time, to obtain in the world, how little a way, in comparison, did the Christian records reach, or have reached hitherto? According to common computation, the world being divided into thirty parts, nineteen do yet remain totally paganish in the grossest sense, and the other eleven, between mahometans and christians, and not above a sixth part of the world that are so much as christians in name, and of them how great a part have the Bible reserved and locked up from them, they not being permitted the use and knowledge of it? All this may seem very strange, if we consider these Scriptures as a divine revelation purposely vouchsafed in order to the salvation of the souls of men.

Why in reference to this I shall offer you some considerations that I hope may not be unuseful. As,

1. Suppose that there had been no saving design at all, set on foot in reference to the apostate sons of men, but that they had been left under the same remediless condition with the apostate angels, what wrong had there been done? who could have had whereof to accuse the righteous Lord and sovereign Ruler of all this world? Why might not he have left all to sink without remedy or hope, into so deserved, yea, and a self procured ruin? It is therefore apparently, not a matter of right, but of free favour, if God afford any apt and suitable means in order to the saving of any. And what is not matter of right may surely be withheld without wrong. But,

2. When upon the fall of Adam it pleased God so graciously to reveal to him his saving design and the means of it by that eminent seed of the woman, whereof (though those words do carry but an obscure intimation, yet) undoubtedly, he did not leave Adam ignorant of the meaning and intendment of them. And it is as little to be doubted, but that Adam did transmit the knowledge of what he knew himself, in so important a matter, to his more immediate posterity. If then they had not been wanting to themselves and their posterity, it must necessarily have been, that there would have been some sufficient knowledge of a Saviour diffused all the world over, wheresoever his posterity had spread itself. But if men have herein been wanting to themselves, is the holy merciful God to be charged with this? If some very bountiful person should confer some great estate, and settle it upon some particular family, and they embezzle and lose it, is this to be charged upon the bountiful benefactor? And again,

3. Men did not only by their voluntary neglect, lose the notices that were first thus given to Adam, concerning a Saviour,

but they lost the very notions of God himself. So that by their own negligence and malignity, they gradually and universally sunk, even into the grossest idolatry, and so by this means, not only lost the opportunity that they had of knowing somewhat how man might have been saved out of his lost and lapsed estate, but they provoked divine displeasure against them in the highest degree. And so their negligence herein, is not only the natural means of their being without such knowledge as they otherwise would have had, but the provoking cause of God's deserting the world in so great a measure, and so generally as he hath deserted it. And thus doth the apostle plainly state the case, that because they have not been true to that light that was natural and common to them, did not follow the conduct, even of the notices of God that they had, therefore they have been abandoned and given up: "The wrath of God hath been revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." What truth was that? or what men were these? It was natural truth, the natural knowledge of God, that men had as men; and this was the pagan world that was here chiefly spoken of. And for that very reason, because that which was to be known of God in them was so manifest to them, even the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, his eternal power and Godhead, sufficiently to leave them without excuse: yet (as it after follows) they liking not to retain God in their knowledge, therefore he gave them up; as we see Rom. 1. 18, 28. Here is nothing but *Nemesis, just punishment*, and so no cause at all to complain of any injury done to men. But,

4. When yet it pleased God, in order to the revival of the lost state of religion in the world, to form a peculiar people to himself, and there to set up an eminent light, (as it were,) upon a candlestick, to vouchsafe an express revelation of himself to that people, and to commit to them his oracles, they were so committed to them, not to be confined and hid, but preserved and kept: and that thence, light might be transmitted all round about, which accordingly must of course (if men had not been wanting to themselves) have spread further and further. It was not from any divine appointment; but from the ill spirit that ruled amongst that ill people, and from the prejudice and negligence of their neighbours, that the light they had, did not spread and extend further and further and still further and further, to circulate from nation to nation. It proceeded (I say) from the ill spirit that was among the Jews who did envy to the rest of the world the knowledge of God, which now, for the present, was peculiar to them: and to the negli-

gence and prejudice of the rest, that they looked after no such things. Of that ill spirit that ruled among the Jews, that is a sad instance, (which I have upon some other occasion told you of) that when there was one translation of the Old Testament by the seventy elders, enjoined to be made by Ptolemy and they could not tell how to hinder it, they appointed a solemn fast universally wherever they had any thing at all to do, to lament that the knowledge of God should be so diffused amongst others; and go beyond their own bounds. Wherein, as they were guilty, no doubt, so the rest of the world were accessory too, by their negligence and disaffection to the true knowledge of God, to their own continuing ignorance. And further,

5. That when the Christian records, the books of the New Testament came to be added to those of the Old, how should it come to pass but only through the general ill temper of men, that Christian knowledge might not be as far extended as commerce was between nation and nation, kingdom and kingdom? Why might not that commodity have been carried as far as gold and silver and precious stones? the price whereof is far above all these, "more precious than rubies," or thousands of gold and silver. And (as I told you formerly) it was never to be expected, God should do that by extraordinary means, that might have been done by ordinary. And this being the case, it is little to be expected that God (when men might so easily have transmitted such notices from nation to nation, and those that were of a greater distance, and might have heard, more obscurely, of such and such things might have inquired and sent and laboured to inform themselves) should give remedy to such an evil as this, by an extraordinary course; that when in an ordinary way such knowledge might have been conveyed from country to country, he should have sent an angel from kingdom to kingdom, and from nation to nation to carry them Bibles. It might have been as well expected that, in Christian countries, where the Bible is come, but a great many persons being illiterate, and can make no use of it, an angel should be sent from house to house to teach their children to read. Again,

6. Where there hath been both a loss of that Christian knowledge that once did obtain, and those very records do (it may be) cease from some parts of the world where they have been, this is still to be imputed to the same cause, the carelessness and negligence of men about their own concerns, even about their greatest concerns, as we are told. It is true, that of latter days, in some parts of the world, where there have been thirty christians for one pagan, there are now nearly thirty mahometans for one christian. Whence is this,



but from the wilful degeneracy and revolt of those, amongst whom the Christian name was sometime professed? It would not have been imposed upon any, whether they would or no, to forego their religion, and to let these sacred records cease from among them, and substitute a foetid, fulsome, ridiculous Alcoran in the room of them. We are not to charge upon God these gross negligences and wickednesses of men. And again,

7. Where these holy books are shut up from people, (as they are generally in the romish church,) to what is that to be imputed, but to their own carelessness and indifferency and coldness in the concerns of their own souls and of the future state? This is a punishment, a just punishment upon stupid besotted princes and people, that they would be so imposed upon; so absurdly and without pretence; that their priests must lock up all from them, that so they might have the leading of them, the blind leading the blind into the ditch. We are to consider a penal hand in this, as is expressed, 2 Thes. 2. 11. that where the truth is not received in the love of it, there God, in judgment, should "send strong delusions that they should believe a lie that they all might be damned." This is righteous and holy displeasure, and the act and effort of punitive justice for very gross and most provoking wickedness, that a greater value hath not been had and expressed of things so sacred, so precious and of such, concernment to men's souls; that the greater part of the Christian world should suffer itself to be so grossly imposed upon, and cheated out of the very things wherein their very salvation is concerned. Their wickedness in this, did punish itself. And God hath most righteously permitted it to be so. And then,

8. That according to human measures, and even amongst ourselves, the government is not concerned when laws are made, to provide that every particular person should have the particular knowledge of them. Such laws as are of common concernment men are obliged, under penalties, to observe: they are to look after them themselves. The government is not to take care that every particular person, or family, or parish, or town, or country hath this or that particular act of parliament sent to them, or a statute book lodged in every such place. That is not their care, but it is expected, people should so far concern themselves and mind their interests as to acquaint themselves with things, upon which the safety of their lives as well as the common peace doth depend. And yet further,

9. Where ignorance of those great things that are contained in the Holy Scriptures is altogether invincible; and where it was impossible, in a natural way, that such knowledge should

come, undoubtedly God will deal with men accordingly. He will only proceed with them according to that light they had ; he will never punish them for not having that light which they never had, nor could have. "As many as sin without the law shall perish without the law : and as many as have sinned with the law shall perish by the law : " as Romans 2. 12. And,

10. In the last place, if any such were any where to be found, that did to their utmost improve the light and means of knowledge which they had, (supposing them never to have had what we have from these holy writings,) we do not know what God would have done for their further help in that case. But I doubt instances will not be found of such as have improved the light they had to the uttermost. How far are we from improving as we should and might, that greater light which we have ? But God hath his ways open to him. We do not know how he did convey light of old to those that had it before the Scriptures were written : how Job came by his knowledge, and how his friends came by theirs, we do not know. But this is undoubtedly the ordinary, stated means of knowledge where it is vouchsafed ; where God doth afford it. If God doth not afford it, he proceeds then by other measures of his own which we know nothing of. But certainly he will always walk punctually according to that rule, that "whosoever hath, to them shall be given, and they shall have more abundantly ;" that is, whosoever hath so as to improve what he hath, that useth and enjoys what he hath, and God is pleased to trust him with, God will never be wanting to such. He will always be before-hand with them, as he is never behind-hand with any, according to that known and generally approved saying of that ancient : *Homini facienti quod in se est, Deus non deest* : God is never wanting to them that do improve what they possess. Though he owes them nothing, and whatsoever he doth for them is of grace, he is never wanting to those that with serious diligence trade with, and improve their present talents. And I think more needs not to be said to that objection.

Objection 2. And it is of less concernment, what might be further objected in the second place. That is, it may seem somewhat more desirable (at least) that these Scriptures had contained things that are of necessity to salvation in a more distinct method, that we might have had (as it were) all the several heads belonging to religion, reduced as in a common place book, to such and such distinct topics, that every one might know whither to go presently for all things that do belong to such and such a head. But,

1. I answer; It is enough to those that consider things modestly, and with that subjection and resignation of spirit that we ought to have, to take notice only that God hath thought another course fitter. And that is surely best which he thinks best. So submissive and resigned ought our minds and understandings to be to the divine mind. But,

2. Supposing the most accurate method that could be imagined were used in all things, as was suggested, yet however, there would have been a continual use and need of a stated office, to be continued through all the successions of time, purposely for the explaining and for the enforcing of things upon the dull and sluggish minds of men. The state of this apostate world doth most manifestly require it, yea and even with the best, those that are upon recovery, who are in some measure restored out of the common apostasy, they do still need to be continually administered unto. And that being supposed, it is the business of them who are invested with such an office, to be continually searching for others, and labouring diligently to explain things to them, and to lay things together, and to apply them to particular uses and purposes as the variety of cases should need and require. And to add no more,

3. Whereas the bounty and goodness of God hath provided for the inhabitants of this earth, that the bowels of it should be replenished with things of very great usefulness and very great value, as gold, silver, precious stones and the like that are dug out of the earth, it might as reasonably be said, Why did not God so order the matter, that upon turning up of the earth, one might have found vessels of gold, flagons and dishes of silver ready made and formed? and why have we not our rubies and diamonds ready cut and polished, as they are taken out of the earth? These Scriptures do contain all needful truths in the ore, from whence they are to be beaten out. And what! is nothing to be left to the industry and diligence of those that are to be employed here a lifetime, in reference to the concerns of their salvation and the affairs of another world? must every one expect that food of this kind should drop into his mouth when, even in reference to the support of this perishing life, it seemed a just and equal law to the universal Lawgiver, that he that would not labour should not eat?

And therefore, now to make some brief *Use* of what hath been said upon this subject. It may be improved several ways.

1. It may very reasonably put us upon *reflection*, what our temper and what our practice hath been and is, in reference to these sacred writings. And,

(1.) Let us reflect, and bethink ourselves: Are they used, are they perused as so sacred, so important and necessary things do require to be? Pray let us reflect, Are they much in our hands in our closets? do we lay it as a charge upon ourselves to search the Scriptures? You see it is given as a charge by our Lord himself, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life." John 5. 39. Is the reading of them in our families a common practice? You do best know. There is such a thing as family instruction charged upon family masters. They are to be accountable for those under their charge in this very thing. And certainly they that do but use a very ordinary understanding, would soon and easily apprehend, that I who am to maintain the lives of so many persons in my family under my care, by providing food for them for their natural lives, that I who am not to suffer a child or a servant to starve under my roof, must not surely let their souls starve: I must not let the necessary means of spiritual and eternal life be withheld from them. Let it be considered, Is such a course kept up? If there must be family instruction, this word must be the ground of it, it must be all fetched from hence. And how sad, how unaccountable a case is it, when it shall be more ordinary and familiar to have a news-book (not to say a play-book) in men's hands, and under their eye than this holy book. But we are to inquire too,

(2.) Not only concerning the reading and perusing of these writings, but concerning the gust, the savour and relish wherewith we do it. With what complacency do we look into and resolve in our hearts those great and deep things of God that are contained and unfolded to us in this book? I would fain know, who of us can assign a reason why David should have a pleasanter relish of the word of God than we? Is it not of as great importance to us, as it could have been to any saint heretofore, to take these sacred truths and doctrines that are contained in this book for our meat and drink? "I found thy words and did eat them," saith the prophet, "and they were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." We have it given us as the common character of a good man, a fearer of the Lord of old, that the law of God was his delight, and therein he did meditate day and night. Psal. 1. 2. Let us but consider, if there be a failure and decay generally among us as to one thing, that is, the want of a savouring and relishing the word of God, the things contained in the sacred writings, whether there be not a matter of threatening abode and import to us in it, for then all our religion is proportionably languishing, and the languishment of it is a continual tendency to its being lost, and continual sickness and

languishing is a tendency to death ; and in such reflections as these, we should compare present time with former time, so far as it any way comes within the compass of our knowledge, either of what we could either of us have observed ourselves, or what is recorded to us by others. Sure the time was, that the word of God hath been a thing of much higher esteem (I doubt) than at present. I am very apt to think and do pretty certainly know, that the reading of the Bible in London was a much more common usage than now it is in families and closets. And truly, if there be symptoms of decay upon us in respect of so very important a thing as this is, it looks very threateningly: we may be sure if our esteem grow less of this book, God's esteem doth not grow less of it: he doth not measure by us: and if he have the same estimate and value for it that ever he had, we may fear that he will sometime or other (and we know not how soon) very terribly vindicate the neglect, contempt and disregard of these sacred records. If he do come to plead his own cause, in this regard, with an untoward generation, I fear it will be a very terrible day: I know not who will live when God doth this. But,

2. This should *exhort* us to several things. As,

(1.) That we do with serious gratitude acknowledge and adore the goodness of God, in entrusting us with such a treasure as these Oracles of his are. I am afraid this is a thing wherein there is a very general neglect and defect. We do not often enough put it into our express thanksgivings, that God hath vouchsafed the great blessing of a Bible among us. I doubt we do not explicitly enough take notice of this, as a matter of gratitude to God, nor so often as we should that he hath put this book into our hands. And,

(2.) It should exhort us to more frequent and diligent reading of the Scriptures. For what have we them for? And indeed we do but mock God when we give thanks for them, if we use them not. It should be more a business with us; time should be chosen and reserved for it on purpose. We should contrive how to spare time from our common affairs for the perusal of this book. I am afraid that partly between the over-much business of the shop and the exchange, and partly through the no-business of the coffee house and tavern, little or no time is allowed for this important work, the reading and perusing diligently these holy writings.

(3.) And we should be exhorted next, to endeavour to get them written over again in our hearts: that this word may be to us an ingrafted word: that we may have this word of Christ dwelling richly in us: that we may be the epistles of Christ, written

not with ink on paper, but with the Spirit of the living God on the fleshly tables of our hearts: otherwise this word cannot but be a witness against us. If there be not a correspondent word within, if there be not an internal correspondent word, the external word must be a standing witness against the frame of our spirits and against our habitual inclination. We then have the word of Christ dwelling richly in us, when it transforms and changes us, and when we are like it, when there is something within us answerable to it, as face answers to face in the water. And,

(4.) It ought, in order to this, further to exhort us to endeavour distinctly to understand it; especially in those great things that do concern the vitals and essentials of religion. And this knowledge will be easy to them that concern themselves to understand. Wisdom is easy to him that hath understanding, that is, that sets his mind to understand, that doth aim at understanding. It must be a design driven and pursued accordingly, that we may get our minds enriched with that knowledge that is wrapt up in these holy writings. And we have greater advantages in order to it, yea much greater than our forefathers have had, though they have expressed that love to this book, which I am afraid is too little common in our time. How dear was a leaf of the Bible to some of the poor suffering martyrs! But, I say, we have much greater advantage to help us to a distinct understanding of it. How many very useful commentaries upon the Bible, are there published among us in the English tongue, which were not in the former time? As particularly the Dutch annotations, and Diodati's annotations, and those that are called the Assembly's annotations and Mr. Poole's, in two volumes, and that lesser and very useful one of Mr. Clarke, single. So that they must owe it to their own great neglect and unconcernedness, who are not furnished with help at hand whereby they may in some measure understand the Bible distinctly as they read it, and know how to refer things to their use from day to day as they go on in that course. And then,

(5.) Lastly, apply it to the several uses it was written for and was designed to serve. You see here in the context, what uses it was intended to serve, and it is said to be profitable for: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" use it to these several purposes, as the case doth from time to time require. And we may add hereunto, what we find in another place, (Rom. 15. 4.) that the things that were written, were written for our learning, that we through patience and

comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Oh! how many a sweet cordial is there in this book! Certainly they cannot be in an uncomfortable state, without a fault, that have such matter of consolation just at hand, and take no notice of it. They that go from day to day in darkness, and complain of their own doubts and fears; and will not be at the pains to consider what there is in this book suitable to the state of their case, and which by faithful application would undoubtedly in time satisfy all unreasonable doubts, and dismiss all causeless fears and make them vanish, must needs be wanting to their own comfort and peace. It is in that respect a light, not only upon account of its instructiveness, but upon account of the pleasantness and consolations thereof. The Scriptures were written that we through patience and comfort of them might have hope. We that are following the conduct of God, and the ducture of that light which shines in this sacred word of his, towards an eternal state of glory, with what erect and raised hearts, with hearts how lifted up in the ways of God should we hold on our course, as the redeemed ones of him, having that life and immortality in view which are brought to light before our eyes in this gospel.

And a little to enforce all this, it may not be altogether useless, nay, I think it may be worth our while to tell you a short passage which was not long ago told me by a person, (whose name is well known in London and I hope savory in it yet, doctor Thomas Goodwin,) at such time as he was president of Magdalen college in Oxford: there I had the passage from him. He told me that being himself in the time of his youth, a student at Cambridge, and having heard much of Mr. Rogers of Dedham in Essex, purposely he took a journey from Cambridge to Dedham, to hear him preach on his lecture day, a lecture then so strangely thronged and frequented that to those that came not very early, there was no possibility of getting room in that very spacious large church. Mr. Rogers was (as he told me) at that time he heard him, on the subject of discourse which hath been for some time the subject of mine, the Scriptures. And in that sermon he falls into an expostulation with the people about their neglect of the Bible: (I am afraid it is more neglected in our days:) he personates God to the people, telling them. "Well I have trusted you so long with my Bible: you have slighted it, it lies in such and such houses all covered with dust and cobwebs: you care not to look into it. Do you use my Bible so? well you shall have my Bible no longer." And he takes up the Bible from his cushion, and seemed as if he were going away with it and carrying it from them; but

immediately turns again and personates the people to God, falls down on his knees, cries and pleads most earnestly, "Lord whatsoever thou dost to us, take not thy Bible from us: kill our children, burn our houses, destroy our goods; only spare us thy Bible, only take not away thy Bible." And then he personates God again to the people; "Say you so? well I will try you a while longer; and here is my Bible for you, I will see how you will use it, whether you will love it more, whether you will value it more, whether you will observe it more, whether you will practice it more, and live more according to it." But by these actions (as the doctor told me) he put all the congregation into so strange a posture that he never saw any congregation in his life; the place was a mere Bochim, the people generally (as it were) deluged with their own tears, and he told me that he himself, when he got out and was to take horse again to be gone, he was fain to hang a quarter of an hour upon the neck of his horse weeping, before he had power to mount; so strange an impression was there upon him and generally upon the people, upon having been thus expostulated with for the neglect of the Bible.

And sure, if our neglect of it in our days have not been less, it is a very sad case, if our affliction and resentment of such an evil as this should be apparently and discernably less.

And nothing will signify our regardlessness of this holy book more, than if we do not strictly regulate ourselves by it as to our thoughts, and as to all our deportment. For pray, under what notion do we own this book, but as a rule to guide us to our end? how to glorify God and how to enjoy him for ever? It will be a plain testimony against us that this book hath not the esteem which is due to it, when it hath not the use made of it that it was purposely designed for. And oh! let that be but considered, its use is to be a rule for us. Bethink we ourselves thereupon, whether we do really regulate our thoughts, our hearts, our affections and our passions by it. "I dare not allow such and such thoughts, I dare not allow such and such motions of spirit within myself, for the Bible is against them." Let us but consider, whether we use to lay this rule to our minds and spirits and to our walkings and actions, so as to conform all to it. If not, it is impossible we can value it according to its true worth, for it is valuable but under the notion as it is a rule, and it can never regulate our external conversation as it should, if it do not regulate our spirit first. We must consider that is the great difference between the government of God and any human government whatsoever. His government is primarily mental, it is a government first exercised about minds;



and this word is the instrument of his government as to them. This word of his "is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And if we do not labour to get our spirits, our inward man, habitually subjected to the governing power of this word, it doth nothing upon us to any purpose; it is lost upon us, as to all the great purposes for which it should serve us. But is not this too apparently our common case, that if there be a strong inclination to this or that thing or way; or if there be a passion up that we have a mind to indulge, this shall signify more with us, to carry us this way or that, than a thousand texts of Scripture? You may as well, many times, oppose your breath to the Thames to turn the course of it, as to oppose the word of God to these inclinations. But is this to make use of the Scripture as our rule, when the plain design of it lies against such and such habitual inclination or against indulgence to such and such a passion, and we never apply it to such a purpose? If we did but get the authority of the great God (whose word this is) to be (as it were) enthroned within us, so as that our souls might stand in continual awe of him, the remembrance of a text of Scripture would presently allay passion, govern appetite, and check inclination, and so would come, with ease and pleasure, to be to us a governing rule of all the affairs and actions of our lives.

And so I have done, as to this great subject of the Scriptures, which was proper next, after we had asserted to you the existence of a Deity, that is, of an intelligent Ruler and Maker of this world, to whom such a word as this might certainly be ascribed as his word; that then we might come from this word of his to have more distinct apprehensions concerning him. It was necessary first, to know that there was one intelligent, perfect, all-comprehending, eternal Mind, the Original and Author of all things, without which it would have been a vain thing to speak of the word of God. We must know first, whence such a word was to proceed, and that being once understood and known, then we may look back again upon him, and such things through the light of the word come more clearly to be revealed to us concerning him, than we can otherwise, by mere light of nature search or find out. And so to such things we shall go on, in our intended course, as the Lord shall enable and direct.

## LECTURE XI.\*



James 2. 19.

*Thou believest that there is one God ; thou doest well :  
the devils also believe, and tremble.*

**I**N pursuance of that design we have had in hand, of explaining and asserting to you the principal heads and doctrines of our religion, we have (you know) already been discoursing to you about the Object of it, the eternal, ever-blessed God : and concerning the measure and rule of it, the holy Scriptures, which we have proved to be the word of God : and that method it was necessary to follow, of evincing the being or existence of God to you first, before we could reasonably go about to prove the Scriptures to be his word. For of nothing there are no predicates ; nothing can be affirmed of nothing. It were vain to allege the authority of this or that prince's edict to one that should not believe that there was ever such a prince : but having evinced to you the existence of God, and that these Scriptures are his word, purposely written to reveal him more fully to us, his nature and his mind and will concerning what we are to believe and practice, in order to our pleasing and our enjoying of him, it is now highly reasonable to expect from these Scriptures, the discovery of such things further, concerning him, and our duty towards him and expectations from him, as we could not otherwise have known, as whereof we could

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not by other means have had, as to some things; and as to other things not so distinct or certain knowledge: for otherwise these Scriptures should not answer their avowed end, and must indeed be supposed to be written in vain. There are things that do concern even God himself, which is of great importance to us to be acquainted with, that either we should have had no knowledge at all of, without these Scriptures, or should not have known so clearly or not so easily: some of us (it may be) not at all: such as were less capable, or less inclined, or less willing to use their own reason in thought, and to discern a train of consequences and the force of them, and how to make things that are in themselves evidencable, evident to ourselves in an argumentative way. It is a great matter of advantage to have more of necessary things made known to us, and to have those things which it is necessary we should know, made known in an easy and less laborious way, without our more toilsome search: or to have it said, on the authority of the great God, this and this you are to believe, and this and this you are to do; to have that which is to be the food of our souls, not to be hunted for, but even brought to our hands; this is a very great advantage.

Now among some of those things that do concern God himself, and which it is of absolute necessity to be acquainted with, and in order whereto, we are to have a clear light, and for the most, their whole light from the Scriptures, there are especially two which I shall instance in, and insist upon. That is,—the unity of the Godhead, and—the trinity therein. And for the former of these, the unity of the Godhead, we may very fitly insist upon that, as far as is needful, from this scripture. In which there are two parts. The first, approving and justifying the believing of this great truth, that God is but *ONE*: “Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well:” the other, reproving and condemning the ineffectual belief of it: “the devils also believe and tremble.”

I. I shall insist on the former of these—That the Godhead is but *ONE*, or there is but *ONE GOD*. “This (saith the apostle) thou believest, thou doest well in it. Thou believest truly and as the matter is.” I do not propound this to you as a Scripture doctrine, upon that account, as if it were not at all demonstrable in a rational way; but shall first, let you see how very expressly the Scripture doth testify to us this truth touching the unity of the Godhead. And then secondly, shall shew what rational evidence it admits of besides.

1. As to the Scripture testimony about this, it could be in nothing more express. “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is

one Lord:" (Deut. 6. 4.) a passage quoted in the gospel as you find, Mark 12. in several verses of that chapter, in which it is enlarged upon. One of the scribes (verse 28) came to our Lord; and perceiving there were reasonings between him and some others, he asks, "Which is the first commandment?" Jesus answered him, "The first commandment is, Hear O Israel; the Lord thy God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The scribe said unto him, "Well master, thou hath said the truth, for there is but one God, and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, with all the understanding and with all the soul and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered discreetly; like a man that had a mind, (as the word signifies) had a presentness of mind, an understanding, a good sound understanding about him, he highly approves of what he said, and saith, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." There are many expressions very great and august, spoken like a God about this matter, in the prophecy of Isaiah, in several chapters of it. If you look to the 43. chapter, "Ye are my witnesses saith the Lord, and my servants whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe me, and that ye may understand that I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I am the Lord; and besides me there is no Saviour." Verses 10, 11. And in the 44th chap. ver. 8. "Fear ye not, neither be afraid; have I not told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are my witnesses, is there a God besides me? yea there is no God, I know not any." "I that can transmit the beams of mine eye through this vast and boundless inane, and look round about me every where, can see nothing like another God in view: I know no such, and I know you cannot know more than I." So you have the same thing inculcated in the 45th chapter, in sundry verses of it, "I am God, and there is none else; and the Saviour, and there is none beside me:" most pleasantly conjoining the notion of God and Saviour together, over and over, that when we know this one God, we may know him too under the pleasant notion of a Saviour. No discovery of him could be more suitable, or more grateful to poor creatures sunk and lost in misery as we are. And so you know, the apostle puts both these together, the "One God and one Mediator," revealing to us this truth—the unity of the Godhead in conjunction with what is most apposite and suitable with the state of our case in that 1 Cor. 8. 6. "To us there is but one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ. And 1 Tim. 2. 5. "There is one God

and one mediator, the man Christ Jesus." And that place is famous, 1 John 5. 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." That oneness can mean nothing there, but in the Deity, in the Godhead.

2. But this matter is very capable of very clear rational evidence too; which because it is not obvious to every one at first sight, I would only help you herein a little, not doubting but you will apprehend things to be very plain to you, when you hear them, which might have been out of your thoughts or sight before: both what hath been already proved, and what is otherwise evident concerning God, will prove to us the unity of the Godhead, and also what is obvious to our common notice concerning the state of the creation. It is by the creation we come to have the first notices of the Creator, as you have heard. That is, of the invisible power and Godhead by the things that are made. Now whether you look to the Maker, the Creator of all made things; or whether you look to the state of those things themselves, you will find clear rational evidence that the Godhead is but *one*, or that God can be but *one*.

(1.) Consider what hath been made plain, or is otherwise evident, concerning God himself, the very notion of God: thence it will appear, that the Deity admits not of multiplication, or that there can be more Gods than one. As,

[1.] It hath been proved, and is in itself evident, that God is a self-original, a self-existing Being. He is such a Being as that he doth not owe it to another, that he is, but only to himself. He only is in being, because such is the peculiar excellency of his being, as to which, it is altogether repugnant and impossible ever not to be. He exists, necessarily of and from himself only. Now necessary self-existing, un-caused being can be but one, for whatsoever is un-caused is unlimited, all limitation proceeding from a cause; and of unlimited being there can be no more than one, for if there were two, one must limit the other: and so neither would be unlimited. And,

[2.] It belongs to the notion of God, considered in reference to other things, to be the very first in himself. He is uncaused towards the creature: he is the first Cause. Now nothing is plainer than that there can be but one first.

[3.] To whom it belongs to be the first of all things, to him it belongs also to be the last, and it is as evident there can be but one last: and as to these things that are so plain, I do not need to insist, but just lay them before you. Therefore,

[4.] It belongs to the notion of God, as he is God, to be the best of all beings, But there can be but one best good, in the

eminent and transcendent sense ; and so there can be but one God, as the matter is in itself obvious, and is taken up by our Saviour, in that 18 Luke 19. "None is good but one, that is God," or saving God. Again,

[5.] It belongs to the very being of God to be omnipotent, almighty, and it is most evident, that there can be but one omnipotent ; for supposing another omnipotent, that could do all things, then he could cause that other not to be able to do any thing, otherwise he were not omnipotent. And if he could do that, then the former were not omnipotent, but plainly impotent, absolutely impotent ; that is, not able to do any thing.

[6.] And lastly, that which sums up all ; it belongs to the notion of God to be the absolutely universal, perfect Being ; to comprehend in himself all perfection : that is, either formally, that which is his own, or appropriate to his own being ; or eminently, that which is to be found any where throughout the creation. Now universal perfection, or all perfection can have but one seat. For there can be but one all ; there cannot be more than all ; and all perfection is comprised in the divine Being. The very notion of God, imports all perfection, signifies him to be the Fountain of whatsoever can come under the notion of perfection ; and which is perpetually springing from himself, and (when it is his pleasure to communicate) communicating from himself thereof to his creatures. And,

(2.) If you look upon the state of things in the creation, you will find that most plainly to signify to us the unity of the God-head. As,

[1.] In the natural world ; the order that is every where to be observed and seen ; that speaks the unity, oneness, and one-lieness of the Agent, that had the forming and continual management of the affairs of all this creation. It was impossible there could be that order which is every where to be observed in the natural world, the heaven and earth, sun, moon and stars, with the constant succession of day and night, summer and winter ; and that variety of creatures, with the due order still preserved in that great variety even here upon earth. I say it is impossible this could be, if that mighty Agent that made, and that over-rules all, were not one, and *only* one : as the Psalmist takes notice, psal. 119. 91. Having spoken of heaven and earth before, he saith "They continue to this day according to thy ordinance, for all are thy servants." "They are all in a stated subserviency to thee, as the only one that dost moderate, and dispose, and order all things, according to thine

own pleasure ; and so they remain stedfast and settled for ever." And,

[2.] Even in the intellectual world, the intelligent world : consider the state of things there. Indeed there, there might be an objection, or from thence ; which objection will be easily improved into an argument to the purpose I am speaking to : that is, that in the intellectual world, there is so great disorder, as we see, such confusions among men, and proceeding from that which we find to have been in a higher order of intelligent creatures, the angels that fell. But this, I say, is improvable into an argument, in that they fell, and are in a fallen state, those angels, and the generality of men, it shews, that all this disorder and confusion, hath come from their receding from the *one God*. They therefore came into that disorder and confusion, (which is the sad object of our daily contemplation, whenever we use our thoughts about such a thing,) having broken off themselves from the one God : from thence doth this disorder proceed ; and, considering these two sorts of intelligent creatures, that lie under our notice, (to confine our eyes to the children of men,) they are either such as are in a state of apostasy still ; or they are such as are in their return, and upon recovery, coming back to God in Christ. For those that are in a state of apostasy still, as they remain apostate and off from God, they make this world that they inhabit, a hell of confusion to themselves, which shews, that the disorder is by their breaking themselves from the one God, the centre of all virtue, and of all order thereupon. But for those, that are returning, that are coming back to God, under the conduct of Christ, that are in the exercise of repentance towards God, according as their minds are changed, according as that great work of renovation obtains, and takes place in them, so it becomes more and more their habitual sense, to own, even from their very hearts and souls, the *ONE GOD*. Then this is their sense, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord." To dwell with God as my only one, (as in that, 27 psalm 4. And as in the 73 psalm 25.) "Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and whom on earth do I desire besides thee ?" It is very true indeed, that in the apostate part of the world, very great multitudes are quite wrong in their notions about this thing, as the polytheism of the pagan world, (of the most ignorant and sottish part of it, though the wiser part, even of that too, have always acknowledged one supreme God, looking upon the rest as so many ministering gods, meaning, no doubt, the same thing that we do by angels,) doth shew. But where

once the light and grace of the gospel do obtain, in conjunction, there is not only a rectitude of motion about this matter, but there is a correspondent sense of heart. "One thing have I desired, I can dwell no where, but with God, with any content: and whom have I in heaven, but thee?" All renewed senses, do presently return to this one, all are gathered back to one centre in one, in this one they all meet; they no sooner begin to live, but all their desires, and all their aims, and all their tendencies are directed the same way, to this one centre. And therefore now to make some *Use* of this.

1. We learn from it, the insupportable misery of those that have no relation to, nor interest in, this one God. God is but one. "Oh! then," may every such wretched soul say, "what shall become of me, who have no part in him, no portion in him?" There is but one God to save thee, and thou hast nothing to do with him: but one God to satisfy thee, and thou hast nothing to do with him: but one to save thee, and if he will destroy thee, who will save thee? If there be but one, and he be set against thee, if he be thine enemy; if this be the state of thy case, that thou liest open to the destructive wrath of this one God, who shall save thee? There is but one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy; (as it comes in after, James 4. 12.) and there is but one to satisfy thee: thou was lost for want of being satisfied, by a suitable good: if thou wert never so safe from any external, any vindictive evil. There is but one good, that is God; no proportionable good, nor adequate good besides, no good that can fill up the capacity of the soul. How may such a creature go, bemoaning itself in so sad a state of its case! "There is but one good, throughout the whole universe of being, and I have nothing to do with that one; I have no part there."

2. As the misery of such, is insupportable, so truly, their sin is as inexcusable: for there is but one God that claims obedience and duty from thee. The case is in this easy way to be understood. Let it be considered, you have not one to command, and another to countermand; one to bid, and another to forbid. There is one God: you know there is but one: you believe there is but one. No man (it is true) can serve two masters, who should both lay claim to supreme power over him. No one can serve two, but sure one may serve one, when there is but one, and his mind is express and plain; therefore the sin of such is altogether inexcusable. Thou hast but one God to worship; and what! not worship him. But one God to love, but one to fear, but one to trust: but one object for thy adoration, one object for thy expectation: and thou art to do him



homage every day, in both together ; both in adoring him and expecting from him. And what ! to rob this one God of the glory, the service which he claims, and which thou mightest pay, and render to him ! There is no exception against it, no counter claim, against this claim of his.

3. We further learn hence, how high and great is the privilege of those, that do belong to God, in that he is but one : they do not need to be divided among many, and to have their hearts distracted within them, "Whither shall I go ? to whom shall I betake myself ?" Their privilege is great, upon this account, with respect both to their knowledge of this one God, and their application to him, the former whereof, leads to the latter.

(1.) In respect to their knowledge of him ; it is a very great privilege, that the eye of their mind and soul is called to one, directed to one : here is eternal life summed up (as it were) in one glance. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent ;" to know him as he is revealed, and as he is to be conversed with, through his Son : and in what a transport, do we find the disciples, upon this account, it being the great business and design of our blessed Lord to reveal the Father to poor souls. "Shew us the Father and it sufficeth," say they. Saith he, "You do know the Father, in that you have known me," in that 14 John. Then saith one of them, Judas, not Iscariot, (no not he, I warrant you, he had not a heart to savour any such thing,) "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world ?" Oh ! how lamentable is it to think (as if they had said) of the sad state of the blinded world, how little they know, how obscure and dark their notices are and how corrupted and depraved about the one Godhead. But Christ tells them, that in manifesting himself he manifested the Father too. And "Oh ! (say they) whence is this to us, that we should have this manifestation when it is not afforded to the world, is not made common to the universality of men ? And,

(2.) In respect of application to him ; Oh, how great is the privilege not to be put to worship stocks and stones for deities and to pray to a god that cannot save. When we think of the inanimate, senseless gods which the blind nations do trust in and worship, we have then just cause to think with ourselves, "Oh, how unlike to them is the portion of Jacob ! He is the Former of all things. Our God hath made the heavens, and doth whatsoever he will, there above and here below."

4. We hence see what obligation is upon us to singleness

of heart. The Deity wherewith we have most of all to do, finally, terminatively to do, is single, is but one. How to be abhorred a thing, hereupon, must a double heart be, a heart—and a heart! For a single God, how suitable is a single heart! There is not for us a God—and a God. And what should we do then for a heart—and a heart? The whole must go to the whole, one to one. When our Saviour had been telling us, (Matt. 6. 24.) “No man can serve two masters,” he points us back to what we find there in the same context: that if the eye be single, the whole body will be full of light. But if the eye be evil, (which implies that a double heart is an evil heart,) then all is in darkness. And saith he, “If the very light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?” When our eye looks with one direct and undivided view towards the one God, here the soul is all replenished with light, clear, and vital light, that is transfused through it. But multiplicity and darkness come all to one. If we do not look with a single eye to that one single Being, where all glory and all blessedness for poor souls reside; but are looking to other things, and departing from this one, we are presently lost in multiplicity, and see many things under that notion, as if our good lay here, or as if the prime duty lay here, it is all one as seeing nothing, as good to know nothing of any God at all, as to know many gods, or to consider many under that notion. And again,

5. We see hereupon how possible the most entire and intimate union with God is with sincere souls. To those that are sincere, if he be but one, how entire and intimate may the union be between one and one? When we bring to him a single soul, a soul full of simplicity, uprightness and sincerity, which points only at him as the one God, he being but one, and we but one in the intention and aim of our souls, how entire and intimate may this union be! That which some pagans have expressed by that nearest and closest and most intimate touch of the centre; centre to centre, so (have some of them said) are souls to apply themselves inwardly to God; the one God joining centre with them. And it is a mighty solace to think of it: that whereas the felicity of a soul doth so absolutely depend upon the most near and intimate union with God, that which is so necessary is so possible. It is necessary to me, in order to my happiness and well being, that I be most intimately and entirely united with God; and since he is but one, if I be one in the intent and bent of my soul towards him, it is not more necessary than possible. For observe how the scribe, that puts that question to our Lord in that forementioned Mark 12. understands this conjunction, when our Lord

answered him, what was the first and great commandment ; namely, " the first and great commandment is, that God is but one, and that there is no other God but he, and that therefore we should love him, with all the heart," he replies, " Master thou hast said well, for there is but one God : " and our Lord, it is said, observed, that he answered like a man of sense, like a man of understanding, like an intelligent man. There lies the connexion, " therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, because the Lord our God, is one God, and there is none other but he." And,

6. We may hence collect the mighty obligation there is upon christians, to unity with one another ; to be united one with another. Those several unities you read of, Ephes. 4. are all directed to this one purpose, and this is the prime and most fundamental of all the rest, " There is but one God ; " and therefore are all those related to him, and that bear his name, to be but one. It cannot be said, one christian hath one God, and another hath another God : but all have but one God ; so that it is impossible there can be any so great reasons for disunion among christians, those that are sincere, that have vital union with God in Christ, as there are for their union. Whatsoever pretence there can be for disunion, or for distinct communion, the reason is unspeakably greater for union. By how much doth God outweigh all things else, infinite reason is there for oneness in communion throughout, as he, with whom they have all a common union is infinite. But the things, wherein they differ from one another, are most minutely finite, and even as nothing, in comparison of this one thing, wherein they must all (whether they will or not) agree. And thereupon indeed, there cannot be a greater iniquity in the Christian church (which is the community of living christians) than when they do usually make distinct communions. This I must tell you, is the very heart and centre of all anti-christianism, the first remarkable thing in the apostasy of the Christian church, when it began to degenerate, that is, the making of distinct communions, or making of other terms of communion, than Christ had made by the evangelical law. This was the very heart of all anti-christianity, when men would take upon them to make distinct boundaries and terms of communion, which should be larger than Christ would have made, or narrower than Christ had made : to admit men upon such terms as his rules would admit none ; and exclude men on such terms as his rules would exclude none ; this is the first thing, the summary and most comprehensive thing, in all anti-christianity. Then the Christian church, first began to be anti-christian, when it came to this, to make other terms of

communion, than Christ had made, by his own law. And indeed, the iniquity of it, is intolerable, if it be considered : for under what notion, are any to be received into the community of christians, but under the notion of persons visibly united to God in Christ, and so instated into the blessings of the gospel, and so entitled to everlasting blessedness in God, procured for them by the general Redeemer ? Whereupon, to make new terms of communion, larger or narrower than Christ made, is to make a new covenant, to make a new gospel : it is to make new terms of everlasting life and death ; and so to overturn and overthrow all things, that are most essential to a Christian church, or to the Christian religion, or any thing of religion in the world. It would strike at all, if men may shape their communion, according to their own fancy, when they are to shape it according to the evangelical law. Those that we believe to have vital union with God in Christ, or whom we ought to believe have so ; we that with a sincere mind, look upon persons by gospel measures, and consider them as those who have visible characters of true vivid Christianity upon them ought to run into communion with them as such, and only such. This is Christ's measure, and Christ's rule, and so communion can be but one, and to offer to make it diverse and distinct, is to make a new gospel, and a new Christ, and a new religion throughout. Indeed it is a bold thing ; for it is to make new terms of life and death. It is presumptuous enough to put the divine stamp upon this or that truth of ours, or this or that duty (as we count it) of our own ; it is a great presumption : but unspeakably greater, to make new terms of life and death : for every truth, or every duty, are not parts of the terms of life and death. There is many a truth that is not necessary for a man to believe, under pain of damnation ; and many a duty a man may be ignorant of, and so not bound to do, upon pain of damnation. But the terms upon which christians are to hold communion one with another, are such, to which we are bound under that penalty, or which are to be looked upon, as entitling them to be interested in salvation, or exempted from damnation : and so to make new terms of communion, is to make new terms of life and death. But blessed be God, though this hath been too little considered for above forty years past, God is awakening his people, to consider it now. And I look upon that to be the first step towards the restitution of the Christian church, and the recovering of it, out of the terrible apostasy in which it hath lain for a thousand years, and upwards. This, I say, is the first step towards it, to make those the terms of union, and communion in the Chris-

tian church, which God in Christ hath made: And when that once comes to obtain generally, then we shall find the spirit of the body, (for there is but one body and one spirit) diffusing and influencing itself through the body, and making it lively, a kind of resurrection from the dead. It may further,

7. Be collected, that our encouragement is great, as to what expectation we may have, concerning the issue of things, since God is but one. That is, concerning the issue which things shall drive to here in this world, and concerning their ultimate and final issue in the other world, it cannot but be good and happy; for God is but one, who in his Christ is the universal and only Ruler of all this world. If the kingdom of God in Christ were divided, it would come to nothing; but it is not divided, it is all in one hand, who hath the ordering and disposing of the times and seasons, as seems good to him, and he doth every thing with that profound wisdom that cannot err, and that mighty power, that cannot be withstood. And since the most perfect wisdom, and most absolute power, do belong to that one; and all affairs do lie in one hand, the issue will certainly be good. I cannot say it will be good to us, according to our fancy and our sense of things, but it must be, in itself, good. The kingdom is not divided, there is but one God, and one Christ, who governs this apostate world, by his own right, as God, and by a right, that he hath devolved upon him, as the Mediator. And therefore, never doubt concerning the issue of things, let them look never so horribly, and with never so confused an aspect; all will do well, for all is in the hand of one God.

And then, as to the final state, what transports should we be in, to think, when all that belongs to this one God, shall meet in this one God, the many sons brought to glory together, when God shall be all in all, one in all, one diffusing a vital, satisfying, beatifying influence through all, through the whole community, that relates to him, and is united to him, all (as it were) losing themselves in the one God, not in the natural sense, but in the moral; as morality comprehends duty and felicity both together, and the very Scripture expressions that speak of God's being all in all, doth imply this distinction, for otherwise he could not be all in all, if there were not a created all which he replenisheth, with his own fulness. "All in all," is not as if all being were to be reserved and swallowed up again into the fountain Being, and that the blessed should lose their individuality; no, no such thing, the very words and the nature of the thing, are repugnant to that, but when that all of holy ones shall be gathered about the central good, and be replenished continually, perpetually, fully and everlastingly

from thence, Oh ! how satisfyingly then shall we experience the truth and sweetness of this thing,—that the Godhead is but *one*.

And this is enough as to the first thing which we have to consider in the text, “thou believest there is one God, thou doest well.” The belief of this is approved and justified.

## LEC. XII.\*

II. But then the ineffectual believing of it is reproved and condemned ; to believe it with such a kind of notional faith as the devils believe it with. The former was the main thing for which I pitched upon this scripture, but this latter I shall not overlook ; it having so great an aptitude with it to help and enforce the right improvement of the former. That is,—the *ineffectual* belief of the Unity of the Godhead, which the apostle doth, in this expression, designedly animadvert upon, may be easily collected from this present scope, which is to shew what kind of faith that is which must justify us ; not a notional dead faith, such as lets the soul wherein it is, remain unchanged, such as works not within, such as leaves the soul just as it was. You may see his scope fully represented to this purpose in the 14th verse, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works ? can faith save him ?” can that idle faith, that unworking faith that effects nothing, can that save him ? “I appeal to you, (as if he had said) whether it can.” He doth not say it cannot, but he doth appeal to them whether it can or no : and it is true, that manner of interrogation doth deny that it can, more pungently : that is always the intent of questions or interrogatories, put in the room of affirmations or negations, to deny or affirm more smartly or with more pungency than a bare affirmation or negation would have done. It is an appeal to the common light and conscience of the person spoken to. Can such a faith save ? And then he comes at length, in prosecution of this scope, to this particular truth. I may not now run over with you the whole thread of this discourse ; but immediately before the words of the text, he urgeth this, “A man may say, Thou hast faith and I have works : shew me thy faith without thy works ;” that is, if thou canst shew me any thing that is worth that name. But I for my part “will shew thee my faith by my works,” as knowing it can never significantly or to purpose be shewn otherwise. And then he comes to this particular case, “Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well ; the devils also believe and tremble.” If thou

hast no other faith, in this point of the one God's existence, but the devils' faith; nay if thine fall short of such a faith; dost thou think it will save thee? This is the meaning pursuantly to the present scope. His great question is, what faith will finally save, and for resolving of it, his great business is to evince and make out, that there must be some intervening effects in order to that final salvation for which the faith that will save must have a proportionable efficacy. If it did not work those intervening intermediate effects, it would not bring about the end, salvation. And so the truth that now remains, to be spoken to from this latter part of the verse, you have it plainly in view thus—That the ineffectual belief of the one God's existence, or such a belief of it as doth not beget in the soul proportionable dispositions towards God, will no more save a stupid man than a trembling devil—And to speak briefly and usefully (as much as is possible) to this, it will be requisite to shew—what effects or dispositions our faith of the one God's existence, should work in men—to open to you what it doth work in the devils, and—to shew, that if it do not its proper work upon men, it will no more save men, than devils.

1. What it ought to work, what impressions the faith of the one God's existence, should make upon men. The impressions it ought to make upon men, must be measured and judged of, by the state of their case, wherein it is different, and represented to them as different from that of the devils. That is, that though they have been in an apostasy from God, their sovereign and rightful Lord, as the devils have been, yet he is reconcileable to men, when he is not to the devils: and where the gospel comes, it shews distinctly how, and in what way, and upon what terms he is reconcileable. The belief then of the one God's existence, you may easily apprehend what it effects upon this supposal of the case. There is but one to whom I owe obedience as my Sovereign, to him I must subject myself. There is but one, from whom I can expect blessedness: a portion and interest in him, I must seek. I have hitherto been in an apostasy from him, I have hereby violated the bounds of my duty to him, and forfeited all interest in him: but I find there is a remedy to be given to this case, and through the Redeemer, God is reconcileable: he recalls me to my duty, he offers to restore me to my interest. It is plain then, what impressions should be made, to wit, of "repentance towards God and (upon discovery made of him) faith in our Lord Jesus Christ:" a disposition to come back to God, through Christ, with a heart full of wonder, full of gratitude, full of love, ready to be devoted, and subject again: and so to do all, that can

be done on our part, or to comply, with all that is required from us, in order to the reinstating of things; between God and us, and setting all right again. But,

2. What impression is there made on devils, by the belief of the one God's existence? That one word "tremble" tells us most significantly. They "believe and tremble." Their belief strikes them so, that they are shaken by it: just as the sea with a violent wind, that tosses the waves this way and that. The *fremitus maris* is that which this word doth express, the tumultuation of the sea, as tossed by violent winds. Such an impression doth the belief of the one God's existence, make and leave upon devils: that is, it stirs those violent passions in them, which we must suppose the view of the one God, in his terrible majesty and glory, is apt to raise in his creatures, in their state who are apostatized, and revolted from him, and know there is no redeemer for them, that God will not be reconciled to them, and they themselves have no disposition to seek reconciliation with him; that is, such passions as these; the passion of hatred: every view they have of the one God in his majesty and glory, stirs up their enmity, and the oftener they view it, the more they hate it, and especially considered under the notion of just and holy. It cannot but stir the passion of envy, looking on him under the notion of happy: it cannot but move their dread and horror concerning him, under the notion of almighty, not to be resisted, not to be withstood. And then it stirs up the passion of despair too, considering themselves as none of his match, and that they are never to expect that he will yield to them as they know they can never conquer him. But,

3. Why is a stupid man no more to expect salvation from the ineffectual faith of the one God's existence, than a forlorn trembling devil? That men have been in an apostasy from God, as well as devils, is plain to us all. That death, that is, eternal death is the proper wages of that sin by which they have apostatized, that is plain to us all too: why should not an apostate man therefore, lie under the just wrath of God, as well as an apostate devil? All that can be said in the case is, that Christ hath died for men and not for devils: here is all that can be alleged. And so we need do no more for the clearing of this matter further, than only to consider what alteration this makes in the case, and in order thereto, I will lay down sundry things that I reckon very plain, and such as do carry their own evidence with them.

(1.) As, that there is no natural connexion between the death of Christ and the salvation of a sinner. These two things



are not naturally connected, the death of Christ and the salvation of a sinful man. It is plain and obvious in itself, that there is no natural connexion; these things do not naturally touch one another.

(2.) Therefore there can be no connexion at all, between them but such as shall be ordinate or made, there cannot be any connexion, without its being made, between the death of Christ and the salvation of any man.

(3.) There can be no pretence of any such made connexion, but such as the gospel constitution makes, that is, made between the death of Christ and the salvation of any man, but what the gospel hath made by its constitution.

(4.) The gospel doth make no connexion between the death of Christ and the salvation of any sinner, without intervening faith. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The gospel makes no other connexion between that death to which he gave up his own Son, and our having, any of us, everlasting life, but upon the supposal of an intervening faith.

(5.) That faith which the gospel requires for this purpose, it describes and tells us what it is, it describes it by distinguishing characters; it tells us, it is such a faith as overcomes the world. 1 John 5. 4. It tells us it is such a faith as by which the hearts of men are turned to the Lord; "many believed and turned to the Lord." Acts 11. 21. It tells us, it is such a faith, as "is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" (Heb. 11. 1.) that faith that conquers one world, and reveals another. That faith (I say) which the gospel requires for this purpose, to wit, of the salvation of sinners, by the Redeemer, it doth also describe, and tells us what it is. Whereupon,

(6.) Not to have that faith which the gospel doth so describe is, in the gospel estimate, to have no faith. He that hath not this faith is an unbeliever, still an unbeliever. As when we speak of having any thing (whatsoever it be) that is necessary for this or that end or purpose, it is not the name of that thing, the misapplied name of that thing, that will serve the end or purpose, but it is plain, only the thing itself will do it. It is true, you may call painted bread by the name of bread; you may call the picture of a loaf, a loaf, but it is not painted bread that will nourish you, nor is it the notion of gospel faith, or the name of that faith misapplied that will save you. They who have not the faith which the gospel requires, have no faith *quoad hoc*, that will serve *this* purpose, because that faith

which is so and so described, it requires as necessary for this purpose of saving. And therefore,

(7.) Lastly ; They which have not this faith, being thereupon still unbelievers, that is, they are unbelievers in reference to this faith ; they have none of that faith that the gospel requires in order to salvation, they must accordingly have the unbeliever's portion, and the portion of unbelievers and devils is all one. Compare Luke 12. 46. with Matt. 25. 41. In the first it is, "Let such a one have his portion with unbelievers : " and then consider that they who fall under such a doom and condemnation at last, are condemned to that "fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels," as it is in the latter place. So that let a man believe never so much this one thing, (which among the rest it is needful he should believe in order to salvation,) to wit, the one God's existence ; but it doth not work upon his soul, impresseth him not ; altereth him not, it can no more save him than it will save the devil.

Yea, and it might be added, that the gospel constitution, in this case, making such a faith necessary, doth not only speak the pleasure of the Legislator, but it speaks most consentaneously to the reason of the thing and with the greatest advantage. Here is reconciliation offered to sinful men ; but there is none offered to the devil : in this respect then (though I do not say absolutely in all respects) their guilt is greatest. That one who is no way suitably affected with that discovery which is made to him of God, considered with reference to the state of his case, and the gospel dispensation under which he is, such a one as doth in this respect remain unchanged, his heart unaltered, not won, not turned to God ; lies under greater guilt than the devils themselves do lie.

Therefore now to make some brief *Use* of this. Hence,

1. We learn, that it is a supposable thing, that persons living under the gospel, professed christians, (for the apostle speaks to such here,) may be no more duly and suitably affected with the discovery that is made to them of the one God, than the very devils. This is not an unsupposable thing, that man may have the representation of God which the gospel affords, super-added to all that is natural, and be no more suitably affected therewith than a mere devil, this is a truly supposable case. And that it is a case to be supposed, a thing that may be, should strike all our hearts with just solicitude hereupon. May it be ? And what ! Is it not so with me ? Have I not lived all this while amidst that light that reveals the one God, unaltered, unchanged, unimpressed, just as I should have been, if there had been no such light, no such discovery ? And again,

2. We may infer, that persons may be in a very great measure like the devil that do very seldom think of him: nay (it may be) do think there is no such creature. It is very likely that this sort of persons whom the apostle here speaks to, with such smartness and acrimony, might very little think of the devil till they met with this epistle, till they were so put in mind. This may very well be. Persons may be very much akin to the devil in the temper and complexion of their minds, when they very little think of him, or of any such matter. And they are most of all like him that are most positive in their disbelief of any such sort of creatures as devils are. That piece of revived modern sadduceism goes now, with many, for a great piece of wit and learning. And a very strange thing it is, that we should have had among us a clearer light than the greatest part of the world have had, to make us more ignorant and unapprehensive of things that are of very great concern to us; clearer than the pagan world have had, and yet how many things do we find discoursed concerning the devil, among their poets and philosophers, that there are such a sort of middle creatures between the gods (the supreme God at least) and men: and that these are distinguished into two orders of good and bad. Nothing more frequent in the writings of pagans than that there are the good *genii* and *cacodæmones*: some of them seem not to have been ignorant, however they came by the knowledge, of the apostasy of the devils; and of their being thrown down from their happy state above, into very great darkness and misery. But it seems, our having of clearer light, and more express discoveries of things relating to an invisible world, than pagans had, hath served only to make a great many of us a great deal more ignorant, and less apprehensive of these things and more insolent in the belief of them than they. But it is strange that they who are so very like the devil, should be of all others most unapt to own or apprehend that there are any such creatures, or any such sort of creatures. But,

3. We may infer, that it is not strange, when the cause is so very like between men and devils, that their doom should be so like also: that we cannot think it strange, that we should remain and be left under that doom and condemnation which sin did in itself subject them to: who when God hath made overtures to them, to distinguish them from these evil spirits, will not be distinguished, but rather choose to sort themselves with devils than with returning souls, souls that are willing to return to God through Christ.

We see the terrible estate of devils, that they cannot own the one God's existence without trembling. A frightful thought

it is to them, to have the eternal Being always in view, that is, what he is necessarily, without variableness or shadow of turning: they cannot nullify his being, they cannot shake his throne, they cannot alter his nature: the glorious, bright, majestic Object is always in view, and they can never look towards it without dread and astonishment. Whatsoever little respite they may have, which those words imply, "Art thou come to torment us before our time?" it doth yet signify, that any thought of God was dreadful to them, as importing that state of torment that was approaching, was drawing on, wherein it will be let forth on them, wherein wrath will come upon them (as it must upon unreconciled men) to the uttermost. But,

5. How wonderful is the grace of God towards poor sinful men, that their case doth admit, and may admit of their owning and believing the one God's existence, with another sort of impression than the case of the devils doth admit of. For that is plainly implied here, and therefore I make this inference and collection,—that it is expected that men should be otherwise impressed by this belief of the one God's existence than the devils may or can. It is expected the faith of this should make other kind of work in the heart of a man that entertains this belief; than it can do in the heart of a devil. And that very intimation signifies peculiar favour and special good-will, special, if compared with them, though it be yet more special, if you compare men with one another. Such good-will is the import of those words, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men." "He took not on him the nature of angels," or (as those words may admit to be read) "he took not hold of angels to save them; but took on him the seed of Abraham." His design herein spoke itself, (as in that 2 Heb. 14.) "Inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself did partake of the same." Saith he, "Those that I came to save, are such as have flesh and blood in them, not devils." And because they had flesh and blood in them, he likewise took flesh and blood that he might save such; that is, that he might die, that he might have somewhat mortal about him, somewhat that could die, that was capable of dying, and that dying he might overcome "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

6. We may learn hence, that there is not too great a stress to be laid upon the mere business of orthodoxy, or a rectitude of notions and sentiments, though about the greatest and most important things, things never so great: and you may suppose none greater than this, the existence of the one God, the cer-

tain existence of the unity of the Godhead. But yet, I say, a rectitude of notions or sentiments, even about so great things, or that which we generally call orthodoxy, ought not to have too great a stress laid upon them. I doubt not but that there is entire orthodoxy in hell, there is very little error in hell, very little of untrue notions, the truth of things is very clearly apprehended there, even the most terrible things; false doctrine doth not obtain there about such matters as this, to be sure: and therefore, let no man value himself too much upon this, that he understands aright, that he thinks right thoughts, doth believe that there is one God, one, and but one. He may do no more in this, than the devils do, they may be as orthodox as he; and he may therein know no more truth than they know. But we may yet further infer,

7. That it is a very dismal thing, and ought accordingly to be deplored much, that such things as we have revealed to us, concerning God, should be from time to time propounded and explained, and inculcated, and yet have no more effect upon us, than upon devils. How many a man is there, that lives under the gospel of Christ, unreconciled to God all his days? Oh, if there be any such a one in this assembly, How often hast thou been striven with to turn and live? how often invited back to God in Christ? But it hath signified as little to preach to thee all this while, as if one had preached to a devil. Oh, wretched creature, that thou wilt make thyself a devil, when God doth not make thee such! that thou wilt sort with the devils, when God would deal with thee, on very distinct terms from them! He would have thee come to him: he doth not invite devils back; he saith to thee, "Return, return:" he saith not so to them. Here is the blood of a Redeemer spilt for thee, it was not for them. And if we consider this matter generally; Oh, how dismal it is to think, that the revelation of the doctrine of the very one God's existence, should have made no more impression than it hath, to advantage the world of mankind; that the state of things should be so very much upon earth, as it is in hell! as if there were no difference in the cases of men and devils; that there should be such enmity against God, amongst men upon earth, such rage, such contempt, such blasphemy against this one existing Deity. And indeed, in this, men are worse than the devils, for the devils do hate God, but they do not despise him: here on earth he is hated and despised too: the devils hate him, but they cannot condemn him: men hate and condemn him both together. "Wherefore do the wicked condemn God?" Psal. 10. 13. But lastly,

8. We further learn hence, what this doctrine is likely to ef-

fect, if ever it come generally and to purpose, to be believed in the world, even this faith of the one God's existence. What a blessed change will that infer and make generally among men; when the one God shall be represented and understood and known with effect generally! if ever there shall be such a time. That is, there shall be a world of reasonable creatures, all centering in this one, all conspiring in the adoration and love of this one God; all bowing to him and kneeling before him: and no contention amongst men but who shall express most of love and duty to their universal, sovereign Maker and Lord. And therefore, men are only miserable in the meantime by not having real truth impressed and inwrought into the temper of their spirits, they are only by this miserable, that they are fallen from the one God, and apprehend him not, apprehend not the unity of the Godhead in whom they all are to unite. If men were all united in God, in the fear of him, in the love of him, in subjectedness and devotedness to him, this could not but infer universal order, peace and felicity, all the world over. Men are only miserable, only unhappy, by holding the truth in unrighteousness, and such truth; for the apostle speaks of such. This is the true ground, on which "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them." Rom. 1. 17. 18. But I shall not insist further upon this.

The next thing that comes in course, to be handled, will be the doctrine of the Trinity. Having opened the Unity of the Godhead, a Trinity therein also, will next come under our consideration.

END OF THE SIXTH VOLUME.

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*Mason, Printer, Chichester.*

## LECTURE XIII.\*

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1 John 5. 7.

*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father,  
the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and  
these three are one.*

**I** INTEND no long discourse upon this subject, nor longer than may consist with the design of going over the several heads of religion, in as plain a manner, and in as short a way as I can. It would very ill agree with such a design, to insist upon, and discourse upon all the several texts of Scripture arguments and objections this way and that, which are wont to be ventilated upon this point. All that can be expected, according to the course I have proposed to use, will be barely to represent that which I take, and which (I hope) we generally agree to be the truth in this matter, in as few and as plain words as is possible. If one should take the large course, which some (it may be) would expect, it would be to make one particular subject the business of a long life's time, and would be to turn this place into a theatre of contentious disputations rather than serious instructions, tending only to gratify vain minds, rather than to edify the sober mind.

I shall not need to stay at all upon the particular controversy about this text, the authenticity of it, which, it is true, is disputed: but upon that account only, that some copies have been found not to have it. But for such as are in doubt thereupon concerning it, I need do no more than recommend them

\* Preached, March 27. 1691.

(amongst others) to what hath been most judiciously, and, indeed, very charitably written as to that matter by Dr. Hammond, in his annotations on the New Testament, where he hath, with equal judgment and charity, represented how it is very easily supposable that in the transcribing of some copy or another, two verses coming here together, this seventh and eighth that do begin and end, both of them, somewhat alike, the eye of the transcriber might fall upon the latter, and so write without looking back to the former. A very obvious supposition, and a great deal more probable (as it is a great deal more charitable) than to suppose that either side, in the time of the Arian controversy, did design a corruption of the Scripture text; I say, it is a great deal more rational, (as it is more charitable) because indeed it had been a very foolish thing, merely out of favour to one side, to have corrupted the Scripture in that one particular place, leaving other scriptures to stand as they were that speak so fully the same thing, as that 28 Math. 18. 19. and that John 10. 30. "I and my Father are one." It is not likely there should be a designed corruption, where the loss of reputation would be so very great, and the gain and advantage so very little; but we have reason enough to be satisfied that the most ancient copies have it as we here find.

And for the way of managing the discourse upon this subject, I shall not offer at that which some have done, the demonstrating a Trinity in the Godhead in a rational way, as that which some have supposed sufficiently evident by rational light; and which some have made it their business to evince, (both Poiret and others before him,) and with no contemptible endeavour. But whether such do demonstrate their point yea or no, it is to me a very strong demonstration of the strange imbecility of the human mind, that some should think it rationally demonstrable, that, that cannot but be, which others take to be rationally demonstrable cannot be. This, I say, it is a great demonstration to me of; and I do believe that they who do read the other writings of Poiret and others, who think the Trinity rationally demonstrable, and read the writings of Socinus and others, his followers, who think the contrary, will apprehend in other matters, Poiret to be as rational a man as ever Socinus was, or any that followed him. Compare the writings of the one and the other, in other matters; and then I say, it is a strong demonstration, and that which doth require our very serious thoughts, of the imbecility of the minds of men, and how little the confident pretences to rational demonstrations, by interested persons, engaged and dipped in a party this way



and that, are to be relied upon, when some very highly rational men shall undertake to demonstrate, that it is impossible this should be ; when others as rational as they, shall undertake to demonstrate it is impossible not to be. That is, that there could have been no such thing as creation nor indeed any action in the Deity, and consequently, no Deity at all if there were not a Trinity in it. That is, if there were not an eternal mind which, when there was nothing else, should like an intellectual sun turn its beams inward upon itself, and so by consequence, beget an eternal action, its own eternal image, and that there must be an eternal love between that mind begetting, and the mind begotten : and there you have the Trinity in the Deity.

But this I insist not on ; only that it may appear that it is not impossible : and I hope that all pretence that it is, will in due time, and easily vanish. It is so plainly revealed in Scripture, that there is a Trinity in the Godhead, that we may very well take it upon the word of him that reports it to us, and who best (we may be sure) understands his own nature. Take it, I say, amongst those things of God, which are only to be known by the Spirit of God ; as there are things of a man, that are only known by the spirit of a man that is in him : (as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 2. 14.) and if the mind and spirit of every particular man, have its own particularities known only to itself, till the man is pleased to reveal and make them known, sure it is very little strange that the divine Being should have his peculiarities too, not otherwise knowable than as he is pleased to reveal them. And if he plainly reveal to us, that there is a Trinity in the Unity of his nature, then surely, to sober inquirers and learners, the business is done.

As to the latter part of the verse, I shall not need to insist upon it, “these three are one,” having, I hope, sufficiently evinced to you the Unity of the Godhead from another text. And I chose to do it from another text rather, that had that expression in it which this hath not. For this doth not expressly say, these three are one God, but it doth say, these three are one. But having already proved to you that the Godhead is but one, it leads us with so much the more clearness (having asserted the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead to be true) to apprehend, that it must be the truth of this place, and so shall have occasion but to repeat concerning that which we have already proved, but not to prove it any more. And therefore, the plain contents of this scripture you may take thus—that there is a Trinity in the Deity, or—if you will, a little more largely—that there are three which we cannot more fit-

ly express or conceive of, than by the name of persons, in the only one Godhead. And,

I. I shall evince the *truth* of this doctrine.

And now to let you see that this is reasonably given you, as the sense and meaning of this place, I shall proceed by some gradual steps : and,

1. To prepare my way, let you see that this is spoken here in this place ; it is the doctrine of this place. So that if it can be made appear to be in itself true, we shall have all the reason in the world to conclude, that it is fitly represented as the doctrine held forth in this text. And for the truth of the thing, we shall come to consider from other places afterwards. And,

(1.) It seems very reasonable, inasmuch as we otherwise ascertained that there is but one God, that the one thing wherein the three persons mentioned are said to be united, is the Godhead. "These three are one." One what? It is most reasonable to understand the meaning is, that they are one God, though this be not expressed in the text. For it is very plain, from what hath been already said, that the Godhead can be but one. And when it is said, there are three in heaven that are all one, that one thing which they are said to be, must needs be God, or the Godhead wherein they are said to unite ; especially the Father being said to be one of the three, concerning whose Godhead there is no doubt.

(2.) It is very plain, (upon supposition that the three mentioned in the text do unite, or are united in the Godhead,) the meaning must be, that they are one God and no more ; that is, that the one God which they are said to be, is but one, is one God and no more. There can be no reason imagined why it should be said they are one, if the intendment were not that they were only one ; or that that thing which they are said to be, is but one. To say the Godhead is one, it must always mean one exclusively, that is, that there is no other God but that, that one. And so, that is the thing that these three do unite, or are united in : not one witness, it is not a being united in their end : that cannot be meant here : for it is manifest that the apostle doth vary the form of expression in the following verse, where it is said, "These three agree in one ;" all to one purpose, all to one design, all giving one and the same testimony concerning Christ, concerning that Jesus who was descended and come down into this world. But here it is said in the text, they are one, are one thing, not one person, and therefore, it doth signify that they do agree, or do unite and meet in that wherein it is never intended to say or intimate

that they differ : that is, in essence they are united, but not in personality. If it had been a person that was spoken of, then it would have been proper enough, to have spoken of it under the notion of things. But inasmuch as it is the essence, and not the person, that is here intended, therefore it is said, one thing : if we would read the words literally, it is, “ these three are one thing,” that is the meaning of them and so they should be rendered.

(3.) Hereupon it is very rational to conclude, that when it is said, there are three that are united in this one thing, that it must also be understood, they are three and no more, as by one is meant only one, so by three is meant only three. Whereupon,

(4.) It must with equal reason be concluded, that these three which are three, and no more, must needs be some eminent three, and of some very eminent order. And do but pause here a little, and see if light do not spring into your minds about this matter : when it is said there are three (it being by parity of reason to be understood, three and no more) in heaven, Pray what three in heaven can there be, that are three, and no more, of one eminent order, but they must be three divine persons ? Bethink yourselves of it a little : it cannot be three angels, for then it cannot be said, there are three and no more in heaven : and you have not heard of any higher creatures than angels, any superior order of creatures above angels, of which there are three and no more : and it cannot be three Gods, because the Godhead is but one ; there is but one God and no more. Then I beseech you, What is there left ? It is not three angels, it is not three of any sort of creatures superior to angels, of whom there are three and no more. And the Father is here mentioned as one of them, of whose Godhead there can be no doubt : and then pray consider, What can these three be ? Not three creatures, not three Gods ; therefore, they can be nothing but three persons, three substances in the Godhead. Thus then you are gradually led on to see, that this is the plain doctrine of the text, and if you can be convinced that there is in it, *veritas rei, the truth of the thing*, there will be no doubt at all but that it is *veritas loci, the truth of this place*.

2. And that is it I now come to, that is, to evince to you *veritatem rei, the truth of the thing*, that there is a Trinity in the Godhead, that there are three that are all of them this one God. And, I shall (with all possible brevity) labour to prove it to you positively, from other scriptures and scripture-considerations, and then—shew you the unreasonableness of

what is pretended against it, how irrational the pretence is against such a thing. That is, that there should be three who in some one respect are truly to be said and called three, and in some other respect are as truly to be called, or said to be but one. But,

(1.) I come to the positive proof. And because, concerning the personality and deity of the Father there is no question; there is none that will contend with us about that matter, therefore our business will relate to the other two. And concerning them, that is, the Word (as he is here called) and the Holy Ghost, I shall endeavour to evince to you these two things—that they are persons, and—that they are divine persons.

[1.] That they are persons. And here (as I have told you) we have not a fitter notion under which to conceive of them, nor a fitter word in our tongue by which to express or speak of them. Not that we can think, that person being afterwards to be clothed with the notion of divine, can be the same thing with God as with us; because it is impossible any thing can have one common notion to him and to us. That would be altogether inconsistent with the perfection, the universal perfection of the divine Being, to suppose that any notion could be common to him and the creature. For then, he should not comprehend all entity in himself, if there were a notion common to him and to us; for that must import something superior to both, and that were comprehensive of both, and so it would make God but a part of being. Therefore, the word person as any other word whatsoever, that is wont to be applied to, and spoken of God and of us, must be spoken of us but analogically, not univocally, not as if it signified the same thing when it is spoken of him, and when it is spoken of us. And therefore, we are not to judge of a divine person by a human person, or by a created person. The difference is infinite, and the distance is infinite between God and any creature. So any thing that is spoken of him must infinitely differ from whatsoever may be spoken of us under the same name. Therefore, when we speak of a person, among creatures, as signifying an intelligent *suppositum*, *being*, neither *suppositum* nor intelligent can be the same with him and with us. His intellect and ours differ infinitely: and it is so little known how individuations are made among creatures, that it is infinitely more impossible how they are made with God. But that being premised, that these two, the Word and the Holy Ghost are so spoken of in Scripture, as that we have no other way of conceiving otherwise than that they must be spoken of as persons; this I shall endeavour to evince.

First. As concerning the Word, I only premise that which is in itself evident, that by the Word here, and the Son of God elsewhere, must be meant the same thing. As is plain in the first of St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word:" that which is called the Word there, is called the Son of God presently after, in the same chapter: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." The Word and the Son are all one. Then, what is there and elsewhere called the Word sometimes, and sometimes Son, or the Son of God, that must needs mean what we can conceive of no otherwise than under the notion of a person. That is, we find the action, from time to time, ascribed to this Word, or this Son, of an intelligent agent, of one that did act understandingly and with design. And we can have no better signification of a person, no clearer notion of one than that is. He is constantly spoken of as an intelligent agent; and concerning that, there can be no difficulty, nor indeed is there any controversy between us and our antagonists, concerning his personality; only they will have him to be but a human person, which we shall in its own place consider by and by. And,

Secondly. Concerning the Holy Ghost, that he also is a person, or such a one as we can conceive of under no other notion than that of a person; that is, as acting intelligently and with design: even so is he most apparently spoken of, from time to time, in Scripture. Hereupon it is said, He bears witness in heaven; as he did in heaven, and from thence, testify concerning Christ, that he was the Son of God, to be heard and obeyed and submitted to as such; and as a dove, descended in visible glory upon him from the heavens. This speaks the act of an intelligent, designing cause on his part, as to what he did in testifying, and so he is very frequently spoken of, as coming for such and such a purpose. "When he is come he shall convince the world." John 16. 7, 8. And (which is most observable) in several parts of these chapters, of the 14. 15. and 16th of that gospel, even there, where he had been spoken of under the name of the Spirit before, when one would expect, in correspondence to that name spirit, it would have been said, *it*, *it*, being neutral, a word of the neuter gender, it is said *he*; when *he* is come, not when *it* is come, he shall convince the world of sin: yea, and even the very laws of grammar and syntax are waved, as if it were on purpose to hold out this one thing to us, that the Holy Ghost was a person. an intelligent Being, working and acting with design: for when we have the word spirit, presently *he* doth follow upon it: and at a very great

distance, in one place, (several verses being interposed) from any other antecedent but spirit. Indeed, in the 14. and 15th chapters, there was the comforter as well as the spirit, to which *he*, might have reference : but still, spirit was the nearer antecedent. But you will find, in the 16th chapter, the 13. and 14th verses, that there is no antecedent for many verses together, besides spirit, and afterwards immediately subjoined *he*, and not *it*, on purpose to signify (and we cannot imagine what it should be to signify besides) the personality of the Holy Ghost. And it is a very unreasonable supposal, that in the form of baptism which we have, Matth. 28. 19. "Go ye, teach all nations, baptizing them. in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" that the two first should be persons, (as they are confessed on all hands to be) and that there should be put in the same order with them a quality, as our antagonists would teach us to conceive concerning the Holy Ghost, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and what? of a quality, in the third place. That is, that when the design manifestly was there to state the Object of all practical religion, of the whole of our Christianity, into the believing whereof we are to be baptized, there should be a transient quality put into conjunction with those two great persons, the Father and the Son. Surely, it needs but to stay and to pause here a little, to have light irresistibly strike into the mind of any one that will do so, that will consider how unreasonable it is to imagine, when the design is manifestly to represent and state the entire object of whole Christianity, that is, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, that the two first of these are persons, and the third but a quality. Therefore, that being very plain,

[2.] The second thing that needs to be evinced is, that they are divine persons, and much is done towards that already. It appearing they are persons, they cannot be created persons, they cannot be angels, of which it can be said there are three and no more. But we hear of no intervening order of creatures, above angels and below God. And then what should they be, since they are persons, (as is plain) but divine persons, that do subsist in the Godhead? And to evince this a little more distinctly, but very briefly,

First. Concerning the Word, or the Son, (which you see are both of them names of the same person) how expressly is he often said to be God? In that mentioned first of John, nothing can be spoken more openly nor in plainer words. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And Psalm 45. 6. "Thy throne O God is

for ever and ever," which the author to the Hebrews (chap. 1. 8.) allegeth to be plainly said to the Son; "And to the Son he said, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." So Romans, 9. 5. "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." And that, 1 John 5. 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. This is the true God and eternal life:" most fitly spoken of the Son who was to be the spring of life to us, according to what had been said a little above in the same chapter, "This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life."

It is, I know, alleged with a great deal of triumph by some of the adversaries, that he is excluded in another place from being the true God, and that that should not be said of him, when we are told, (John. 17. 3.) "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." If the Father only be true God, then the Son is not. But the inconsequence of this will easily appear to them that shall but consider, how the word *only* is placed. It is placed so as to assert the predicate, and not the subject in the latter proposition. It is not said, 'Thou only art the true God, and so, that doth not exclude the Son at all. The Father is the only true God, and the Son is the only true God, and the Holy Ghost is the only true God. But it cannot be said that either the Father only is the true God, or the Son only is the true God, or the Holy Ghost only is the true God: but they are each of them that God which is the only true one, and of which there is but one and no more. Do but observe that the word *only* affects not the subject spoken of, but the thing affirmed, or spoken of that subject. The case is but like this, as if I should use these words, "This is the only London." It may be true for ought we know, that there is no other London, but this which is famously called so by that name, but if one should say, "This only is London," that is, this place where we are, and there the *only* should limit the subject, that were false; for there are thousands of places in London as well as this, there are a great many assemblies in London, a great many places of worship and societies besides this: but we may say, "This is the only London," so the difference is plain to any that will consider it.

I might insist much more largely, (but it is not needful to say every thing that might be said in a plain case,) concerning the Son, to prove his divine personality by most manifest attri-

butes of Deity, given him over and over in Scripture, as “The First and the Last :” creating power, as “Him by whom the world was made, and by whom he made the world,” which is over and over said of him. Col. 1. 15. Heb. 1. 3. John 1. beginning. And universal knowledge, Omniscieny, heart knowledge ; “Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” But then,

Secondly. Concerning the divine person of the Holy Ghost, that he also is God ; that doth sure, carry convictive light with it to any that do consider, that when the form of baptism is given (as was said) with design to state the whole object of our religion, “The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost” are mentioned together ; and there can be no object of religion but God, none but a divine person : and we find the Holy Ghost frequently mentioned, upon the same account, as one of those eminent three. How many places are there (it were endless to name them) where these three are brought in together, as it were purposely to signify that they were *ejusdem ordinis, of the same order* ; and that we are to conceive of each of them under the same notion, that is, that of Deity, of the Godhead in God. Look but to that 1 Pet. 1. 2. Rom. 1. 4, 5. 2 Thes. 2. 13, 14 : and a great many places besides, where these three are brought in still together. As if it were purposely to signify their being of one order, and as having, in distinct respects, a concern in our great affairs ; those that relate to our salvation and blessedness. Besides, that it must be a great prevarication, to understand that place otherwise than as expressing the Holy Ghost to be God : Acts 5. 3, 4. “Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost ?—thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God.” And certainly if he were not God, it were the most dangerous thing in all the world, to have him represented to us as if he were : and so tempt men to pay the homage of divine worship to a creature. It is never to be imagined, that there would have been such a snare laid before us, to lead us into so dangerous a mistake as that : things would have been spoken more cautiously, if he had not been God, than, when it was just said before, “Why dost thou lie against the Holy Ghost ?” so immediately to say, “Thou didst not lie to man but unto God.” It is not to be thought, (the thing being so full of danger) to place the notion or homage of the Deity upon any thing to which it doth not belong, that there should have been such incautiousness used, or so little caution, as directly to lead and train persons into so perilous a mistake. But besides all this, to put the matter out of all doubt ; whereas, they that will have the Holy Ghost not to be



God, being urged, "What is he then?" do say, "He is the mighty power of God, a certain mighty *vis emissa*, a divine power that *issues from* God for the working such and such effects." As for this conceit, pray do but consider the matter thus, Is the Holy Ghost indeed not God, but the power of God? Why this power which it is said to be, is either a created power, or an uncreated one. If it be an uncreated power, He is God, for every thing that is uncreated is God: if he be then a created power, the created power of God, or the power of God, but created, then it seems God did, without power, create this power, and was without power till he had created it: so that he did the act of creation (which is an act of omnipotency) when he was impotent. It supposes, first, an impotent God, and then supposeth him, when he was impotent, to create his own power; that is, when he was without all power, he did that act which requires an infiniteness of power, to wit, to create. I know nothing that carries clearer evidence with it, than this doth, that the Holy Ghost cannot be that created power which these persons pretend to; or cannot be divine power distinct from God, from the very essence of God. Every thing of God is God, and cannot be otherwise. If he were the power of God and not God, he must have been created power, by God; that is to say, God did create omnipotent power, being before impotent; for this it plainly comes to.

Thus far, I think, it is with some competent clearness evident, that these three, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, (concerning the first, as you have heard, there is no question) are persons; they are that which we cannot conceive of otherwise than under the notion of persons: and they are divine persons, so that there are three divine persons that do subsist in the Godhead, that is but one. So you have this, as the doctrinal truth of this place, and as the real truth in itself, positively evidenced to you.

What is to be said by way of objection against it, we shall next come to. Only upon the whole matter, it seems to me, that there needs a great deal more of humility and reverence and seriousness and fear of the Lord, over-awing the spirits of men, to apprehend this to be the plain doctrine of Scripture, than of further argument in the case. And that will more appear by considering how irrational the pretence is, that this is a thing rationally impossible, that there should be such three, that are but one God. Nothing indeed, would be plainer than that the same cannot be three and one, in one and the same respect: but, that they may be three in one respect, and but one in another respect, we may make appear to be no impossi-

ble thing, and that there is nothing of harshness in it, nay, whereof we have parallel instances, (as far as there can be a parity between God and creatures) that occur to us every day. So that one would wonder how men can stumble in so plain a way, and when there is nothing indeed in view that should occasion it, besides their having indulged themselves, I fear, too much liberty to prevaricate in their own minds, and reasonings before, and then they think it reasonable to justify error by erring always, by never retracting, or by endeavouring to make men believe, that things suggested to them as true, are impossible to be true.

### LECTURE XIV.\*

3. But now to come to the third part of the proposed work, to vindicate the truth of this doctrine laid down, in the proposition, as to what is objected, and alleged against it, which summarily and generally is but this one thing, into which all results; That it is contrary to the common reason of men, and such as doth in itself imply a contradiction, that three should be but one. And thereupon it is determined by the leader of them, Socinus himself, that if any thing do appear to be never so plainly contained in Scripture, if yet also it do appear to imply a contradiction, or to be contrary to natural reason, any, whatsoever violence, ought rather to be put upon the Scriptures than to admit it. And this goes therefore, with the men of that way, for a principle, that whatsoever seems to be repugnant to their reason, or to imply a contradiction, ought to be rejected, though never so plainly expressed in Scripture, or contained therein.

Now first, I shall say here somewhat to this principle in the general, by which these men do steer themselves in this, and all matters of religion besides. And then secondly, I shall say somewhat in the particular application of it in this case, and shew how very untruly it is alleged here, that this is a doctrine repugnant to the common reason of man, and which doth carry a contradiction in itself.

(1.) As to the principle in general, I shall in short say these things to it:

[1.] That if we can be certain, that any thing is repugnant to the reason of man, as it is such and doth in itself imply a

\* Preached April the 10th, 1690.

contradiction, it ought to be rejected even in duty to God, and as a piece of homage to him. We do owe that homage to our Maker, as the God of truth, to reject every thing that we are sure is contrary to the common reason of man, which he hath put into him, which is truly and purely reason, and which belongs to the Spirit, unto which by the inspiration of the almighty God, that understanding is given, which distinguishes him from the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field. We do owe it as a homage to the Author of our nature, to reject whatsoever is manifestly contrary to that reason, and which is in itself a contradiction. First, because he is most confessedly the *primum verum*, the *first truth*. And as all the beams of the sun, in whatsoever way they do shine to us, whether directly, or by never so various refraction, we are sure are all from the sun; so whatsoever rational dictate, that we are most certain, or can be sure is such, which we find arrive to us, we cannot but be sure that it is from the Father of lights, from whom can issue nothing but light; nothing opposite to light or truth: and secondly, That it is impossible we can in duty, or as a homage to God, believe a contradiction, any thing that carries a contradiction in itself, because the highest and primary reason upon which I am to admit any thing for truth, is as it is a production of the first truth, as hath been told you. But I am certain, the same thing cannot be true and false; and therefore, as a deference to God, I cannot have greater reason to believe it, than I have to disbelieve it. If it carry a contradiction in it, and is pretended to be from God, I cannot believe it for any reason, but for the same reason, I am bound to disbelieve it. There is not more weight in one end of the scale than there is in the other: and so it cannot be believed in that case, as a piece of duty unto God: and thereupon, we are as ready to reject every thing, we are sure is contradictory and repugnant to a manifest dictate of reason, as they can be. But,

[2.] If any thing be plainly contained and expressed in the word of God, that seems repugnant to our reason, we are then certain that the seemingness and semblance is false, because we cannot be surer of any thing than that God is true, and that he can never be deceived himself, nor deceive us: that both verity and veracity are most essential to him; and that it is repugnant to his nature, either to be ignorant of any thing, or to lie unto us in any thing. And therefore,

[3.] When there is this competition between any plain words of Scripture and a seeming dictate of reason, we are to censure the latter by the former, and not the former by the lat-

ter: we are to measure the rational dictate, by the divine word, and not the divine word by the seeming rational dictate. And especially,

[4.] When that thing is spoken often in Scripture, in the divine word, and in varied forms of speech, which have all the same manifest sense and meaning, and are not, without the most notorious violence, capable of another. And (which will be the ground of this last mentioned assertion) when,

[5.] That word being professedly and declaredly given us as a rate to measure our sentiments as well as our practices by. If therefore, we should oppose that which seems to us a rational dictate, to the plain expressions of that word, we make that which is to be ruled, the rule; we do in that case regulate our rule, and do not admit that the rule should regulate us. We judge the law, (as the apostle James's expression is, in a case that hath reference to practice, and the case is the same in reference to sentiments, and our judgments of things,) which is certainly very great insolency: that when God, in compassion to the darkness and blindness of our minds, gives us such a rule, a light shining in a dark place unto which we are told, we should do well to take heed, we should reject this rule, and say, we can do better without it, reject this light, and say, we can see better without it. As if one should, out of mere good will, offer himself as a guide to a bewildered traveller that knows nothing of his way, and this traveller should at all turns be controverting with his guide, and say, I know the way and how to steer my course better than you; which would be as well the highest insolency as ingratitude, supposing that guide to be very highly superior and very kindly condescending to do that office in such a case. And again,

[6.] There is yet the more ground for this, when there is among men, and even among wise, and learned, and rational men, a very great division about what is a rational dictate in this case, and what is not. This makes the determination which I have given, to be so much the more reasonable, and makes the pretence on the other hand so much the more absurd, that that should be given for a dictate of common reason wherein most rational men do disagree, at least, therein, as rational men as these pretenders, are of a quite contrary mind: and that cannot be so clear a dictate of common reason, wherein even the most rational men do disagree, and sure then, in that case, one would be glad to be determined by a divine word. And I add,

[7.] That the reason of man, in this our present state, even in things of much inferior concernment, is very dubious and uncertain, in matters wherein religion is not concerned, and so

wherein the minds of men are not apt to be perverted by ill inclination, as in the matters of religion they are. For though it be very true, that it is natural for men to be of some religion, yet it is as true and as evident, that there is an aversion and antipathy in the minds and spirits of men against true religion, against sincere, living religion. And if the reason of man be a very dubious, uncertain thing, even when there is nothing to bias one this way or that, as it is in thousands of instances that might be given most apparently ; much more cause have we in matters of religion, and of this nature, not to over attribute unto it. In philosophical matters, wherein men's minds cannot, through prejudice be swayed this way or that, and wherein it is no one's interest that this side be true rather than that side, yet there are the greatest difficulties imaginable in determining what is reason and what not, what is true and what not, as all the controversies in philosophy do shew : and some, wherein it is the hardest matter imaginable, even to the greatest wits that have ever been in the world, to free themselves from the appearance of contradiction, which side soever they had in the controversy. As it is most notorious, to any that know any thing in philosophy, about the *compositum continuum*, whether the *continuum*, that is, a body doth consist of parts always divisible, or of indivisible parts ; so that bring it to the minutest thing imaginable, even if it be to the breadth of a hair, whether it be still perpetually divisible or indivisible. It is plain, take one side or the other in that question, and hitherto all the wits in the world have not found how, freely and clearly, to disentangle themselves from contradiction in saying, this is always divisible ; or it is sometimes impossible to be divided any further, and the apprehension of that doth (I must acknowledge) greatly lower my reverence to that which goes under the notion of a rational dictate, when in such a case as that of any, the minutest thing you can imagine, even the breadth of a hair, no man shall be able to assert either it is always divisible or sometime indivisible, without entangling himself in such appearances of contradiction as from which, the greatest wits that have ever been, have not been able to shew us the way of being extricated. And when there is such a division, even among the masters of reason, the highest pretenders to it ; this is a rational dictate, saith the one side, the quite contrary is a rational dictate, saith the other side, even in this very business of the Trinity itself : whilst some with loud clamour cry out against it as impossible to be, others on the other hand, take upon them to demonstrate it to be utterly impossible that it should not be ; that there could be no creation, no Creator if there were not a Trinity.

These things being said in reference to that principle in the general, I now come,

(2.) To the application of it to this objection ; that is, that this is a doctrine, (say some) to common and rational principles, contradictory in itself, that three should be one.

That we may speak to this with the more clearness, we shall—consider what it is, from Scripture, we assert concerning this matter, and then—shew how unreasonably this is pretended to be repugnant to reason, or to imply any thing of a contradiction.

[1.] What it is we do from Scripture assert in this matter, and what we do not. For we must distinguish here, between plain Scripture doctrine and the bold determinations of some schoolmen. We do not think we are obliged to justify every determination of a confident and presuming schoolman, as if it were divine writ. But what from Scripture we do affirm is, That there are three in the Godhead, that these three are some way distinguished from one another, otherwise they could not be three, there were no pretence to call them three. We find they have distinct names ; that is plain—the Father, the Word or Son, and the Spirit or the Holy Ghost, over and over. But there must be somewhat of distinction among themselves, otherwise there were no pretence to call them three, if they were no way distinguishable.

Again, we do affirm they are so far distinguished from one another as, that can be said concerning one which cannot be said concerning the other. As when we say, “The Word was made flesh,” (which you know the Scripture speaks,) the meaning is, not that the Father was made flesh, or the Spirit was made flesh, but that the Son was made flesh. When it is said, (as it often is,) that the Spirit or the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father, or the Son, the meaning is, not that the Father sends himself, or that the Son sends himself. Therefore, they are so far distinct from one another as, that is said of the one which cannot be said of the other. But then, how much greater the distinction is, we pretend not to say, because the Scripture doth not say it. Only this we do say, We can think of no notion by which they are so fitly distinguishable as that of personality, as that of their being distinct persons ; that we do find plainly said concerning one of them, the Father, (who is so called in that Heb. 1. 3.) that the Son is the express image of his person. So we render the word *hypostasis* fitly and aptly enough. And they being so frequently mentioned together, as we find they are, it doth naturally suggest to us, that there should be a suppositality. And concerning the personality of

the Son too, there is no question; but as concerning the Holy Ghost, he being so frequently spoken of under the notion He, and, (as was noted to you) the gender varied on purpose, contrary to strict grammar, we ought also, to conceive of him, under the notion of a person: though at the same time (we have told you) it is impossible that the notion of a person should be the same with God and amongst men, and that for the reason which hath been mentioned to you. Only, we have nothing by which more fitly to conceive it, than by this notion. Then, so much as this, being what we do affirm and assert to be the doctrine of the Scriptures, and to be Scripture in this case, then, I say,

[2.] This is very unreasonable and pretenceless, to affirm that this is contradictory in itself, or any way opposite or contrary to the plain dictates of reason. For where should the contradiction lie? It is only pretended to lie in this, that the same thing cannot be three and one. And it is easily admitted, that the same thing cannot be three and one, in the same respect wherein they are but one. But nothing hinders, but that the same may be, in different respects, that is, in those respects wherein they are three, they are not only one: in that respect wherein they are but one, they cannot be three. But, that in divers respects, the same thing may be three and one, or that there may be a trinity, a triad, in one and the same thing, the instances are so many, so plain and so notorious in other inferior things, that it is absurd and unreasonable to pretend this to be contradictory, or contrary to the dictate of nature. Let us go to the most obvious thing that can be thought of. If I should go no further but only to give you an instance of this book which I have here in my hand, it hath its breadth, its length and its thickness, as you all easily see and apprehend, but its breadth is not its length, nor is its length its thickness, neither of these are one another, yet all the same book: that is, this thing which is so long, so broad and so thick is this book. If we speak of a man, he is a very vegetative creature, and he is a sensitive creature, and he is a rational and intelligent creature, and yet, it is most plain, vegetation is not sensation, nor sensation intellection. The sun, it hath belonging to it, light and heat and motion: that luminous body is the sun, that califective body is the sun, and that moving body is the sun. These three are all but one sun: and yet there are three in it as is evident. The world is full of instances of the like nature. We can hardly think of any sort of things wherein this may not be exemplified. And whereas, the greatest quarrel is about personality, there is nothing more plain than that

one and the same man may sustain three persons, the person of a father, the person of a son, and the person of a magistrate, and the like. Many persons may be sustained by one and the same man; the notion of person, in the strict and common sense, being only taken for the circumstances of their state and condition who are spoken of, and not as denoting this or that particular essence; and so to be a man, and this or that person is not all one: and so to be God, and this or that person in the Godhead is not all one. The same man may endure, and may *sustentare*, may put on, and may bear, several persons: and so it is no repugnancy to reason at all that the same God do so too. And therefore, this pretence of the irrationality or contradictoryness of this doctrine, doth itself want a pretence; there can be really no ground for it. And so much hath been so far said, by some of the late zealous contenders in this case the other way, that they are brought to say and publish, that truly he must be a madman that will say there cannot be three persons in the same God. That we find published not long ago: so far doth that pretence vanish, that this doctrine must be rejected as being irrational and contradictory. And if we would take the notion of person and personality, in the most strict and scholastic sense, it would be with very great arrogance that they must pretend this doctrine (taken even in that sense) to be contrary to a common, rational dictate, when as it is so very well known first, that the very notion of individuation or personality, suppositality, or more generally personality, in reference to rational beings, is one of the most disputed things in the world. And how absurd is it to say, that this or that is opposite to a common rational dictate, about which, (as was said before,) the most learned men, and the highest pretenders to reason have constantly disagreed. There must first, before this can be said, some one common notion of personality and individuation be fixed, which all men must assent to, as soon as ever they hear it, that must command assent to it in every man's mind. But about these things there is the greatest disagreement, and hath constantly been, ever since the name of a schoolman or metaphysician hath been known in the world. And then, secondly, besides that, there is so great a disagreement among schoolmen and metaphysicians, about the notions of suppositality, personality and individuality, that they who will conclude this to be against a rational dictate, must be able to evince, that the notion of personality must be the same with us and with God, which it will be impossible for them ever to evince, and the contrary whereof (as hath been said) is demonstrable. That is, were it ever so certain that there can-



not be three finite persons partaking the same finite nature, it will be hence no consequence, that there cannot be three infinite persons partaking the same infinite nature, or communicating in the same infinite nature : no reason, for a parallel cannot be drawn so much as with a plausible pretence, between what is finite and what is infinite, in this case.

But to shut up all that I intend, as to the polemical part of this discourse, I shall only leave these few things, which will plainly represent to us that this doctrine may be conceived, and hath not that difficulty in it which commonly hath been thought. As,

First. It is out of all question that God is but one, can be but one. And,

Secondly. That whatsoever is necessarily, is God. Whatsoever is in being, from a necessity in nature, is God ; than which no principle can be plainer. And,

Thirdly. That whatsoever is by dependance on the divine will, is creature ; whatsoever is not of necessity, but by mere dependance on the divine will, that is all creature. “Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Fourthly. If therefore, we do suppose the Son and the Holy Ghost to be from the Father, by a necessity of nature, an eternal necessity of nature, and not by dependance upon his will, they will not be creatures, because nothing is creature but what depends upon the will and pleasure of the Creator. And if they be not creatures, what are they then ? Then they must be God, and yet both of them from the Father too : for all that do assert the Trinity, do acknowledge the Father to be *fons trinitatis, the fountain of the Trinity* : and if from this fountain, the Son be one way, and the Holy Ghost be another way, both from the Father ; that is, the Son from the Father immediately, and the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, and this, not by choice, but by an eternal necessity of nature, here is this doctrine as easily conceivable as any that I know of whatsoever, that lies not within the compass of our manifest demonstration. And my business is not now to demonstrate to you that thus it is, but that it is very easily conceivable that thus it may be. That is, that the Son and the Holy Ghost may be from the Father, and that we are sure they are from him by an eternal necessity of nature, and not by choice. It is not by his pleasure they are and were, but by eternal necessity of nature they are from him as he is originally from himself. That is, they are always and eternally in that nature which is self-originate. And here is no contradiction, nor the least appearance or shadow of it in all this.

And thus far now, hath our labour been taken up as to this subject, about the truth of it : that is, to prove and to vindicate it. Our next business, which only remains, will be about the importance of it, the great usefulness of it, and the mighty weight and stress that lie upon it. At present I leave this with you, that I know nothing more needful to clear our apprehensions, and make our minds very calm and serene, in reference to this doctrine of the Trinity than first, high, adoring thoughts of God, and secondly, mean thoughts of ourselves. If we can but think highly enough of God, and meanly enough of ourselves, and how unmeet and incompetent such moles and worms of the earth as we are, must needs be to make an estimate of his nature, and how things are with him, otherwise than he is pleased graciously and freely to declare to us concerning himself, there will be nothing then in all this doctrine that we shall stumble at, nothing that we shall receive with difficulty, and nothing but what we may receive with great use and advantage to ourselves.

#### LECTURE XV.\*

Therefore, now for the *importance* and *use* of this doctrine, much may be conceived of that, if it be considered how the stamp and impression of a Trinity doth run through the world. A noted writer, of our time, hath said very much to that purpose, of which I shall say but little. Take the whole universe of created beings and you have every where a Trinity instamped. It is observable enough in that great triad, the several things conceivable under each member, of nature, morality and religion. But it is with religion that we are concerned, and wherein the practice of it doth principally appear, and is most considerable. Our religion you do know, objectively considered, is made up of doctrines to be believed, and of duties to be done, and of benefits to be sought, and these are comprised in those three noted summaries, the creed, the decalogue, and the Lord's prayer. In these three, there is some impression and resemblance of the Trinity in the divine nature. That is, of that power and of that wisdom and knowledge, and of that benignity and love, which are the three great most noted principles we have to conceive of, and that we cannot but distinctively conceive of, we cannot otherwise

\* Preached April 17. 1691.

conceive of, than as distinct in the simple union of the Godhead ; and which may probably enough correspond to, and be the very notion of, Father, Son, and Spirit.

Why now, if we consider doctrinals in the first place, the doctrines that do make up the first and most noble part of the scheme of religion, you know how they all depend upon, and are reduced to, the notions that are given us of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost ; upon these three heads hangs the frame of Christian doctrine. That is, of the Father considered as God Creator ; and of the Son considered as God Redeemer ; and of the Holy Ghost considered as God Sanctifier. Which three great works of God, though it be true that they do each of them owe themselves to the concurrence of each of the persons according to that known maxim, *opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* :\* which is undoubtedly a true and clear one : yet each of these is appropriated to each of the persons severally, not exclusively, but eminently. And that we may understand that aright, when it is said, the Father creates, it is to be understood eminently, not exclusively, of the Son and the Holy Ghost : and so as to the rest. When we profess to believe in God as the Creator of heaven and earth, that is, in God the Father, as he is the first Fountain of all being, uncreated and created too ; why though that be plainly said, yet it is as plainly said, that without the Word was nothing made ; and that by him, that is, the Word, even he—who is said to be “ the brightness of his Father’s glory and the express image of his person,” the worlds were made : and that they were made by the Spirit of his mouth ; and that the Spirit did move upon the waters, that is, upon the fluctuating chaos, which we must suppose to have been first made, before things were made out of it : and that it was first made is the most demonstrable thing, in all the world ; otherwise, it were, itself, a necessary and self original being, and so God ; the notion of God would not be all-comprehending, or there would be something *præter Deum*, *besides God*, originally and naturally, and of itself. So again, as to the work of redemption, that was designed by the Father, but wrought by the Son, and applied by the Holy Ghost. These are plain things and abundantly evident in Scripture as, if I should turn from text to text, you would see. But I must suppose you to understand it already. You cannot then but see the mighty importance of this doctrine of the Trinity in our religion. We shall have occasion to press that further by and by. But now hereupon, I shall, for putting a period to the discourse on

\* The Holy Trinity, in external operations, is not divided.

this subject, subjoin several instructions in reference hereto.  
As,

1. That we should all learn to adore the wonderful divine condescension, that he should so far unveil himself, and make known so much of the things of his own nature and being, to such despicable beings as we. We can never wonder enough at this. Indeed, I have many times considered, it is a very instructive thing, that so many of the pagans should discover so very reverential thoughts of God, upon this account, and under this notion, as they apprehend his Being to be inscrutable, unsearchable, as that inscription on one of their temples doth import, "I am he that was, and he that is, and he that shall be, and no one hath ever unfolded my veil." Such reverential apprehensions, had they (however they came by them,) of the inscrutableness and occultness of the Divine Being, that there were such arcana, such secrets veiled from all eyes, that could never possibly be looked into. Now that God should take such poor creatures as any of us are, and let us see so far into the veil, that, whereof we could have had no certain apprehensions, if he had not told us, how wonderful is it ! Though some have made it very much their business, (after they had got the hint from Scripture concerning the Trinity,) to shew how rational it was ; not only to shew how consistent it was with reason, (which is a very justifiable undertaking and a great piece of right done to our religion,) some carry the matter higher, (as I told you,) and undertake to demonstrate it to be necessary, and that we cannot conceive of the nature of God, and of that great work of his, the creation of the world, in-reference to one another otherwise. But this is to strain beyond what the exigency of the case doth require. It may however, (by that improvement I have already made of it too,) serve somewhat to rebuke the proud confidence of that sort of men, who represent this doctrine as contrary to a common, rational dictate, the common sense and reason of mankind. That is most insolently pretended when, as (unless they will assume to themselves that there can be no such thing as a rational dictate, that is not stamped at their mint) I say, unless they would assume that to themselves, it must appear very incongruous to pretend that such a thing is impossible to be, when others at the same time, (who may for ought I know lay as good a claim to that of being the men, and that wisdom shall die with them as they can,) should say with so much confidence, it is impossible not to be ; and that there could be no such thing as a Creator and a creation, if it were not so.

But waving this disquisition, since it is most certainly not

impossible in itself, it is very adorable that God should come, and so graciously discover to us that so it is; when we see how useful it is, and how expedite a frame of religion it lays open before us: that he should discourse to such children, such weaklings as we, at that rate concerning his own nature; "I will tell you how things are with me: now in the Godhead these are co-existent from all eternity, Father, Son and Spirit: and this I would not have hid from you; I would have you to be possessed with right notions and apprehensions of my nature thus far, that thus it is with me, and in me." You would wonder that a great and wise prince should take upon him to discourse his arcana with a peasant, a mean, ignorant peasant. But we do not enough wonder at this condescension of God, upon this ground, that we do not enough set ourselves to consider the distance between God and creatures, and what mere nothings we are to him, and that when we have the most exalted thoughts that our minds are capable of, concerning any created being whatsoever, and then descending to the meanest sort of creatures we can think of, the distance is not only greater, but it is still infinitely greater between the great God and us. What then have we left to do, but to fall down and wonder, fall down and adore, and cry out, "Whence is it to us that thou shouldst let us know so much of thyself?" that whereas, the things of God are never to be known distinctly, otherwise than as the Spirit of God doth reveal them, that Spirit of God should be the Author to us, of such a revelation as this, which we have contained in the Bible, concerning this great and most important mystery.

2. Let us learn this too, not to think it a small matter, now that we are informed that there is in the Godhead, Father, Son and Spirit; that all three should so far concern themselves as we find they do, and be so constantly concerned as they are about our affairs. If all the potentates on earth should concern themselves about the life of one single fly, it were not so strange a thing, it were not so great a stoop. We should consider with ourselves over and over, What am I? what am I, and what is my life, that the eternal Father, and the eternal Son, and the eternal Spirit, should all concern themselves from eternity about me? And again,

3. It should further instruct us into this, to fasten the apprehension deep in our souls, of the great concernment of the doctrine, that it may lie with weight upon us, as a seal that doth not make impression unless it be pressed on; that we should endeavour and intend more to press on this doctrine, this truth upon our own souls, that it may make the proper,

due impression, that we may be delivered up into the mould and form of it: as the expression is, Rom. 6. 17. And to that purpose, let us bethink ourselves, how miserably (where this doctrine is not entertained) the scheme of Christianity, and the Christian religion are scattered and torn by the want, or by the denial of it. This apprehension should urge us so as that the doctrine should lie with greater weight and pressure upon our spirits, because where it is not received, away go the great limbs of Christian religion. The Deity of the Son of God, that is abandoned and cashiered: well, and what then becomes of our religion? Do you not think yourselves concerned in this matter? What! Are you willing to venture your souls otherwise than in the hands of a Divine Saviour, when you know yourselves to be sinners, to be guilty creatures? Do you think it will answer the exigency of your case, to have an atonement made for you of no greater value than if one mere man were made a sacrifice for another? And if that would do, suppose one man were as good as another; why inasmuch as all are sinners, when he goes to satisfy another's sin, who shall satisfy for his sin? Or how shall he satisfy for his own? And suppose an innocent man should be made on purpose (as it is supposed in this present case) to be a sacrifice; that is still but man for man. It is true, he hath no sin of his own to satisfy for, but suppose he could satisfy for the sin of another man, there must then, be as many innocent men created as there are guilty men, at that rate. But would not you be loath to hazard your souls upon such conceits as these? and to quit your hold of a mighty God for your Saviour? of this assurance, that he who is to be your Saviour is known by the name of "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace?" Would you be content to abandon this, that he is to be your Saviour who is God blessed for ever; who before the worlds were made was with God; and in time was made flesh, and dwelt among us; that word that was with God, and that was God, and by which all things were made, without which nothing was made, that was made, was made flesh? An amazing thing it is to me, how men that pretend to believe the divine authority of the Bible, can disentangle themselves from such a place as this, "The Word was made flesh." They that will have Jesus Christ never to have been, no such person ever to have been, before he was born of the Virgin Mary, I would then know of them, "What was that, that was made flesh?" It was the word that was made flesh; there was somewhat before this flesh was made, or it was nothing, that was made flesh. And every one that under-

stands the ordinary use of this expression (flesh) knows it doth not signify the person of a man, but the whole of a man, not the body only: for when it is said, "in his sight there shall no flesh be justified," what is the meaning of that? That the bodies of men shall not be justified? Surely not. But thus, from not believing this doctrine, proceeds the denial of that great and noble propitiation, once for all made for the sins of men, under the proper notion of a propitiation or an expiatory sacrifice to atone for sin, and take away guilt. Again hereupon,

The eternal priesthood of the Son of God is evacuated and reduced to a nullity: and all upon this, that an alterity cannot be conceived in the Godhead. Not that there is therein, *Aliud et aliud, one diverse from another*, but that there is there *personæ altera et altera, one person distinct from another*. But because this is not apprehended, nor will be apprehended, therefore, say they, There can be no such thing as a propitiatory sacrifice, such as we, such as the Scripture, such as the gospel doth most expressly speak of, that is, of him who was God offered up unto God. For, say they, There is but one person in the Godhead; and a satisfier and a satisfied, must be two persons, there must be in such a case an alterity of persons *personæ altera et altera*, and so they truly reason. He that doth satisfy and he that is satisfied must be two persons: this is most certain, but they, not admitting the alterity of persons, therefore exclude the whole doctrine. And then,

That mighty power that is to go forth from the Divine Spirit, for the breaking of the bands of iron, and the rescuing of captive souls out of the devil's power; to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, all that is reduced to nothing too. And so there is no other Christianity left in the world but a certain sort of self-sprung religion: no power but that which I can be the author of to myself, what I have of mine own: or else if they will have more, they do speak altogether unintelligibly and contrary to the plain sense of things: that is, they will not have the Holy Ghost to be a distinct person in the Godhead, but (as they call it) the power of God, meaning a quality. But I take what hath been said against that, to be truly as plain demonstration as can be used in any case whatsoever. The Holy Ghost is called the divine power. Comply with them so far, then say I, This divine power is either created power or uncreated. If this divine power be created, then they must suppose God, while he was without power to create power; that is, that God being first impotent, created power and became omnipotent. But if they will say, It

is an uncreated power, then they say what we say: then it is God: the Holy Ghost is God. But he is God so as he is capable of being sent, and sent of the Father, and so that he must be a distinct person in the Godhead. But the stress of all that mighty affair which is to be wrought in the souls of men, when they are sanctified; of children of the devil, and friends of hell, to be made children of God, and meet to be partakers of an inheritance with them that are sanctified, with the saints in light: all that mighty work that is to be done by an Almighty Spirit, must be proportionally diminished as the cause is diminished, as the agent is diminished and reduced, by their doctrine, to a mere creature. Therefore, I say, labour to apprehend deeply, the mighty importance of this doctrine, and to fix the apprehensions of it, and to have it wrought in your souls, that so such a truth may no more be capable of being torn away from thence than one faculty of your souls can be torn from another. And,

4. Labour to savour and relish such truth, this truth, this doctrine, labour to get the savour and relish of it into your souls; that is, to receive this truth in the love of it. It is a matter of dangerous importance, when truth of this kind which concerns the vitals of religion, is received merely as an airy notion, and is not digested, doth not enter and sink deep into our hearts, and that which must entertain and admit there: even into the very centre of our souls must be the love of it. "They received not the truth in the love of it, that they might be saved." 2 Thess. 2. 10. And what became of that matter? When they did so lightly adhere to divine truth as one doth to a thing that he doth not love, or that is not united to his soul by love, they easily suffered their souls to be cheated of it: and then, for their not loving this truth, (it being a thing most highly criminal not to love divine truth, not to love so great and sacred a thing) God gave them up to strong delusions, to believe lies, that they all might be damned who received not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Such truth they could take no pleasure in, but they could take pleasure in unrighteousness. "Let them go," saith God, "the way that the inclinations of their own wicked hearts carries them to." There is that kindred, that alliance between the soul and truth, that there is a violence done to both if they be severed, and if the soul do not inwardly love truth, as that which is most nearly allied to it. They that are after the Spirit do savour the things of the Spirit, as they that are after the flesh do savour the things of the flesh. And this is the way to become most stable christians, when souls and truth come to be united and knit together in love, meet-



ing in one and the same common centre, and even in this as the centre; as you may see in that place which I will recommend to your present perusal, and future serious thoughts. Colos. 2. 2. Saith the apostle, "I would, that ye knew what great conflict I have had for you, (as he introduceth it to them by what he saith in the foregoing verse) that your hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God." And what is comprehended in this mystery of God? that is, of the Father and of Christ; it is generally expressed first, "the mystery of God," and then particularly, "of the Father and of Christ." The former *and*, is not copulative but exigetical: "To the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and," that is, even, or to wit, of the Father and of Christ. That is, the mystery of God doth comprehend these two. The Holy Ghost is not always mentioned, being expressly enough so in many other texts. But here is the very sum of our religion in this mystery, "the mystery of God," to wit, "of the Father and of Christ;" two particular expressions including the general one, from both which, (as other scriptures sufficiently instruct us,) the Holy Ghost issues forth, as the great and mighty Agent to accomplish all the great things, which by Christian religion are to be effected in the world. And this was the apostle's deep concern on the behalf of these christians. "You cannot imagine," saith he, "what conflict I have about these things; that you might be strong christians:" and how? "That you may be knit together in love, unto the riches of the full assurance of understanding," all loving together, all agreeing together to love the same truths, the same doctrines, and thereby to have it incorporated, inwrought into you, that you may be able to say, "I can as soon suffer limb to be torn from limb, as suffer such truth as this to be torn away from my soul:" that that is to be bought and never to be sold, never to be parted with on any terms, "What! part with that? or be indifferent towards that? or let my mind hover or be in suspense? why it is my very life, my life lies here: shall I in the midst of a tempestuous sea, being safely brought to a firm and stable rock, quit my rock and go to floating again amidst the raging waves?" So will any man reckon in this matter, that hath any care or concern for his soul. Again,

5. You may hence learn, how we are to eye God in our transacting the great business of covenanting with him; that is, as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; which that initial seal of the covenant doth plainly enough dictate, when we are required to be baptized in the name of the

Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. When I enter into covenant with God to take him for my God, if I am first solemnly to do it yet; or if I am with solemnity, from time to time, to renew my covenant, we must consider how we are to do it; we must not think of taking God abstractly or taking one person alone. But we must take God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost for our God. Do not think your baptism signifies nothing, when it is directed to be administered in that order, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. So you are to consider with yourselves, "I am to be a devoted one, I am a devoted one, and must continue so, to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost." A wonderful thing that we should be a congregation of such persons dwelling on earth, who have these names named upon us, that such a claim should be laid from heaven to us, I claim every one of you for mine, for mine, saith the Father, you were baptized in my name; and so the rest. Why should we not walk up and down this world with this sense on our minds, with this thought often renewed, often impressed upon us?

## LECTURE XVI.\*

6. It lets us see how we are to understand the relation that results from such a covenant between God and us, whereby we become related to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and they become related to us: you have heard under what distinct notions, principally, but not exclusively, each of the persons is related to us. The Father as Creator, not excluding the Son and Spirit: the Son as Redeemer, not excluding the Father and Spirit, the Spirit as Sanctifier, not excluding the Father and Son. We have shewn you concerning each of these, that creative power (according as the Scripture teacheth us to conceive) is from the Father, as the Fountain, through the Son as the way of its conveyance, (in respect whereof some speak of a natural mediatorship belonging unto the Son of God before the ordinate one) and by the agency of the Holy Ghost, who is represented as the immediate Agent in all the operations of God towards the creature, whether in the sphere of nature or of grace. And we are to look upon the Son as under the notion of the Redeemer, but so as to understand that this redemption

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was designed by the Father, and is applied by the Holy Ghost : and upon the Holy Ghost as the Sanctifier, and yet still to understand that this his sanctifying work was pre-determined by the Father, procured by the Son, and effected by himself. When therefore, we are to consider God as related to us as our God, ("this God is our God, he will be our guide even unto death") we must take in and bring together each of these notions, and conceptions concerning him ; we must take in the conceptions of each of the persons, " God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost is my God." Somewhat agreeable to what the ancient philosopher saith, concerning relatives, *Relata sunt quorum totum esse est ad aliud* ; that is, *relatives are such things, the whole of which appertains to another.* Why so ? All that is conceivable in the Divine Being is, in this case, all to us. The fulness of God is to be considered with relation to us so far as is needful, so far as we are capable : he doth not reserve himself from us in any thing of it. How admirable a thing is this ! How great and high thoughts ought we to have concerning the privilege state of our case ! Indeed, there is nothing that we have to consider of this God, or to look after the knowledge of, to answer the curiosity of a vain mind ; but every thing or any thing that may answer the necessity of a perishing soul, of a soul that must otherwise be miserable and lost. Whatsoever is requisite to our real felicity and blessedness, we may look to all that is in God as determined by a special relation unto us. " As I am such (saith God) I am such entirely yours, all for you, wholly yours." Therefore, did the everlasting covenant that comprehends and conveys all this, yield such solace to the soul of dying David, 2 Sam. 23. 5. "Thou hast made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire." " I care for nothing beyond this." The great thing that the covenant doth convey, is God : and by it, it is, that God the Father, Son and Spirit do become related to us as ours, if once we do take hold of the covenant, if once we put in our claim, and do but lay the ground by that act of our own interest : our claimable interest doth depend upon that ; that very act of taking, accepting, "laying hold" as the expression is in that 56 Isaiah, for the encouragement of poor strangers that might possibly apprehend they were quite cut off from God. "No, let the sons of the strangers that take hold of my covenant encourage themselves ; that makes me theirs : I am theirs, if they do but lay hold ; it is but take and have," as afterwards, in this chapter where the text is, it is said concerning the Son especially, "He

that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." And he hath him who hath once taken him. Again,

7. This serves specially to instruct us concerning our application to God in prayer. That is, that we must still comprehend in our thoughts, Father, Son, and Spirit together ; the Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, as it is expressed in the text. I know and have particularly understood from some, that they have been full of dubious, perplexing thoughts, how to steer aright in their applications to God, making their solemn addresses so as to run into neither of those things which they have pretended to have been, both of them, their fear and confusion : on the one hand, by not ascribing distinctly to each of the persons what they should ; or blasphemy on the other hand, by ascribing what was not due ; what was not to be ascribed. But our way is very plain, if we do but consider what the Scriptures say concerning these three substances in the Godhead, and what copies it sets us of applying ourselves hereupon. That is, to the eternal Father, through the eternal Son, by the eternal Spirit ; so we ought to apply ourselves, and here is nothing to lead us into confusion or indistinction of thoughts in so doing. It is plain we have the Father always represented as the original Foundation of all light, all life, all being, all excellency, all perfection, whether created or uncreated. He is then a most adequate terminative Object of our worship in such application and supplication. We go properly to the Fountain of all good. Whither should we go else ? But he is (especially to those that have been in delinquency and transgression) inaccessible : we need a mediator : there could no mediator answer the exigency of our case, that was not God as well as man : we need a Divine Mediator, a God Mediator, we cannot expect that God should do any thing for us but for the sake of God, or for his sake who was God : so we are always taught to apply ourselves, to direct our addresses : and so we are to expect the answers of them : that is, that prayer must ascend through Christ, and that blessings are to descend through him. " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places," through him. Eph. 1. 3. And we are to suppose that whatsoever is done for us, in answer to our prayers, when they are accepted, it must be by the agency of the Holy Ghost. The state of our case is such, as to require an infinite almighty Agent to work in us, and to work for us, the things that are necessary to our present support, and to our final blessedness. And we are hereupon, taught by our Lord himself, in respect to the final and terminative Object of

such worship, (that of prayer for instance) to pray unto the Father; "Our Father which art in heaven"—so we are taught to pray. "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephes. 3. 14. Yea, and so our Lord Jesus Christ did pray himself: "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter." John 14. 16. "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23. 34. And to him he renders solemn acknowledgment by way of thanksgiving. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." Matth. 11. 25. And when he did so, (as we find his was a very praying life, in the days of his flesh, here in this world,) it is very vainly and foolishly alleged that then he must, according to our doctrine and notion, be supposed to pray to himself: it is a very vain and idle pretence. And so I find indeed, that the arguments of that sort of adversary, that is, they that do impugn the divinity of the Son of God, tend to prove, generally, nothing but that which we never deny, that is, that Christ was man. This is the thing that by many arguments they set themselves most industriously to prove, which none of us deny, that Christ was man. Who doth doubt it? But they would thence conclude that because he is man, therefore he could not be God; which is their absurd and foolish consequence, when we know it was so plainly, so very plainly said, that the Word which, in that text, is said to be with God, is also said to be God: and the same Word is said to be made flesh, to be incarnate, to have assumed and taken on flesh: that is, not as if it did, in becoming flesh, cease to be what it was before, but did only add an assumed nature to a divine; and therefore, there being two natures now meeting together in that one person, it was no way unintelligible, but that he should do that in the one nature which was impossible he should do in or by the other. That is, as man he did grow, and as a man he did die, and as man he did pray, when as God he could do none of these. But he that was God did do these things, though not as he was God. He that was God, did lay down his life, as in that 3rd. chapter of this epistle, verse 16. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he" (that same he that was God) "laid down his life for us." And so he that was God, shed his blood for us. Acts 20. 28. "Feed the flock of God (his church) which he hath purchased with his own blood;" his own, who was God; though as God, we know he could neither bleed nor have blood. But whereas, the Son of God, as he was the Son of God and God, did pray, and praying, apply himself to the Father, so are we to do, to pray, and in praying, apply ourselves to the Father as we are led by that great example. But then, we being nothing but

creatures, we have the whole Deity in view as the Object of our worship and addresses. But not the Deity, abstractly considered, but the Deity as subsisting in these three persons. The Deity abstractly considered, in the case of our Lord himself, was neither the Object, nor the Subject of prayer; God, as God, did neither pray nor was prayed unto by him; did not pray, for it was the man, the man Christ that prayed; nor abstractly, nor merely as God, was he the Object of prayer: but as the Godhead did subsist in the person of the Father, so did the man Christ apply himself to him, and so could in no sort be said to pray to himself, in praying to him. But now, I say, we who are nothing but creatures, we have the entire Godhead, not abstractly, but as subsisting in three persons, to apply ourselves unto, and those persons conceived of, according to the order they are represented to stand towards one another, and to be related one to another. As we told you already, when we pray to the Father, as the final and terminative Object of our prayers, we are at the same time, to conceive the Son as through whom the prayer is to be transmitted, together with the answer, the good we are to expect and pray for: and the Holy Ghost, as by whose power to pray, and by whose power the answer of prayer is to be effected too. And so it is God that our prayers must respect, God to whom, God through whom, and God by whom. Pray to God, through God and from God, and so our prayer hath every way to do with God. Our prayer, as it is to be through the mediation of Christ, so both it and its answer are to be wrought by the Holy Ghost: we are in that great and sacred work of praying, to deliver up ourselves to the conduct of the Holy Ghost, and so we are to do in the whole of our course. "As many as are the sons of God they are led," *oracled* (as that word signifies, Rom. 8. 14) "by the Spirit of God." Which Spirit is a Spirit of adoption, (as it afterwards follows,) the Spirit that belongs to the state of worship, as they are sons, that teaches them to cry "Abba Father." And because they are sons, he hath sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, as it is said in that parallel place, Gal. 4. 6. And we are required to pray always in the Spirit. Ephes. 6. 18. And in the Holy Ghost: 20th verse of the epistle to Jude. "Praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Put all this together, and then every prayer of ours, ought to respect each person in the Godhead. That is, it ought to be to God, through God, and from God: even as the answer, it is to be in the same order, originally God's answer, through Christ, and by the Holy Ghost. And so we run into no con-

fusion, when we suffer ourselves to be governed by Scripture light. And we can be in no danger of incurring the guilt of blasphemy: for we do not ascribe to any of these persons more than the Scripture doth plainly teach us to ascribe. And as our Saviour saith concerning himself, so may we concerning each of these persons: when the Scripture saith so and so, and doth attribute such and such things to them, will any one say, that he blasphemeth that saith, that the eternal Father is God, or the eternal Son is God, or the eternal Spirit is God? Scripture most expressly saying these things as words can speak them. And again,

8. This should further teach us how to steer our whole course in this world: our business here on earth, ought to be (in the main of it) religion: we ought to make religion our business. The business of religion, while we are in this imperfect state, is only a motion Godward. The religion of the way, is coming to God. So that any one who is sincerely religious and Godly, will be able to make answer to this question, What is the main business of your life? This true answer he can make, "My main business is to make towards God, I am aiming at God, tending towards God, as one that hath been removed and set at a distance from him, and so am to be brought back to him." It was this, Christ died for, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Now this being the state of our case, we are distant from him, in nearness to whom consists our duty and felicity. When we are to take and direct our course Godward, we must have a final term for our motion: "Whither are you going?" "Why my course is tending and directed Godward." This motion must have for its ultimate term, God the Father. This is the sense and language of an inquiring soul, when once it comes to understand what the Scripture doth so plainly reveal; that there are in the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Their sense, I say, is what we find expressed, John 14. 8. "Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us:" "do but shew us the Father, and we have enough: our great inquiry is after the Father, the Fountain and Original of all things, in whom is our life and our only hope." "Well," saith our Saviour (meeting that genius and sense of such an inquirer) "I know where you would be, and who you are seeking: and have you so long known me, and are ignorant of the Father? Come, I will be your Conductor, I will be your Guide, no man cometh to the Father but by me." And therefore, as there must be a final term of this motion, so there must be a way leading thereto. "Why, I am the way, the truth and the life, (John 14. 6.) no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." What is consider-

able in all motion, is especially considerable in this. In every motion there must be a final term, and there must be a way to move in. The Father, he is the final term—the Son, he tells us, he is the way. But then there must be a third thing, there must be an acting, moving principle besides, and that must be the Holy Ghost, and can be no other. It is by that one Spirit that all who shall approach to God must have access to him, even to him the Father, considered under the notion of the Father. Jews and Gentiles have been wont (as that was the noted distinction) to divide the world. Now we find both spoken of in the same context, Ephes. 2. His business was to make them nigh who were afar off. The Gentiles were afar off, the Jews were comparatively nigh: now Christ was to make them nigh too, and both of them were to have access by one and the same Spirit to the Father: from the 13th to the 18th verse. Whoever have a mind to return, to come back to God, (from whom, in the common apostacy, all have made a defection and cut themselves off,) here is the course and method of their procedure, they must propound to themselves God the Father, (the Fountain of all life and blessedness) to whom they must come, to whom they must be bending and directing their course, and to whom they must guide their course in the way he hath prescribed, and that is, by his own Son: “No man cometh to the Father (saith our Saviour) but by me.” And they must be acted on in this way towards that final term and end, by the power of the Holy Ghost. There can be no motion without the concurrence of such a third, unto which there is a correspondency here. That is, no man can move, but he moves somewhat towards some term, nor can he move, but it must be in some way. Nor again, can he move but it must be from some motive principle, that carries him through this way to that end. And so you may easily represent to yourselves the business of your lives here in this world. My business is from day to day, to tend towards the eternal Father by the eternal Son and under the conduct and influence of the eternal Spirit. These are obvious and useful instructions, in reference to the doctrine that hath been opened to you from the text, that do more directly concern and relate to the subject we have thus far been upon.

But there is somewhat else, in reference to the present purpose, upon this subject, which is collateral, and will be of use to us, however, to take notice of too. Our great design upon this text, was to observe to you, that there are such a three in the Godhead; three and no more, as we have observed and insisted, of one certain order, Father, Son, and Spirit, that do



subsist in the Godhead, which is but one. But the apostle doth here not only take notice what they are, that are thus in heaven, but what also they do, how they are employed, amidst the glory of the heavenly state. And he tells us they “bear record in heaven : the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.” You see who the witnesses are, in the words of the text, and may see, a little lower, what is the matter of their testimony, (as I was hinting to you but now) that is, in sum, the truth of the Christian religion, or the whole constitution of the Mediator. This is the record, (as it is presently subjoined) that God hath given us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son. He hath an infinite fulness of life to convey, to communicate, and to diffuse through a desolate world, a world lost in death and darkness. And how is it to be conveyed? in what way is it to be communicated? Why it is all treasured up in his Son, he hath constituted and appointed a Mediator, that in him it might be deposited, and that by him and through him, it might be transmitted and made to diffuse itself, and flow amongst lost and perishing souls. This was the matter of this testimony. Why let us take so much of instruction from hence,

That since those Three glorious Three that are in heaven, are bearing record to the truth of our religion, of Christianity, that is, that God hath a design to communicate life to lost and perishing souls, and hath treasured up that life in order to this communication in his Son : since this is their record, their testimony, I pray let us take care that we duly receive it. Be afraid of slighting that testimony, the matter whereof, is of so great importance to ourselves, and the Authors whereof, are the three glorious Persons in the Godhead, so venerable and so great Ones. When they are said to bear record in heaven, or to testify in heaven, the meaning is, not that their testimony is performed in heaven terminative, but originaliter, that is, these witnesses do testify from heaven, concerning this matter which is of so great importance to the sons of men on earth. And pray see that we receive their testimony, as after it follows; If the testimony of a man (who is of any credit) ought not to, be slighted; the testimony of God is greater. We have the testimony of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, concerning this one thing, that there is a design of saving sinners, and giving life to them through his Son, and that this life is only in this way to be communicated and conveyed to perishing and undone souls : what an awe should this lay upon our souls that are perishing ! And it is to us, that this salvation is offered. They are dead themselves, as the apostle’s ex-

pression is, "You are dead, but your life is hid with Christ in God." This being the state of our case, tremble at the thought of slighting such a record, such a testimony, that proceeds from these three great Witnesses that do bear record in heaven. That is, the Father testifies concerning his Son, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased : " The Son, that eternal Word, testifying concerning the man to whom he united himself, replenishing that man with a divine glory, so as that glory descending from heaven, and accompanying him in his descent from heaven, shone visibly in him as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. For he, at the same time when, after his descent, he had united himself with flesh is said to be the Son of Man, who came down from, and who is in, heaven. John 3. 13. He was therefore, testifying from heaven, and was actually in heaven, when also he was actually united with this man on earth. And the Holy Ghost, he testifying from heaven, by descending on this same man, in visible glory like a dove and lighting upon him. Thus, here was God the Father, testifying from heaven, and the eternal Word testifying, and the ever blessed Spirit testifying, from heaven, and their testimony meeting all in one point, namely, that Christ the Mediator is he by whom life is to be conveyed from the God of all grace unto undone, perishing, lost souls.

And consider in reference to this further, that as this is a testimony to us, it is our concernment, and is incumbent on us so to comport ourselves as that it may finally prove a testimony for us, and not a testimony against us. This testimony is directly to us, that is, that this is God's appointed way for saving lost souls and bringing of them to life and blessedness, and consequently, according as the design of this testimony is comported with or not, it will be either for us or against us. For us, if it can be recorded at last concerning us, such and such have had the gospel preached unto them, Christ hath been offered, God hath been offering himself in Christ ; and they have obeyed the gospel, they have complied with the call, they have received the Son of God. Oh ! how great a thing would it be to have a record in heaven for that ? How did Job solace himself in this, " My record is in heaven." When you can appeal to the records in heaven touching transactions between God and you, and you can say, " Lord, thou didst make an offer to me of thy Son, thou didst require me to receive him as my Lord and Saviour ; I have done so, I appeal to thee whether it be not recorded above, let the records of heaven be searched, see, whether I be not recorded a believer, one that

hath resigned up my soul to God in Christ by the power of the eternal Spirit, to be entirely and absolutely his for ever. O! how blessed a thing will it be to have such a record in heaven concerning you and for you? He that knows all things knows that such a one hath received Christ in truth, such a one hath truly believed, such a one loves the Lord Jesus in sincerity."

And how fearful, by consequence, will it be to have it recorded in heaven against you "So long, so many days, so many years hath such a one lived under the gospel,—so often hath a Christ been tendered to him, and been refused by him, and there he stands in the records of heaven, a refuser of the grace of God, refuser of his Christ, despiser of the great salvation, that hath been published and proclaimed and "begun to be spoken by the Lord himself, and was confirmed by them that heard him, God bearing them witness by divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

And besides, that we are thus to take notice of what is doing above; how these Three employ themselves, their bearing record in heaven, consider too (and therewith I shall shut up all) where it is that this work is doing, that these Three are bearing this record in heaven. Let us consider a little, and take this instruction from it, that it very ill becomes us to alienate ourselves from heaven and disregard the affairs and concerns of heaven. For we find that our affairs and concerns who dwell on earth are minded in heaven. In heaven there is a concern about such poor, wretched creatures as we upon earth. It is very unworthy dealing if we live here upon earth, groveling in the dust of it, and very seldom think any thought of heaven. When, in heaven, by that glorious Triad above, we see our concerns while we are upon earth are not forgotten, are not disregarded. These great and glorious Ones in heaven, are taken up about our affairs. Sure it should provoke us to look upwards much and often, adoringly. It should suggest from time to time this thought to us, that the intercourse between heaven and earth is not cut off. Still (as abject creatures as we are in this our low estate) these glorious persons above are concerned about us. Certainly, it should be often considered by us, that we have mighty attractives to draw our minds and thoughts upwards, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost still bearing a record from heaven to us about things that are of the greatest and highest concerns for us to mind.

And it should, in fine, provoke us to have aspirings upwards, towards the blessedness and perfection of the heavenly state. In heaven, these three bear record, the Father, the Word, and

the Holy Spirit. Who can think of this, and not say, "O that I were there! O that I were there! Then will this glorious mystery of the Trinity lie open to my view." It is in that seat of the divine glory that these Three are performing this kind office towards the poor children of men, even amidst the light and glory of the heavenly state. The time will come that we may hope to ascend, and be caught up into this region of light, and in that light to see light, so that as whatsoever is dark and obscure and unknown, and unrevealed, concerning this glorious Three and One, will be done away. When once we ascend and get up thither into the regions of light and bliss, where the glory of the Eternal Being doth display itself, we shall then know as we are known: we cannot know now but in part, and see but in part, but we shall then know perfectly and fully, and as we are known; so far as the capacity of created nature can admit. O! how pleasant should our aspiring upward to these Three be, where they do thus testify and bear record. How often should we be directing our thoughts and spirits, and the longing of our souls towards these regions of light and bliss, saying within ourselves, "When shall a period be put to the time of my converse with bats and moles in this base earth? when shall I hear the divine voice from the throne of glory that shall say to me, Ascend and come up hither, and see the things whereof thou hast hitherto but heard by the hearing of the ear?"

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## LECTURE XVII.\*



Matt. v. 48.

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

**N**EXT to the doctrine of the Trinity, comes (according to proper theological order) that of the Divine Attributes or Perfections, most fitly to be considered. After the discourse of the Trinity which we have showed you subsists in the Godhead, we have chosen this text, both as it serves to confirm, and as it serves to regulate, that foregoing doctrine.

First, As it serves to confirm it. For when we are so plainly told that “there are three that bear record in heaven;” and that the great Object of our religion, and whereto we are most solemnly to be devoted, is represented to us as three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; supposing such a triad as you see in the Godhead, you can suppose it under no other notion than that of a very great and high perfection belonging thereunto. And that, therefore, it must greatly intrench upon the perfection of the Godhead, and unspeakably diminish it, if there should be any attempt or offer made to diminish and detract from that sacred number. It could not but be a horrid maim to the very Object of our religion: and against any such disposition thereunto, or to do any thing, or to admit of any thought into our minds that may have that tendency, it would fortify us greatly, to have the belief well fixed in our minds of the perfection of the Godhead. And,

\* Preached May the 8th, 1691.

Secondly, It serves to regulate that doctrine of the Trinity too: that is, to direct us to understand it so as may consist with the other perfections of the Godhead; where we are sure it is impossible there can be any war, or that there should not be the highest and most perfect agreement. We must so conceive of the Trinity in the Godhead, and the perfections that we are here and elsewhere taught to ascribe unto it, as that these may manifestly accord with one another. And for that purpose, we must conceive of the divine perfections as the Scripture doth direct us, according as God himself speaks of them; allowing his word to be our measure, in making our estimate and judgment concerning them. They that take another course, and pretend to discover to us the incomprehensible nature of God, by methods and measures of theirs, secluding this, and opposing it in any kind, truly we have a great deal more reason to be astonished at their confidence than we have to admire their knowledge; as if they could make a better discovery and a clearer representation of God to us than he himself. But if we do understand the divine perfections according to those plain and express measures which he hath given us in his word, or which he enables us to collect, as we are reasonable creatures, from what he hath said in his word concerning himself and them, it would then withhold us from any such exorbitant conceptions concerning the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, as shall not be easily reconcileable with the doctrine of his perfections, according as he hath represented and stated it himself.

And upon that account, shall we apply ourselves to consider so much concerning the perfections of the Godhead, as this scripture will give us a general ground for. Indeed to speak of the several perfections and attributes that do belong to the Divine Nature, distinctly and at large, would be the work of a life's time; and very little agree with what I have designed, the expounding and opening to you the principles of religion, in as short a time as I can. Therefore, I have pitched upon this text, designing to sum up all under it, which I think requisite to say concerning the excellencies and perfections of the Divine Being, which we commonly speak of under the name, his attributes. You may take the ground of discourse thus,

That all the excellencies which are requisite to make up the most absolute perfection, belong as attributes to the nature of God; or as so many attributes to be ascribed to God. This, some may possibly apprehend will be but to do what hath been done already, and to do it over again. That is, when in proving to you the existence of the Deity, we shewed that we are

to conceive of him under the notion of a Being absolutely perfect. It is true, it was impossible to demonstrate his existence without forelaying that notion of God. And that is suitable to what the laws of method do require, in treating of any subject whatsoever. That is, if there be occasion to put the question *an sit*, whether such a thing be or not and to prove the existence of it, first, and before we come to that inquiry, to inquire *quid sit*, and what it is. To open the nature of such a thing, there must be first some general notion assigned and laid down of that whose existence we would prove, and about which the first inquiry was made *an sit*, whether it be yea or nay. Otherwise, in attempting to prove that, we may as well prove any thing else, if we do not give such a notion of it as will distinguish it from another thing.

But now after we have done so, it comes properly of course then, to proceed to a more narrow inspection into the nature of such a thing. And so the order of tractation did require it should be in this present case. That is, when we were to inquire concerning the existence of the Deity, first to put you in mind, what you and all must be supposed to apprehend concerning the thing we inquired about, that is, a Being of absolute perfection in the general: and we can have no other notion of God but as a Being absolutely perfect. That being done, and it having been evinced to you that there is such a Fountain-Being from whence whatsoever perfections we do behold, and come under our notice among the creatures, must have descended and been derived, inasmuch as whatsoever we behold, and take notice of, that comes under any notion of perfection with us at all, is not nothing, and therefore could not come from nothing, and therefore must be first in a fountain from whence it came. When by this means, I say, we have plainly evinced, that there is one Being which hath all perfection originally in itself; and thereupon shewn that Being to be a fit Object for religion, and to be worshipped by us, and to whom duties and exercises of religion ought to be performed, and that this can be done acceptably no way but agreeable to his own will; thereupon we were put upon an inquiry, how that will of his might be understood and known: and having found that it was discovered (with that design and to that purpose that he might be duly and acceptably worshipped) in that word that bears his name, thence we come regularly and of course, to speak of things particularly and more expressly concerning him (whereof we have had some general notions before) which are contained in this Book, and which this word will help us to a more distinct knowledge of. And therefore now, in speaking to

the proposition laid down, we are to consider the subject of it: "your heavenly Father," and then we are to consider the thing affirmed concerning this subject: He "is perfect."

I. For the former, the subject of this affirmation, we must consider in what sense (as there will be occasion to take notice of by and by) he can be spoken of under the name of a subject. Scholars know how to distinguish between a subject of predication, and a subject of inhæasion. He can be no subject of inhæasion, as you will see presently. But a subject concerning which, this or that may be affirmed or spoken, that is the only thing which we can truly and properly mean when we speak of God under that name or term. But whereas he is here mentioned as our "Father which is in heaven," (as our Saviour directs he should be prayed unto, in that comprehensive system of petitions that he himself was pleased to give his disciples, "Our Father which art in heaven,") we must distinguish between Christ's calling him Father himself and his teaching us to call him so, or his speaking of him as our Father. When Christ himself calls him "Our Father," he calls him so as he was: and so he doth speak himself, when he speaks of his having come from, his having descended from the Father. He could mean by the term "Father," nothing else but the first person in the Trinity. But when he speaks of him as our Father and directs us so to speak of him, or to speak to him, we do not need so to limit that term "Father," in reference to us, for we may fitly enough consider the whole God in the paternal relation to ourselves. Concerning the Father there is no doubt, for so our Saviour hath taught us to conceive and speak, "I go to my Father and your Father, My God and your God," John 20. 17. And even the Son is spoken of as our "everlasting Father." Isaiah 9. 6. And all the children of God are said to be born of his Spirit, and to be begotten thereby. John 3. 1. And suppose we should look upon Father, here, strictly as a personal name or title, yet so we must consider the Divine Nature as subsisting *fontaliter*, or as in a *fountain* in that person: and it is that person as having that nature eminently and originally and firstly in him; even that same nature that is common to each of the persons. And so it is not the person as the person, but as having the Divine Nature in it, which is the subject here spoken of. "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The Godhead or the nature of God subsisting as in the Fountain, in the Father: and that same nature which is also common with him to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. But then,

II. For that which is affirmed or spoken of this subject, He "is perfect." How are we at a loss when we come to speak of



this divine perfection ! “I have seen an end” (saith the Psalmist) “of all perfection, but thy commandments are, or thy commandment is exceedingly broad.” Even so much of divine perfection as is expressed that one way (in the divine word) is of so exceeding vast a latitude as to represent itself as the matter of the highest wonder to a very enlarged and comprehensive mind, that had exceeded the bounds of all other perfection and already gone beyond them all. I have seen an end of all perfection, but how vast a perfection beyond all that do I perceive in thy divine word, wherein there are yet but some sunbeams, some glimmerings of the perfection of the Divine Nature ! Indeed when we go about to speak of such a subject as this, or to think of it, we may even fear to meet with such a rebuke as that, Job 38. 2. “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge ?” Can we think, by searching to find out God ? Can we find out the Almighty unto perfection ? Job 11. 7. Somewhat, the case requires should be said, of what we can say and conceive but little of. Something, the exigency of our case doth require ; that we labour, all of us, to be informed concerning one with whom we have so much to do, and in whose hands all our great concerns do lie.

For the word that is used here, “*perfect*,” and the words in the learned languages that we are referred to by these penmen, they do (as all words must do) fall most inconceivably short of the thing. Words cannot but be poor, and labour under a penury when they are expressive of any thing of God. Alas ! They can go but a little way in it.

The words that we have here to do with more immediately, do carry in them a kind of diminishing and lessening intimation of coming to a state, or having come to a state that is higher and more excellent, from a state that was meaner and lower ; in which the subject spoken of is (as it were) supposed to have been before, according to the general and indefinite use of such words. As the Greek word *τελειος* that is here used, refers to a word that signifies *an end*, and so carries an intimation with it, as one had but then attained an end which he was aiming at, and tending towards before, which implies such a diminution as can by no means be admitted concerning God. As when any one doth then suppose himself to have arrived at an eternal sort of perfection, when he hath compassed an end that he was about. “I work this day, and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfect ;” finish a work I was engaged in, which is but an external sort of perfection. The word (for want of being more expressive) is borrowed and employed here, in a case of very transcendent height above that. And so for the Latin word

*perfectio*, or *perfectus*, it carries an intimation with it as if the thing spoken of were, now at length, thoroughly made that which before it was not. Such expressions do (through the natural poverty of speech and language) lessen and diminish greatly the thing that should be represented and set forth by them.

But to consider the thing itself, (as we may be capable to open to you somewhat of the divine perfections) there are two things to be done in reference hereto. We shall note to you, some things more generally that do concern the divine perfections indefinitely considered: and then shall (though briefly) come to consider some of the particular perfections themselves, which we are more specially concerned to take notice of, that are comprehended under those generals.

1. There are some things more generally to be laid down concerning the divine perfections, or excellencies, or attributes; you may call them which of these you will, fitly enough. And,

(1.) There is this to be considered concerning them, that there are of these divine excellencies or perfections, which we are taught to attribute to God, some that are altogether incommunicable ones. There are some that are incommunicable; that is, that have not so much as a name common to him, and to us, by which they are to be signified and spoken of. As there is his Self-subsistence, his All-sufficiency, his Eternity and his Immensity. These are attributes, or perfections of the Divine Nature that are not so much as common in name to him and to us; so appropriate to him, that there is nothing known by the same name that can be said of us. And there are some of his attributes and perfections that are communicable, that is, which under one and the same name, may be spoken of him and of us, of him and of the creature. As his wisdom; there is also such a thing among men: and his power; they have some power: and his goodness; they have some goodness: and so his justice, his holiness, and his truth: these are divine perfections that are spoken of under one and the same name, concerning him and concerning some of his creatures. That is one thing that you have in general to note; as concerning the incommunicable attributes of God, they have not so much as the same name with him and with us: for there is nothing in us, to which such names do agree: All-sufficiency, immensity, eternity, omnipotency, self-existence and the like. But the other (as was said) are signified by words applicable to somewhat in us, as to be wise, to be good, to be just, to be powerful and the like. And,

(2.) In the next place, you must note, that for those divine attributes and perfections which are communicable, it is only the name that is common to that thing in him, and that thing in us, which is expressed thereby. It is true that there is the same name but not the same nature. There is a likeness, a similitude, but not an identity, or a sameness. Take heed of apprehending, or imagining any such thing between the divine wisdom, or the divine power, or the divine goodness, that are uncreated, and that which is created; and so of his holiness, his justice and the like. We are not to think there is a sameness of nature, though there be the same names used in such perfections as these, as they are found to be in God, and as they are found to be in us, or in the creature: for it is impossible that the nature which is infinite, and the natures which are finite can be the same. An infinite nature and a finite nature must needs differ infinitely, and therefore can by no means be the same nature. Wherefore, all that is said in this case, in reference to us, when God is pleased to derive and communicate from himself unto those whom he regenerates, that which is called the Divine Nature; it is only said of it,—that it is his image, and his likeness, that is conveyed or communicated: it is only somewhat like God or the image of God that is impressed upon, and wrought into the soul. We must take heed of thinking that it is the same nature, as they have thought and blasphemously spoken, who have talked of being godded in God; as if the very nature of God was under such a name as this, transmitted into the creature. And again,

(3.) We must understand these perfections, or excellencies of the Divine Nature to be his very nature itself, and not to be any accidental thing superadded thereunto. We must not conceive that such divine perfections as wisdom and power and goodness and the like, are additions to the nature of God: but they are his very nature itself. There can be no such thing as an accidental supervention to the Divine Nature; but every thing that is in God must be conceived to be God. He is essential wisdom and goodness and truth, and is not these things by accident, as men may be, so as to have those things separable from their nature; no, nor can his nature, indeed, be so much as conceived without them. We are not to look upon them as accidents, either as separable or inseparable from his nature, but as being essentially included in it. And this is most evident, upon the account we have showed you; and the thing speaks itself in demonstrating to you the existence of the Godhead, that that Being whose existence we were to demon-

strate, is self-existent, existing always by and from itself without depending, without being beholden to any thing from whence it was. Now what is so self-existent is existent necessarily; that is, it owes its own existence to that peculiar excellency of its own nature, to which it is repugnant, and impossible not to exist. Now, whatsoever doth exist necessarily, so that its non-existence should be altogether impossible (which is the peculiar manner of the Divine existence) that must needs be unalterable. What is necessary, must be eternally or invariably necessary, and without any mutation: and nothing can be superadded to another but must infer a mutation: any addition would make an alteration. Therefore, none of these perfections are additions to God; for then they would make a change; but that which is necessarily what it is, never admits of any change, neither by addition nor subtraction any ways.

(4.) You must take this general note farther, that it is hence consequential, that the excellencies and perfections of the Divine Nature are in him, in perfect simplicity. That is, if none of them do differ from the Divine Nature, then it is impossible they should differ from one another; they cannot really differ one from another in themselves. It is true, indeed, that by our imperfect way of conceiving things, through the narrowness and incomprehensiveness of our minds, which cannot take in all things at once, we are fain to admit distinct notions which are wont to be called inadequate notions, concerning the Deity. We can conceive of such and such excellencies but by parts, but by little and little. It is but a small portion we can take up of him in the whole, and but very little after all. And therefore, all we are fain (looking upon the glorious and ever blessed Deity) to conceive, is an unknown wisdom in him, and an unknown goodness, and an unknown holiness and the like. Not as if these things did more really differ in him than one and the same face, (as one aptly expresseth it) doth really differ in itself because a great many glasses are placed against it, that do themselves differ from one another, and are variously figured and cut, do seem to represent divers faces. There is, I say, no more of real difference in these perfections from one another, as they are in God, than there would be in that case of so many real things that are reflected by so many glasses, where the difference of the reflected image doth proceed from the glasses, and not from the original which is one and the same to them all. And that we may preserve the notion entire of the Divine Simplicity, it is easy to be demonstrated to them that shall consider—that if there be not a most perfect simplicity in the Divine Nature, so as that the several ex-

cellencies belonging thereto be really in him, one and the same thing, then these excellencies could not meet there but by composition; they would make a composition in the Divine Nature if they were there with real difference. But such a composition in the Divine Nature is altogether impossible, upon these two accounts. First, If there were such a composition there must be supposed a causation: if the Divine Nature were compounded, it would be inferred it were caused; and so God were not the first Cause of the first being: and, Secondly, (though one would think that nothing should need to be added after that, it being plain, nothing can be prior to God,) If there were a composition there would also be a limitation, and so these perfections of the Divine Being would not be infinite, and consequently they must be perfections altogether disagreeable, no way agreeing to the Divine Nature. It cannot but be that he must be infinitely wise, infinitely good, infinitely powerful, and the like. But he should not be so, if these things did really differ in him from one another; for whatsoever doth really differ from one another, doth limit that other from which it differs. If there be an infiniteness in goodness, or an infiniteness in power, or an infiniteness in knowledge, we cannot suppose many infinites; there cannot be more infinites than one; and therefore it is but one and the same thing that is all these. Whatsoever you do design to the one, you must detract from the other. And if you should suppose two infinites, you do thereby suppose neither to be infinite, but both to be finite. That therefore, you must fixedly retain, as a general rule, that the several excellencies and perfections of the Divine Nature, are in him, in most perfect simplicity, and so do not differ in him, as one thing differs from another. Only the Divine Nature and Being itself, as it hath all excellency and perfection in it doth, when it comes to cast an aspect upon us and upon our minds, appear as various, though in itself it is most simply one. And again,

(5.) You must further note this, that the negative attributes of the Divine Being do always imply somewhat positive. There are some things ascribed to God in negative terms, which must be understood to have a positive sense and meaning, under those terms. As when it is said of God, he is immortal, which is a negative term, it implies the most infinite and undecaying fulness of life. And so when it is said of God, that he is invisible, though that be a negative term, such a being as cannot be seen, the meaning is, that his being is of that high and glorious excellency as not to be liable and subject to so mean a thing as the sight of our eye; it is too fine, too bright

and glorious for so mean and low a faculty to reach unto. And,

(6.) You must note this, that any particular excellency that men attribute or ascribe to God, it must always be understood to be ascribed to him in the highest pitch of perfection, and not with that diminution wherewith we behold the shadow of such things to be accompanied in the creature. And therefore, we must take heed of debasing the excellencies of the Divine Nature, by confining, concerning them, to that which only gives some faint representation of them among us. We speak of several things that are real excellencies among the creatures; as quickness of sense, to be able presently to feel whatsoever is noxious and hurtful: this sense of pain, is in the creature a perfection; but we are not to conceive any such thing in God: but we are to conceive that which is transcendent in him, that comprehends in itself the power of giving such and such perfections to the creature; so as that those things are eminently, constantly, only in him which, speaking of this and that particular perfection, is in a distinct, formal notion in the creature. We must not say, that this or that we behold in the creature is in him, but some transcendent excellency that doth virtually and eminently comprehend it; as when the Psalmist tells us, "He that planted the eye, doth he not see? and he that formed the ear doth not he hear? and he that teacheth man knowledge doth not he know?" we are not to think that there is such seeing, or such hearing with God, or any kind of sensation as is with us: but there is that transcendent excellency in him, that doth eminently contain all these in a far more glorious manner than we can conceive. These things, it is fit we should note generally, concerning the divine attributes, or perfections, as a ground for somewhat more distinctly, though very briefly, concerning these attributes, or perfections of God, particularly considered.

But before we pass from this discourse, of what is of more general import concerning them, give me leave to suggest somewhat to you that may be of present use, and that may influence practice, and tend to better the hearts and spirits of us, who are now called to hear about such a subject; "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect." So our Lord, who was a Teacher come forth from God, on one of his great errands, doth direct us to conceive concerning him. I pray let our thoughts stay here a little, and meditate, and pause awhile; both on this Subject here spoken of, and that which is affirmed concerning this Subject.

[1.] The Subject spoken of, "Your Father which is in heaven," This NAME, "Your Father," should carry a very attrac-

tive sound with it to every ear, and to every heart among us. It is very unfit that we should, any of us, sleep and slumber under the mention of this name, this title given to God, "your Father." Let us bethink ourselves: Can we call God Father? It is a thing to be thought on—with much caution, and then, if that hath produced any effect, and reached any good issue with us, it ought to be thought on—with high consolation.

First. With great caution. "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect:" when we find that some are addressed by our blessed Lord, with the supposed capacity of bespeaking God as their Father, would it not strike cold to any man's heart, that should have cause to think, "Am not I excluded? Am not I one of them that may not dare to take such a name into my mouth and apply it to him, to call him my Father? Doth not my own heart smite me, that I assume so much to myself as to say, God is my Father?" There were those that briskly and boldly pretended to it in our Lord's time. "We are not born of fornication, we have all one Father, even God," say some of these petulant hearers. John 8. 41. It ought to be seriously considered, "What Godlike thing have I in me to bespeak me his child, or that may give me the confidence to call him my Father? What childlike dispositions do I find in me towards him? Is there that trust that becomes a child, that love, that dutifulness, that study to please him?" Let us consider whether we can call him Father, and our hearts not smite us, and tell us inwardly, this is a title that belongs not to thee to give. But if we can find it doth, it is a thing to be considered as with great caution.

Secondly. With high consolation afterwards. Can I indeed say, that he is my Father? What then can I have to complain of? what have I to fear? what have I to desire? what have I to crave beyond what this contains, and carries in it? And pray take heed of diminishing so great a thing to yourselves. Have you, upon a strict inquiry, reason to look upon yourselves as one of that regenerate seed which is peculiar and appropriate to God? carries his signature, his stamp, his image? It is then a very unworthy thing to your Father, to let your spirits sink. It should greaten your minds, it should make you to say within yourselves, "Then am I to live far above the world, it is base, for the children of such a Father to live mean, and lie low, and to grovel in the dust; and to let his own heart despond and sink within him, upon the less grateful aspect and appearances of things from this world. For alas! what is this world to me, if God be my Father?" And, "Your Father, which is in heaven is perfect." You must consider how this our Father is in heaven; not as confined there, not as if heaven did confine him,

whom the "heaven of heavens cannot contain." And we should thereupon consider, that truly if heaven do not confine him, this earth ought not to confine me. If he be my Father, there should be no exclusive limits between him and me. If he be my Father, so in heaven as that though he hath his throne, the theatre of his glory, his court, and his retinue there above, yet he doth also diffuse a vital and essential presence throughout the creation, so as that this earth itself is not excluded, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there; If I traverse the seas, wherever I come, there thou art." Psalms 139. 7. I say, if heaven doth not contain him, but that he reacheth this earth too, I should thereupon think this earth should not so confine me, but I will reach him, and apply myself to him, and converse and lead my life with him. And since heaven is represented as the seat of his most glorious residence, we should always think ourselves to have concerns lying there above. I am not to be limited then to this base low earth, if I have a Father in heaven. It is intolerable hereupon, that we should live here upon earth, if we had renounced and quitted all claim to heaven, never looking up thither. What! Do we forget that our Father is there? There he dwells in glory, there he beholds the dwellers upon earth, and looks into the very inmost motions of our thoughts, and workings of our spirits, from day to day, and from moment to moment; if he see a mind carried after vanity all the day long, will he not say, "What! Is such a one, one of the offspring of heaven, but hath no business there, who never minds any thing but this base earth?" Shall he have cause to observe this concerning us, and thus to judge and censure us from day to day? "These are the children of the earth, sons of the earth, they have nothing to do in heaven, they never look up thither." Such words standing here in the Bible, "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" methinks they should make strange impressions upon our spirits when we come to look on them and seriously consider them.

[2.] And then what is affirmed concerning this Subject, (though I must not spend time upon that now,) he is perfect, every way perfect. We may yet, by the way, see what ground of reproof there is here for us, that we so little adore, and so little imitate this perfection. That God is not greater in our eyes when we are beholding him, and considering, that whatsoever our minds can conceive of excellency, we find it in him in the highest perfection, and yet we adore him not, we take no notice of that glorious One, how sad is the case when even this itself is a continual increase of guilt upon us, that we know so much of God, that a poor creature should have cause to say, "I should have been



far more innocent if I had known less, and been less capable of knowing God. I might have been an innocent creature, in comparison, if I had not known so much.” To know him to be so perfectly holy and not to imitate him, to know him to be so good and not to trust him, to love him, to depend upon him and to seek union with him; to know him to be so perfect, and content myself with my own imperfection, when according to this rule of our Lord we should be “perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

## LECTURE XVIII.\*

2. But I come now to give, in the second place, some more distinct account of some, at least, of the more eminent of the attributes of God. And I shall begin with that which must be understood as comprehensive of all the rest, and that is, of the **DIVINE ALL-SUFFICIENCY**. This is the summary perfection of God; his All-sufficiency. And as the verse where the text lies, saith “Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect,” so elsewhere, is the Divine All-sufficiency represented to us as the ground and pattern of that perfection which is required in us. Gen. 17. 1. “I am God All-sufficient: walk before me and be thou perfect.” The word there used is, in some translations, rendered All-mighty, in others, All-sufficient, *El-Shaddai*. They indeed seem to me, to give the more congruous account of the etymology of that word that do read it All-sufficient, deriving it not from *Shadda* that signifies to destroy, to lay waste, which yet, is comprehended no doubt (that is the power of doing so) in the notion of Almighty, but rather deriving it from a word that signifies sufficiency with the pronominal particle he: He that is sufficient, God that is sufficient, *El-Shaddai* or that is self-sufficient. And he is so self-sufficient either understanding it to be a sufficiency arising from himself or a sufficiency serving for himself. Either way he is self-sufficient; by a sufficiency that speaks him to be All to himself, a sufficiency arising and springing up within himself, or a sufficiency to himself, as having enough in himself to enjoy without being beholden, without depending upon any thing without himself. And such All-sufficiency spoken of God must needs mean, He that is of himself, sufficient for himself, must needs be sufficient for all the creation besides.

\* Preached May 15, 1691.

If of himself there be a sufficiency in him for all his own perfections, there must be a sufficiency for all that communication that the creature can any way stand in need of. This is that attribute, that comprehensive one, that we shall in the first place say somewhat to.

And I shall say the more of this, because it is so vastly comprehensive as hath been said, and as the matter is plain in itself that it is. It is the same thing that is meant by that fulness that we find again and again, in Scripture, attributed to God, that πληρωμα του Θεου, "That you may be filled with all the fulness of God." Ephes. 3. 19. Not that there needs any great fulness to fill us. A very little thing will do it; and it signifies nothing to the vastness of the plenitude of the ocean, that a nut shell or a minute vessel may be filled; but it is the greatness of the expression that I here note, "the fulness of God;" how vast, how immense, how profound an abyss must that be! In Ephes. 1. 23. we read of the "fulness of him that filleth all in all;" that filling fulness: it is another fulness that is meant there in that form of expression where, most condescendingly, the church of Christ in this world is spoken of as his fulness. But whose fulness is it? The "fulness of him that filleth all in all." Even he, notwithstanding his vast and boundless self-fulness doth yet vouchsafe to be filled in respect of that union that he is pleased to take a people out of this world into, with his own blessed Self. We read (Col. 2. 9.) of "all the fulness of the Godhead" dwelling in flesh, as it were, embodied in flesh, which we must understand still is the same fulness when it is deposited, when it is, as it were, so disposed for communication. It is not another fulness from the original Divine Fulness, but the same under a new relation wherewith it now comes to be clothed. As when also, in that Col. 1. 19. it is said, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," fulness and all fulness, that it should dwell in him. It did dwell indeed in him originally and naturally in the person of the Son, but now it dwells in the Mediator, that being so lodged and settled, (as it were) it now lies ready for communication to indigent creatures, necessitous creatures, empty creatures; such as we are, empty of every thing that is good, and of the desert of every thing that is so; and only designed and fitted by natural designation as so many "vessels of wrath" to be filled with wrath. Now all the fulness of God comes to be posited and clothed with that relation, to put on that aspect, with reference to us, that according to our need, measure and capacity it is all for us. "It pleased

the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," with such a design that he might fill the sacrifice first, that was offered up, as you find the context speaks,—(Col. 1. 19, 21.) "that he might make peace by the blood of his cross and reconcile all things to himself:" and then, that he might fill the souls which that sacrifice had been accepted for, in the virtue of it, opening its own way to flow in to us. And another expression you have of this same perfection, (the All-sufficiency and plenitude of the Godhead) to wit, that of his being "All in all." A most Godlike phrase, wherein God doth in his own word speak so of himself, speaks like himself, at the rate of a God, with divine greatness and majestic sense. It is used with reference to the divine operations, 1 Cor. 12. 5. "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." But it is also spoken of the Divine Being with reference to his existence; He is All in all; or as in the mentioned place, (Ephes. 1. 23) "filleth all in all." In the final state when all the great designs of God are compassed and brought about, then is he more entirely, fully and immediately to be All in all. He will be more conspicuously so then: he is now so indeed, as it hath not escaped the notice of heathens themselves, who tell us, that whatsoever we see is Jupiter, and whatsoever we are moved by, is Jupiter: that one universal mind doth work through all the universe and mingles itself with the vast body of the creation. So is Christ, in whom is all the fulness of God, (as was told before) he is said to be "All in all." Here is an All in an all, a comprehending all and comprehended all; that is, an uncreated All, and a created: the latter, contained in the former, the former, containing the latter, in-wrapping it, infolding it, diffusing itself any where throughout it, and in all, and over all, and through all. And indeed, that created all, is a little, most contemptible little all, in comparison of the all-comprehending, uncreated fulness, that involves the other in as great a disproportion as you may suppose an atom, a little mote or particle of dust comprehended in the whole earth, or a minute drop in the vast ocean, that swallows it up and runs through it and through it; so is the all of this creation (as great as it may appear to our little narrow minds and thoughts) swallowed up in the uncreated All, so as that in comparison of that, it is nothing. All nations come under this notion, but "as the drop of a bucket, and the small dust of the balance, and lighter than nothing," as confessing it impossible to speak diminishingly enough of the littleness of the creature, in comparison of the Divine All, "less than nothing." In-

deed, simple nothing cannot vie with all fulness, with the immense plenitude of substantial beings. But that, that seems to be newly stept forth out of nothing, that, it may be, will pretend to vie, and therefore that is so much the more despicable, even more despicable than mere nothing: mere nothing hath no competition with it to that vast plenitude and fulness of Being. But there may seem somewhat of competition in that which is just stept forth out of nothing: and therefore, that is despised as less than nothing; for mere nothing is not so despicable as that which is just risen out of nothing when it is brought into any kind of compare with the infinite, immense All.

But to speak yet a little more particularly and distinctly concerning this most perfect All-sufficiency and fulness of God, (as it can be possible to us to speak and hear of so great a thing) I shall speak somewhat to the nature of it, what sort of fulness or plenitude this All-sufficient, perfect fulness is. And then—speak somewhat of the purposes which it answers and is most apt to answer.

1. Somewhat of the nature of it. And for that, our best way of opening and unfolding it will be to consider these two things, namely, what it contains, and—after what peculiar it doth contain what it must be understood to carry in it: that is, the contents and the properties of this fulness: what it contains and with what peculiar and distinguishing characters it doth contain it.

(1.) For the contents of this most absolute and perfect fulness of God, All-sufficient fulness; it contains all that we can think, and indeed all that we cannot think. It contains all being, and all life, all motive and active power, all knowledge and all wisdom, and all goodness; every thing that is excellent, valuable and desirable in all the kinds, and in all the degrees of perfection conceivable, in reference thereunto. I shall not speak more distinctly now, in reference to that head, because under other heads that we are afterwards to speak a little (though but a little) particularly to, there will be more occasion to discourse of these severally. But we come,

(2.) To consider of the characters of this fulness, the properties of it, whereunto it must be understood to contain what it doth contain. And so,

[1.] It is a self-original fulness, a fulness that ariseth from itself. It is the highest fountain itself, and not fed from any higher, which is the signification of that title, or that name by which God was pleased to make himself known to Moses, “I Am,” and a little more largely “I Am that I Am.” A name so expressive of this plenitude and fulness of being and all-per-

fection of God; so aptly and naturally expressive thereof, that it hath obtained naturally, easily in the pagan world, as that inscription testifies in the temple, which I formerly named, “I am that which I was, and that which is, and that which shall be, and let any man at his peril disclose my veil.” And we are told by some of the ancients in the Christian church, that the notions which Plato doth so abound with, he learnt in Egypt, and came by them, it is most probable, and as they think, as having been communicated from some of the Israelites to some of the Egyptian priests with whom he afterwards conversed, that is, with those of them to whom those traditions came some centuries of years afterwards. And that this fulness is self-original, or self-originate, they must always apprehend, who do apprehend that any such thing as Deity could only be of itself, from itself. A Being of that sort and kind, as unto which not to be, was always repugnant; and so that it owes whatsoever it is, or whatsoever it hath in itself, to that peculiar excellency of its own nature, which was always necessary to it, to be what it is; can receive nothing *aliunde*, from without, and can lose nothing, or suffer no detraction of what it is, or hath already belonging to it. This is “I Am,” the stable and permanent Being that is by itself what it is. That then, is the character under which we are to conceive of this divine fulness, of this perfect All-sufficiency; that it is self-originate: he being the perpetual, everlasting Spring and Fountain of it to himself. “With thee is the fountain of life.” Psal. 36. 9. There, being is in its first Fountain, and life is in its first Fountain. To that, all things else that be and live, and that have any thing of motive and active power, they participate all from hence; “In him we live and move and have our being,” as the apostle expresseth it, Acts 17. 28. For which he there quotes a pagan poet; and likewise for that in the adjoining words, “we are all his offspring.”

[2.] We are to conceive concerning this Divine Fulness, that it is immense as well as self-originate. He is infinite, unbounded: and that it must needs be for the same reason, because it is self-originate: for causation speaks limitation, whatsoever causeth another, limits it: and that which is uncaused must be unlimited, *omnis limitatis est causata*; that which doth impart and communicate to another doth measure and bound its own communication: and from whence any thing hath that which it doth derive from another, thence it hath the bounds and limits of that which is derived. The limits of the derivation proceed from the original. Therefore it is plain whatever is uncaused must be unlimited, and so this

fulness of God being self-originate without any superior cause, must needs be immense and infinite without bounds and limits. There is nothing to bound and limit, but he existing necessarily, when all things else do exist contingently, and by dependance upon his will and pleasure, it could not be but that he must engross all being, all life, and all perfection in himself, because there was nothing else existing besides or before that which did exist necessarily, that is himself, by which what was in him could not be any way limited. Therefore, so we are to conceive of the Divine Fulness—that it is immense. It is then a perfection here spoken of God, which is not particular of this or that special kind, but which is most properly absolute and universal, to wit, of all kinds taken together, with all the several degrees that can come within the compass of each several kind. So metaphysicians are wont to distinguish of perfection, into that which is simple or absolute, and that which *sui generis*, of its own particular kind, that which hath all that belongs to that kind in it, may be said to be perfect in its own kind. That which hath the essence and properties of gold may be said to be perfect gold, and especially if it be pure from dross and doth exclude every thing that is alien from it, if it be pure. That is the notion of pure : *purum est quod est plenum sui, that is pure that is full of itself*, and hath no admixture of any thing alien from it. So may a thing be said to be perfect in its own particular kind, when it is full of itself and when it is free from admixture of any thing else. But the Divine Nature (as is evident) is infinite and immense ; is not perfect of this or that particular kind, but of all kinds whatsoever ; that is, of all that is excellent and valuable ; yea, every thing of all being, being included and comprehended in it. Not formally, for that would make God and the creature all one, but eminently and transcendently, that is, it being in the divine power to determine whether any thing besides should be extant, or not extant. And so he is the Root of being to every thing that is, and the Spring of life to every thing that lives, and the Fountain of all excellency to every thing that can partake of it. And therefore, his perfections or fulness is not of this or that particular kind ; if it were so, it were a limited fulness, a bounded fulness : but it is a fulness that comprehends all kinds together eminently, and transcendently in itself. As the root of the tree doth comprehend all the branches, that is, virtually, it comprehends that virtue in it, and transmits that which extends to all the branches, and as the very seed did virtually contain the whole tree once in itself ; so all

the creation was contained in God, before it, by his appointment and command, stood forth into actual being. And,

[3.] It is hereupon an immutable Fulness. This divine fulness admits of no alteration, either by augmentation or diminution. It can neither be made more nor less than it is: either, would make a change, and no change can have place in that Being which is necessary. The Divine Being and all that plenitude and fulness that belongs to it, being self-original, it must be necessary; it could spring from no other, therefore, it must be of itself what it is: and no other imaginable reason can be assigned why such a Being doth exist, but only that peculiar excellency of its own nature, to which it was repugnant not to exist. Hereupon therefore, this is the only necessary Being, and that which is necessarily what it is, can never be other than what it is, can never vary, and therefore that "Father of lights (as the blessed God is mentioned under that name, James 1. 17.) is without variableness or shadow of turning." Without so much as the umbrage of a change, there is not the shadow of variation with him. But before the creation was he was the same, and through all the successions of time when that creation is in being, he is still the same: and if the creation should drop back again into nothing he were the same. Unto that which is necessarily what it was first, nothing can supervene, because it hath its whole being necessarily, so that there can be no addition to it: and then there can be no detraction from it, no diminution, because it hath what it hath necessarily: it is essential to be what it is. And therefore,

[4.] This plenitude of God, must be everlasting, this All-sufficiency, this perfection, must be eternal. For if there can be no variation in any, the least degree, much less is it conceivable there should be a cessation of the whole Being. A variation in any, the least degree, is altogether impossible to that which is necessarily what it is: and thereupon the eternal permanency of it in the same state must needs be consequent. Hence those amazing expressions about the Divine Being, "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." Psalm 90. 2. Set yourselves to contemplate God; you must needs yield yourselves to be lost and swallowed up in your minds upon the contemplations of that which is "from everlasting to everlasting." And so that most emphatical expression, of his inhabiting eternity; "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, I dwell in the high and holy place." Isaiah 57. 15. But before that, he was his own place, and indeed all the creation is rather vested in him, than he in any thing. Be-

fore time was, or any creature was, he had nothing to inhabit but his own eternity, that is, his own eternal Self: for eternity and the eternal One are the same thing.

Thus you have some account of the nature of the all-sufficient, perfect fulness of God, both from the contents and properties or perfections thereof; what it contains, to wit, all being, all life, all motive power, all wisdom, all knowledge, and whatsoever excellency besides you can conceive, or all that is conceivable, and indeed, all that is unconceivable by any created mind. And then, under what characters, as it is a self-originate fulness, an immense fulness, an unalterable fulness, incapable of any augmentation or diminution, and as it is an everlasting fulness.

2. The next thing is to shew you what purposes this perfect, All-sufficient fulness of God may answer. And indeed, it answers all that is any way desirable should be answered, or that it were to be wished should be answered. For,

(1.) It answers the corresponding purpose of its own felicity, to be an everlasting felicity to himself, where there is the only correspondency, that it is any way possible it should otherwise be; should any way be found between the fruitive faculty and the object. Here is an immense and boundless object for an immense fruitive faculty: nothing could satisfy God but God: there is a capacity not otherwise to be filled up. It was to be answered by nothing but himself, and therefore we must not suppose that there are any additions any way to that felicity from any thing without himself. He only enjoys himself and takes pleasure in his own designs. When he hath designs upon such poor creatures as we, he only pleaseth himself in himself, in his bountifulness, the benignity and the kindness of his own design. When he did, (he must be supposed to have done) even in the days and ages of eternity always retain with himself a design, "I will raise up such and such creatures;" such in particular as any of us; "I will in their proper time and season raise them up out of nothing, on purpose to take them into a communion and participation with me in my own felicity, my own blessedness." What is it he was pleased with? was it that he loved us or delighted in us? He was self-pleased with the kindness and benignity of his own design: not that any thing in us could draw his eye, his love, or his delight, but his kindness and goodness therein was its own reason. He sheweth mercy because he will shew mercy. It was not that one was better than another, but from that goodness of his that is invariable, and can never be better than himself, the complacency that it was always apt to take in its own designments.



From hence it is, that he hath any such thing as delectation in a creature, only as he hath freely placed a design and made it terminate upon such a one, and so is pleased in that kindness and goodness which he hath in himself, and not in any delectableness that was previously in the object. For as to that, there was no more in one than another, and if it were for that reason as such, then it must have followed that all would have a like participation in the felicity of the Divine Being. But this is the eminent, great purpose that the divine All-sufficient fulness serves for, even for his own eternal and invariable felicity. Whence he hath so frequently the title and name of “the ever-blessed God;” his own blessedness being his very essence, or essential to himself; so that he was never to be known under another name, or conceived of under another notion, than as the blessed One, the Fountain of all blessedness; “The glorious gospel of the blessed God,” saith the apostle, 1 Tim. 1. 11. And “the blessed and only Potentate.” 1 Tim. 6. 15. And “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore.” 2 Cor. 11. 31. And so of Christ as he is God, he is said to be “over all, God blessed for ever.” Rom. 9. 5. “Blessed for ever,” that is, only in himself as the only correspondent and adequate object of his own fruition. And,

(2.) His most perfect Divine Fulness, appears to have been sufficient for the creation of this world: and (which is but doing the same thing continually) preserving it ever since it was created, even until now; not only bringing it into being, a rude mass of being; but settling and conserving of order in it, and that variety and distinction of creatures, which we behold and which indeed we must suppose to be the only effect of the All-sufficient perfection of a God. The very being of such a world speaks his power; but the order that is in it and the variety of creatures wherewith it is replenished, and the continued preservation of those distinct kinds and species through so many successive ages; so that what this or that plant is, or at least was, so many thousand years ago, it continues to be the same, a thing of the same kind; in the same rank or class of being still as it was. All this is by the All-sufficient, perfect fulness of a Deity that could answer such a purpose as this, to make such a mass of created beings exist and arise out of nothing; and that so much of order and distinction of kinds should obtain and be preserved even in this natural world, through so many successive ages unto this day. It was this that the perfect All-sufficiency of God did, and doth continually serve for. And,

(3.) For the government of the intelligent world ; so that wheresoever he hath intelligent creatures he can, by bare touches upon the mind, steer them and act them this way and that at his own pleasure : make great numbers of people at once to agree in one and the same design, all of them ; as God did touch their minds in making Saul, king. And that is one instance that shews what is done throughout all the world, and all other ages, where all minds lie under the agency and influence of one supreme, universal Mind. And otherwise, how were it possible that all should conspire and agree to serve the same purpose and do the same thing. And again,

(4.) This perfect, All-sufficient Fulness serves for the defeating of the designs of his enemies ; so that he can with the greatest facility and ease, consume adversaries with a fire not blown, and make them “perish like their own dung :” and blow upon them with the breath of his nostrils and make every thing of opposition vanish when he will. And thereupon, as being perfectly Master of his own designs and having every thing in his own power with the times and seasons and ways of doing them, he lets enemies run on, foreseeing still at a distance their day that is coming. He knows their day is coming, and in the mean time sits in heaven and laughs at them, “the Most High hath them in derision :” them who say “Come, let us break their bands asunder and let us cast away their cords from us :” as it is in the 2nd Psalm.

(5.) It answers the purpose of sustaining and preserving his own, the people that he hath collected and chosen out of this world to be peculiar to himself, the whole community of them and every particular soul belonging to that community so as to lose none of them. He bears them up and carries them through all the temptations and conflicts and trials and exercises that they meet with here, in a sojourning state and in a warfaring state, so as that they are kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. And then,

(6.) And lastly, this perfect and All-sufficient Fulness serves for their final satisfaction and blessedness, when they shall be brought into that region, into his “presence, where there is fulness of joy, and to his right hand where there are pleasures for evermore.” Psalm 16. 11. And that which is felicity enough for himself, will surely be enough for them too.

## LECTURE XIX.\*

But now in the next place I shall speak further to you of some of the most eminent and noted of those attributes and perfections of God which are comprehended in this general one, and concerning the order of speaking to them, I shall not be much solicitous. Some distinguish them into negative and positive. But that distinction I reckon less material; because that those they call negative ones are so only verbally, there being somewhat most really positive, that is comprehended under such negative terms, as infinite and immortal and immense and the like. They are usually distinguished into communicable and incommunicable, as hath been occasionally told you already; the former whereof, being those attributes of God of which there is some image and resemblance under the same name among the creatures.

The INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES are those whereof there is no direct resemblance among the creatures, nor the very name thereof justly or properly to be given to any among them or to any thing that is to be found among them. And for this distinction of the divine attributes, they speak very properly and congruous to the nature of the thing, who tell us, that in the description of God, the former sort of these attributes (the communicable ones) do serve to express his nature more generally, or serve to supply the room of a *generus* in a definition. And that the incommunicable attributes serve to supply the place of a *difference* in a definition restraining (as it is the business of a difference to do) that general nature, that is presupposed.

And others again distinguish these several ways, that is, some do call every thing a divine attribute, which may be any way affirmed concerning God. When some others of them do only mean by a divine attribute, that which is affirmed concerning him, (as the logicians are wont to speak) "*Loquiter quid*," not "*in quo*;" as when it is said, "God is a Spirit," that they do not reckon a divine attribute which is only to answer the question, What he is? But those things only are to be called attributes, or divine perfections, that do speak more distinguishably concerning his nature, to shew what a one he is, or what a peculiar sort or kind of being he is. And so for one class of divine attributes some reckon his natural properties which do some way specify his nature.

\* Preached June 12, 1691.

And then for the second kind, the faculties which, (according to our way of conceiving things) we must attribute to him. And then for a third sort, the exercises that do reside in those several faculties, and for a fourth, those that do imitate the affections that are in us belonging to the rational nature, as it is to be found with us, such as love, anger, desire, delight or the like.

I do not think fit indeed that we should tie ourselves to any such distribution. What I mentioned before, of communicable attributes and incommunicable, carries its own evident reason with it, and its own light to every one that observes things. There are some divine excellencies whereof there is an image and resemblance in the creatures fitly mentioned, under the same name in him and in them, though they do not signify the same thing in them as they do in him, but only the image or resemblance of such a thing. And then there are those that are *incommunicable*, and which neither in name nor in likeness can agree to the creature. This is a very plain distinction, obvious to any one that considers.

For his *incommunicable attributes* they are such as these, and I shall but only mention them. As,

1. His **SIMPLICITY**, absolute uncompoundedness, all excellencies and perfections meeting, and being united in him, in the absolute unity of his own Nature without division, without composition and without mixture.

2. His **IMMUTABILITY**, by which he is always invariably, eternally what he is. "I Am what I Am," without "shadow of turning," (as the apostle James's emphatical expression is) there being not so much as the shew of a change.

3. His **SELF-EXISTENCE**, or (which is all one) his necessary existence, or the necessity of his existence. That perfection of the Divine Nature, by which he is so, as that it is simply impossible for him not to be, or ever not to have been, his essence involving existence in it, so as it is not with any thing besides; for as to any created being, it may be, or it may not be; it may exist or not exist. But it is peculiar to the Divine Being to exist necessarily, so as that it cannot but exist: that is the same thing with self-existence, not existing from another, but existing only from himself. And,

4. His **INFINITENESS**, which comprehends divers things in it; for the infinity of the Divine Being, it is either extrinsical or intrinsical: extrinsical as it imparts some kind of relation to somewhat *ad extra*, or without, and so the extrinsical infiniteness of God is two fold: that which respects time and that which respects space. That which respects time is eternity,

and that infinitely exceeds all the measures of time. Consider God's duration in reference to time, and his duration is eternal, which is founded in his self-existence, or his necessary existence, was told you before. His being, is of that peculiar kind or hath that peculiar excellency belonging to it that could never not be; and therefore must exist from eternity, and must be to eternity. This is his extrinsical infiniteness in reference to time. And there is his infiniteness in reference to space, which is extrinsical too. It is somewhat supposed without, or besides himself; though but supposed or but imagined. All that space which the Divine Being doth occupy and possess: and this is his immensity. In reference to time, his infiniteness speaks eternity, in reference to space his infiniteness speaks immensity, that which some understand to be his omnipresence. And indeed, it is mostly so, but not wholly, for omnipresence even as presence is a relative term, and refers to somewhat with which it may be said to be present, and so the divine presence can refer to nothing besides himself, without the compass of the created universe, for there is nothing without that, that he can be present to. But his immensity hath an infinitely further reference, that is, to all the boundless, imaginable space (only imaginable) through which the Divine Being diffuseth itself. For not only is it truly said concerning him. He fills heaven and earth, "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Jer. 23, 24. But also, "the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him," as it is said in that seraphical prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple "Will God indeed dwell with men on the earth, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain?" And so his infiniteness in reference to space, it doth, without any limits, go beyond and transcend this vast created universe, be that as vast as it can be supposed to be: and it must be supposed to be very vast indeed, by all that do set themselves to consider what is by human indication or inquiry to be found most considerable, and who allow themselves the liberty ever to think of that vast extent of created being, in comparison whereof not only our earth is but a point, but even that vortex that covers this part of the world to which the earth belongs, is but a mere point, that which contains our sun, and the other planets; all that is but a mere point in comparison of the rest of the universe. Consider that, and the vast extent thereof, and you must yet consider, all this is but a mere point in comparison of the vast amplitude of the Divine Being, concerning which we are to conceive there is not any point of conceivable space any where, but there the Divine Being is, and still infinitely beyond it. And indeed, it is fit we should give great

scope to our thoughts, that we may as far as possible conceive in this respect worthily and greatly concerning that God whom we serve and whose name we bear, and to whom we profess to be devoted ones.

But then there is his intrinsical infiniteness besides, that is, his infiniteness considered not with reference to any thing without him, but in reference to what he is in himself. And so it signifies the unfathomable profundity and depth of his essence, including all being itself, in all the kinds, in all the degrees, and in all the perfections thereof; so as that there is no being of any kind, or of any sort, which his being doth not some way or other comprehend, virtually at least: his, being the radical Being from which all other beings spring.

Concerning these Incommunicable Attributes, or perfections of the Divine Being, I shall say no more to you than only to give you this summary and short account that I have given, because in our demonstrating the existence a God it was impossible not to speak to these things: that was a thing not to be done without mentioning such things as these, even somewhat too in a way of demonstration, that demonstrating of them we might give some account of the Being whose existence we are to demonstrate. But now there are sundry other divine attributes that I shall speak a little more distinctly to, and which lie under that other head of

*Communicable Attributes*, and which therefore are more familiar, and ought to be so to ourselves, as having some image, some resemblance of them, under the same names, in us; all, either have, or ought to have; some indeed have and cannot but have a resemblance in every intelligent creature, yea (and further than so) in every animate creature. And for those that fall under a moral consideration, they are such as ought to be in us, though they be not. These perfections of God are distinguished into natural, intellectual, and moral; or of his nature, mind, and will.

*First.* I shall consider his natural perfections: and,

1. I shall begin with that perfection of the Divine Nature whereof there is in us some kind (and ought to be in other kinds) a resemblance or image under the same name. And that is, the DIVINE LIFE, the life of God. I do not mean it now in that sense wherein it is a thing either derived to us, or prescribed to us. As in the one or the other, or both of these senses, that expression must be used and understood, (Eph. 4. 18.) “being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, and because of the blindness of their hearts,” speaking of the Gentile world, and those

Ephesians themselves, while as yet they were in a state of genti-  
lism. I do not, I say, speak of that life now which God re-  
quires us to live, and which he makes his own children to  
live. But I speak of that life which he lives himself; and  
in respect whereof he is so frequently in Scripture called “the  
Living God,” that excellency of his Being, which he many  
times attests, to add weight and solemnity and emphasis  
unto his protestations to men, to assure them that this is  
so, or not so, or that this or that he doth, or doth not, or will  
do, or will not do. “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no plea-  
sure in the death of the wicked.” And so, upon sundry like  
occasions, that form of protestation is used by him: “As I live  
I will do so or so, or it is so and so;” which intimates this, to  
be a most glorious excellency of the Divine Being, and that  
which he lays a mighty stress upon himself, and would have  
us to do so too. It is that which should highly raise our  
thoughts and apprehensions of the Divine Being, to consider  
him as the living God: and therefore the properties of that life  
by which he lives, (after the general conception of life itself,)  
would be worth our while a little to stay upon. We can have  
no other general conception of life, but that it is a self-active  
principle. It speaks a sort of self-activeness in the subject  
wherein it is: and so, being spoken of God, it attributes that  
to him in the highest perfection that can be thought, and in-  
deed doth suppose it to be in him, in a perfection infinitely  
beyond what we can conceive: that is, that he is by the excel-  
lency of his own Being, a perpetual fountain of life to himself.  
It is that which is included in the notion of a spirit, though it  
is not expressive of all that is signified by that notion. It is  
but an inadequate conception of what is carried in the notion of  
a spirit. A spirit, it is, as such, (though that be not all) a self-  
active being, a being of self-actuating vigour, that can move  
itself within itself. And that is the most full and distinct con-  
ception that we have of life. But taking that for the general  
conception, there are peculiar excellencies of the Divine Life,  
that distinguish it from life any where else. As,

(1.) His is absolutely self-originate. No other life is so;  
but his is absolutely self-originate. All other life is derived,  
participated, even such creatures to which life is essential, yet  
their life is but participated; for admit, life is essential, (as it  
is to all created spirits as such) yet inasmuch as their being  
is participated and derived, so is their life too; and their being,  
being a spiritual being, (though a created being) life is so es-  
sential to it, for if it ceaseth to live it ceaseth to be, and so its  
life and being are not separable things. It is not so with that  
life which our bodies do partake of; even in ourselves, our

bodies and our souls have two very distinct sorts of life, our bodies have but a borrowed life, a united life which they borrow from the soul that is within them, and unto which they are united. That soul may retire and part, and then the body dies, and yet it is the same body that it was before : so that if it cease to live, it doth not thereby cease to be. These bodies of ours may cease to live, though not cease to be, because their life is a borrowed life from another : they have it from the soul. But the soul, that hath life in itself, essential to it ; so that it cannot cease to live, but it must cease to be. But though it be so, yet its essence and life are but derived from that great Original Life, and from that great Original Being whose life we now speak of. He is the well-spring of life, (psalm 36. 9.) "With thee is the fountain of life." It is equally impossible, as was said before, for him either to cease to live, or cease to be ; whereas to us this impossibility is only supposed, it is only a suppositive impossibility. If we should cease to live, we should cease to be too, in reference to these souls of ours. But it is positive as to God, that he can neither cease to live nor cease to be. His is therefore an absolute self-original Life. He hath life in himself, or by himself, as that expression is, John 5. 26. "As the Father, (who we are told is our Father) which is in heaven is perfect," perfect in this respect, hath life in himself, a perpetual spring of life within himself, so hath the Son life in himself, as he is God, and as he is God-man ; life to communicate and derive from himself to quicken whom he will, as it is in that context. And then,

(2.) This life of God, as it is a self-original, so it is a self-communicative life ; it is a self-communicating life. Not in the same kind, but it doth contain in itself eminently that life which it makes others to live, which it imparts unto creatures. Indeed they cannot live that same life, for life being essential unto him in whom it originally is, to communicate his life were to communicate his essence, and so we make the creature, God which is impossible. But he contains eminently in himself that life by which, formally, he makes the creature live. And so in that respect, the Divine Life, is self-communicative, causal, efficient, making those to live to whom he doth impart it. With him is the well-spring of life. Now these two things are carried in the notion of a fountain : 1st. That there be a perpetual spring in it, and 2nd. that there be a communication and efflux, a deriving of streams from that spring. These two things are carried in the very notion of a fountain. And so as he is the well-spring of life it imports,



[1.] That life that is in him to be self-original, he is the perpetual Spring of it, in himself and to himself. And then,

[2.] Self-communicative, continually deriving streams issuing and flowing out to the creatures, so as to quicken whom he will, as it is said, “the Son doth, in that,” John 5. 20. And

[3.] This life of God is an indeficient life; a life that cannot decay, a life that cannot fail, a life that cannot languish, life always in the highest perfection, every thing in God being God, and therefore no more capable of diminution or decay, than the being of God is, which, as you have heard, is a necessary being, and therefore can never be otherwise than as he is, never more perfect, nor ever less perfect. And,

[4.] It is universal life. The life which belongs to the Divine Being, is universal; that is, it carries all kind of life eminently in it, not formally but eminently. You know that there is a great variety of the kinds of life among the creatures; but all comes from one Fountain, and therefore that life which doth belong to the blessed God himself, it must be a universal sort of life, a universality of life, all kinds of life are summed up there, not formally but eminently, there being no kind of life that is lived by any creature, from the most excellent to the most mean and abject, but the power of giving it, the power of imparting it, being in himself who is the Original of life: he bath it within his own power to make that creature live this or that sort of life suitable to the capacity of its own nature, and it is observable to this purpose, that in that passage, Psalm 42. 8. where the psalmist saith, “my prayer shall be to the God of my life;” in the Hebrew it is plural, to the God of my lives. And you know, a man (and more may be said in this kind concerning a holy man, a saint) lives several sorts of lives, as he lives a vegetative life, first the life of a plant, and then the sensitive life; the life of an animal, and then the rational life; the life of a man, and then, if he be a saint, as you know the Psalmist was, a holy life. Now all these lives are comprehended together in this one Fountain. “My prayer shall be to the God of my lives.” It is he that makes me live all these several ways that I do live. As I live the life of a plant, I have it from him: as I live the life of an animal, I partake that life from him: as I live the life of a man, a rational creature, I still partake that life from him; and as I live the life of a saint, a holy man, I partake that life from him too, which carries the nearest resemblance with it of his own life.

And thus we are to conceive of our Father which is in heaven, to be perfect in respect of this high and glorious excellency of life; self-original life, self-communicative life, indefi-

cient life and universal life, that contains all sorts and kinds of life eminently in itself.

And now to make some *Use* of this subject of the *life of God*, how highly should this raise our thoughts concerning that God whose name we bear, concerning our Father that is in heaven. It must highly serve to recommend him to us,

1. As the Object of our worship. What a glorious object of worship have we! How may our souls solace themselves every time we go to worship in the contemplation of this, "I am going to worship the living God!" So he is pleased to distinguish himself from the false gods, by this same epithet of the living One. Therefore, we have living and true, put together distinctly concerning him. 1 Thes. 1. 9. "To serve the living and true God." And it is with reference to the consideration of him as the glorious Object of our worship, that the apostle speaks of him, in Acts 14. 15. when those ignorant barbarians, among whom he was, would have done worship unto him and Barnabas, he runs in among them and saith "Sirs, why do you these things? We also are men of like passions with yourselves, and preach to you that you should turn from these vanities to the living God, who made heaven and earth and all things therein. "Our business is to bespeak you to be worshippers of the living God alone." Thus doth the word magnify him above the inanimate, senseless deities of the pagan world, who were wont to worship stocks and stones and the works of their own hands; and bow down and pray to a god that could not save. And how should we magnify to ourselves the Object of our worship, under this notion, and admire and bless God that he hath revealed himself to us, so as we are not left altogether ignorant whom we are to worship, that we do not worship altogether we know not what. We know the Object of our worship carries in it the reason of its own being worshipped, which renders it a rational worship. He is the living and so the true God whom we worship.

2. How highly should it recommend him to us as the Object of our trust. "Therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe. 1 Tim. 4. 10. and chap. 6. 17 "Charge them which be rich in this world that they trust not in uncertain riches but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." How heart satisfying an Object of trust have we in this respect, considering God as the living God, the Fountain of an indeficient, never failing self-original and universal life, in all the excellencies and perfections of life.

3. What an Object of fear have we even in this conception of God, or from this divine attribute. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb. 10. 31. A man may be angry with me, and he dies and then his anger dies with him; but it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands who never dies, the hands of the everlasting God. Who would not value his favour as that wherein stands life? It should mightily raise our apprehensions concerning God to conceive of him so. And,

4. It highly recommends him to us as the Object of our imitation. For this is one of the divine excellencies or perfections, whereof there is a *mimesis*, a resemblance under the same name in us. We do all of us live (as was said) several sorts of lives wherein we do resemble God. But we should most of all resemble him in a holy life, such of us who are raised from death to life, or shall be so. And herein it is the duty of every believer to resemble him. This is matter of precept, a thing capable of being put into a command. It is no matter of duty to us to imitate him in the other kinds of life, but in this kind of life it is matter of duty to imitate him in it, that is, in the perfection of that life which is therefore called the life of God, because it is prescribed us by God, enjoined us by God and it is that wherein we are to imitate God. And therefore, it is called, even as it is in us, "the life of God." Ephes. 4. 18. Others not yet reconciled to God, not brought home, but remain in their natural, unconverted state, they are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their hearts." We are to consider God, the living God, as the Object of our imitation: and therefore, should reflect with just severity upon ourselves; "Do we pretend a relation with the living God, and say he is our God? O! then what mean our dead prayers, our dead duties, our dead hearts! that we let them be dead, and do not strive and wrestle and contend with them, to get them up to this raised perfection of life wherein we are to resemble God, and to express a visible conformity to him!" It is a severe rebuke which is put upon the Sardian church. "Thou hast a name to live and art dead." It is plain, he doth not speak of a total death, or as if there was nothing of spiritual life among them, for in the next words he saith, "be watchful and strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die." There were great degrees of deadness, but strengthen (saith he) the remains of life, "the things that remain that are ready to die," and see how it is enforced, "for I have not seen thy works perfect before God." Your heavenly Father is in this

respect perfect, as he is the living God, as life is in him in the highest pitch of perfection and excellency : “ but I have not found your works perfect before me, as your heavenly Father is perfect ;” therefore, “ strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die ;” that your life may shine in lustre and glory more suitably and conformably unto the divine life, unto the life of God himself. But now,

## LECTURE XX.\*

2. In the next place I shall go on to speak somewhat concerning the power of God which is another natural perfection in him, and is next of kin to the life of God. Once have I heard this, twice hath it been spoken, that power belongeth unto God, as in that 62 Psalm 1, verse. It is in him as in its native seat and subject. It belongs unto him. Nothing is more appropriate, more peculiar to God than power : and it so belongs to him as it can to no other. If we speak of strength, lo, he is strong : (as the expression is in Job) implying all-created power is not to be spoken of in comparison with him. All other power is not to be named power, not worthy to bear that name. “ Your heavenly Father is perfect ” in this, as well as other respects : power is with him in perfection ; the perfection of power belongs to him.

And here, concerning the power of God, I shall give you some instances and some properties of it.

(1.) Some instances of it. As,

[1.] That it hath been the sole, productive cause of this great creation. Consider all this vast creation as resolved back again into nothing : and then consider it all springing up out of nothing (as it were) at once. How vast a power is this ! Whatsoever in all the whole universe of created things you see or hear of, or can think of ; all this is raised up out of nothing by the divine power. To bring any thing out of nothing, how vast a power would it require ! how far surpassing any human, any created power ! If you could but suppose all the powers in all the world, if the whole creation were to be combined and united together only for this one single purpose, to make one single atom, the least that can be thought to be raised out of nothing, you would easily apprehend it would never be. If all the world were assembled to contrive and unite their power to make a grain of dust out of nothing, they must all confess it

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infinitely above them. Then to have so vast a creation as this made to arise out of nothing, at once from nothing come to being, how should it overwhelm us to think of it; all that we now behold in being, and so far beyond, so inconceivably beyond what we can behold it to be. This earth of ours, as spacious as it is, is but a mere point, compared with our own vortex; but a part, but a little corner of the creation, and that but a mere point in comparison with the rest of the universe; and all this spoken out of nothing into being by the great Creator: the word of Divine Power but saying, "Let it be," and it was. Lift up your eyes on high, as the prophet's direction is, Isaiah 49. 18. and think who hath created all this: when you behold the sun, and moon, and stars, the vast expanse of the heavens, and all the ornature thereof. And again,

[2.] There is the continual sustentation of this world, once created and made, which is the same momently expense of power; for all created being, if not continually sustained must, by its own natural mutability, every moment be dropping into nothing. So that here is the same power put forth as if a new world were created every moment. And then,

[3.] That all the motion that is any where to be found, throughout the whole universe continually proceeds so from it, that the divine power is the continual spring of it. A wonderful thing to think of! We are apt to have our thoughts soon excited and awakened concerning the divine power when we see some wonderful instance of it fall out, besides the ordinary course. When we behold the effects of some violent wind and impetuous tempest; if we see trees torn up by the roots, houses shattered down, all to pieces, mountains torn asunder, the bowels of the earth ript open, we straightway think these to be great instances of a mighty power. But the power is incomparably greater that works continually and every moment in all the motion that is any where through the universe, in the most still, and silent, and steady and composed way. The power that continually, but silently turns about the mighty orbs of heaven, and the great luminaries that are in it, and, as some think, this very earth itself, in that still, unobserved way that we can take no notice of, which if it be, is incomparably less than that the so inconceivably greater body of the sun should be moved in so inconceivably greater a space, so much larger in circuit, so vastly large, with that celerity that must answer what we expect and see every day. What must that power be that goes forth in this? Such motion of the heavenly bodies that we find move the sun, and moon, and other planets, besides all the innumerable stars, multitudes whereof are so un-

speakably greater than the body of the sun, and that so vastly greater than this earth of ours: and all these continually turned about by a motive power: which because it is steady and constant we are therefore so stupid as not to take notice of it, or adore what is doing by it every moment, without failure, without stop, even for one moment. We are to blame that we do not more use our thoughts this way, to aggrandize to ourselves the greatness of him that made all things, and us little inconsiderable parts of them all. And again,

[4.] That this power doth work constantly and steadily with nature in a natural way, and extraordinarily, whensoever he will to whom it belongs, against nature. Here is what doth demonstrate it to be the exceeding greatness of his power, it is vastly great, as it co-operates with nature, as it works with nature. And how vastly great doth it appear as it counterworks nature in several respects, and at his pleasure whose power it is. It was great power that could make such a thing as fire to burn, to seize and prey upon other matter, and devour and consume it. But how much greater power doth it require to make fire not to burn, to bind up the natural tendency of it, as in the instance of the three children. It was a great power to make that great element of water to flow along every where as he hath assigned its receptacles and channels; and greater again when he pleaseth to make it not to flow, to congeal, as it were, and to stand up the mighty waves on a heap. And again,

[5.] If we look a little into another sort of species, what a weighty instance of this power was it to support the manhood of Christ under those sufferings of his, which he, as to satisfaction for the sins of men, and in which capacity only he was capable of suffering; to wit, as he was man, for he could not suffer as he was God. That that man should be able to bear the weight and load of all that guilt, which he undertook to expiate by his blood, which blood was necessary to expiate it, and to lay a foundation for the preaching of the gospel, which saith, "who-soever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life:" that he did not sink under that weight and load of guilt, and under the power of divine wrath, when all our iniquities did meet on him: that he, one single man should be sustained and borne up, when so vast a load and weight of guilt lay upon him: here was the power of the Godhead sustaining that one man. It was because he was Immanuel, "God with us," God in our nature. That that nature did not fail, did not sink under that mighty load: that that man should stand as the fellow of God, when the sword was drawn to strike that man his fellow: that he should stand against him and not be de-

troyed, and not be overcome, is a great power. And again hereupon,

[6.] What an instance of the divine power was the resurrection of that man? Smitten he was, and smitten down unto death, into the grave. And yet out from thence he springs up anew, by a divine power, “and was declared to be the Son of God, with power by the Spirit of holiness, by which he was raised from the dead.” It was an exceeding greatness of power, as you read, Ephes. 1. 19. which he wrought in him, or exerted, or put forth in him, when he raised him from the dead. And again,

[7.] What an instance is it of the power of God, when he changes the heart of a sinner, when he reneweth and reduceth a lapsed, fallen, apostate, degenerate creature; that is, especially when he changeth his will, the primary, main seat of that mighty change. “Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power.” Here is the perfection of divine power to be seen in this: for most plain it is, as I said before about creation, that if all the power of all this world were combined together for this one effect, to alter the will of one single man, it could never be done; you know how to crush, how to tear him into a thousand pieces, but no man knows which way to change the will of a man, not in any instance whatsoever, unless God change it himself. In instances of common concernment, nobody hath power over another man’s will; all the power of all this earth is not able to change my will if I have set it this way or that. But his people shall be a willing people in the day of his power: your heavenly Father is perfect, perfect in power in that he knows without doing violence to his creature, without offering any thing that shall be unsuitable or repugnant to its nature, to change its will. He knows how to govern his creatures according to their natures: though he knows how to rule and govern them, yea, to over-rule them contrary to their nature when he will, yet he chooses to govern his rational, intelligent creatures according to their nature, and so agreeably changes the hearts of men, according to that natural way wherein the human faculties are wont to work; a thing that all the powers of the whole world could never do besides. And again,

[8.] What an instance is it of his power to uphold the life of a regenerate soul, during its course through this world! A great instance this is, that their heavenly Father is perfect in power. For most certain it is, as soon as any one production of this kind appears, if there be a child born, a son of God born from above, all the powers of hell and darkness are presently at

work, if it might be, to destroy this new, this divine production. But it is enabled to overcome. "He that is born of God keepeth himself, that the evil one toucheth him not:" and "he that is born of God overcometh the world." This is by a divine power annexing itself to, and working in, and with, this new creature. The apostle speaking of one weak in the faith, (Rom. 14. 1.) weary in the faith, as the original signifies, shews that such a one might be received, but not to doubtful disputations: for God (saith he) is able to make him stand. This poor weakling, one that is weak in the faith, receive him (saith he) for God (as despicable a thing as he appears) is able to make him stand. Every new-born child is weak, and we must conceive so concerning every regenerate soul: he is at first weak, and they are always too weak, (God knows) as long as they remain here in this world. They have distempers, weakening distempers always about them. But concerning such a weakling, that it should be said, "God is able to make him stand," makes it to be an instance of a divine, enabling power that ever he should be made to stand. And it is the like case where such are spoken of under the notion of bruised reeds, to make a bruised reed stand against all the shocks of hell, when all the infernal powers are engaged to overthrow it: God shews that he is able to make it stand. And thus it is with such a poor creature all the time of his abode upon earth, hell is engaged in a continual conflict against his precious life, and purposely and with a design to destroy that. But God is able to make it stand, it lives as a spark amidst the raging ocean, and is never extinct but always lives. What an instance of the divine power is this! And again,

[9.] Restraining the wrath of man combined with the power of hell against his church in this world. He hath built this church upon a Rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. The design hath been always driven, and the attempt continually renewed from age to age. One age hath been industriously at it to root religion out of the world, to extinguish the divine seed, but they could make nothing of it: another age rises up after them, "Come (say they) let us handle the matter far more wisely and take better methods and carry it more secretly, that we may do our business more securely, and see what we can do to extinguish and root out religion:" and so the age after that, and then the next after that, and so from age to age until this age, and yet the thing is not done: yet this church remains, and is still in being, and is yet propagating itself. This is owing to the perfection of divine power. Their Father which is in heaven is perfect, perfect in this pow-



er of his, by which he conquers all the powers which are engaged against his poor church in this world, he triumphs over the feeble and impotent attempts of men and devils. “He that sits in the heavens laughs, the Most High has them in derision.” The wrath of man shall praise him and the remainder thereof will he restrain. Psalm 76. 10. The wrath of man he turns to his praise; he makes matter of praise and triumph to himself that the wrath of man goes forth; pleasing himself with this, “How shall these wretched creatures see themselves foiled and baffled within a little while!” He raiseth trophies and triumphs to the greatness of his power, from all the wrath of man that goes forth. And that which shall not belong to his praise, all that he will restrain. He can let it go forth as he pleaseth, and restrain the remainder thereof as he pleaseth. What he lets go forth, creates to himself a name upon its going forth, and he suppresseth the rest. And though I might thus multiply instances, I shall add but this one more: and that is,

[10.] The power he shews in forbearing and sparing a sinful world, and (upon his own prescribed terms) here and there, as he pleaseth, pardoning and forgiving particular sinners. This is a power which in some respects surmounts all the rest, or an instance of power that surpasseth all other instances. In other instances, his power shews itself in mastering of a creature, or outdoing all created power, but herein he useth a certain sort of power over himself, restraining his own great wrath, omnipotent wrath, that it break not forth to consume a world, and turn it into flames, as it righteously might have done many ages ago. “Let the power of my Lord be great according as thou hast said. The Lord is gracious and merciful, and of great forbearance, forgiving iniquities, transgression and sin.” Let the power of my Lord be great. O! how great is his power over this world! But how much greater is his power over himself, when he withholds his anger, and lets not his fury go forth to consume and make an end of sinners, as he easily could in a moment. But,

(2.) I shall in the next place, after these instances, give you some properties of this divine power. It is,

[1.] Original, as must be said of all divine attributes. All other power is derived, secondary, borrowed, participated from another; but the divine power, God is beholden to none for; it is self-sprung, self-original. “This have I heard,” saith the Psalmist, “once and again, that power belongeth unto God.” It is in him, as in its native subject. His is the first power, the very beginning of power. It is in him as in the root and foun-

tain: and so he is of himself, the mighty One. "If we speak of strength, he is strong." Job 9. 19. As if it had been said, All other strength is not worth the speaking of. If we speak of strength, meaning a strength fit to be spoken of, or mentioned under that name, that is divine strength. The divine is self-originate, it is in him as in its first original. And again,

[2.] It is irresistible, or invincible, not to be resisted if he pleaseth, and not to be overcome however. He will work and none shall let it. His work shall go on, of whatsoever kind it be; if he have designed it once, resolved it once, it shall be done through all, whatsoever opposition. Saith that man of God Moses, that great man, (Deut. 32. 3. designing there to give an account of God) "Because I will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe ye greatness unto our God: He is the rock, his work is perfect." It is spoken concerning him and his work as a stated, settled character, that whatsoever work he resolves upon, he will make thorough work of it; and so his work shall bear the heavenly image upon it. Your heavenly Father is perfect, and his work is perfect, carried on irresistibly, whatsoever it is, upon which he sets his great heart, against all opposition. And again,

[3.] He is a self-moderating power; a power that can moderate itself. Indeed, the power of all intelligent beings is more or less so. It belongs only to brute agents to act, *ad ultimum*. Intelligent ones can govern their own power. But such is the divine power in perfection, a self-governing power that doth not go forth *ad ultimum*. He can temper it as he pleaseth, and there is a most observable indication of the peculiar excellency of his power in this respect continually, though men observe it not, though men take no notice of it, that it is self-moderating, as was said before, there could be no such thing as motion any where throughout this great creation of God; but through a motive power from him, even his own motive power, he being the first mover; no hand turns, no creature moves but by a participation of a power from him, the great Fountain of all power. But now supposing without the creation, apart from the creation, so vast a power (as the divine appears to be) to go forth without moderation, without restraint, if once there were such a consistent thing and this world, by any means formed and connected together, I say by any means formed and connected together, that divine power, not self-moderated power, must needs shatter this consistent world all in pieces in a moment. If that power were not self-moderated, so that things are guided and moved in a steady, orderly course, it must be so. How easily doth a great wind throw down a

house ! Then so vast a power going forth from the Creator of this world, supposing it compacted, congested, brought to a consistent thing already, must needs shatter it all in pieces if that power were not self-moderated that goes forth upon it. And again,

[4.] An infinite power; that is a further property of it. How often is the great God, our God, our heavenly Father celebrated as the Almighty. “I know that thou canst do all things,” saith humbled, convinced Job, when God puzzled him with so often repeated, “Canst thou? Canst thou do this? and canst thou do that thou seest done? and where wast thou when I did so and so? when I laid the foundations of the earth? where wast thou when the morning stars sang together? who ever thought of thee in that age?” When God had thus argued with him and brought him down to the dust, (chap. 42.) he saith, “I know thou canst do all things and that no thought can be withheld from thee.” That is, “Whatsoever thou thinkest to do, nothing can withhold thy thought from proceeding to execution, from coming into fact, if thou wilt do it. Thou hast an unbounded power without limits.” But this must be duly understood. It is to be noted here,

First. Concerning the infiniteness of the divine power, its omnipotency, its almightiness, that it can never exemplify itself by an infinite effect. As it doth not follow, because divine power is infinite therefore the world created by that power is, or could be infinite: or, that it was possible for God to make an infinite one; you would think that strange perhaps. Cannot an infinite power produce an infinite effect? Can it produce an effect contrary to itself? No, but yet the other is impossible: and the reason is so plain, that I think when you consider it, every one will understand it. That is, if you should suppose the infinite power of God to have made an infinite effect, this infinite effect can be made no better, no greater than it is; for nothing can be added to what is infinite; and if so, then that infinite power could do nothing more. So that it is a contradiction for an infinite cause to produce an infinite effect, for an infinite cause, would be exhausted by producing an infinite effect: but an infinite cause can never be exhausted, therefore an infinite effect can never be produced by it. That is, it can never be said concerning an infinite cause, that it can do no more. But if it should have produced an infinite effect it could do no more, for nothing can be added to what is infinite. And,

Secondly. This is to be further noted, that this infinite power, omnipotence, almightiness, it cannot do impossible

things, neither things naturally impossible, nor things morally impossible.

i. Not things naturally impossible. It can give being to nothing that carries self-repugnance in it, that should imply a contradiction if such a thing should be. Whatsoever implies a contradiction is no object of omnipotency. As for instance, to make that not to be; that is, while it is, to make a thing to be and not to be at the same time; or to make a thing that hath been, not to have been. This implies a contradiction, this is naturally impossible and so, by consequence, is not an object of almightiness. And,

ii. Any thing that carries in it a moral impossibility is no object of divine power. To do an unjust thing, to lie, is impossible with God, impossible to his nature; and therefore, when we speak of the infiniteness of divine power, the perfection, the absolute perfection of it, we are to consider this as it is conjoined with other divine perfections, and so we are not to measure our notion, or conception of the divine power, by what it, abstractly considered, can do, but as it is the power of a Being in all other respects absolutely perfect. It is one thing therefore to inquire and determine what almighty power, considered apart by itself, can do, and another thing to consider what almighty power in conjunction with all other divine perfections can do, as it is in conjunction with holiness, justice, mercy, and wisdom. And it can never work but as it is in conjunction with these, as it is joined with all these together. Though God be almighty, omnipotent, he cannot do any unjust thing, an inept thing, a foolish thing. This were impotency, not omnipotency. It would speak him impotent, not omnipotent: it were an imperfection of power, not a perfection of it. We must consider him as perfect in power, and it would be an imperfection of power to suppose him enabled to do any thing that were unfit to be done. And then,

[5.] In the last place, his is eternal power. His eternal power and Godhead go together, "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." A perpetual, never failing spring, he is in this, as he is in all the attributes and excellencies of his being; "I Am that I Am. What I Am, I am without variableness, or without shadow of turning." That continual expense of power that hath been ever since the creation, first arose out of nothing, hath not made that power suffer any diminution, nor can it suffer any. He is still the same, without variableness, without mutation, without so much as the shadow of a turn, of a decay, of any failure.

Let us make some *Use* of this,

1. Labour deeply to apprehend this perfection of the Divine Being: fix the apprehension of it: let all our hearts say within us, “Lord we subscribe, we agree, we yield to the light and evidence of divine truth concerning thy divine power.” It is a lamentable case that the clearest notion of divine truth should be with us, as if we held the quite contrary, so as that with reference to effects, and impressions upon our spirits, it were all one to us, to believe that God were omnipotent, and had all power, infinite power, and to believe he had no power. It is a reproach to us, that our notions of truth, when they are never so plain, are so insignificant, so void of effect, and of their proper correspondent impression upon us.

2. Take heed of admitting disputations against the divine power. Let the foundation be once firmly laid with you, that power belongs to him in its highest perfection; and then admit no disputations against it. We are too prone to do so, to misimpute things, to impute things wrong that we take notice of, and that come under our observation, and make that a cause which is not a cause; we think that things do go in this world many times very irregularly, and so as we wish they might not, or they did not do, and secret atheism unobservedly slides in and insinuates itself. “If there be a perfect One, perfect in power as he is in all his other attributes, why are things thus? why do they go thus? why is not what is amiss redressed, and presently redressed?” But, as was said before, we are not to judge of what the divine power *can* do, but to consider it in conjunction with other attributes: consider it in conjunction with perfect wisdom, as we shall have occasion afterwards to speak, consider it in conjunction with perfect liberty and with absolute sovereignty. If we did consider things thus, “We are not to imagine that the divine power is to be exerted according to our will, but according to his will,” dispute would cease, the matter would drop: we should presently say, “I yield the cause, he knows better how to use his own power than I can direct him.” “Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, and who, being his counsellor, hath instructed him?” And,

3. That it may be so, let us labour to get our spirits into an adoring frame and disposition towards him under this notion, as our heavenly Father who is perfect in power, as the perfection of power is in him. Let him be always great and admirable in our eyes under that notion, and so considered. And further,

4. Let us glory in him upon that account: let our hearts exult in the thoughts that our heavenly Father is perfect in this respect. Walk accordingly in his name, glory in it, make your boast of him all the day long. This hath been the temper and

genius that hath governed among a people related to him heretofore. "Our God is in heaven and he hath done whatsoever pleased him." When all people are wont to walk each one in the name of his god, why should not we walk in the name of the Lord our God? Their gods that are no gods, they please themselves with and take a kind of pride in owning them. O how warrantable a matter of gloriation have we, to go with hearts lifted up in the name of our God! Our God is in the heavens, and doth whatsoever pleaseth him: and can with the greatest facility carry every cause that he is engaged in. He cannot fail, finally to own and right all that are brought to him, and adhere to him, whatsoever their present excuses for awhile may be. Learn hence again,

5. To value an interest in him, and covet it, and labour to make it sure and clear. Who can but think it the most desirable thing in all the world, to have him who is so infinitely perfect in this, as in all other respects, for their God? How secure would it make a man's heart, how quiet and rationally quiet to think, that power, all power, is in the hands of my Father! My Father can do whatsoever he will, he hath all power in his hand. And then,

6. When you have made it your business to secure an interest in him upon this account, and under this notion, then trust in him under the same notion. Exercise a daily, vital trust upon him. "Trust in the Lord for ever, for with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Isaiah 26. 4. See how things correspond there, "Trust in the Lord:" "Why," might the soul say, "I have need of a God, and a strong one to trust in." In the Lord Jehovah is strength; trust in him. "But I have need of strength for ever, being made to live for ever." In him is *everlasting* strength; so that you have as much reason to trust in him to day as you had yesterday, and will have to-morrow as you had to day: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength, strength that will never fail, and it is trust that must keep you from falling. "He gives power to the faint and to them that have no might he increaseth strength;" and "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." Isaiah 40. 29. 31. And,

7. Lastly, Dread to have him for an enemy. O! consider the fearful case of such as are engaged in a contest with him! Consider their folly, their madness, their misery; and labour to keep at the remotest distance from their state: fly from that sort of men as a dreadful spectacle; you fly from among them by ceasing to be of them. That is, by seeking reconciliation with God, and an interest in him, and striking a covenant with him, then you are delivered from being of them; but think in

the meanwhile with pity and compassion, what mad creatures they are, that are engaged in a contest against omnipotency, “Woe to him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth.” But what! shall a potsherd of the earth strive with all the powers of heaven? How unequal a match, how mad a choice is this! And from thence take your measure of what is like to become of all the contestations in this world against God, and against his interest. We are not to prescribe to him concerning the times and seasons and methods: but do you see a sort, a generation of men set against God and godliness? It is easy to judge the event; you may easily foresee the effects in the power of their productive cause.

And thus I have gone through those attributes which we call his natural perfections.

## LECTURE XXI.\*

*Secondly.* I shall now come to speak of those perfections of God that are to be considered under the head of *intellectual* ones, and there we have these two to consider and speak of, as more eminent perfections, the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, and his WISDOM. These are great perfections of the Divine Mind, wherein we must understand our heavenly Father to be perfect, as the text stiles him. I shall speak to these both together, they being congenerous, and of one sort and kind, though they are to be conceived of by us, with some distinction. And,

1. For HIS KNOWLEDGE: our heavenly Father is perfect in this respect; or his knowledge is most perfect knowledge. It appears to be so, both in respect of the peculiar nature of it, and in respect of its extent, with reference to the objects about which it is conversant.

(1.) In respect to the peculiarity of its nature: it is knowledge of such a kind as is appropriate to God only: that is, upon this account principally, that it is entirely intuitive not discursive. It is not such a sort of knowledge as that by which we proceed, as we do from the knowledge of plainer and more obvious things to the knowledge of those that are darker and more obscure. But his knowledge of all he knows is simultaneous, that is, he knows all things at once, all at one view. We come to know some things by the knowledge of others which we foreknew, and so are fain to lead on our minds from step to

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step, and from point to point. The case is not so with him. All things are at once naked and manifest to his view, so as that, though he doth see the connexion of things and knows them to be connected; yet he doth not know them or any of them because they are so connected; that is, because he knows such things, therefore knows such other things as are connected therewith, as it is with us, while we proceed by rotation from the knowledge of some things to the knowledge of more. His is in this respect most perfect knowledge. And,

(2.) It is so in respect of its extent, in reference to the objects known. And we must,

[1.] Suppose the extent of this knowledge so vast as to reach simply unto all things: that is, not only all things that do exist, but all things that are even possible to do so. In this respect, with reference to the objects of divine knowledge, it is aptly wont to be distinguished into that which they call *Simplicis intelligentia et puræ visionis*. It is no matter for opening to you those terms; but the thing intended to be signified by the one and the other is briefly this—that God doth not only know all those things that shall certainly be, but all those things that are possible to be. And so in that respect the object of his knowledge is equal to his power. There is nothing possible but what he can do, but what he can effect. Every thing is possible to him because he can make it to be. And so vast as that *ambitus, circle* of his omnipotence, so vast also is the object of his knowledge or omniscience; that is, he knows whatsoever he can do he knows the utmost extent of his own power though he never intends to do actually all he can. But then,

[2.] The perfection of this knowledge, in reference to the object of it, is most especially conspicuous in two things, namely,—that he knows all futurities and—that he knows all the most secret thoughts and purposes of men, or generally of his intelligent creatures.

First. That he knows all contingent futurities. It is needful you should understand me right here, not only bare futurities, that is, things that shall certainly come to pass. There are many men can certainly foretell many future things: that is, natural futurities and such as do depend upon certain and settled causes; as when it is morning, the night will come, when the sun is risen, that it will set, when the sea has ebbed, that it will flow, and the like; but contingent futurities mean quite another thing, that is, such futurities as do depend upon free causes, such as do depend upon the will and pleasure of such creatures as have a certain sort of liberty belonging to their nature. And thence comes that miracle of pro-



phesying; that God should be able to tell so distinctly and with such certainty, for many ages yet to come, that such and such things, men will do. Nor are we to think so debasingly of this knowledge of God as to suppose it depends only upon this his purpose to make a man do whatsoever he knows he will do; which indeed were to debase it into the very dirt, and to make him accessory to all the impurities and wickedness in the creation, by men or devils. And it is to narrow it as much as to debase it: that is, to suppose that he could not know that men would do so and so unless he would make them do the very things that he forbids them, in the very circumstances wherein he forbids them. And this indeed were to subvert the whole entire notion of divine forbearance and permissive providence. As when we are told (Rom. 3. 25) "That God set forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." To suppose that sin should be past, through the forbearance of God, that is, that he forbearing men, they sin, were a subverting the notion of forbearance, if he made them do (by a positive effective influence) all that they do in a way of sin, though the thing be never so apparently evil in itself most intrinsically evil, as the very act of hating himself. To suppose that he should only so know this or that, that he should be ignorant who should hate him and who should not, among the children of men, unless he should make them hate him, and determine to make them do so that he might know what they would do; this were not only to debase, but infinitely to narrow this knowledge of God. To suppose that he cannot know but upon such and such terms, or in the same way wherein the devil hath some certain foreknowledge of what he intends to his uttermost to make men do, must infinitely debase and narrow his knowledge. He is not an idle or unconcerned supervisor of the affairs of this world, and doth not only foreknow whatsoever one will do, but he knows too how to limit their actions and how to restrain and how to convert and turn to good, what they do with the most evil and mischievous intentions and designs, but upon this it is that he doth demonstrate his Godhead, that he is able to declare future things long before they come to pass, and did so; that he hath given such predictions of what should be, long before it was. In many places of the prophet Isaiah he doth, as it were, magnify his own Deity in opposition to the paganish gods, by this, that he hath declared the end from the beginning, even what shall be in all after-times. As in the 41. 44. and 48. chapters of that prophecy we have many passages of that import. And in that 41 chapter, verse 22, 23. he doth, (as it were) provoke and challenge the

heathen deities to demonstrate their Godhead this way. "Produce your cause," (saith he) "let them declare things to come, that we may know that they are gods:" as if he had said, "Let them never talk of being gods, or that there is any such thing as deity belonging to such despicable idols unless they can foretell things to come. And this is the true import of that great scripture: Rev. 19. 10. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy:" that is, that which should demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion or prove against all contradiction that Jesus was the Christ, was the spirit of prophecy so long before, that he should come at such a time and in such circumstances into the world as eventually he did. And,

Secondly. This perfection of divine knowledge is most eminently conspicuous in this too, his knowledge of the hearts of men; that he knows the most secret thoughts and purposes of men's hearts, and looks into them with an eye that injects fiery beams. He hath an eye as a flame of fire, that searcheth hearts and tries reins; so as that when there is (as it were) a challenge given to all this world; "Who can know the heart of man?" It "is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked who can know it?" (Jer. 17. 9.) here comes one, that answers the challenge, "I the Lord search the heart and try the reins." And this is one of the great things that both demonstrates and magnifies his Godhead. Amos 4. 13. "He that formed the mountains and created the wind, and that declares to man what is his thought, the Lord, the God of hosts is his name."

I shall not further insist on this, but pass on to the other intellectual perfection, in respect whereof we also ought to conceive our heavenly Father is perfect; that is,

2. HIS WISDOM. He is perfect in being perfectly wise, all-wise as well as all-knowing. I told you we were to speak of these perfections of the Divine Nature, and conceive of them, according to what analogy they have to such things as go under the same names with us, and so wisdom and knowledge are two distinct things. Many know much who are not wise: but so we are to conceive of the perfections of our heavenly Father, that he is not only most perfectly knowing, but most perfectly wise also. Wisdom, you know, is commonly distinguished into speculative and practical: sapience and prudence. Indeed, the former doth not greatly differ from knowledge but somewhat it doth. It is not needful for me to stay to explain to you the distinct notions of intelligence, sapience and science. The first whereof, is the knowledge of principles, the last of conclusions, and the middle comprehends both together.

But besides what hath been said concerning the knowledge of God, it will be of more concernment to us to consider his wisdom, as it corresponds to that which with men is called prudence, as the expression is Prov. 8. 12. for both are most conjunct with him. “I wisdom dwell with prudence.” And so this wisdom lies in always proposing to himself the best and most valuable end: and choosing the aptest and most suitable measures and means for computing it. According as any one doth more perfectly both these, he ought to be accounted more perfectly wise. Now his end is known to every one that knows any thing of God, he cannot but be his own end. As he is the Author so he must be the End of all things for himself. He hath made all things for himself, by the clearest and most indisputable right. There could never have been any thing but by him, and it is not to be supposed that he should make a creature to be his own end. It would not consist with the wisdom of a God, that he should do so: it were indeed to make a creature to be a God to itself, or that he should upon such terms make a creature to ungod himself. And whereas, the just display of his own glory is the means to his end, his doing that, is most conspicuous in such things as these, to wit, in the creation of the world, in his providential government of his creatures, in the mighty work of redemption, wherein he hath abounded in all wisdom and prudence; and in the conduct of his redeemed through all the difficulties of time to their eternal state.

These are the means; or his actual displaying or diffusing of the beams of his glory in all these ways, is that by which he doth effect his own glory, make it to shine as that he is thereupon the most worthy and becoming Object unto all eternity, of all the adoration and praise of his intelligent creatures; the most worthy and deserving Object, whatsoever is done, or not done by any of them. My limits will not allow me to insist, at least not largely, on these things.

(1.) The creation of the world. What a display of wisdom was there in that! If we take but the two great and comprehensive parts of it, heaven and earth, “He hath established the earth by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his understanding,” or discretion. Jer. 10. 12. And if you should look into the one or the other of these more comprehensive parts, it would not be conviction only, but transport and admiration that we ought to be put into every hour, or as often as we make any such reflection. But I must not go into particulars, as I might. And then,

(2.) For the providence by which he governs this created

world, and all the variety of creatures in it, so as that all things in their own particular places and stations do most directly subserve the purposes for which they were visibly made, they are sustained that they may do so: they are guided and governed and ordered in all their natural tendencies and motions that they may do so. And,

(3.) For that wonderful work of redemption, the apostle gives us this note about it, that he hath therein abounded in all wisdom and prudence. Ephes. 1. 7, 8. Herein did the perfection of wisdom and prudence shine forth, to reconcile the mighty, amazing difficulties, and seeming contrarieties, real contrarieties indeed, if he had not some way intervened to order the course of things, such as the conflict between justice and mercy; that the one must be satisfied in such a way as the other might be gratified; which could never have had its pleasing, grateful exercise without being reconciled to the former. And that this should be brought about by such an expedient, that there should be no complaint on the one hand nor on the other, herein hath the wisdom of a crucified Redeemer, that is, whereof the crucified Redeemer or Saviour was the effected Object, triumphed over all the imaginations of men, and all the contrivances, even of devils and hell itself; for they undoubtedly were so secure upon no account as this, that they saw our Lord die. Satan filled the heart of Judas to bring it about that he might die; animated the whole design: this was the devil's contrivance, "If he that is turning the world upside down, doing such wonders every where, all men running after him be but dead, if we can bring him to his end, we shall certainly make an end of his religion, we shall certainly make an end of his design." But even by that death of his, by which the devil contrived the last defeat, the complete destruction of the whole design of his coming into the world, even by that very means it is brought about so as to fill hell with horror, and heaven and earth with wonder. And then,

(4.) The conduct of the redeemed through this world, notwithstanding all the obstacles, discouragements, and difficulties that lie in their way, what a display, a glorious display of the divine wisdom is there in this! I shall not speak to particulars distinctly, but only give some general account. As,

[1.] That it hath never yet made any wrong step; that amidst all these wonderful varieties of actings and dispensations wherein it hath been engaged ever since there was a creation, there should never be any one wrong step made, nothing amiss done, nothing ever done out of time, or otherwise than it should. And,

[2.] That it is never at a stand, never puzzled, hath always its way open to it, every thing forelaid: “Known to God are all his works from the beginning,” as that sage speech is of the apostle James, at the famous council of Jerusalem. Acts 15. He can never meet with a difficulty that can put him to a stand; for his way is always plain and open before him. And,

[3.] That he never loses his design, never misseth any end that he proposes to himself: The counsel of the Lord always stands, and the thoughts of his heart take place through all generations. Psalm 33. 11. And,

[4.] That he doth so frequently disappoint and bring to nothing the designs of the wisest and most contriving men, turns their wiles upon their own heads, “takes the wise in their own craftiness,” drives their way headlong, precipitates their counsels into confusion and abortion: as the expressions are in that 5th Job 12, 13. and in the 33d psalm, 9, 10. And many more we have in Scripture, of the like import. And then,

[5.] That he frequently surpriseth the most apprehensive and sagacious among men; doth things that it was never thought he would do; wondrous things, terrible things that we looked not for. Isaiah 64. 3. Sometimes they are fearful surprises that he brings upon men, and sometimes grateful ones. Indeed, the same dispensation may be at the same time most terrible and most grateful, most terrible to one sort and most grateful to another, as they must be understood to be that are mentioned in Isaiah 64. 3. “Terrible things that we looked not for, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.” That is, the most mountainous oppositions, the loftiest and most aspiring spirits brought down and made to stoop: and all their pride laid in the dust; so it hath often been beyond all expectation, he still shewing his ways to be as much above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, as the heaven is high above the earth, and as the east is far removed from the west. So it hath been when he hath gone beyond any fear or foresight of his enemies, and above all the hopes and desires and prayers of his people, done beyond what they could ask or think. What wonderful conspicuous beamings forth of the divine wisdom, have there been in such ways as these!

I shall not discourse to you further doctrinally, concerning these things. Something I would say by way of *Use*, before I pass from them. Thus our heavenly Father is perfect. Why these are very clear notices of God, which we soon hear; we have heard them now within the compass of a little time; and we as soon assent to them as we hear them. But pray let us look into ourselves and consider, What impressions have they li-

therto made upon our hearts? Have our hearts been all this while leaping and springing within us, and saying, "This God is our God; our heavenly Father is thus perfect?" Hath that been the lively sense of our souls within us all this while? And consider, these notices of God are not new to us. Did we never hear before that the living and true God is all-knowing and all-wise? When were we without these apprehensions? Such a conception of God as this we have had ever since we had the use of our understanding, and heard or knew any thing of God at all. But pray consider, What suitable, permanent and abiding impression have we borne about the world with us hitherto? and what is he so far manifested and made known to us for? Is it not that our spirits might be formed by the discovery, and our minds thereby governed agreeably thereunto? How comes it to pass that such things as these should have had all this while no more influence to beget a correspondent heart and spirit in us towards God? Is it that these things are of little weight, that they sink no more into our hearts and souls? Or is it a matter of small concernment to us, what a one he is whom we take for our God, or profess to have so taken? Is that a matter of small concernment to us? Do we know what the name of God imports? To be a God to us, is to be our "All in all," to be such a one to us every way, in point of good to be enjoyed, in point of power and authority to be obeyed and submitted to. Can it be a little matter in our eyes, what a one our God is, he that we have to do with continually as our God? And by how much the more easily we assent to such things concerning him when we hear them, it argues that they are so much the plainer, and therefore that the guilt must be unspeakably the greater and unspeakably the heavier, if our hearts and spirits be not in some measure proportionably framed and steered and conducted according to the import and tendency of so plain things. These are not dark things that need much explication to us, nor doubtful things that need proof or demonstration. We are satisfied already, that he could not be God, who is not infinitely knowing, and infinitely wise, and perfectly both. So that we have nothing at all to do but to comport in the frame and temper of our spirits, and in the course of our walking with these most evident things. And by how much the greater they are, and the more sacred they are, (and things that we profess to believe and apprehend concerning God must be such, for a greater one could not be concerned than he,) the greater profaneness must it be to abuse such notices as these are, or not to use them, not to improve them to their proper purpose and end. We know such things con-

cerning God: and have we nothing to do with the things of God, but to trifle with them or to let them lie by as neglected, useless things, when they are to run through our lives and to have a continual influence upon us through our whole course from day to day? Are these things right in our minds and understandings, and our hearts in the mean time only as a *rasa tabula*, a mere blank? There are such notices in our minds, but look into our hearts and see what corresponds there. Alas! there is nothing, a mere vacuity: what a sad case is this! and yet the discovery of these things breathes no other design but only to form our hearts and spirits and that our lives may be proportionably governed. It is a dreadful thing to have the knowledge of God lie dead in our souls, as if that were to go for nothing. Here I might shew you what impressions this discovery of the divine perfections should make upon our hearts, and might thence proceed to shew you in many instances that it doth not make that impression which it should. But I must not take that course. I will briefly hint a little at the former, the latter you will recollect yourselves: *rectum est index sui et obliqui*: If it doth appear once what we should be and do, correspondently to the apprehension of the divine perfection in these respects, it will be easy to us to animadvert on ourselves and see wherein we are not what we should be, and do not what we should do correspondently hereunto. It is plain,

1. That such a discovery of God, in these perfections of his, should conduce greatly to the forming and composing of our spirits to adoration, to make adoration of him to be very much the business of our lives. How grateful should it be to us to think we have such an Object for worship and adoration, the all-knowing and the all-wise God! How vastly different in this respect is our case from theirs that worship stocks and stones for deities, senseless and inanimate things! That worship woods and trees and rivers and fountains and beasts and creeping things and the like. What hath God done for us that he hath made himself known to us in these great perfections, as the Object of our worship! that when we pray we know we pray to an intelligent Being that knows all things, and an all-wise God that judgeth what is best and most suitable to be done in reference to what we supplicate him about, and when and how to do all that he judgeth fit to be done. There ought not only to be an adoring frame in solemn worship hereupon, but an adoring frame we should carry about with us through this world, often looking up to him, and considering that we have always an eye to meet our eye, and are to apply mind to mind, (what a satisfaction is that!) understanding to understanding, our im-

perfect understanding to his perfect one. With what adoring souls should we go through this world every day upon this account ! But do we do so ? Consider how far short we come in so plain a case as this is. And again,

2. Should it not make us stand much in awe ? The matter is plain : great knowledge and wisdom in a man, great prudence creates great reverence, especially if it be in conjunction with things that we know are in the highest conjunction here, if in conjunction with authority, power and dignity. But even apart they do much in this kind ; when a man hath the repute of a wise man, of a knowing person, it would strike us with so much awe as not to trifle, not to play the fool in the presence of such a one. Is there any thing proportionable with us in our frame and deportment towards the all-knowing God ? Our heavenly Father is perfectly knowing, perfectly wise ; in what awe should we stand of him continually upon these accounts ! And again,

3. It should fill us with shame to think what he knows by us. He is all eye as one said truly of him. With what confusion should it fill us to think he should know so much by us every day ? Every vain thought, every light motion of our mind, all our fooleries, all our triflings, all our impurities that lodge and lurk in our hearts are known to him. This thought made a great impression upon a heathen ; (Seneca, as he testifieth himself,) *omnia sic ago, tuncquam in conspectu, I do every thing as in sight*, as having an eye that doth *rimari*, *pry* into my breast. O ! what a shame is it that we should need a heathen instructor in such a matter as this ! and how confounded should we be before the Lord to think what he knows by us continually, that we should be ashamed that men should know such things concerning us, as we are not ashamed he should know. The ingenuity of grace is wanting, it works not, shews not itself. It hath wrought like itself heretofore, “I blush, I am ashamed to lift up mine eyes to heaven,” saith good Ezra, and that, when he speaks not so much neither concerning his own sins as the sins of the people.

4. How should it make us study to be sincere. Nothing in us so answers perfect wisdom and knowledge in God, as sincerity. Every thought of my heart thou hast known long before ; and it follows in the same Psalm, 139. “Search me O Lord and try me, and shew me if there be any evil way” (any painful way as the hebrew admits to be read) “in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Again,

5. It should possess us with great complacency, (those that can reflect upon their own sincerity,) that they are continually in view to God. It should be a complacential thought, to think



that he who is so perfectly knowing, and so perfectly wise, knows their sincerity, and knows too, all their infirmities. That he knows their sincerity, “Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” John 21. 17. And that he knows their infirmities, and will consider them with indulgence and compassion. “He knows our frame and remembers that we are but dust.” Psalm 103. 14. And,

6. It ought to possess us with trust, habitual trust that should run through our lives. Is not such a one fit to be trusted? doth it not highly recommend him to us as the Object of our trust, that we know him to be perfectly knowing and perfectly wise? You can easily apprehend, an ignorant fool is not to be trusted. One that is ignorant and a fool is no fit object of trust. Is not he therefore that is perfectly knowing and perfectly wise, a fit Object? How cheerfully therefore should you trust him with all your concerns, how cheerfully should you intrust him with the concerns of this world, and your part and share therein? considering in what hand your affairs and all affairs do lie, even in his who will make, “all things work together for good.” So he hath engaged to do, and he is most knowing and most wise that hath so engaged. Imprudent persons promise rashly what is not in their power, but he that is perfectly knowing and wise can never do so. Though I might mention divers other things I will shut up all with this,

7. It should make us study conformity to him in these respects. Have we this discovery of the perfections of our heavenly Father, that he is perfectly knowing and perfectly wise? It should make us endeavour after conformity to him in knowledge and wisdom: for these are some of his communicable excellencies; that is, his imitable ones. We should think with ourselves, “Is it for me to pretend to him as a child, to call him Father, to say, my Father which is in heaven is perfectly knowing and perfectly wise, when I am nothing else but an ignorant fool?” Wisdom expects to be justified of her children. Are we the children of wisdom, are we the children of him that is perfectly wise and perfectly knowing? Certainly it concerns us to be like our Father in these respects: this is a great part of his image, even of his image to be renewed in us. “Put on (saith the apostle) the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” Col. 3. 10. Is it for the glory of the all-wise and all-knowing God to have a company of fools for his children, ignorant creatures that know nothing, and labour not to know much of the things that most concerns them to know, in reference to him, and what lies between him and them? We should, upon these accounts,

labour to value and covet, most of all, mental excellencies, such as these. But such is not the common guise of this world. And it is an amazing thing, to think so many intelligent creatures' minds and spirits (though lodged in flesh) should be so lost as to all apprehension of true excellency, or of what is truly valuable, as to value a little glitter, a little exterior pomp and splendour before these mental excellencies of knowledge and wisdom, that are most peculiar to God, and wherein we, if we are possessed of them shall most resemble him. What fools are the men of this world! They esteem men according as they have most of worldly pelf, as they have collected together most of thick clay, but they never think of valuing themselves or any one else by the mental excellencies of knowledge and wisdom in which they resemble God. What base erroneous thoughts must these be supposed to have of God! What do such make of God? As the apostle speaks to these Athenians, but speaks as knowing and understanding them and himself to be of a mind as to this, he argues with them from a principle and *ex concessis* "What! do you think the Godhead is like silver and gold or corruptible things?" As if he had said, "I cannot but know as well as if I were within you that you are of my mind perfectly in this matter, that is, that the Godhead is not like to silver or gold or corruptible things, but he is a Spirit, and you, as you are spiritual beings, or as you have such in you, are his offspring." Certainly it is to be governed by the judgment of a fool in my choice, in my desires, in my estimation of things, to think that earthly things are the most valuable things, that carnal things (as the apostle calls them) are the most honourable things. No, without doubt those are the most honourable and most valuable things that are most God-like, and by which I shall most resemble God. How was he taken with Solomon for his judgment and choice when he bids him ask what he would have! He was not such a fool as to go and ask riches, honour, long life, or the necks of his enemies, but begs for wisdom and understanding. This was most God-like: and you see how God was pleased with his choice, how high an approbation he gives of it in that 1 Kings 3. 10, 11. And we should labour to govern our own judgment in these matters accordingly.

And pray consider this with yourselves, and labour to feel the weight of it in your own spirits, if we do not covet and desire that God should create us according to his image and likeness, we shall certainly be apt to create to ourselves a god after our own image and likeness. That is, if we do not make it our business to have ourselves made like unto him, we shall be in-

dustrious to make him like to ourselves. As it is in the Psalmist, “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself.” A thing that will lead and plunge us into the deplorable estate of all sin and misery unavoidably.

## LECTURE XXII.\*

*Thirdly.* It remains now that we go on to the third head of the communicable perfections of God, to wit, those of the divine will, or which we may otherwise call his *moral perfections*, and the most principal of them which I shall (but briefly too) speak of, are these four, to wit, his holiness, his justice, his faithfulness and his goodness. And before I speak to them severally, I shall give you some general considerations concerning them, and which will also partly respect some of those that have been spoken to already under the former heads. As,

1. That when we distinguish the divine perfections into natural, intellectual and moral, the meaning is not as if those that were intellectual and moral were not also natural. But the first member in this distinction is larger and more comprehensive than the rest. All that are intellectual and moral are also natural perfections in the divine nature, but all that are natural are not intellectual and moral. And,

2. We are to consider this concerning them, that the divine perfections which are spoken of under the notion of attributes, they do suppose their subject to be such, as to which they can and they must agree: we speak now only of a subject of denomination not of a subject of inhæssion in a proper sense. But they do all suppose their subject, that is of predication, to be a spiritual Being, or they do suppose God to be a Spirit, and might, all of them, be brought as proofs and demonstrations (if it were needful) that he is so. He could not be intelligent if he were not a spirit, nor righteous, nor holy, nor just, nor true, for all these do suppose such a subject of predication as to which such attributes or attributed perfections can and must agree. And therefore (as hath been intimated formerly) when we speak of the attributes and perfections of God, this doth not come among them, but is presupposed and necessarily presupposed. Those that are properly called attributes are spoken of in *quale quid*, not in *quid* as schoolmen do fitly enough say, though

\* Preached October the 16th. 1691.

I do not need to trouble you with the explication of those terms.

3. You are to note this concerning them, that as they do suppose their suitable subject, so several of them do suppose others of them. As wisdom doth suppose knowledge, and holiness doth suppose wisdom; and justice, holiness, and faithfulness, justice, and so on. And again,

4. We are to consider that our conception of God and his nature and the properties belonging thereunto, cannot possibly take up things otherwise than by parts: and so all our conceptions of him must be inadequate, and when we have taken up as much as is possible it is but a small portion that we have taken up, or can admit into our minds. And therefore, we are to conceive concerning all these perfections of God that though it be unavoidable to us to apprehend diversly, yet we must apprehend them as all falling into one most simple nature and being: whence it is not to be thought strange that we find a coincidence in very great part indersive of these perfections, that do (as it were) fall and run into one another. As there will be more occasion to take notice in those particulars that are mentioned. And,

5. You are to consider further that our notices of God must needs be in a great measure by reflection on ourselves. He hath been pleased to let us know that he created man at first after his own image. That is, after his natural image with the addition of his moral or holy image. And that he doth again regenerate and renew men after his own image, that is, his holy image, supposing the natural one, that being still supposed remaining, as the subject both of the corruption and of the restitution. This being so, we have the advantage of discerning much concerning the excellencies and perfections of the Divine Nature by reflecting upon ourselves. What we see by that reflection, we see as in a glass darkly, and indeed, when we are the glass we are a very dark one. But some resemblance, some image there is to be found, even with all there is the natural image of God, and with the regenerate there is the holy image renewed, though very imperfectly renewed, whereupon when we are to conceive of holiness, faithfulness, justice and goodness in God, our conception is much to be helped by these notions that we cannot but have of such things among men, these being, (as you have heard) of his communicable attributes that have the same name in him and in men, and the image and likeness of the same things. And,

6. Though there be somewhat of the divine image or likeness in men, yet this similitude is not to be considered without very

great dissimilitude. It is true indeed, *omne simile est dissimile*, every like is also unlike, but there must be most of all when we are to compare things in God and in us. Though there be some similitude, the dissimilitude must be vastly great which we are to take along with us in speaking of each of those mentioned perfections of the divine will, and so we come to the particulars. And,

1. As to the HOLINESS OF GOD. That very term as it is applied to God, is of various significaney. And indeed, it is so as the term comes thence transferred unto creatures. Sometimes it signifies august, venerable, great, majestic. And the reason of the use of that phrase to such a purpose, that is, holy to signify august and venerable, is obvious: for as things that were holy were not to be violated, were not to be touched (as it were) by impure hands, not to be arrogated, not to be meddled with by any but those to whom they were appropriate, (in which respect, majesty hath been wont to be accounted a sacred thing that was not to be meddled with by any other, and the person a sacred person that was clothed therewith, not by any means in the world to be violated,) so with no very remote translation, holy or holiness being spoken of God doth signify the awfulness, the venerableness, of the Divine Nature. But yet, this is somewhat alien from holiness as it is a moral perfection: or as it is a perfection of the divine will. And therefore, as such we must consider it under its own proper and peculiar notion. It sometimes also, signifies firm, sure, unalterable. The *sure* mercies of David, (Isaiah 55,) the Septuagint renders it sacred, holy. But if we speak of holiness in the proper sense, as it is a perfection of the divine will, so it must needs, in the general notion, signify the rectitude of that will in all things, and so it must have two parts, a negative, and a positive part.

(1.) A negative; and so the divine holiness stands in purity, in being most perfectly free from any taint or defilement, from any thing of moral turpitude, in any kind or any degree. And that purity, the negative rectitude of the divine will which is carried in his holiness, comprehends two things, first, an enmity from all irreectitude, any taint, any turpitude: and secondly, an abhorrence and detestation thereof. Not only that the nature and will of God hath nothing impure, or that is not right adhering to it; but doth also detest and abhor to have. It signifies the aversion of the divine will, its perpetual, inflexible aversion from every thing that is evil, unworthy of it, unbecoming to it. And so whereas, holiness is spoken of in Scripture under the notion of light, that light is said to be without darkness, in the first place, (1 John 1. 5.) "God is light, and

with him is no darkness at all." This is made the matter of solemn message to the sons of men: "And this is the message that we have from him and which we declare to you:" God hath sent this message to the world, this account of himself, that he is light and without any darkness at all, without the least mixture of any thing that is impure, or foul or unworthy of him. But then, as it is said in that place, speaking of the divine holiness under the notion of light, that it is without darkness: so it is, secondly, elsewhere, represented under the same notion as expulsive of it, declining it, hating it, as having with it a most inflexible and eternal aversion from every thing that is signified under the notion of darkness, unholiness being there signified by it. "What communion hath light with darkness?" It is drawn down to signify that there can be no communion between God and unholiness, the temple of God and idols. 2 Cor. 6. 16. And,

(2.) This holiness hath also its positive part which must comprehend two, the like things that have been mentioned concerning the negative part. That is, first the actual, perpetual rectitude of all his volitions, and all the works and actions that are consequent hereupon; and, secondly, an eternal propension thereunto, a love thereof, by which it is altogether impossible to that will, that it should ever vary from itself in this, as it cannot in any other respect. That the determinations of that will are right in themselves, is out of question; and that, his word (and he best understands his own nature) testifies over and over. And then his propension, his eternal, unalterable propension of will to that which is right and good, that we find spoken of as a thing we must conceive too, as belonging to his holiness also; "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright." Psalm 11. 7. And so you have his hatred of all iniquity, and his love of universal rectitude, both mentioned together in one and the same breath, as it were; "Because thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity," (it is spoken of Christ it is true, but spoken of him as God, (Psalm 45. 7.) having said immediately before, "Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever") therefore God, even thy God hath anointed thee." He is the image of God, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person. But here it may be said, when we place (as we cannot but do) the notion of holiness generally in rectitude, every thing of rectitude must have some measure or another, or some rule to which it is to be referred, and which it is to be judged by. What is then the measure and will of divine rectitude wherein holiness stands?

This is the thing that hath been very variously discussed, and with a great deal more perplexity than there was cause for. These things you may take about it, that are all plain in themselves, and will be as much as will need to be, or can, in sum and substance, be said to it. As,

First. That the divine rectitude cannot be measured by any law, that refers to him properly so taken. A law properly taken, is the signification of the will of a superior concerning an inferior. But it is out of question, God can have no superior, and so nothing can in a proper sense be a law to him. And a measure, it is prior to the thing measured, must be before it, but there can be nothing prior to God. Yet,

Secondly. In the borrowed sense, very plain it is that God is a law to himself; and it is the only conception concerning this matter, that it can admit of: nor is that to be thought at all strange, when those parcels and fragments of right notion that are left in the ruined nature of man, do yet leave him a law to himself, where he hath no other law, no written law extant before him: much more, when the notions of rectitude are most perfect, they may supply the place of a rule or measure by which the divine rectitude is to be measured. But,

Thirdly. His mere will, abstractly considered, cannot be this measure, as if the divine will might have made that which is right to be wrong, or that which is wrong to be right: this is altogether unconceivable and impossible, that that will, abstractly considered, should be to him the measure of right or wrong, or of good and evil. That is, as if one could suppose that an act of the will might alter the obligation that is upon an intelligent creature to love the best good; or could make it lawful or a duty to hate the highest and most perfect pulchritude and beauty. This cannot be: as we are told, it is impossible for God to lie. He cannot lie, as it is impossible to him to be unholy, as it is to be untrue. And therefore, that there are eternal reasons of moral good and evil is a most indubitable thing; that that which is right could not in its own nature, in the greatest instances but be so; and that thereupon, that the distinction must be admitted necessarily, of things that are good because God wills them, and of things that he wills because they are good. And so natural laws and positive, they come to have their distinction and diverse consideration. And then in the last place,

Fourthly. That it is equally absurd to suppose, that the ideas of right and wrong, or of moral good and evil, as they are a measure to God should have place any where but in him; that is, in his will, not abstractly considered, but in his will as it is

everlastingly conformed to a wise mind. There cannot but be an everlasting conformity between the rectitude of the divine will and the divine word. And whatsoever he doth, he doth all things not because he will, but according to the counsel of his will. Ephes. 1. 11. And indeed, the contrary apprehension, were to resolve all the divine perfections into nothing but sovereignty. It is the divine will that is the measure of good and evil, yet not abstractly considered, but as it doth agree with most perfect wisdom, and that unalterably thereupon, it is as impossible to him ever to will that which is not wise, as it is impossible to him ever to speak that which is not true. And so far, having given some account of the divine holiness, wherein it lies, you may collect in great part from what hath been said, this double property of it, not to mention more :

i. That his holiness is primary, all other holiness is but derivative, imparted. This is the fountain-holiness, the primary holiness. And,

ii. His holiness is essential. It agrees to him, not primarily only, but essentially too, as being altogether inseparable from his nature. Holiness in any creature was always to it an extra-essential thing. We have had instances of it even in the higher orders of God's creatures. Man was created holy, but fell. Among the angels that were universally holy, many fell. So the holiness of the best of creatures is a thing in itself separable from its essence. But the divine holiness is most perfectly inseparable. I shall say no more upon this, (the course that I am upon did oblige me to great brevity in speaking to this head,) but only by way of *Use*.

1. To recommend it to you, that we may live in the adoration of God, considered under this notion: "Who is like thee among the gods, glorious in holiness?" Exod. 15. 11. "There is none holy as the Lord," as Hannah speaks in that admirable song of hers, 1 Sam. 2. 2. How should we rejoice in the thoughts of this, that we have such an Object of worship, so perfectly, unexceptionably holy. And,

2. We ought to study the imitation of him herein, as the adoration of him upon this account, understanding the text as saying that to you, "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" in holiness: "Be ye holy, for I am holy," 1 Pet. 1. 15, 16, referred (for so it is written, as the apostle speaks) to that Levit. 11. 41. and in divers other places.

3. Consider with what great gratitude the condescending goodness ought to be owned, that he should have a design to make such as we, like himself in this respect: we ought to acknowledge great kindness even in such a commandment, "Be



ye holy for I am holy. I would fain have you like myself." It speaks great love and good will to us, that he would have us imitate him. And,

4. It should make us willingly submit to any methods that he thinks fit to use, to bring us to that conformity to him in this respect; that we be gradually perfected herein, as he is most perfect. The state of our case requires that his methods should be sometimes rough and severe for this purpose. We have a great deal of dross about us. The fathers of our flesh, indeed, they correct (saith the apostle, Heb. 12. 9) "after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." A great word and work, (and which we ought to consider accordingly) that we might be partakers of his holiness! that is, that he might transform us into his image and likeness. What difficulties, what furnaces, what fires, what deaths would we not go through for this, that we might be made partakers of his holiness; to be in this respect, as he is, perfect.

2. The next that I have mentioned of these four perfections of the divine will, is his **JUSTICE**. And justice is wont to be distinguished into universal and particular. But then,

(1.) As universal righteousness or justice doth comprehend particular justice in it, so it superadds somewhat distinguishing, as you shall see by and by. Therefore,

(2.) For particular justice, that is twofold. It is either commutative or distributive; for commutative justice, with God it can have no place, because he hath no equal: or there are none of the same order with him, that can make exchanges with him or that can transfer rights to him for any rights transferred from him: he can be debtor to none of his creatures. "Who hath given him any thing, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" as Rom. 11. 35. It is a challenge to all the world. But it is that part of particular justice, which is wont to be called distributive justice that properly agrees to him, that is, rectoral justice, magistratical justice, the justice of a governor, ruler, of a superior towards an inferior. And that useth to be divided into these two parts, præmiative and puniative: præmiative, that confers rewards, and puniative, that dispenseth punishments. For the former of these, whatsoever rewards God dispenseth must be all of grace, not at all of debt. He cannot be antecedently a debtor to his creatures, otherwise than by promise, and so his justice runs into his faithfulness, as you will see by and by. And supposing him to have bound himself by promise, then it is a piece of justice with him to make good his promise, and thereupon, the notion of righteousness doth obtain and take place, even in conferring

benefits. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love." Heb. 6. 10. And "it is a righteous thing with God," not only to "recompense tribulation" to the troublers of his people, but also, those that are troubled rest with him. 2 Thess. 1. 6, 7. And "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." There is a piece of justice in it. It is, upon one account, the highest act of merey imaginable, considering with what liberty and freedom the course and method were settled, wherein sins come to be pardoned: and it is an act of justice also, inasmuch as it is the observation of a method to which he had tied himself, and from which afterwards therefore, he cannot depart, cannot vary.

And then for punitive justice, this is most distinguishing of the justice of God, from his holiness abstractly considered. By his holiness he hates sin, and by justice he punisheth it. The one makes him hate it, the other obligeth him to animadvert upon it in a way of punishment, or inclines him to do so. And this he doth as a debtor to himself. Justice among creatures is conversant about the rights of other men; but in God it must be conversant about his own rights; because he is himself the Fountain of all rights. And there could be no such thing as right throughout the whole universe, if it had not its first fountain in God himself: and therefore, his justice must be the faithful guardian of the rights of his sovereignty and government. And thereupon, this justice doth not only allow him but oblige him to award to every transgression a just recompense of reward, as the Scripture speaks.

But of this, I shall say no more, save only, this word or two by way of *Use*, that is,

1. Let us have our souls so possessed with this apprehension of the divine justice as to dread it, and stand in great awe of it, knowing that we have to do with a God that will not be mocked, or trifled with by any; and who never confers favours upon any, so as to forget his just right; nor doth so exercise his mercy towards any as to depress and lose his sovereignty; of which sovereignty of his, as hath been said, his justice must always be a faithful guardian, and therefore, those that are nearest to him must know that if they transgress, his justice must have an exercise about them, even as punitive. There is such a thing as economical, punitive, family justice, by which, even where God is pleased to be related as a Father, he animadverts upon, and chastises and punishes the faults and follies of his own children, even those that are of his own household. Though you must distinguish of punishments, between those that are corrective and those that are vindictive. Vindic-

tive punishments shall not have place there upon those that are, and have, a stated being in the family, that are of it and in it. But corrective punishment shall have place even there. And then,

2. Not only dread divine justice, but labour to engage it to be on your side. What a great blessing is that, to have even justice itself plead for us, and the state of our case brought to that pass that it may. If we confess our sins, that is, with a truly evangelical frame of spirit, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins : and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. But I pass on,

3. To say somewhat of his FAITHFULNESS. And that also doth in great part run into justice, as justice doth in some part run into holiness. But so far as to superadd somewhat peculiar and distinguishing. The faithfulness of God is his veracity or his truth as it relates to his word, the conformity that is between his word and his mind. And whereas, his word, as his faithfulness that refers to it is twofold, assertory and promissory ; so accordingly, must his faithfulness be understood. It stands either in declaring to us truly how things are, or how they shall be. It relates to his *assertory* word ; that is, that he doth make a true representation to us of all things that are to be received by us as doctrines. Whereas, he is in no possibility of being deceived himself herein, so neither can he deceive us ; God cannot lie. It is impossible to God to lie. So much, the light of a pagan could discern of God, even Balaam ; “ God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.” All the declarations that he hath made to us by way of assertion of things that we are to conceive are so and so, we are to look upon his truth and faithfulness as engaged herein. That is, he doth make a representation to us of things just as they are, and no otherwise, in what he saith to us of himself, in what he saith to us of Christ, in what he saith to us of his Spirit, and in what he saith to us of the way and course of duty wherein we are to walk, and the like. And whereas, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Revealer, the first Revealer of God and his mind to men, he is thereupon, called the faithful witness, as representing and testifying things just to be as they are, and no otherwise. It comes in among his glorious titles, “ Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the faithful witness :” that falls in among the rest. Rev. 1. 5. God’s name is in him, that is, the same nature is in him whereof the divine name is expressive. And therefore, in the whole gospel revelation we must conceive the highest faithfulness to be engaged. That which sums it up, “ Jesus Christ came

into the world to save sinners," the apostle calls it "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," (1 Tim. 1. 15) most worthy to be received and believed. And then,

The word of God, to which this faithfulness hath reference is not only assertory but *promissory*; not only declaratory how things are, but how also they shall be. It is true, we may take in his threatenings too, unto which his faithfulness hath reference as well as his promises. But chiefly and principally, his faithfulness hath reference to his covenant. "He is the faithful God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for ever." Deut. 7. 9. And "he will not alter the covenant that is gone out of his mouth, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail." Psalm 89. 33. 34.

And therefore, concerning this also, take so much of present *Use*. Is God perfect in this respect, most perfectly true and faithful, true to his word, his mind always agreeing most accurately with it? Then,

1. Trust this faithfulness of his. The object of trust is faithfulness most properly, the most immediate object. That which answers to faithfulness is faith. If he be faithful, he is to be believed, trusted in, and relied upon. In that passage of the apostle's prayer that he might be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, for all men have not faith; the most probable meaning of that, is, that have not faithfulness, (faith being there taken objectively,) that are not fit to be trusted; wicked and unreasonable men, upon whom we can place no trust, that are not fit to be believed. But we are never to admit a thought so diminishing or debasing concerning him whom we have taken to be our God, as if he were not fit to be trusted, as if his faithfulness could fail any whit. Our heavenly Father is perfect in this respect; therefore trust him perfectly, without vacillation, without wavering or suspenseful hearts. He cannot deny himself, he abides most faithful and therefore most securely to be relied upon by those that are, through his grace, enabled to give up themselves to him. He desires no more: give up yourselves to him, and you are safe on his part: rely upon him, for he is faithful; he will keep what you commit to him. And,

2. Imitate his faithfulness as well as trust it. Do you labour to be perfect herein? I pray let us all labour to be perfect in this as our heavenly Father is perfect, to wit, in faithfulness, both towards him and towards men.

(1.) Towards him, O! how can we think it tolerable to break with him who is never apt to break with us! His faithfulness can never fail, why should ours so often fail? When

we promise, when we engage, when we vow to live in his love, in his fear, in his communion ; what shame should it cover our faces with, to be unfaithful towards him, who is constantly faithful towards us. And,

(2.) Towards men ; imitate him there too : this would be the glory of our religion. It is the intolerable reproach of it, that there is so much falsehood among men, and even among them that profess the Christian name, among them who pretend to God as their God : saying he is their God who is the faithful God, most perfectly faithful. This makes a most deplorable state of things. “ Help Lord ” (saith the Psalmist) “ for the faithful man faileth.” Psalm 12. 1. It makes the state of things so very dismal that all who understand themselves, think they have reason to cry to heaven, “ Help, help, in such a sad case as this.” Help, Lord, the godly man fails, there is no faithfulness left in the world. We are undone in this case if God do not help, if we have not help from heaven. But what an ornament is it to the Christian name and profession, when the very words of such and such as do profess it, are reckoned stable as a pillar of brass. “ I would no more distrust such a man’s word, than I would fear the falling of the heavens over me, or the sinking of the earth under me : ” this would be the glory of our religion. O ! then let us labour to be perfect in this respect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

### LECTURE XXIII.\*

Having discoursed from this text, of many of the divine perfections, under the distinct heads of the perfections of the Divine Nature, of the Divine Mind, and of the Divine Will : and as for those of this last rank, having discoursed to you of several others, it remains to say something yet,

4. Of the **DIVINE GOODNESS** ; where, by goodness I do not mean the goodness of being merely, or the goodness of this or that thing in its own particular kind ; nor moral goodness in the utmost extent and latitude of it, for that would comprehend the several other perfections of the divine will, that have been spoken to already ; but one branch thereof only, which commonly goes under the name of benignity ; a benign inclination of will, which we are to consider, both with respect of what it excludes, and in respect of what it includes.

(1.) In respect of what it excludes : it excludes what is oppo-

\* Preached November 20, 1691.

site to it, whether it be contrarily opposite, or contradictory. That which is contrarily opposite is an aptness to do hurt, a mischievous disposition to have a mind or will prone to the doing of mischief; which it most certainly excludes: and then, that which is contradictorily opposite is, not to be willing to do good, an unaptness to do good.

(2.) And so, accordingly, it doth include a general propensity to benefaction, to acts of beneficence, and so we are to consider the goodness of God anologically to what we can find of any like specimen among men; for indeed, much of our way of knowing God is by reflection, there being somewhat of God yet left and remaining in man, fragments, broken relics of that image first instamped upon the soul of man in his creation. And by them it is, that we form the general notion, even of those perfections which we do ascribe to God. We see the several features of that image, by reflection, as in a glass, on which we bestow such and such names. Though in the mean time we must know, (as hath been told you upon other occasions over and over,) that whatsoever there is that goes under the same name with God and with us, (as all his communicable attributes do,) yet the things must be infinitely diverse, as his being and ours cannot but be. It is but some shadow, some faint resemblance, of the divine perfections that are discernible in us. But upon those things we bestow these names, still apprehending, that under the same name somewhat infinitely more perfect hath its place and being in God.

And now, as to this perfection, (the divine benignity,) I purposely reserved that to the last place, because it is most in the eye and design of this text, as is very manifest if you look back but to the two more immediate paragraphs, which do more directly refer hither, the former of them more expressly signifying that vacaney that should be in us, (in conformity to the divine pattern and example,) of all inclination to do evil, and the latter, positively expressing and holding forth the inclination that should be in us, after the same example, to do good. Of the former of these paragraphs you may look downwards from ver. 38, and see how the design of that, runs against a mischievous temper and disposition of spirit, an aptness to do evil, yea, though provoked; that there must be no disposition to retaliate, to requite evil with evil, wrong with wrong, injury with injury: but rather than do so, suffer oneself to be injured more, as the several expressions in that paragraph do signify, which it is not needful here to consider.

And then for the latter paragraph, concerning the disposition to do good, the discourse of that, runs from ver. 43 to this con-

clusion and close of the chapter ; all under the name of love ; so extensive and large in reference to its object, as not to exclude enemies themselves ; those that do with the most bitter hate pursue and persecute us. “ You have heard it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy ; ” such undue limits have been wont to be put and assigned to your love ; that you acquit yourselves well enough if you do love them that love you, and if you do good turns to them that do such to you, if you carry it courteously and affably in your salutations to such as will salute you. But this is a mean and narrow spirit, unworthy of a christian, and unworthy of the name and design of Christianity, that being intended to restore man to man, to restore man to himself, to make man what he was, and what he should be. There are no such limitations as those to be made to our love ; it must reach enemies, enemies themselves. “ I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you : ” and all this, that you may be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect ; (for so he doth,) “ that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good, and sends his rain upon the just and upon the unjust ; ” animadverting upon it as a mean thing, and an argument of a base and narrow spirit, to have our love and kindness confined to those wonted limits, wherein men, otherwise taught by their own corrupt inclinations, are wont to confine theirs. This is, therefore, the main and more principal design of this text, as it refers to the context, to commend to us the divine benignity, to represent that, and to set it before us as a pattern to which we are to be conformed. Be in this respect perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

And indeed, it is the fittest to consider this divine perfection in the last place ; for it is (as it were) the perfecting perfection ; it crowns and consummates all the rest. All the excellencies of the Divine Being, they are to be considered not abstractly, each by itself, but as they refer to one another, and as all together they do make one admirable temperament ; as with reverence we may speak. Indeed, of those that are abstractly considered, that are wont to go under the notion with us of very great exercise, should be all separated from this, they lose themselves, lose their very name ; wisdom, apart from goodness, it were only an ability to contrive, power, apart from goodness were only an ability to execute ill purposes and designs. But divine wisdom, that is in conjunction with most perfect goodness : and divine power, that is in conjunction with the most perfect goodness : and so this is, (as I may say,) the perfecting perfec-

tion, consummating of all the rest. How admirable a thing is that wisdom that is continually prompted by goodness! and that power that is continually set on work by goodness, in all the efforts and exertions of it!

And now, in speaking to this, the divine benignity and goodness, I shall briefly point out unto you the various diversifications of it, and then lay before you some of the more observable exemplifications of it. I shall shew you how it is diversified, and wherein it is exemplified.

[1.] How it is diversified. It admits, in sundry respects, (which I shall mention to you,) of sundry considerations and notions that may be put upon it, which yet do all run into this one thing, goodness. First, as it imports a propension unto any thing of suitableness, according as the estimate of divine wisdom and liberty doth determine it, and so it goes under the name of love. Love, is nothing else but a propension towards this or that object. The objects towards which divine goodness is propense, they are estimated by his wisdom and liberty, or sovereignty in conjunction, in respect of their capacities to receive these his propensions, or to be the passive subjects thereof: secondly, as it refers to offenders, guilty creatures, so this goodness is his clemency: thirdly, as it refers to repeated offences, so it is patience: fourthly, as it refers to long continued and often repeated provocations, so it is long suffering, forbearance: fifthly, as it refers to a miserable object, so it is pity and compassion: sixthly, as it refers to an amiable object, so it is complacency and delight: seventhly, as it refers to an indigent object, and speaks large benefactions towards it, so it is bounty: and lastly, as it refers to the principle of liberty and spontaneity from whence it proceeds, so it is called grace, *ευδοκία*, the very expression that is used to signify the goodness of the will, when, without any kind of inducement, good is done for goodness' sake. "Thou art good and doest good." When there is nothing to oblige, nothing to requite, nothing to remunerate, nothing to invite, this is the graciousness of goodness. These are sundry diversifications, (as they may fitly enough be called) and one and the same excellency, divine goodness and benignity, raised according as such and such respects (as have been mentioned) do clothe it. But then,

[2.] We come to give you exemplifications of it, in instances and evidences that do recommend and shew it forth unto us. And,

First. The most obvious and most comprehensive one is, this very creation itself which we behold, and whereof we our-



selves are a little, inconsiderable part. What else can be supposed to have been the inducement to an infinite, self-sufficient, all-sufficient Being to make such a creation as this stand forth out of nothing, but an immense goodness, a benignity not to be prescribed unto, and was only its own reason to itself, of what it would design and do? The creation could add nothing to him; for it being produced out of nothing, it could have nothing in it, but what was of him and from him; and so there is nothing of being in it; nothing of excellency and perfection in it, but what was originally and eminently in himself before; for nothing could give that which it had not: and all that is in this world, is given out from God himself, and therefore, it is resolvable into nothing else but mere goodness that we are, or that any thing else besides is. As in Rev. 4. 11. "For thy pleasure all things are and were created." For thy pleasure; it was a pleasure to him to have that immense and boundless goodness of his, issue and flow forth in such a creation: and among the rest of creatures, in giving being to such as might be capable of knowing who made them, and of contemplating the glorious excellencies of their Maker, and of partaking a felicity in him, as well as a being from him. Indeed, that there should be so vast a creation, (though all that is nothing compared with him, vast as it is,) that is owing to his power; that there should so ornate and amiable and orderly a frame of things be created, that is owing to his wisdom. But that there should be any creation at all, that is owing to nothing else but his mere goodness. He would have creatures that should be capable of knowing and enjoying the excellencies and perfections that make up his being to himself, according to their measure and capacities; and he would have other creatures of inferior ranks and orders to minister unto them. And though this be an obvious thing, and we hear of it often, it is often in our minds, yet I am afraid it is not often enough in our hearts. It doth not sink and pierce deep into our souls, to think what we, by mere nature, are, by mere untainted uncorrupt nature; all that we are by divine benignity, that it did eternally depend upon his mere pleasure whether I should be something or nothing. And what a rebuke would this carry in it to a vain mind, if it might be seriously and often thought of! "Was I created to indulge and pursue vanity, to indulge a vain mind, and pursue vain things?" how great an awe would it hold our spirits under! It would teach us to fear the Lord and his goodness, to think, "I only am, and have a place in this world, because he thought it good, and he saw it good to have it so." But,

Secondly. The universal sustentation that he affords to all

created beings, generally considered: this is all nothing but mere goodness; for as he had no need of a creation at first, he hath still no need of it, and he that hath raised it up into being out of nothing one moment, might have suffered all to slip and lapse into nothing the next moment again, without injury to what he had made, or without loss to himself. His tender mercy is over all his works. He lets all this great variety of creatures that replenish this world, continually draw from him. The eyes of all things look towards him. Nature hath (as it were) set an eye in every thing that is made, only to look up with craving looks to the great Author of all things, and all are sustained suitably as their indigent states require, when all are still useless to him, and advantage him nothing. But,

Thirdly. His continual sparing offending creatures; how constant a testimony and evidence is this of the immense goodness of God! That when he hath those that offend him continually, in his power and at his mercy, and he may right himself for what hath been done, in a moment, or prevent doing any thing more to his displeasure, and to his dishonour, yet he spares: how admirable goodness is this! It is not oscitancy and neglect, as if he took no notice of what men did. On purpose to obviate such an expression, Moses useth that emphatical expression, (intereeding for offending Israel,) "Let the power of my God be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering and slow to anger." Let the power of my God be great. It is not from oscitancy but power, that guilty creatures are spared, that an offending world is not turned into flames and ashes long ago; that a vindictive fire hath not been preying on it, and vindicating the wrong done to the offended Maker and Lord of all. It is not oscitancy but power, that is, power over himself, the greatest of all powers. Creating power is less, the sustentative power, by which the world is borne up, is less. By the exertion of his power towards his creatures he can easily conquer them; but by this exercise of his power he doth, (as it were,) conquer himself; withholding himself from those more sudden eruptions of displeasure and wrath which would argue that these were a predominant thing with him. But he will let the world know it is not so. There is the power of goodness that doth predominate and is governing. It is admirable in itself, and ought to be so in our estimate, that this world which hath for so many thousand years been inhabited and possessed by rebels against the crown and throne and dignity of the Eternal King,

is yet spared, and they let propagate their kind, and transmit their nature, though they do, with it, transmit the poison and malignity of an inveterate hate and enmity against the Author of their being. How admirable is the divine goodness, that shews itself in this patience and long-suffering towards a guilty world! We are taught so to account; “Despisest thou the riches of his forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? Rom. 2. 4. And again,

Fourthly. We are to consider as a further instance and evidence of this immense goodness of God, that he is pleased to take such care of the children of men, in their several successive ages and generations, as we find he continually doth; not only sparing them but providing for them; which is a plain and most constantly positive instance and exemplification of this goodness whereof we speak. Two ways he doth more especially take care of the offending creatures that do possess and inhabit this earth of ours; partly by laws, and partly by providence.

i. By laws. How much of the goodness of God is seen by those very laws which he hath taken care shall have place in this world, and by which any thing of common order is preserved? How admirable is it that he should so concern himself for the tranquillity and peace and welfare of those that are in a confederacy and combination against him, and have been so from one generation to another! How wonderful is it! It is owing, partly, to the impressions he hath made and left upon the minds and nature of man, that there are any such laws as go under the name of the laws of nature, which have this tendency and design, to keep the world in a peaceful and quiet state; and do so, as far as they obtain and prevail. And indeed, there is none that do any thing to the disturbance and disquiet of the world, but they abandon the law of their nature in what they do, and offer violence to themselves. But any such law of nature we must understand to have proceeded from the Author of nature, and we must understand it to have been preserved and kept alive among men, by him that doth preserve the nature of man, and doth take care that there should be successions of such creatures in this world. Consider how tender he is of the life of man, that he hath provided, that there should be such a law, even in man’s nature, against murder, of which the municipal laws of several countries are all transcripts, and all owing to the general Legislator. Whatsoever laws of this or that country do agree with the natural law, they are all

from the supreme Legislator, and are but discoveries of the care and concern that the common Ruler of this world hath to preserve such a creature as man on earth, from violence and wrong. And so likewise, the laws that do obtain anywhere for the preservation of property and for the preservation of chastity, and for the preservation of fame and reputation among men, and the like; that men may not be injured in such respects: they are all so many instances and exemplifications of the great and general benignity of the common Lord and Author of all things, towards his poor creatures in this world, though he beheld his nature poisoned with enmity and malignity against himself, and though that creature takes no notice of him in all this. And then,

ii. The case is seen, not only in the provision he hath made by laws, but which he continually makes by providence, for the sustentation of these, his offending creatures. So you see the text refers us to these very instances, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:" that you may represent and shew forth the Divine Nature in yourselves, that you may shew yourselves born of God, with such a nature as God hath; give some proofs and discoveries of the Divine Nature in you, because he doth thus; loves his enemies, doth good to them that hate him, feeds them with breath, with bread, with all the necessary supports of life, in a continual course from day to day. And again,

Fifthly. It doth further evidence and exemplify divine goodness, and how perfect he is therein, that there is any derivation hereof to be found any where among men, that there is any such thing among men as goodness towards one another, in any degree of it. Wheresoever there is to be found more or less of that which we call good nature, if there be any thing of humanity, of an aptness to do good to others, or an unaptness to do them hurt, or to take pleasure in their infelicities or miseries, these are so many specimens of goodness that are derived, and their very derivation speaks a fountain from whence they come. There can be no borrowed or participated goodness but must suppose, and imply, a first goodness whence it proceeds. If there be any, the least goodness in any creature, this refers us to God, prompts us to look towards him with adoring eyes. This is a little rivulet from an immense ocean, a beam, a ray from that Sun of love and goodness, from that Nature that is all goodness and all love itself, in the very essence of it. This we ought to consider, if we meet with any kindness in this world, if we see any efforts, any discoveries of

pity, of compassion and mercifulness in one towards another, this is all goodness from the First Goodness. All this, shews there is one Immense Goodness, whence all such little parcels of goodness do proceed and come. Even in this apostate and fallen world we see some such appearances of the divine image, (as was said) yet left. We see man hath love in his nature, something of goodness in his nature, a proneness to do acts of goodness and beneficence to some or other, as they come in his way : this should presently make us fall adoring the Supreme Goodness in all this. But then,

Sixthly. The design of recovering apostate, fallen man, is beyond all things, a most admirable discovery of divine goodness ; that ever he should have formed such a design. Here is such a creature, such an order of creatures, such a sort of creatures, fallen, sunk, lost, become miserable, and miserable by their own delinquency, by their own apostasy, that is, by their own choice : they have chosen the way that leads down to the chambers of death and eternal ruin. Now, that in this case he should form a design with himself, “I will yet settle a course wherein such creatures as these may be recovered and saved, even from a self-procured ruin.” If there were not, I say, a goodness whereof no other account could be given, but that it is divine, but that it is of itself, as the Deity is, as the Godhead is ; who would ever have imagined but that such creatures having offended, and by their offensive nature and course, put themselves into a way of perishing, must have been let perish. Nothing more was needful than to let them perish. Why should they not be let perish, when they chose it, when they loved it, and affected the way to it ? “They that hate me love death.” They that hated wisdom, the Supreme Wisdom, they loved death. And why might they not be left to their own choice, to take the things they love ? No, this was Godlike, this speaks the goodness of a God, that he will prevent the perishing of self-destroying creatures. “Their destruction is of themselves, but they shall find that in me is their help ;” as by the prophet he speaks his own mind and heart. Partly, the design itself, of saving and recovering such creatures, and partly, the strange and most surprising methods for bringing about such a design, may not only beget conviction, but the highest admiration also, of the goodness of God. We should not only acknowledge it, but fall a wondering, and even lose ourselves in wonder. How unaccountable a goodness was this, that rather than such creatures as we, should finally and remedilessly perish, God should put on man, become man : that man, a man

of sorrows; that man of sorrows, at last a sacrifice on a cross, to bring about a reconciliation between an offended Majesty and offending creatures? What manner of love was this! what a transporting discovery of divine goodness! "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3. 16. But then, if we add in the next place, to all this,

Seventhly. The various means that he useth to draw and gather in souls, to comply with the terms upon which pardon and reconciliation, and eternal salvation are offered to us. There are his ensigns displayed, there is a gospel published, there is an office set on foot, which is to last through all ages to the end of time, on purpose to draw and gather in souls; and all these to be looked upon still under the notion of enemies, they whose hearts were full of enmity and hate against him. For whom indeed he hath been doing good, in common kinds, long before: but they never thanked him for all the actings of his patience and sparing mercy. But such things are continually done towards the unthankful and the evil; yea, these he is so intent upon saving from a deserved ruin, and bringing them to partake, even in a blessedness with himself, to unite them with his Son, make them one with him, to possess them with his Spirit; and to one of the greatest wonders of the divine goodness that can be thought of. When he hath given his Son to be a sacrifice for poor sinners, then to give his Spirit to enter into them, and to inhabit and possess them, and dwell in them; that holy, pure Spirit, that Spirit of all goodness and purity, that Spirit of holiness, as he is called, that he should make his entrance into unholy souls, souls that are so many cells of impurity and filthiness, of every thing that is hateful and noisome and loathsome, how admirable a discovery is this of the divine goodness!

#### LECTURE XXIV.\*

And having thus *demonstrated* the divine goodness, my design is to *vindicate* it. And that is, indeed, of so great importance, that I cannot think it fit to leave off from this subject without placing some endeavour that way. It is of the greatest consequence to us, in all the world, to have our souls habitually possessed with a believing, admiring sense of the goodness of God. We should therefore watch with greater jealousy over

\* Preached December the 11th, 1691.

our souls, in no one point more than this, lest any thought should arise, or lest any injection should fix and have place in our souls, that should any way tend to infer with us a diminution of the goodness of God, that the glory of it should be sullied in our eyes, or that it should be obscured or darkened in any kind: for how much may a thought do of prejudice to that genuine, holy, spiritual affection that should be working back again in ourselves towards a good God? How may that affection be stifled by a thought, if it be not duly and seasonably obviated!

And indeed, there are but these two great objections that can, with any plausibleness, offer themselves against the goodness of God; partly, the eternal miseries that do befall the greater part of mankind; and partly, the temporal calamities that do befall the better part. These two ways, men may object to themselves against the divine goodness, wherein God is here represented as so perfect, that the most should miserably perish, and the best should undergo many hard and grievous things, even in this world. Both these, we shall take into consideration, that so, this most necessary part of the idea of the divine perfections may obtain, without any kind of obstruction or objection lying against it in our minds or hearts; so as we may yield ourselves to be entirely swallowed up of the divine goodness.

The former of these is more frequent. And to shew how little pretence there can be from thence, how little colour of objection against the divine goodness, I shall lay before you these many considerations:

1. That no such goodness can be as a perfection in God, that shall exclude or diminish any of his other perfections. No such goodness can belong to the nature of God, as any perfection due to it, that shall be exclusive or diminishing of any other perfection. You should not praise a man, but reproach him, if you should give this of him as his character, that he is so very goodnatured, as never to make any difference between civilities and affronts.

2. Punitive justice is most certainly a perfection belonging to the nature of God, both as he is a Being universally perfect, and as he is the Ruler of the world, to be exercised in such cases, wherein there is occasion it should have place. This is plain in itself, punitive justice to be exercised where it ought to have place, it is a perfection belonging to the nature of God as he is a Being of universal perfection, and the Ruler of the world: as indeed, the Original Being, the First of beings must include all perfection eminently in itself. For there is

no perfection that is not somewhat, and there is no something that can come from nothing, and therefore, the First Being must have all perfection in it. And if this be a perfection, (as every man's judgment will tell him it is,) that is, punitive justice, to be exercised upon proper occasions, it cannot but have place in the Divine Nature, as he is a Being of universal perfection, and as it necessarily belongs to him, supposing a world, to be the Governor of it. It could be from no other but him; and therefore, can be under no government but his.

3. There can be no place for the exercise of punitive justice, but in reference to creatures governable by a law. Punitive justice can never have place, but towards such creatures as do admit of being governed by a law. Punishment is, properly, nothing else but due animadversion upon an offender against the law to which he is obliged, and which he is put under. This also is plain in itself, and only leads to what I add further,

4. That no creature can be capable of government by a law, but such a one as is endowed with the natural faculties of an understanding and a will. There is no place for a legal government, and so nor, consequently, for the exercise of punitive justice, but toward a creature that is endowed with the natural faculties of an understanding and will, supposing that such a creature be guilty of violating the laws by which he ought to be governed.

5. It can be no reflection upon the nature of God to have made such a creature as man. For that which is the very first instance of divine goodness, it would be very strange that that should be a reflection upon it, cloud it, or obscure it. It evidenceth it most highly, that when it was in the choice of God, and a thing merely depending upon his pleasure, to make such a sort and order of creatures stand up out of nothing into being. This is, I say, the first evidence of his goodness, and speaks nothing to the disparagement of it: "for thy pleasure all things are and were created." And that which ought, from the very reason of the thing, to be matter of highest and most grateful acknowledgment and adoration, must thereupon, necessarily, be an instance of goodness in him to whom such grateful acknowledgments are due, and by whom they are claimed. And it is a saying that carries its own light and reason in it, of that ancient, that "If I were capable (saith he) of making an intelligent creature stand up out of nothing, with a present power of using and understanding, the first thing I should expect from him should be, that he fall down and worship me, and



make acknowledgment to me, for having been the author of being, and of such a being to him.” And then, for the kind of this being which divine goodness hath allotted to it, it makes it a high instance of his goodness itself. So far is it from being a diminution to it, that is, that he hath given us such a sort of being that is merely imitative and resembling of his own, wherein could there have been a greater signification of kindness and goodness, than to form a creature after his own image, with a spiritual, intelligent nature like his own? And,

6. The things that render any creature capable of felicity, do also render it capable of government by a law: that is, reason and will, an intellective and elective faculty; these make a people capable of government by a law, and make them capable of felicity too. As hath been told you, if man had not had a nature endowed with an understanding and a will, he could have been no capable subject of being governed by a law: but then, if he had been destitute of such faculties as these, he could not have been capable of felicity neither. If he had not understanding to apprehend wherein it lies, and a will to unite with it, choose it, and take solace in it, he would be incapable of being a happy creature. And what! Can it be any argument against the divine goodness that he hath made man with such a nature as renders him capable of felicity? If he were not capable of government, he could not be capable of felicity; the same things making him capable of the one, and of the other.

7. It must have been a very great blemish upon the divine government, if creatures capable of government by law, should generally offend against the most righteous and equal ones, (as his laws cannot but be,) and there should be no course taken for the punishing of such transgressors. This must be a manifest blemish upon a government. Suppose we, in any government whatsoever that there should be any such edict and proclamation published, that let the subjects under such a government do what they please, no man shall be animadverted upon, all shall do what is good in their own eyes, and no one be ever called to any account; would this be a commendation of a government? Such a thing is altogether insupposable in the administration of the best and most excellent government that ever was, or ever can be. Consider it in the whole course of it, not the temporal administration abstractly, from the future state of things, but the course and the end of it altogether; and it must finally appear the best and most perfect and excellent government that ever was, or ever can be. But how insupposable is it, (I say) that the best and **most** perfect government,

should ever be liable to such a blemish as this, that let men be never so wicked, it shall fare as well with them as if they were never so dutiful and obedient. The thing speaks itself, and Scripture speaks it, but it speaks not as a notion which it suggests anew, but only that which it takes up and observes, as a thing common to men before. "Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?" And see, what immediately precedes, "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee; Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?" Gen. 18. 23, 25. Supposing this as a great fundamental, a principle that did always shine with its own light, and that did evidence itself, that it must belong to the Judge of all the earth to do right: and so put a difference between the righteous and the wicked, that they are not to fare all alike. And again,

8. The very nature of the law, that was original and natural to man, is itself a high evidence and instance of divine goodness. The law of nature, that law (I say) which was original and natural to man, and so inwrought into himself at first, that he was even constituted as a law to himself, because that that was enjoined in it summarily, did carry his own reason in it, had in itself, recommending evidence to that conscience wherewith he was created, that God did rule upon those terms that he was to rule himself upon; and so must judge him upon such terms, as upon which he must judge himself. For do but consider, how this law is afterwards summed up, all in one word, love. This was the fulfilling of the law, the loving of God above all: the most equal thing in all the world, that the highest and best love should be placed upon the highest and best good. This was that which his law required, that we should love the Lord our God, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. Our Saviour gives this, as the summary and principal part of the law that was natural and original to man: and then, the second part is like the former, loving our neighbour as ourselves. How greatly evidential was this divine goodness, that when he had made a creature capable of government by a law, he should give him such a law as this, and impress it upon his mind, so as it might be said, God was not more to govern him by it, than he was to govern himself: and so finally was to judge him by it, as he must needs judge himself! "He hath shewn thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6. 8. Walk in that dutiful subjection to God, which must be the necessary and easy product of supreme and sovereign love to him: and then, carry it justly and

mercifully towards men. And, certainly, that must needs be an instance and evidence of the greatest goodness in God, that should be the cause of the greatest good in man. Now, do but suppose the world conformed to this law of God, in these two most noble and constituent parts of it; that is, that all the inhabitants of this world did live in the continual love of God, adoring him most gratefully as the great Author of their being, and in a universal and mutual love to one another, each man seeking another's felicity as his own, and having no more design of hurt or mischief against another than he hath against his own life, his own heart; what a happy world were this! And that which tends to happiness, must be from goodness: nothing is plainer. Now, when so admirable a law as this, every part agreeing with the whole, no branch but what is naturally included in this summary, this compendium; I say, when such a law as this was given to men, it is most natural to add, that the same goodness that did enjoin upon man such a law, must also adjoin a penalty to it, a threatening or due punishment for the violation of it; otherwise, the divine government had been ludicrous, if there should have been such a law which is without annexing any penalty. And the better the law, and more unexceptionable, the more clearly righteous and equal is a very severe penalty to be annexed to it: and the annexing it thereunto, is not only what divine goodness must allow, and doth allow, but what it did require. This was a thing not only consistent with divine goodness, but the effect of it, that there should be such intermination added unto such a law. For, if the adding of that sanction to the law, was the aptest means to procure the continual obedience of it, and the law itself had a tendency to the good of the community for whom it was made, then the very addition of the sanction or threatening to the precept of the law, must not only consist with the goodness of it, but proceed from it. Any prince that doth really study the welfare of the governed community, must be understood to adjoin due and proper penalties to good laws, for the good of the people to be governed by them: that the awe of the adjoined threatening may procure obedience, and that obedience, felicity to them that are so governed; so as that such a law being once made, goodness did not only admit of it, but did require that there should be a penalty annexed to it, to enforce obedience. And again,

9. It was never to be expected, that when God made such a creature, he should create him in that which was to be his final state. It could never be looked for from the divine goodness, that making such a creature as man, he should settle him in

a final, good and happy estate the first day he made him. It can be no way inconsistent with the goodness of God, that having made such a creature as man, he should order him a state of trial, of probation, through which he was to pass into that state which was to be final, and perpetually felicitating. For a final state is a state of retribution, a state of reward. The Scripture so speaks of it, frequently, as you cannot but know. Now I beseech you, what was it to be the reward of? It must be the reward of a foregoing obedience. And therefore, it could never have been expected from the divine goodness, that when God first made man, he should have made it impossible for him ever to have offended: or when he made any intelligent creature that he should have made it so. Those two great orders of intelligent creatures, angels and men, it is plain enough God made neither of them incapable of offending. And it was not reasonable to expect that he should. But as to ourselves, (for we are more obliged to mind our own concerns,) this is the account we have given us, (Eccles. 7. 29.) "God made man upright; but he hath sought out many inventions." God made him upright, put him into a good state, if he would have liked it, but he must needs fall to his own inventions, to mend it, and try if he could not make to himself a better state than God had made for him. It was never to be expected from the divine goodness, that he should, by almighty, extraordinary power, have prevented this. For the creature that was designed to be rewarded with eternal felicity, for a present temporal obedience, he must be left to the trial of his ingenuity and dutifulness towards his bountiful Creator. Otherwise, there would have been no place, no room for reward. And if there had been no place for punishment, in case of disobedience, there could have been no place of reward, in case of obedience and duty. Therefore, I add hereupon,

10. That inasmuch as it was necessary there should be such a law, and the threatening annexed to it, or punishment proportionable to any offence committed against it, the execution, according to the tenour of the threatening, became accordingly and consequently necessary, supposing once the violation of such a law. I speak of that law which was natural and original to man; for that little instance of obedience wherein God did put man at first upon, there could not have been transgression in that, without it had been a violating of the most natural law, in the most noble and essential part of it. Now, if a threatening were necessary to be annexed to a law, the execution of it, in case of a violation of that law, was consequently necessary; yea, and if the threatening did immediately pro-

ceed from divine goodness, the execution of the threatening must immediately proceed from it; but not without the intervention of the divine veracity. The goodness of God did lead him to add a due and proportionable threatening to his law: and this law being violated and broken, so as that the threatened punishment became due, it must be executed. That which was ordained from the divine goodness, it comes to be the immediate effects of divine justice, which is not contrary to goodness: it is only in our conception diverse, but far from being contrary. If there had not been such a constitution, the divine goodness had not shone forth with that lustre and evidence that now it doth. And there being such a constitution, his truth and legal justice oblige him, in some way or other, to keep to it, either in kind or equivalency: he must do himself and his own law that right, as to preserve the honour, reputation and dignity of it, and of his own government concerned therein. Therefore, the execution of such a law, by inflicting the incurred penalty one way or other was necessarily and unavoidably consequent: so necessary, that one attribute could not in this case have had its sole exercise without injury to some other, which our first consideration was directed against. But then I yet further add,

11. That whatsoever penalty comes to be inflicted upon unreconcilable sinners, in the final and eternal estate, it must be acknowledged that much of divine goodness was exercised and demonstrated towards them before. Suppose an offending creature whose heart was implacable towards God, and so violently addicted to sensual lusts, that he had the authority of his Maker in continual contempt; and his whole life was a defiance to the authority of his justice and government, and the goodness and kindness of the offers he hath made to him; suppose (I say) such a creature incurs never so severe a penalty, he cannot but acknowledge that much of the divine goodness had its exercise and demonstration towards him before. For otherwise, what room or place were there for that expostulation of the apostle, even with them whom he supposeth finally to fall under wrath in the day of God's wrath, and revelation of his righteous judgment; "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and long-suffering, and forbearance? not knowing that the goodness of God should lead thee to repentance?" Despisest thou his goodness! This same despising had no object, if there had been no exercise of goodness towards such a one before: and it would suppose this expostulation to be a great impertinency. Despise goodness; it were to despise nothing, if there had been no goodness, and so there could have been

no such thing as despising: the thing the apostle chargeth upon such a one; for there can be no act where there is no object. There could be no goodness to be despised, if there had not been the exercise of goodness towards such a one in a former state. Therefore, I add,

12. That the general and special goodness of God are things no way inconsistent with one another. These two things do very fairly accord, God's general goodness towards all, and his special goodness towards some. And it argues a very great debility of mind, and shortness of discourse, when any do set these against one another, as if special goodness must destroy the notion of general goodness, or as if general goodness must destroy the notion of special. The matter would be more easily apprehensible, if we would bring it to a case relating to a human government, and suppose the best that is supposable in this world. Would you suppose that the clemency, kindness and goodness of the best prince that ever was (or of whom you can form any idea in your own minds) must oblige him to deal alike with all his subjects, that is, that all persons that are of equal parts, of equal understandings, must be equally preferred, equally dignified? Would the goodness of any prince oblige him to this, that if he find a necessity to have some persons of good parts and understanding to be of a privy council to him, that he must have all to be of that privy council that are of as good parts as they? And shall such a prince not be thought to be good, or his government not to be equal, unless it were so? The best idea that we can form of any government is, that things be equally carried towards all, and yet special favour be towards objects that are not altogether incompetent, at the choice of the ruler. This is the best idea we can form. Bring then the matter to the divine government; we must distinguish between matters of right and matters of favour. For matters of right, we are to expect from it, that God do right to all men universally without exception; but for matters of mere favour, in reference whereunto he is not so much as a debtor by promise; (and he can be a debtor to none by nature) he can owe nothing to his creature. It is possible for a subject in a human government to oblige his ruler, but no creature can oblige God. A subject in a human government may really deserve favour and kindness at the hands of his rulers, for he can benefit them, it is in his power to profit them, they can really be the better for him; but God can be the better for none of us; therefore, he can be a debtor to none but by promise; we are therefore only to expect from the divine goodness, that where he hath promised, there he will be as

good as his word; but for unpromised favour, to which the creature can have no title, that there he do dispense arbitrarily as seemeth good to him. And therefore, upon this ground his general goodness towards all, and special goodness towards some, are no inconsistencies one with another. And if he do generally shew that goodness in the course of his dispensations, to all his creatures, and especially to all the children of men, that every one that considers must acknowledge, then it is no detraction from the goodness that he doth shew to all, that he doth somewhat more of mere special favour for others, yea, though it be never so much, or though it be never so greatly more. There is no cause or pretence why any man's eye should be evil because his is good. For free and unpromised favours, (and all are unmerited, but such as are not only unmerited but unpromised too,) that he dispense out these arbitrarily, is certainly no repugnancy to the highest and most perfect goodness. I further add,

13. That instances of the general goodness of God towards men are most numerous and undeniable. For besides, that he hath given them being, (when it was in his choice and pleasure whether he would or no,) here he entertains them in a world, to the making whereof, none of them did ever contribute any thing; he watches over them by an indulgent providence, supplies them with breath every moment; keeps off, for an appointed time, destructive evils, affords them out of that common bounty of his, the good things that are necessary for the continuance and comfort of life. How rich is this earth in its productions for offending creatures! I cannot but think of it, many times, with wonder, that considering that this inferior part of God's creation so soon after it was made, fell under his just displeasure and righteous curse, there yet should be so great variety of productions, every where in this earth, for the entertainment of rebels, or those that for the most part never give thanks for what they enjoy, never look up, although they have a capacity and disposition in their nature (originally) so to do, to adore, to pay reverence to the first and eternal Being. That which some think to be more the difference of a man from a brute than reason is, a natural religion, which some take a great deal of pains with themselves to erase and tear by the roots out of their own souls. Let us consider that which the text refers to, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father, who doth good to the evil and the good, makes his sun to shine and his rain to fall on one and the other;" do so, that you may represent your Father;

herein lies his perfection. This whole earth that men fill with their wickedness, he fills with his goodness, "The whole earth is full of the goodness of the Lord," Psalm 33. 5. "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works." Psalm 145. 9. "He hath not left himself without witness, in that he doeth good, and gives fruitful seasons, and fills men's hearts with food and gladness." Acts 14. 17. And I further add,

14. That even those instances of divine goodness that are of an inferior kind, have a tendency and aptitude in them to make way for the exercise of his goodness to them, in a higher and nobler kind. The goodness which God exerciseth towards men in the concerns of this natural life of theirs, they have a tendency and aptitude to affect their minds, and to beget good impressions there, and to make them consider and bethink themselves, "Whence is all this? and how comes it to pass that such provision should be made for one, and for creatures generally, of that order to which I belong?" This is the tendency, even of external mercies. Whereupon, it is spoken of with such resentment, "They say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways—yet he filled their houses with good things: but the counsel of the wicked be far from me." Job 21. 14, 15. And the same, you have resumed afterwards, in the next chapter, implying that the tendency of things did run quite otherwise; that is, to allure and draw the minds and hearts of men towards God; and make them consider and bethink themselves, and say, Why should we not covet to know our great Benefactor, and him from whom all our good comes? But they say unto him "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:"—"though he filled their houses with good things;" and therefore, is there such a resentment afterwards expressed: "but the counsel of the wicked be far from me;" representing them as a monstrous sort of creatures, a sort of prodigies in the world, that there should be such a disaffection in rebellious and obdurate hearts against the Author of all goodness and kindness and mercy, that is in so continued a course exercised towards them. The counsel of the wicked be far from me; as if any serious and considering man must, and ought to be startled and affrighted at beholding such a spectacle as this, a reasonable, intelligent soul shunning and fleeing away from him who is daily loading it with his benefits, and seeking, by kindness and goodness, to insinuate himself into it, and so make room and place for himself, in the love and kindness of such a one. But that these dispensations have this tendency in them, the Scripture is full



of it; “Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” hath a leadingness thereto, in that mentioned Rom. 2. 4. “And count, (saith the apostle Peter in his 2 Epis. ch. 3. 15.) that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation:” (he would not have us make a false count, I hope :) reckon that he is aiming at the saving of your souls, while he is doing good to you in external respects. If he feed you with bread, if he feed you with breath day by day, and moment by moment, what is it for? Is it only to support such a despicable thing as this frail body of yours is, which must shortly become a carcass? Is that the utmost of his design? No, he is leading thee to repentance, and would have thee account that both his bounty and his patience towards thee have salvation in design. Count the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation, that is, it is the design of the thing; it is that which the thing itself doth naturally aim at, and lead unto. And hereupon, we are told, in that, Acts 14. 16, 17, 18. that God aimed at the turning men from the vanities that their hearts did doat on as the objects of their worship, to the living God; he did aim at this in giving them fruitful seasons, as you may see, if you take notice of the connexion between the 15 and 17 verses of that chapter. So, Acts 17, he gives them being, breath and all things, that they might seek after him who is not far from every one of us; in whom we live and move and have our being. And then,

15. Lastly; The terms upon which he offers peace and pardon and eternal life to offending creatures are the highest proofs and evidences imaginable, of the wonderful goodness of God, notwithstanding that so great multitudes do, finally, refuse them and perish. And to this purpose, it should be considered, that the apostle speaks of this as matter of transport more than doubt, and that it did need more to be admired than evinced. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3. 16. The silence that is there used is more speaking than any speech could be. He so loved the world, at so stupendous a rate. It is a very speaking silence that he doth not tell us how great that love is; he leaves us to understand it to be altogether inexpressible, that he should give his only Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish—and whereas, men have an impotency to the exercise of that faith that is requisite to their attaining salvation, what is that impotency? It stands only in an affected blindness and obduracy of will; that which they call moral impotency. Now moral impotency doth not excuse, but ag-

gravate the faultiness. No man takes moral impotency to be an excuse, but a high aggravation. As if a man is guilty of murder, and he bring this to excuse him,—“I could not but kill that man because I hated him, I did so violently hate him that I could not but do this unto him.” That moral impotency (his extreme hatred) aggravates the crime, that that made it to be done, made it so highly faulty, and so much the more heinous, that it is done. He is not less guilty, but the more, by how much the more his hatred was predominant and prevalent in the case. Why, so this disaffection to God and to Christ and to holiness, (which is impotency) is an impotency seated in the will, and the ignorance hath its root, it ariseth and proceeds from thence, that is, that men are “alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, and because of the blindness of their hearts.” A blindness which they love, a blindness which they choose, as it is, Ephes. 4. 18. Whereupon, all their misery is self-created. The miseries wherein men are involved in this world, which make it another hell to them, (a hell on this side hell,) and the miseries of the final and eternal state, they are all self-created: that is, they do arise from a fixed, inveterate malignity against the Author of their being, and that very nature itself, whereof their own, at first, was an imitation. An amazing thing, but it were impossible, if men did love God, to be miserable. Loving him is enjoying him, and enjoying him is felicity, if any thing be, or can be. The image of men’s future miseries, you have in their present state. What is it that makes the world such a hell as it is, but men’s hatred of God and of one another? For (as was said) if there were no contention at all, among men on earth, but who should love God best, and one another best, and who should do most for him, and for one another, what a heavenly life should we live here, a heaven on this side heaven: but the hell on this side hell, is only this, that men’s hearts are filled with enmity against God, and one another: and from this malignity proceeds their infidelity, that they do not unite to God in Christ when they are called to it; which is no excuse, but an aggravation. But, in the mean time, that is the most wonderful goodness that can be thought, that such overtures should be made to men, God having given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

LECTURE XXV.\*

And this may suffice to be said, in answer to that first objection against the divine goodness, the eternal miseries of the most. And, indeed, the sum of all that can be said upon that account, doth amount to this, as if it were a thing inconsistent with the goodness of God, that he hath made such a creature as man, given him so excellent a being, made him after his own image, that is, endowed him with a reason and a will, in his very creation : and, that having made him such, he did not unalterably fix him in a good and happy state the first day, but that he thought fit to pass him through a state of probation into his final state; and upon this lapse and degeneracy, he did not do for every one in order to their recovery as he hath done for some. In answer whereto, you have these considerations laid before you.

But we pass on to the other objection; the temporal afflictions of good men. Some may be prone to impeach the divine goodness upon this account, and object against what hath been said on that subject. But here, such as find themselves disposed so to object, should reflect upon themselves and consider, what they themselves are. Are they good men that do thus object? Or are they such as are afraid to be so on this account, and are thereupon so very officious as to object this on the behalf of others, while they themselves are loth thereupon to become good, apprehending they shall not serve a good master, and are therefore willing to wave and decline his service? If they be men of this latter stamp and character, that do so object, it seems that their sense must be this, that they will never be good themselves, unless God will hire them to it by temporal rewards and emoluments, by indulging them to live a life of ease and pleasure and opulency in the world. And for them whose sense this is, I have but these things briefly to say to them :

1. That true goodness can never be so mercenary. They are never like to become good upon these terms; if God should give them their own terms.

2. I would have them consider what other choice they can have. If they will not serve God, and devote themselves to him, and admit to be such as he requires, (that is, truly good,) but upon these terms, what else will they do? What other master, or service, or way have they to make choice of? Can they, by

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their not being willingly subject to the governing power of God, exempt themselves from an unwilling subjection to his vindictive power? Whither will they betake themselves? will they leave God's dominions? will they go beyond the bounds of his territories? whither will they fly? Neither earth, nor heaven, nor hell, can keep them out of his reach; as the Psalmist, at large, speaks it in that 139 psalm, and the prophet Jeremiah in the 23 chap. of his prophecy. "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Is it to be a disputed thing between him and you, whether you shall serve him and comply with his good and acceptable will? And,

3. If God should give such men their terms, whereas they appear to be in the temper of their spirits bad enough already, they have a great deal of reason to think that would make them a great deal worse. It needs abundance of previous and preventing grace not to be the worse for a good condition, here in this world, as all experience shews. And,

4. Lastly, I would appeal to such, whether God is not, in such respects, abundantly good to them already. Hath he not given you breath and being and all things that you enjoy? How great are the favours that you partake of, in common with the rest of men! To instance in what the context mentions: "He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the just and on the unjust." What a case were you in, if God should put out the sun, and if he should turn the fruitful land in which you dwell, into universal barrenness, by continual withholding his rain? If he should turn your present health into continual sickly languishings, and your ease into tormenting pains, and your plenty into pinching wants, and your straits? And more than all this, if he should turn his invitations to you to pray and supplicate for higher, and those that may tend to eternal mercies, into prohibitions; and say to you, "Never pray, never supplicate, never look up, I will receive no addresses from you?" If his invitations to you to surrender yourselves, and become his, and take him for yours, should be turned into protestations against it, "I will never be your God, and you shall never be my people?" Think while this is not the case, if God be not abundantly good to you already, so that upon your own account you have very little reason to contest the matter with him.

But, if good men do object this, as possibly against their more habitual frame, under the power of some temptation they may be apt to do, as we find it was with the Psalmist in the 73 psalm: and the like offence and scandal, good men are repre-

sented as, sometimes, apt to take at their own afflicted condition, compared with the prosperous state of worse men, against which, much of that 37th psalm is directed, and that 21st of Job; and the beginning of the 12th. chap. of Jeremiah's prophecy: let such but go into the sanctuary, as the Psalmist did, (in that 73d. psalm) retire themselves, consider the thing in the secret divine presence, and commune with God about the matter, and not with their own souls, nor consult with flesh and blood, and let them but consider such things as these, briefly,

(1.) Whether this matter of fact be ordinarily and generally true, that the case of good men is worse than that of wicked men in external respects. It is a matter that deserves to be considered and inquired wisely about; and certainly, upon inquiry, it will rather be found otherwise: that is, except in the paroxysm of persecution against instituted religion; (for it is very rare that men should be persecuted for natural but,) "if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus," he must expect to "suffer persecution." I say, except in some such paroxysm of persecution upon such an account, for Christianity itself, as to those that live among pagans, or for this or that institution of them that live among christians, that case being excepted which is not constant; ordinarily, it appears evident that the better men are, the better their state and condition are in this world. Their religion obligeth them to that temperance, sobriety and diligence in their callings, prudent and discreet management of their affairs, that in ordinary cases it is most plain and manifest, that there are much fewer who are ruined by their religion, than that are ruined by their wickedness, by their riot, and by their debauchery; more persons, more estates, and more families are ruined that way, if there be but a survey taken of the state of things in this world: and the apostle offers this very consideration, (in that 1 Cor. 10. 13. even to the very suffering christians of that time) "There hath no temptation," (that is tentative affliction) "befallen you but what is common to men," but what is human. It is true, the account is not common, but the matter of the affliction or the afflictions materially considered, are common to men. Are good men thrown into jails, and sometimes put to death for their religion? Truly, so are bad men for their wickedness, as frequently, and, if we should make a general computation, much more frequently. They suffer the same things very commonly, upon a less comfortable account. And,

(2.) Where this is really the very case, that the condition of good and holy men is, in this world, much worse than that of the worst men, as many times it is so; they are to consider the

vastly different value of spiritual and temporal good things, and this is the great business of a christian, to labour to have that spiritual sense in exercise, by which to be able to discern between good and evil, and to prefer the things that are more excellent: as those two scriptures compared together speak; Heb. 5. 14. and Phil. 3. 8. They ought to have their naked, unvitiated senses by which to discern between good and evil, and to abound in that judgment and sense, in all sense, by which they may distinguish the things that differ, and prefer (as that expression admits to be read) the things that are more excellent. And then, how much greater is the value of a sound and well tempered mind and spirit, above that of all earthly and worldly accommodations and enjoyments imaginable, which are but the gratifications of our flesh and external sense, at best. And,

(3.) Such are to consider what is the experience of christians of all times, concerning the aptitude and useful subserviency of external afflictions to inward and spiritual advantage: they say, when they are in their calmer, and more considering frames that it is good for them, that they were afflicted, and, that God hath done it in very faithfulness to them. And,

(4.) Lastly. It is God's own declared end, in the temporal afflictions, he lets befall his, and therefore, would have them count it all joy, when they fall into divers temptations, that is, tentative afflictions. James 1. 2. Count it all joy, because it made greatly for their perfection. The trial of your faith worketh patience, therefore, count it all joy; implying, there is more of real good in that one single excellency of patience, than can be of evil in all the external afflictions, absolutely resigned and submitted to the divine pleasure. Here is so much of an inchoate heaven, such a heaven as our present state admits of, this one thing hath, as is not only enough to make us patient, but joyful under the various temptations and trials of this kind, that we are apt to fall into, or lie under. And hereupon, where this sense hath been impressed upon the hearts of good men, they have thought the sufferings of the present time, were not worthy to be compared with the end of them, which was to be wrought out thereby, as in that, Rom. 8. 18. "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." This is my arithmetic, so I account, or this is my logic, so I reason: the word may be rendered either way, this is the rational estimate I make of this case, having turned it round, and viewed it on every side, and balanced things with things, that the sufferings of the present time, this *now* of time, this very point

of time, are not worthy to be compared (alas, it is not to be named the same day,) to the glory that is to be revealed. It is as nothing in the account, as if we should weigh a feather against a mountain. This is my rational estimate and judgment in this case. And, that God doth design the afflictions of this present state, as a preparation for the future, and eternal state, we have most expressly laid down in that, 2 Cor. 4. 17. "The light afflictions which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." It is a *metathesis* which is not usual in Scripture; do work for us, that is, indeed, do work us for it. And it is to be understood, principally, of subjective glory, not objective; for that can never be more or less to any: it is essentially the same in itself with divine glory, but subjective glory, not objective. It is essentially the same in itself with divine glory; but subjective glory to be impressed, that is, more or less, according to the capacity and disposition of the subject. And we grow more capable, and are larger vessels, receptive of greater glory, as our temper is: and our temper is better, and made more receptive of larger and more glorious communications, even by the sufferings of this present time. By the light afflictions which are but for a moment, we are so much the more apt for the eternal weight of glory, which is to ensue; which we are not barely to be told, but to bear, answerable to the notion of weight. We are not only to be mere spectators of the glory there spoken of, but the subjects of it. And then, if this be all that God doth design by the afflictions that he lets befall good men here in this world, to refine them, to make them more partakers of his own holiness, and consequently of fuller glory, greater and higher measures of glory, is this any ground of taking up diminishing thoughts concerning his goodness? Yea, I might add,

It is that which his very relation doth oblige him to, even as he is our Father: your heavenly Father is perfect. For what a Father is he to us? Or in what sense is he Father to his own? He is the Father of their spirits; so his word speaks contradistinctly of him, to the fathers of our flesh. Of the flesh we have other fathers. Heb. 12. 9. He is not the Father of our flesh; he is the Creator of it: but of our spirits he is the Father. He is the Father of them, both upon a natural and supernatural account, as they have his natural image, being intelligent and spiritual beings like his own: and, as his regenerate children, have his holy image renewed in them. Now the very relation doth oblige him (if he be a Father to us, that is, to our spirits,) more principally to mind the advantage of our spirits. That very relation doth not only admit, but re-

quire that he should let us suffer in our flesh, if it may be for the advantage of our spirits: and that this outward man should be beaten and shattered day by day, even unto perishing, if, while this is a doing and suffering, the inward man may be renewed day by day. He must take the principal care about that to which he is a Father. Affection must follow the relation; the relation is to our spirits, and the affection must be, principally, to our spirits.

But I shall insist no further on that part. It remains only to make somewhat of *Use* of what hath been said, especially touching this divine perfection of the goodness of God. And,

1. Be hereupon encouraged to cherish this apprehension concerning God, take heed that nothing ever shake your fixed belief and apprehension of this. And whatsoever reasonings do arise in your minds at any time, forelay this always, let it be always a thing forelaid in you. Yet God is good to Israel, as the Psalmist begins that 73 psalm. Nothing can be of greater importance, either to the liveliness and vigour, or even to the very substance and being of religion, than a fixed, stable apprehension of the divine goodness: that religion is nothing, the soul whereof is not love. If love be not the very soul of your religion, your religion is a carcass, an empty nothing. But that love may be the soul of it, there must be a constant apprehension of the loveliness of the object. Labour then to have your souls possessed always with a deep and fixed apprehension of the divine goodness. Contemplate it in every thing that you behold, in every thing that you enjoy, yea, even in the lessening and qualifying of those evils that you suffer. Go up and down this world with hearts full of this thought; “the whole earth is full of his goodness.” Collect all the instances you can of the goodness of God, and keep by that means, such an apprehension alive and in vigour concerning him. What a mighty spring would this be, of cheerful and joyful and pleasant religion. Let no thought arise, but let it meet with a seasonable check, if it tend to any diminution of divine goodness. And,

2. Preserve a worshipping, adoring frame of spirit Godward upon this very account, having your hearts full of this apprehension and sense; labour always to be in a posture of adoration, apt and ready always to look up, carrying that as a motto engraven on your hearts, “I am less than the least of all thy mercies.” And again,

3. Endeavour as much as in you is, accordingly to look upon that immediate promanation of the divine goodness, his law; that which issues, which proceeds so directly from the goodness of God. Esteem it to be what really it is, the product and image of the divine goodness. Look upon him



as absolutely, universally perfect, and consider the reasonableness of what is said concerning this law, in correspondency thereunto. "The law of the Lord is perfect." Psalm 19. 7. And considering this one single perfection of the Divine Being, his goodness, make a proportionable judgment concerning his law, in reference to that; that is, that it is an expression of his good and acceptable will: and labour, more and more, to prove that by a vital sense, by an experimental relish in your own spirits. O! how good is it to be what he would have me to be! what that most perfect rule of his doth require and oblige me to be. And,

4. Accordingly judge concerning the course of his providential dispensations. His law precribes to us the way in which we are to walk; his providences make the way in which he walks; labour to apprehend goodness therein too. All his ways are mercy and truth. That is, you are to judge according to the series of his providences complexly taken, and as together they do make up one entire frame. And so, indeed, we are to make up our judgment concerning his law. Not by this or that particular precept, for it would be a very hard imposition upon the mind of a man, to judge and pronounce concerning the goodness of that command to pluck out the right eye, or cut off the right hand, or the right foot, abstractly taken, without reference to the conjunct precepts, and without reference to the end, to which, altogether, they refer. And so, if you look upon providence, you are not to pronounce concerning this or that, separately and apart, considered by itself. As you would not make a judgment of the goodness of a piece of arras by looking on it folded up, where you can only discern a piece of a leg, or a piece of an arm, it may be, or the limb of a tree, but look upon it unfolded, and there see the entire frame of it all at once. So consider the providences of God, in reference one to another, and in reference to their end in which all things shall finally issue, and into which they shall result, and you must say as the Psalmist doth, "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth." And as Moses, in that triumphant song of his, in the 32 Deut. where he tells us, in the beginning, his design was to publish the name of the Lord, that is, to represent the glory of his attributes; "Because (saith he) I will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe ye greatness to our God: He is the rock, his work is perfect." Take all together, you will see it will be perfect work at length, entire, all of a piece; and that nothing could have been spared out of that series and chain of providence that compose and make up the whole course. And then,

5. Endeavour that your knowledge of God may be practical, vital, unitive and transforming, as touching this very thing, the divine goodness. O! how much to be lamented is it, that we should have such a notion of God in our minds to no purpose? the notion of so great a thing, a Being absolutely perfect and infinite, even in this perfection, goodness itself, immense goodness lying in our minds, idle, dead, useless and in vain; so that our hearts are in reference hereunto but a mere *rasa tabula*. There is a notion in our minds, but nothing correspondent impressed upon our hearts, such an apprehension of God as this, if it were vital, lively and operative, would transform us, make us aim continually to be such as he is, which I shall further press by and by. It would powerfully attract and draw us into union with him. What! shall I live at a distance from the Fountain of all goodness, immense goodness, goodness itself, love itself! God is love. He that believes the love of God, is hereupon drawn to dwell in God as he is love, considered under that notion, and so to have God to dwell in him; as the apostle expresseth it, 1 John 4. 16. What mighty influence would this have upon our whole course, if we did go with lively, operative, apprehensions up and down the world of the divine goodness! How should we disburden our souls of care! With what cheerfulness should we serve him! How little doubt should we have concerning the issue of things! of that glorious reward which a course of obedience, service, and fidelity to him, a little will be followed with at last. But that our knowledge of God, as to so great a thing as this, should be like no knowledge, as if we knew nothing, or as if we thought the quite contrary concerning him; methinks, this we should look upon as an insufferable thing, as a thing not to be endured, and so take up resolutions, dependant upon his grace, never to be at rest till our hearts were like this apprehension of God, that he is perfect in goodness. And hereupon further,

6. Make sure of your relation to him as your God, as your Father; and consider and contemplate his goodness with that very design, that you may be indeed stirred up to aim at coming, without more ado, into that relation. We do not much concern ourselves so seriously to inquire touching the character of a person with whom we are never to have to do, with whom we have no concern nor ever expect to have any. If we hear of any such as an excellent person, we hear such a thing of him with more indifferency of mind, "I do not know him, and I am like never to know him; and be as good and as excellent as he will, I am never like to be the better for him." But

when I receive an account of one, as a most excellent person, who designs to adopt me at the same time for his son, and overtures are made to me for that purpose, I think myself highly concerned to inquire into the character of a person to whom I am to be related. And so should we consider the characters that we meet with of God; for we must either have him as our Father, or we must be children of a worse father, or of the worst of fathers. Therefore, this should be hearkened unto, your heavenly Father is perfect, perfectly good, perfect in goodness, upon this account, that overtures are made to me in order to my becoming one of his children: I am to come into his family; this is the thing that is proposed to me. And should not I labour to know what a one he is, and to contemplate the representation that is made to me of him, upon this account? And,

7. Consider with highest admiration and gratitude, the greatness, the privilege, that you are, or may be so related. As the case is stated, if this be not, there is nothing wanting but your own willing and joyous acceptance of the overture, falling in with it, resigning and giving up yourselves most absolutely and entirely to him; and taking his Christ for yours; with him goes the sonship, that is, with the acceptance of his own eternal Son. John 1. 12. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed in his name." And then, consider the greatness of the privilege, that you are, or may be thus related to the Most High God as a Father, to the best, most perfect, and most excellent of beings. You may have him for your Father, and perhaps you have him so already. How great a privilege is this! To have him for your Father is to have all. He that overcometh, shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. Rev. 21. 7. "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." God is to be your portion and inheritance, that if we suffer together with him (which is but a trifle, not to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed) we may be also glorified together. Rom. 8. 17, 18. Methinks, this should run in our minds every day; we are either related to this blessed One, as our Father, or we may be; we are invited and called by the gospel, (and it is the great design of this gospel) into this blessed state. Methinks, it should run in our minds all the day long, that that glorious and most excellent One, should look down from heaven upon such an abject worm as I, and say to me, "Call me Father, take me for thy Father." A heart that were full of the sense of this, would soon grow too big for all this world. What a trifle

would this world be to that soul which were full of that sense ; “ God is become my Father, I have a Father in heaven, that doth whatsoever he will in heaven and in earth, and there is no withstanding him.” He can do what he will, and he will do nothing but what is kind and good to them that willingly consent to come into this comfortable relation to him. You see how distinguishingly such a case is spoken of in the next chapter, Mat. 6. in the latter end. Do not you so and so, like the gentiles. Do not torture yourselves with cares and thoughts, “ what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and what you shall put on,” and what shall become of your affairs and concerns in the world, and the like : the gentiles do so : after these things do the gentiles seek ; but your heavenly Father knows what you need ; you have a Father in heaven that knows all your concernments, and that minds all of them, with all wisdom, and all the tenderness and kindness imaginable, I would not have you be as if you had no Father, to put yourselves into the same condition with pagans and outcasts, and those that are without God in the world. And then,

8. Lastly ; Imitate God in his imitable perfections, and especially in this his goodness. I say, imitate him with all the goodness that is possible, in all his perfections : “ Be ye perfect, for your heavenly Father is perfect.” So I would shut up, bringing the exhortation in the text, and inferring reason together. And pray drive it to this one particular thing, to which the context draws and claims it, that is, unto love : and even unto such love as shall reach enemies themselves. You very well know, that God could have shewn no love at all to any in all this world, but he must shew it to an enemy : all were in enmity and rebellion against him. “ The carnal mind is enmity against God.” And this world was only possessed with such inhabitants, all sunk in carnality and earthliness, and deep oblivion of God, and full of anger and displeasure, upon being put in mind that there is One that claims a right over them, and that would have all their thoughts and their love : this they cannot endure ; this carnalized race of creatures cannot bear this. “ For the carnal mind is enmity against God.” And he could never have been kind to men but he must be kind to enemies. For all were become his enemies, affected liberty, and could not endure the thought that there should be a power and a Lord to prescribe to them. I pray, let us labour to imitate this great perfection of the divine goodness, even in this very application of it to enemies. This is the beauty and the glory of the Christian religion, the thing wherein it excels the precepts of the most refined paganism, and of

that which was higher, (as it was grown,) Judaism itself. “You have heard that it was said of old time, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy:” (as it is in the context) “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.” I never expect the Christian religion to flourish much in this world, till this appear and be exercised as the common temper of christians. They are to be such a sort of men, as that all the world may be the better for. If you express never so much of unkindness towards them, if you use them hardly, they will bless you, they will pray for you, they will do you all the good they can, all the good and kind offices in their power. When this spirit comes to be revived among men, it will make the Christian religion (as I may say) *grassari*, mightily to prevail and grow upon the world. The world must fall before such a sort of men as this. But that it will never do while, in this respect, christians are just like other men, as wrathful, as vindictive, as full of rage, and as full of revenge as any body else. Christian religion must grow upon the world, by things that will strike the sense, that incur the most sensible observation of men. Every one can tell and sees it when one is kind to them, and when they have good returned for evil. But there are two things most directly opposite to this temper, which christians are wont too frequently to overlook, never to animadvert upon : the one is,

(1.) When they let their hearts tumultuate with too great fervour and anger against men, upon account of their profaneness and irreligiousness; and they think themselves warranted so to do : such a one is a wicked man, an open, visible enemy against God and Christ, a rebel against heaven. And so they allow themselves to let wrath have its vent and liberty towards such men, and upon such occasions. It was a great deal of zeal for Christ, that the disciples discovered, when they would have had fire to fall down from heaven to vindicate his cause upon those Samaritans that would not receive him into their town. But, saith Christ, “Ye know not what spirit ye are of.” This is quite another thing from that spirit which I intend to introduce into the world, and which must breathe in, and animate, the religion that I am setting on foot among men. The other is,

(2.) Their confining their kindness and respects to men of such and such a character, to this or that party. It is a temper more grossly remote, more vastly different from what is enjoined upon us here; and the thing that our Saviour animadverts

upon in this context, as that wherein we do not only not exceed the pharisees as such, but even publicans themselves. ver. 20. We are told, that except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God : not even into the initial kingdom. As if he had said, “ Ye are not fit for the Christian state, you do not come within the confines of Christianity, real Christianity, if your righteousness do not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees. But when men do confine their respects and the kindness of their hearts to a party, this is not only to outdo the pharisees, but even publicans and sinners, for they do so ; if you love and salute them that love and salute you, if you are kind to them that are kind to you, what do you more than others ? do not even the publicans and sinners the same ? But “ be ye perfect ; ”—(that is the contexture of this discourse) “ even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

And so I have done with what I designed upon this subject, of the divine perfections or attributes ; the next we come in course to, will be that of the divine decrees and purposes of God : and more especially concerning men, and with reference to them.

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