

LECTURE IX.*

Heb. 11, 3.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear.

IN that order of discourse, (wherein we have made some progress,) of treating of the several more principal heads of that religion which we all profess, we have spoken at large (as the last subject we insisted upon in this course) of the counsels of the divine will, or (which is all one) his purposes and decrees, according to which he is said to work all things, in that, Ephes. 1. 11.

And now, the next thing that comes in order to be spoken of, is that great **WORK OF CREATION**, which is part, and the first part, the beginning of the execution of his external counsels or purposes of his will. This is the first of his external acts that terminate upon somewhat without himself. His decrees, though they have their term within him, and so come into the account, not of his transient, but of his eminent acts, and yet do differ, too, from all these internal acts of the divine Hypostasis towards one another; for they have their very objects in the Divine Being. But the decrees of God, though they have their term within the Divine Being, that is, they do, while they are but decrees, effect nothing *extra Deum, without God*, yet they have their object without him; that is, they refer, some way or other, to the creature. Now, in contradistinction to those internal acts of God that have reference to the creature, we consider his exter-

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nal acts, whereof this of creation is the first, and is leading and fundamental to all other subsequent and external acts of his, towards, or upon, the creature, as now existing, till some act or other hath preceded, by which it might exist.

This is, therefore, such an act as makes its object, and doth not suppose it; as all following acts of God towards the creature do suppose the object, and not make it; suppose it pre-existent, and then are concerned and conversant about it, as already existent; to wit, to sustain it, to regulate it, improve it, perfect it; or any ways alter it as he sees good.

And whereas, this is the first step that God takes in executing the counsels of his will; that is, that being ascribed to him, to do all things according to the counsel of his will, he doth this great work of creation, according to that counsel of his will. This will put an end to the great dispute about the original of all things; whether this world, and all that it contains came, of itself, or by fate, or by chance; or whether it were all entirely owing to some wise and designing intelligent Agent. If, I say, the authority of divine Revelation may decide the matter, and so far obtain in the minds of men, there is an end of that dispute; that is, that since whatsoever is done by that great and almighty Agent, was done according to the counsels of his own will; then this world came not into being of itself, or by any fatality or casualty; but by wise counsel designing the thing, and the time, and whatsoever circumstances might refer thereunto.

And, indeed, those that have not a divine Revelation to guide their apprehension in this matter, and have but allowed themselves (as many have) a liberty of thought, have discerned those characters of divine wisdom and design, in the whole frame and contrivance of things in this great creation, as not only to acknowledge, but to adore the wise Creator that hath given being to all. Every thing of order, being the product of wisdom; wisdom and order have most certain relation to one another, as the productive principle, and the object produced. If there be such a thing as order produced, wisdom and counsel must have been the productive principle.

We, formerly, in the beginning of this series of discourse, had occasion to speak of the creation, from Romans 1. 20. The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen in the things that he hath made. It was upon another account that we discoursed of the creation then; not making that the terminative subject of our discourse; but considered it only as evidential of the Deity; we are now to consider it as effected by that almighty, divine power: we now

consider it as a matter of faith. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." And it was of absolute necessity that there should be that rational consideration of the creation, first, in order to the evincing of an object of faith, before we came to speak any thing of faith, or what was to be matter of faith; for no one can believe any thing, by the proper assent of faith, till he understands who he is to believe, and why. And it is the formal object of faith that we were to evince to you, in order to our shewing the ground why we were to believe any material object that comes within the compass of divine Revelation.

Therefore, having first evinc'd to you the existence and being of God; and then, evidenced to you, that that Revelation which we have in the Book of Scripture is from God; and thence having more distinctly considered the nature and perfections of God, as they are held forth in that Revelation, together with the distinct Hypostasis which that Revelation assumes us are in the Deity; we now come to consider the creation too, as a matter of faith also.

And it ought not to seem strange to us, that when we have heard the creation spoken of, as tending to evince to us the being of God, we should come now to discourse of it as a matter of faith; for most plain it is, that the same conclusion may be assented to on different grounds, and the one doth strengthen the other, and not detract from it. It is no prejudice at all to our receiving the doctrine of the creation, as a matter of faith, that it is also demonstrable in a rational way, any more than it doth detract from, or lessen the credit of, a human testimony that many do concur and say the same thing; which detracts nothing from the validity of that person's testimony, but instead of that, adds thereto.

And we are to reckon it a great discovery of the divine favour and indulgence to us, when one and the same thing may be the matter, both of a fiducial assent upon a divine testimony, and of rational demonstration also. God condescends to us, and is so much the more favourable, that he is pleased to make the same thing evident more ways than one, according as the occurrence of several *media* for the evidencing of any thing, doth beget a stronger and firmer impression of the thing itself, upon our minds. This is referred unto, allusively, to set forth the great assurance wherewith the gospel Revelation was given, 1 John 1. 1, 3. "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life—that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."

It is very true, indeed, that the creation, generally considered, and more abstractly, is very demonstrable by reason; not only to be rendered probable, or a likely thing, but certain and more demonstrable. That is, as I said, when we have in view so many sorts of things that we are sure were not always; and therefore, could not be of themselves; (for whatsoever is of itself must be always, must be from eternity;) then we are sure every such thing must have had some maker or other. And so, nothing can be more demonstrable, than that there hath been, and must be, a creation, even unto reason, and by reason.

But though reason may clearly apprehend and evince, in general, that there hath been a creation, it can never evince the way and manner, the method and order, wherein things have been created. All this must be owing to divine Revelation, and to faith thereupon, if we understand, (as here it is said,) “through faith, the worlds were framed, by the word of God.” By reason, we may know that the world or worlds were some time or other made: but we can only know by faith that they were made in six days, and that such and such was the order of making them, as the divine history doth report the matter to us. And therefore, doth this text inform us, not only of this as an apprehensible thing, that the worlds were made, but it lets us see how we are to apprehend it. We are not only to understand this, but we are to understand it by faith, that the worlds were framed by the word of God.

We have, in the text, two distinct propositions, which are of two divers kinds; the first is dogmatical, or more expressly assertory, and the second is explicatory of the former.

The former, I say, is mere dogmatical. “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.” It is a thing to be understood by faith, that the worlds were framed by the word of God. And this, I shall make the main subject of my discourse which I intend upon this scripture.

The latter is explicatory of the former, so that things which are seen, were not made of things that do appear, or were made, (which is the truer reading of the text,) of things which do not appear, or were made of not appearing things, not pre-existing things, that had stood forth into being before.

First. And for the first of these: you see it contains two parts—what it is we are to understand; and—how we are to understand it.—The thing to be understood, that the worlds were framed by the word of God, and—how we are to understand it, by faith: or through faith. It is faith that lets in the

notion the more distinctly into our minds. We have this notion by faith, as the word in the greek signifies, the forming of a notion, begetting it in our minds. We have the notion begot in our minds by faith, that the worlds were so framed by the word of God.

1. We have first, and more principally, to consider the former of these, the thing to be understood. We shall consider the manner afterwards. And for the thing to be understood, that the worlds were framed by the word of God, we have here three heads of discourse more distinctly to be considered and spoken to—the object of this act, the worlds—the Agent whose this act or work is, that is, God, exerting his power by his word, and—the act of creation itself, what kind of act that is. It is here rendered, “framed.” We shall speak to the emphasis of that expression hereafter, in its proper place, when we come to give you an account of the nature of the act, creating, which though that word doth not primarily and directly signify, yet supposeth, as we shall in a proper time come to shew you.

(1.) We are to consider the object of creation, as it is here expressed by this comprehensive term, the worlds, “The worlds were framed by the word of God.” The word, here, so rendered, doth signify sometimes eternity, especially being plurally used. But sometimes also it signifies time, and sometimes an age, and in the plural, ages. But it doth also signify, in the narrower sense, time: not only time, in itself, abstractly and nakedly considered, but the things that lie within time: not the *mensura* but the *mensurata*, not only that duration, which is the measure of such and such things, but the things themselves that are measured thereby. And that is the sense wherein it must be taken here. Therefore, it is not the naked thing, time, that is spoken of here, (though the word, sometimes, hath that signification as the object of this creative act,) but all things that come under temporary mensuration, all that are measured by time, which is fitly enough expressed in our translation by this term, “the worlds.”

And whereas, it is not said, world, but worlds, that shews, that the *continens* is more than one: and if the propriety of the greek be considered, it also signifies them to be more than two; for the word is not a dual but a plural, and so it is more than one, and more than two worlds that are signified by this expression. And indeed, the matter is less indefinite; and it being impossible to us to know how many are the several circles of things that are above us, that are all made things, things altogether without our knowledge or comprehension, (as we have had occasion to tell you on another account, of our Lord’s

being ascended, and gone up far above all heavens,) we are left in a just uncertainty, (which belongs to us, and is proper to our state,) how many those heavens are, or those orbs of things which are replenished with creatures, (parts of the universe,) that altogether make the entire object of this creation, and this great creative act.

And taking that phrase. "the worlds," to signify whatsoever lies under the measure of time, so we are not barely to consider such orbs, but we are to take in all the *contenta*, as well as the *continens*, all the things contained, as well as the things containing. And so, it is the whole universe of created beings that comes under our present consideration: which, therefore, in speaking to us of the object of the creation, or what it is that is created, it is not to be imagined that we should speak of it in the singular, nor of all the particular kinds; but only under some general heads, into which the universe of created things may be distributed.

[1.] The first, and most general and obvious distribution of the created universe, is into the more substantial things, and the modifications thereof; what is in itself a substantial thing, and what doth only some way or other modify such a being. And it is the former of these, that is the proper object; creation more strictly and properly taken. Creation is, in the strictest sense, *suppositorium of supposita*, of things that do subsist not of themselves, in reference to any efficient cause: for so no created thing doth exist, by itself, in opposition to what doth inhere, so as to be a subject of things that do reside in it. And so, the modification of things are not properly created in the strictest sense of creation; but are educed and brought forth out of those substantial beings that were themselves created, or made out of nothing; and so they, that is, substantial things, are the most proper objects of creation, that have a proper subsistence of their own, though with dependance on the efficient Cause that gave them being. And after this distribution, comes,

[2.] The distribution of such created things, that is, substantial beings, in which all the diversifying *modi* do reside and have their place, And we are to consider what may be the more general distribution of substantial things, that are themselves created. And we can consider none more general, than this one, to wit, of all those created substances, into these two heads, matter and mind. If the inquiry be, What doth this universe of created beings contain? Or what are the great spheres of being that lie within the compass of the created universe? Why, speaking of substantial things themselves, that

are the subjects of divers distinct *modi* or modifications, they can be but these two, all will fall under these two heads, to wit, matter and mind. And this is that distribution of created things which the Scripture gives us a ground express enough for: Col. 1. 16. "By him were all things made that are in heaven or that are in earth, visible and invisible." We may well enough suppose all matter to be, some way or other, visible, though, there be indeed a finer sort of matter than is visible to us. But then, there is the other head of things, in that Col. 1. 16. things that are simply invisible, altogether invisible, as it is altogether impossible that any sense, any external sense, can perceive a mind, or a thought, which is the immediate product of that mind. So, that every distribution of created things into visible and invisible, I take it, sufficiently corresponds with this that I now mention, that is, matter and mind.

And otherwise, we have the creation distinguished as to the object of it, or creation, passively taken, into heaven and earth, as we find in that history of the beginning of the creation, Gen. 1. 1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Some, indeed, that go to the cabalistical way, will have by heavens, all intellectual beings that are created, to be comprehended and meant: and by earth, all matter whatsoever. We shall not dispute the propriety of that conjecture, or what probably it hath, or hath not; but take what is more obvious to ourselves in common understanding. And if we take that as a distribution of created things, heaven and earth, as was intimated before, we must comprehend together both the *continers* and the *contenta*. And so, by heaven, must be understood and meant, not only all the several superior orbs, but all their inhabitants that do reside and dwell in them, and wherewith they are replenished, and unto which, our very minds and spirits, (though now they are clothed with terrestrial vehicles and dwell in flesh,) do originally appertain and belong, as being nearer of kin, and more allied to the world of spirits than they are allied to this world of flesh and earth, this terrestrial world. For, if we take the mind and spirit in us, to be the nobler and more excellent part of ourselves, taking our denomination from that which is more noble and excellent, we have greater affinity, according to our primitive and original state, with heaven, than we have with earth, which affinity is not to be judged by the place of residence, but by the nature of the thing. Mind and spirit are more akin to heavenly inhabitants, than they are to any thing that is made merely of earth.

And so, taking the things contained, with all the heavenly orbs, you have great diversifications, in that mentioned place,

Col. 1. 16. And there indeed, the Spirit of God runs out more than it doth in the distribution of things that fall under that other head, that is, the visible things of this earth. For we are told, under the head of invisible things, (and which also in very great part, indeed, are the things which do belong to the heavens,) of thrones and dominions, and principalities and powers; which are very reasonably thought to mean so many several orders of celestial creatures that do inhabit the other world or worlds, for how many of them there are, we do not know, nor can know; as we formerly told you.

And then, if we speak of the things contained in this lower orb, signified here by earth, they do more generally fall under a common notice, and are more obvious to every one's apprehension. This world, you know, is replenished with very numerous sorts of creatures that live one way or other, or with one or another sort of lives; either, that do live an intellectual life, or live from an intelligent soul, as we do all live; or else, that live a merely sensitive life, as all the brute creatures do, of that next order below, or else, things that do live a merely vegetative life; as all the several sorts of plants that have some kind of life, though it be of a meaner and lower kind.

And then, there are all your inanimate things that have no proper life at all; that is, have no self-moving or self-acting principle within them, or peculiar to them, from whence they do act or order themselves, or are capable of being moved, as from any internal *vis* in this kind or that.

Of such extent is this created universe: it takes in all these several sorts of things. And to descend to the enumeration of more particular kinds would be an endless work, and not proper for us. But, in the mean time, we have very great amplitude in the object of our present thought and consideration, when we are to look upon the universe of created beings, that is, of created substances, look upon all those that come under the notion of matter, and that, as such, is inanimate: matter, as matter, has no self-moving principle in it. Look upon all those things that live some kind of life or another; whether they be things of this earth of ours, or whether they be things of the superior or refined orbs and parts of the universe: these come in all the orders of angelical creatures of which we have only that general and more indistinct account which that Colossians 1. and some other passages of Scripture give us. What their diversifications are, we know not; but some or other they are, and such as do import superiority and inferiority among themselves. And then, go to that other head, of things destitute of life, and that more properly come under the

notion of matter beforementioned: and so, descending downwards from the more noble and excellent creatures, to the meaner and lesser ones, what a vast scale of created being is this! descending from the highest to the lowest, or ascending from the lowest to the highest, and all within the compass of the created universe, and all this signified by that one expression in the text "the worlds."

Indeed, all this being summed up into this one expression, of the universe or the world, taken singularly and in the largest sense of which it doth admit, we have, even within the compass of created beings, that which far exceeds any of our thoughts. And it hath been a question, much agitated, amongst philosophical men, whether the created universe have any created limits at all, yea or no. It hath been agitated by some with a very ill design: and some have made it their business, in moving the controversy, to hide their design. And with a strange mixture of fraud and folly, in discussing that question, Whether the created universe were infinite or no? they have gone about to disguise the matter, and told us, they would not, indeed, say it was infinite, but it was indefinite; to wit, the extent of the created universe: and by the extent of it, the meaning could not be the mere local extent, but the real; not barely what space it took it up, but what of essence and real being it did comprehend and contain; and that, some of them have told us, was not infinite, but indefinite only.

But there hath been a very great mixture (as I say) of fraud and of folly: of fraud, that they have disguised their meaning, and laboured to hide it: and of folly, that in their very attempt of hiding it, they have unawares discovered a very ill meaning. And it could not but be so; for when the terms are distinguished of infinite and indefinite, I would fain know what they mean by the latter. If, by indefinite, they mean that which hath in itself no certain limits, then they plainly say, it is infinite, the created universe is infinite, because it hath no certain limits. But if they mean by it only, that it hath no known limits to us, that every one readily acknowledgeth: we can never know the limits of it; and so that is but to say it is finite, if they mean only so. And indeed, it is a very dubitable thing, whether any finite understanding can measure the created universe, or is capable of comprehending the extent of it. Very willing I am to aggrandize that as much as I can, in consistency, still, with owning it to be but a created thing; because still, the more we magnify that, the more we magnify the Creator. But to pretend it to be an indefinite thing in that sense,

that is, that it hath no certain limits in itself, that is to make it an infinite thing.

And if it here be inquired, What is the inconvenience of that, to make it to be so, or how can we prove it not to be so? Why truly, to the former of the questions, there would be this to say, that to say it were infinite, or could be infinite, were to say that it were not a creation: for most certain it is, whatsoever is infinite is God. Infinity is the proper predicate or attribute of Deity. And so, the inconvenience would be, the taking away all the foundations of religion; for it would be the confounding of God and the creature, the taking away the difference between them. And it would be equally impossible, that there should be any room or place for religion, if you take away the subject of it, as much as if you take away the Object of it. If the creature were infinite, there could be no subject of religion: and there can be no place for religion, if there be no subject of it, any more than if there were no Object of it.

And as to the question, How can it be proved that the created universe is not infinite, and cannot be infinite? It is very clearly to be proved by what hath been said, in very great part: that is, whatsoever is infinite is God. Therefore, to say that the created universe is infinite, is to say, that it is not created. But besides, it may be easily evinced, that not only this universe of created beings is not infinite, but that it is impossible that it ever should be, or could be. And as the plain reason of the thing doth lie against that imagination; so, the most pernicious and destructive tendency of that philosophy that would impose upon us the imagination of an infinite universe, is most studiously to be disclaimed and abhorred, as taking away all place and room for religion. For it would confound created being and uncreated, and deify the creature, and so, leave no subject of worship, as the more avowed atheism leaves no Object of it.

I shall not say more to you about the object of this said act. We are further to consider the great Agent, the Creator: and the nature of the act of creation. But let us make some stand and pause here, and consider what improvement is to be made of what hath been thus far discoursed to you. It is of very vast extent, what we are to consider under the notion of the created universe. But when all this is done, it is still but a creation; make it as great a thing as you will, magnify it as much as possible, consistently with its being a creation, and when all this is done, then say within yourselves, "All this is but as a drop, a drop of a bucket, a dust in a balance, a mere

nothing, yea, lighter than nothing and vanity, compared with that Being which is of itself; that Being which owes itself to none; that Being to which it was impossible not to be; for all this vast creation doth but depend on will and pleasure; “For thy pleasure they are and were created.” It was determinable, merely upon good pleasure, whether there should be any creation, or no creation: so that one *nutus*, one *nod* (as I may speak) of the Divine Mind, either makes this vast thing, the whole created universe, to be something or nothing. “If I please, it shall be something, if I please, it shall be nothing.”

It should lead us into adoration of the great self-subsisting Being, that owes it to none that he is, is beholden to none, but is by the excellency of his own eternal nature, to which it was repugnant not to be, and which comprehends all plentitude and fulness of being in itself, even an infinitude of being.

Consider this then, and when it hath prompted and led you into admiration and adoration, looking up to the great Creator, it should prompt and lead us into the greatest detestation of the insolency of creatures, even such creatures as (if they would use their minds) are capable of apprehending this, and yet take upon them as if they were absolute. They started up out of being but the other day, and at the fiat, and by the pleasure, of the great Creator; and now, they look upon themselves in this world as if it were all theirs, and as if they might do in it what they pleased. He that is the Creator of heaven and earth is also, we know, in Scripture, stiled the Possessor of heaven and earth. And for a company of upstart creatures sprung up into being but the other day, to take upon them, as if they were possessors (as much as is possible for them to grasp) of this creation, and to do in it what they will; what a detestable insolency is this! It is but a dependant, borrowed right that any one hath in whatsoever he calls his own. And yet, men are apt to hug themselves in conceit of propriety, saying, “This is my own land, these are my own goods, this is my own house: and it is so by the best title a man can have.” Now suppose a stranger enter your door and come into your house and take no notice of any thing as yours, but useth all things as he pleaseth, and saith he will do what he lists in this house of yours; or (without saying so) doth what he lists, takes and usés what he will, and as he will, would you not take yourself to be highly injured, and would you not right yourself, if it lay in your power, upon so injurious an intruder as this? Why, at this rate is the great God treated and dealt with, by his apostate, revolted

creatures, inhabiting this lower world, though it be even the meaner and baser parts of his creation? Creatures sprung up into being here by indulgence of divine favour, take upon them as if they were their own lords and owners, and as if every thing they lay their hands on were their own, without ever taking notice of God; He that gave them breath and being and all things, that they might seek after him, and consider, “Whence come I? and all things that I use and enjoy, whence are they?” No such thing enters into their minds, from day to day, but a life’s time is run out in these bodies, wherein they should love, and serve, and adore, their great Creator, without taking notice of him.

But a more copious use of this yet remains, when we shall have opened other things that yet are to be doctrinally opened unto you.

LECTURE X.*

(2.) We are now, in the second place, to consider the Agent in this great and mighty work, and that is, (as the text expresseth it,) God himself, that great, all-comprehending Name. There will be occasion to take notice of the way of his agency, (by his word,) by and by. The Creator of all things, of heaven and earth, can be no other than he who comprehends and contains all things, virtually, in his own power. But whereas, we have heretofore shewn to you at large, that there is in the Deity a threefold subsistence, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, they are each of them to be comprehended under the notion of Creator here. It is a plain and self-evident truth, commonly given us as a maxim, *Opera Trinitatis, ad extra, sunt indivisa, vel communicabilia*; that the works of the three persons in the Godhead towards the creature are undivided, and communicable to each of the persons: so as that we must understand them to be conjunct, in every such act as they do exert without themselves or towards any thing that is not God. Their distinguishing actions are towards one another; but the actings that they exert towards any thing without them, these are common to them all. So that the Father creates, the Son creates, and the Holy Ghost creates. This action which, as we have told you, makes its object, and doth not suppose it, as other acts, *ad extra*, do, it is the common act of each of these. And so you find that the creation is usually ascribed to God, under that name of God (that name, being essentially taken) which compre-

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hends all the three persons. And so we must understand that, in the beginning of Genesis, where God is said to have created the heavens and the earth. And that observation is not to be slighted, that Elohim, a plural noun is conjoined with a verb of the singular number; Barah Elohim. As if it were said, Gods created the heaven and the earth; that is, it is an expression to note that there is a plurality in the Deity; that is, of persons, each of which is God. But it being conjoined with a verb in the singular number, it shews that these three were but one; did agree in Deity, as well as in this creative act. And this is that which that learned man Zanchy, in his treatise, “*De tribus Elohim,*” doth prove profitably and at large. But more particularly, when the name of God is taken,

[1.] Personally, as divers times also it is, then it signifies, eminently, God the Father: and that very term doth sufficiently express him to be the Original of all things, of all beings, both created and uncreated. He is usually, and fitly enough, said to be *Fons Deitatis et fons Trinitatis*. The Deity is first in the Father, and all created beings first and originally from him, as the matter is plainly expressed in the 1 Cor, 8. 6. To us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things. Him we are taught to adore as the great Original, from whom all being hath its rise. And yet,

[2.] We have the creation, very frequently, ascribed to the Son, speaking him conjunct with the Father in this great creative act. And even in that last mentioned place, (1 Cor. 8.) where it is said, “To us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things and we in him,” it is added, “and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things, and we by him.” And so, in that Col. 1. 15, 16. his agency in the creation is most expressly asserted. He who is there said to be “the image of the invisible God, and the first-born,” (as we read it, but it may as properly be read, according to grammar, with only the alteration of an accent, the first-begotten of every creature,) “by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created by him and for him.” There is his concurrence and conjunction with the Father, both as the efficient and final Cause of all things. So that Heb. 1. 2. “God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed the heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” He that is “the brightness of his Father’s glory and the express image of his person,” by him the worlds were made. And so we have it, most expressly, in the beginning of John’s gospel:

“ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, (a known name and title of Christ, God’s eternal Son and consubstantial Word) that Word was in the beginning with God, and that Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” He is spoken of under a title of like import, frequently, in other scriptures, and most expressly in Proverbs 8. That is, by the name of the wisdom of God, and, under that name, is asserted to be with him, even throughout the whole work of this creation. Not with him in an idle concomitancy; which no man can understand, either according to the reason of the thing, or the plain import of the other scriptures that have been named, and many more that are to be named. He was with him, when the Lord laid the foundations of the earth, when he stretched out the heavens, when he did all that was done in the work of creation. And then,

[3.] The creation is ascribed to the Eternal Spirit, to the Holy Ghost, as you find expressly in that Gen. 1. when we had been told, “ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and that the earth was without form and void; the Spirit of God is said to have moved upon the face of the waters:” that is, upon the fluid matter of the yet unformed chaos, that profound abyss; that Tohu and Bohu, as it is expressed; upon that fluid and yet unformed matter that was fluctuating, even as waters do: upon that, the Spirit of God did move to collect and form things out of it, according to divine pleasure.

Thus, it is plain, each person in the Godhead hath his hand and part in this great work of creation. What hand and part each hath, some are very curious in describing. But so far as the Scriptures expressly do lead us, so far we may allow our conceptions to be formed concerning their distinct agency. And it is plain,

First: That the name Father doth signify him to be the Original of all things, the first Fountain Being, the Fountain of all being, created and uncreated. The Divine Being itself is first and originally in Him, as the name Father signifies: and that comprehends the fulness of all being in itself, all excellency, all perfection whether conceivable by us, or unconceivable. So from him, the creation must have taken its rise as the Head of all things. And then,

Secondly: The Scripture speaks of the Son under the name of the eternal consubstantial word of God, or his essential wisdom, which must needs be understood to contain in itself the first idea of all things. All being originally contained and comprehended in God the Father as such, he is now said to be

the image of the invisible God, and in him do all the glories of the Deity shine, as in their first image. All things being to be created and produced into actual being according to that image which lay in the Divine Mind, which he is. As there is no one goes about to make any thing, but hath the image and idea in his own mind, first, of what he intends to make. He that intends to make a book, or to make a house, or a garment, hath the idea in his own mind, first, of what he intends to make, and according to that idea all things are made. All things that were to be created, the eternal wisdom of the Father comprehending them all in himself, he is the rule or *norma*, according to which, the creation is at last produced into actual being. And then,

Thirdly : The agency of the Holy Ghost may be conceived according to that light the Scripture gives concerning the distinguishing characters of that person. From the actuous love, between the Father and the Son, for an eternal production of the divine image by the Father in the Son, there cannot but be an everlasting spiration of love between the Father and this, his consubstantial Image : an actuous love, and that image, containing in itself the ideas of all the things that were to be produced. This mighty power of actuous love, it goes forth to produce all things, according to this image, with the highest delectation and complacency, according to which, God pronounced concerning all things which he had made—that it was very good, and so a derivative object of divine love ; all things being produced according to that excellency of his own image that was the Original Root of all things. And hereupon, do other scriptures speak of the agency of the Holy Ghost in this matter ; that is, that by his Spirit he garnished the heavens ; one part of the creation there spoken of. “Thou sendest forth thy Spirit and they are created.” Psalm 104. 30. And so you see, that Father, Son, and Spirit have their parts and agencies in this great work of creation. But then,

(3.) We have here to consider the act itself. You have seen the object, the worlds ; and you have seen the Agent, God himself, Father, Son, and Spirit. We are now next, according to the order proposed, to consider the act that is expressed here in the text by a word, which is, fitly enough, rendered, “framed ;” but we must note unto you, that, that word doth *express* one sort of act, and *supposeth* another. It expresseth one sort of act, that is, the framing of things ; framing (as it is fitly enough translated here) when there was somewhat now brought into being, out of which, they should be so and so diversly framed, especially as to the material part of

the world. That is the act here expressed. But then, it supposeth a former act, a foregoing act, and that is, the making all out of nothing, out of which any thing was after framed. We shall speak of the act the word expresseth, first ; and then shall speak of the act that word supposeth.

[1.] The word in the text is very fitly expressive of the former act, that the worlds are said to be framed. It comes of a word that signifies perfect and entire, and it seems to come from that we commonly denote by art ; or, as some would have, the relation of this word to *artus* which signifies our limbs, the limbs of any creature that is endued with life. And so they would borrow the illustration of this word from chirurgick art, that doth aptly place the bones which have been dislocated, and puts them into joint again. So the worlds were framed (as it were) by the most curious and exquisite chirurgick art : or else, that which is precedent to that, the locking and joining things into one another throughout the whole creation.

And in this respect, the framing of the worlds was more immediately the work of the divine wisdom, which may be meant by the expression here, that they were created by the word of God, which I told you we should take notice of in its proper place. Which may be meant not of the word spoken out, but of the internal word, agreeable to what we are wont to call *verbum mentis* : as there is no one that speaks, (if he speak sense,) but he hath in his own mind first, that which he afterwards expresseth and speaks out. But herein was the wisdom of the Creator principally conspicuous ; in that beautiful order and frame of things that appeared every where throughout this great universe ; that there is that order that we behold daily among the heavenly bodies, in reference to one another and in reference to us ; that which, in the 8th psalm, you find the Psalmist in so high and holy an adoration of : “When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained.” It is a great argument of a holy heart, to be much in contemplating the divine wisdom that hath settled every thing of that order which is any where to be found in the whole creation.

If you look into this lower world, and consider that, as to what falls under our notice, there is every where that correspondency of actives to passives, of faculties to objects, as every one that will use thoughts may easily discern, the wisdom of the Creator is greatly to be adored in it. For think we with ourselves, how great a piece of vanity this creation had been, if it had not been so ; if there had been objects upon which there had been no faculties to exercise : or, if there were.

faculties to be exercised that had no objects; as if there were visible things, and no eye to see them; if there were audible things, and no ear to hear them. And so, back again, if there were eyes, and nothing to be seen; and a faculty of hearing, and no such thing as sound. But herein is the admirable contrivance of the divine wisdom in this creation manifest, that there is such a correspondency throughout, of objects to faculties, of active powers and principles to passives.

And then, in that order that is settled amongst things, therein we have the great display of the divine wisdom, there being (as hath been often said) that relation between wisdom and order, as between cause and effect. Wheresoever there is any of stated, settled order, we may be sure there was wisdom to contrive and design it. Stated and settled order cannot be a casualty. When we see the contrivance and order that are in such a thing as a watch or a clock, and the like, we are presently sure that such a thing was not made by chance. And to think that such a mighty agency, a mighty power of motion, as was once exerted in this creation, should produce things in that orderly frame wherein we behold them, without design, without wisdom, is as absurd an imagination, as if we should imagine a thousand men, by violent strokes with axes and hammers, upon brass or iron, or the like, without any design, should produce so many watches, clocks, or any such like engines; meaning no such thing.

Therefore, nothing is more to be wondered at, nor a greater argument of the degeneracy of man, or how low his mind is sunk, than that there should be any who should go into the account of the more thinking sort of men, that yet should make it their business to exclude the power of final causes out of the world: as if there were no such thing as a final cause, or an end designed, that had any influence at all upon this great creation. Whereas, if we consider the several orders and sorts of being, how useful the meanest creature, even the inanimate part of the creation is, to very great and necessary purposes and ends; and when we consider, among those things that have life, how aptly they serve for their own purposes, and how aptly every thing in them serves their own purpose, that is, to beget and maintain that life, we cannot but see the absurdity of that conceit. To look upon the lowest sort of living creatures, the mere vegetable creatures; Why are they made with roots? but to take hold of the earth from whence by them their nutriment is drawn; that those little fibres, without which a leaf could not be nourished, should be dispersed every where throughout the whole, with so fine a texture as they are? Very well doth Cicero, a hea-

then, speak of nature under the name of the divine art, the art of God. And whereas, "*Boni artificis est celare artem;*" *it is the part of a good artist to conceal his art*, truly, if the divine art were not, in great part, concealed, one would think all the actions of intelligent creatures, should be swallowed up in wonder, to behold the divine agency running through all things, and so variously exerting itself for the production of things as we find them; and contriving the several kinds of things in the same rank and station in the creation, into which at first they were set.

If we should look to that admirable, rare contrivance, that appears in the forming of our own bodies, upon which you find the Psalmist in that transport, "Marvellous are thy works, fearfully I am made," that is, wonderfully; "and that my soul knoweth right well." Psalm 139. 14. That is, "This is a beaten subject to me, a thing that my thoughts are much used to, it is a thing about which my mind is accustomed, I know it right well:" as we know the path that we have often trod.

And not only is the divine wisdom conspicuous in this framing of things, but his goodness too. How adorable is the goodness of God, even in that frame and disposure of things that we find in the creation; that things are so framed and adapted, as to answer and correspond to one another. Here is a great appearance of the divine goodness, that whereas he hath put into such sorts and orders of his creatures, a desiring faculty, there is still somewhat in that creation to answer that faculty of desire. Every thing is, by natural instinct, taught to desire that which is good for it; that is, that which is convenient and suitable to it. So we have the Psalmist (psalm 145. 15.) admiring God upon this account, that the eyes of all things were up unto him, and that he gave them their meat in due season: a continual argument and testimony of the divine goodness. He hath not left himself, in this, without witness; the whole earth is full of his goodness, even that which the inhabitants of it replenish and fill with their wickedness and malignity against him. He doth good to all, even to the evil and the good. He hears the ravens when they cry, and they seek their meat from God: psalm 104. which psalm is full of expressions to this purpose. This is the munificence of the great Creator, that when he did design to replenish such and such parts of the created universe, with such and such inhabitants, creatures able to receive and entertain some correspondent and suitable good, he hath also stored the world with that good which shall answer every appetite throughout all this creation of God: so that none can be miserable, amongst even those that are rendered,

by their own natures, capable of government by a law, but such as make themselves so by aversion and disaffection to their proper and suitable good. They only have it not, because they refuse it, because they are disaffected thereunto.

But then, we should come, in the next place, to speak of the second act which this expression in the text doth suppose. That which the word in the text is most expressive of, is only that sort of act by which things are adapted and suited to one another: but this supposeth a former act, by which those things, out of which things are thus framed, were themselves at first produced and brought forth out of nothing; which is creation in the strictest and most proper sense; though, indeed, there is not a word that doth exclusively signify that act in any of the learned languages. But the nature of the thing, doth plainly evidence that there must be such an act. That is, look upon all uncreated being, the being of God himself, and then that which is created and made being, must have been made out of nothing; which they that will not apprehend, run into various and most manifest absurdities; one sort, thinking there must be such a thing as eternal, necessary matter; another sort, thinking that things must be made out of God as so many parts of the Deity. But I shall, on the next occasion, labour to evince to you the absurdity of any such imaginations as these.

And in the mean time, pray let us make so much of present reflection upon this great work of God's creation; that is, that he who hath made such a world as this, cannot but have both right and ability to rule it, and all things in it, to the best and most valuable purposes. And truly, I fear we do not, on this account, enough study the creation, and the attributes of the Divine Being that are exerted and put forth in that creation. There is his wisdom and his goodness to be seen in that first sort of act already spoken to.

And his power is most visible, and especially to be seen in the latter sort of act, as we shall shew when we come to speak to it. But to any that would give themselves liberty of their own thoughts, one would think, they should not part, for all the world, with the consolation, that this one thing should afford us: that is, that all this vast frame of things should be produced by divine wisdom, goodness, and power, into that exquisite order, in which we now behold them: and that, hereupon, he that could tell how to make such a world as this, replenished with such variety of inhabitants, knows how to govern, and dispose every thing he hath made. And, as there hath been that display of those glorious excellencies, in the Divine Nature, in the frame and contexture of this whole creation, we ought, hereupon, always to expect, that he will, with the same wis-

dom, power, and goodness, regulate, govern, and dispose of what he hath so made. All these things will appear, and shew themselves in the most proper seasons, without our distracting and self-tormenting cares. Let us be desirous, principally and finally, of nothing but that he who made such a world as this, for himself, and for his own glory, may, in his own way and time, have that glory out of it which he seeks and designs for himself. Yea, let us be content, that he should have it in such a way as may possibly be conjunct with our suffering many inconveniencies; things that may be grievous to us, to our flesh and blood, and external sense. Should not he have his glory out of his own creation, his own way? This world was not made for us, but it was made for him, by whom it was made.

LECTURE XI.*

[2.] But then, as I have told you, in the second place, we are now to consider, that as the expression, here in the text, doth more directly signify that one act, of putting things into order, which is the native import of the word; so there is another act necessarily supposed; and that is, the bringing of things out of nothing, which are the proper, the truly proper matter of production, or whatsoever is *extra Deum*, whatsoever is a diverse thing from the being of the Deity itself. This word, “frame,” doth not signify directly this act, but it doth necessarily suppose it. Order, doth suppose a subject, the things in being that are brought into that order. And as the two great attributes before mentioned, divine wisdom and goodness, do shine forth in that former act, the putting of things into order; so his power doth most eminently appear in this latter act, the bringing of the things which he so puts into order, out of nothing.

As we do not pretend to assert this act, from the import of this word that is used in the text, abstractly considered, so neither do we pretend to assert, from the native, proper force and significancy of any one word at all, that we must think appropriate to this purpose, as only to signify this act and nothing else. We do readily grant, the hebrew and the greek words thus rendered, are frequently used with more latitude than barely to signify the bringing of things out of nothing. And so, this act is not to be concluded from the force and import of such words, abstractly considered by themselves. Words that

* Preached July 1, 1693.

are of a more indefinite signification, that may signify more things than one, they are always determined to some one particular sense or other, by the circumstances of the place where they are used. There is not any one word at all, that is to be confined and limited to one certain sense by its own native import: or, at least, there are very few words that are capable of that confinement and restriction by constant and unvaried use. But what they mean in this or that saying, is to be judged by the circumstances of the discourses wherein they lie.

What of the creation is *de fide*, a matter of faith merely, we have hinted to you already, and shall further have occasion to shew you, when we come to speak of that second head, how we are to come to this understanding. But, in the mean time, it is very evident, when it is said, that we are to understand this by faith, that the worlds were so and so framed, we are not to understand it exclusively, as if the meaning of the text were to shut out every thing of argument, or ratiocination in the matter. One and the same thing may be assented to, from divers different premises, as was hinted to you before. It is enough for our purpose, and even to make this which I am now speaking of, a matter of faith, to wit, the producing of created things out of nothing, if it shall evidently appear, that in some texts of Scripture, this must be ultimately intended and meant; and that no other thing can be, so as to exclude the necessary pre-supposition of this: and there are, undoubtedly, some texts that must be so understood, that there hath been somewhat produced out of nothing, out of which other things at length were made to arise.

As to that first text of Scripture, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Created, must necessarily have this sense, at least, by an unavoidable necessity; for this making heaven and earth, being said to be in the beginning, when things took their beginning, had their first rise, it must suppose that heaven and earth were not only brought into order, but that of which they were made, was made of itself to exist, not having existed before. Otherwise, how was that the beginning of things? How was that the head of things? as the hebrew word *Resch*, from whence the word *Bershith*, in the beginning, signifies. Otherwise, this word must assert a contradiction, that things were begun, and not begun, at that time when God created heaven and earth.

And so, if you go forward to that first of John's gospel, ver. 2, 3. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were created by him, (that is, God) and without him was nothing made that was

made :” every thing that was not God, was then made : all things. And, therefore, to suppose that all these made things were made out of pre-existent matter, is to suppose, that that pre-existent matter was not a thing, for all things were said to be made by him. All things beside himself were then made ; therefore, matter itself was then made, out of which other things were made ; unless it shall be said that matter is nothing, and, if so, we have what we seek, that is, that there are some things made out of nothing ; but if it were a thing, and were not the Divine Being, as it is impossible to be, it was a self-made thing, and then made out of nothing.

And to this purpose must the explicatory proposition in the text be necessarily adapted, so that the things that are seen, were not made of things that did appear. The phænomena, (that is the word there) things not then appearing, when the worlds were thus framed by the word of God ; that is, things not before existing, for there is nothing at all that can be supposed to exist, but doth appear to some faculty or other, either divine or created. But they were things simply not appearing at all, and, therefore, not existing at all, out of which these worlds were made.

And lexicographers do take notice of that among the other senses of the word *φαινομενων*, that it signifies to exist. And, therefore, the worlds are said to be framed out of that which once did not exist, till it was made to exist by the divine creative power. And therefore, they foolishly think who would put a difficulty upon God in this case, such as was put upon the Israelites in Egypt, to make brick without straw : as if omnipotency could be posed, or meet with any obstruction to its designed acts, for want of matter to work upon. It was all one to him, (who calls things that are not, and makes them be as if they were, as the expression Rom. 4. 17.) whether there were the pre-existent matter to work upon or no : and the non pre-existence can never nonplus omnipotency.

And therewith should we obviate the vain and idle question, when we hear of the worlds being framed by the word of God : “Aye, but of what were they made? made they were, but what did he make them of?” They must have, originally, been made out of what before was not, seeing it was his pleasure that they should be ; for, for his pleasuse all things are and were created. Rev. 5. 9. And so, (as was said before,) if you take matter within the compass of being, it must itself be a made thing.

Now, concerning this act, the bringing of all things out of nothing, take this twofold assertion, which we shall evince

to you, and according whereunto we are to conceive of it—that it is possible to no created agent: and—that it is possible to God.

First: To all created agents, it was impossible to bring something out of nothing. It is impossible to all the power of nature, unto the power of whatsoever creature, or unto all the creatures uniting their power. I shall not trouble you with the reasonings of the schools to this purpose, by which they plainly enough demonstrate creation (that is, bringing something out of nothing) to be impossible to any creature. It is, indeed, a much disputed thing among them, whether God cannot impart his power, whether it cannot be communicated to a creature, so as that he may not make use of a creature in creation; but it is little material how that goes.

But that a creature cannot, by all its own strength, be able to bring any thing out of nothing, nor all created power put together, needs no other conviction, but an appeal even to common understanding. Nor can you conceive it any way possible for you. And if you say, “No, I cannot do it alone; but if I take in the advice, or superadded helps of such and such things, possibly we may together.” Why, suppose all the power and force of all men in the world, and of all created agents besides, were to be united in one act, you cannot so much as conceive that they could produce so much as one single atom into being out of nothing. As it is equally impossible to all created power to annihilate, as to create, to reduce something back again into nothing, as to produce something out of nothing. So also is it equally possible for the divine, uncreated power to bring all things out of nothing. And, then, therefore,

Secondly: We are to conceive concerning this act, as it is impossible to any created agent, so it is possible to God, and to the divine agency. For it is plain, it implies nothing of contradiction in the thing itself; that that which did not exist, should exist, as it is evident that many things do exist which did not exist. Therefore, there is no contradiction in that, what did not exist, should exist, as it is evident that many things do exist. And, therefore, to suppose it impossible to God to make that exist, which did not exist, is itself to assert a contradiction. For the notion of God doth carry infiniteness in it: you cannot form a notion of God, but it must include infiniteness. But to say that he is infinite, infinite in being, in his perfections, in his power too, and yet, that he cannot do that which implies no contradiction to be done, is to deny God to be God. It is to say, God is but a finite being, or of finite

power; to say, that which you call God is not God, which is a contradiction, when you say that he cannot do that which implies no contradiction that it should be done: that is, that that which did not exist, should exist.

But admit this, perhaps you will object, that it is possible to divine agency to make something out of nothing, that doth not, however, prove, that God hath now done so. There are many things possible to be done, which are not actually done. And it is no argument, from the affirmation of the power to assert the act.

To this, I only say, It is not alleged to that purpose; we do not assert the possibility of creating something out of nothing, to prove that something hath been created out of nothing; but only by way of answer to them, that would thereby prove, that something was never created out of nothing. because it is an *enunciatio* affirmation, that which is impossible to be done is never actually done, though it doth not follow, that because the thing is possible to be done, therefore it is actually done. And, therefore, this is alleged only in answer to them, that do say it is simply impossible. But we prove it not to be impossible, for many things exist that did not always do so.

But we otherwise prove, that it hath actually been so, that is, that he hath made something out of nothing; that is, that we have proved it from those plain texts, that cannot but be understood in that sense. And we shall now prove it, from the gross and manifold absurdities, that they are unavoidably cast upon, who disallow something to be made out of nothing. That is, such absurdities as these; first, they must suppose this world to have been eternally, of itself, as it is; or, secondly, they must affirm there hath been necessarily self-subsisting matter from eternity; or, thirdly, they must assert, that God hath made all things out of himself, that whatsoever is made, is part of himself. But these are all of them the most manifest and gross absurdities that can be thought.

i. That this world should have been eternally as it is, without beginning. They that will pretend to say so, must first throw away all divine revelation about this matter, which manifestly asserts it never to have been eternal, but hath begun to be. But besides that, they do assert, here, repugnancies in the very nature of the thing, for they must assert the world to be as new now, as it was several thousands of years ago; that it was as old, the first year, as now it is; that is, the first year in our account. Besides what is wont to be alleged by them who are for that second horrid opinion, that matter was necessarily self-subsisting from eternity; they think themselves concerned to

prove the world's being from eternity, as it is ; and they do so from that consideration, that then it is most unconceivably strange, that we should have no records of things, (as one of those Epicureans speaks) elder or of a more ancient date than the times of the Trojan war, and the like. But,

ii. That which is more plausibly, and more usually, taken up in these latter times, (though it was an ancient by-gone absurdity too,) is, that there must be such a thing as eternal matter, out of which many things were brought into this frame, in which now they are . and some that will not pretend to atheism do think, that only that matter did pre-exist, and things could not have been produced into that order and state wherein they do now appear, but by a divine agency; that is, by a divine power and wisdom running through all things, and modelling them into that form in which we do find they do now appear, and are now cast; but nothing is more obvious to them that do consider, than the gross absurdity of that opinion, that there must be such a thing as eternal, self-subsisting matter, out of which God made the worlds. For,

(i.) That would ascribe to the matter, the most fundamental attributes of the Divine Being ; that is, self-subsisting or necessary existence. Nothing can be imagined more grossly absurd, than, that the highest and most radical, and most fundamental attribute of the Deity should be ascribed to dull and senseless matter, that is, to exist of itself, and that it should be possible to him, if he would, to reduce it to nothing: and that this prerogative should belong to every particle of matter, and that all matter being reduced into minute particles, even in our conception, then each minute particle must be in itself, an independent thing, existing of itself without dependance on any thing else. Which, if it be acknowledged, then shall you have as many deities as there are minute particles of matter throughout the universe.

(ii.) This will further confute that gross conceit, that there must be any self-subsisting matter from eternity. And if there were such, it were altogether impossible that this world should be made out of it. And so it is asserted, not only impiously, but vainly : impiously, as it doth intrench upon a peculiar and most fundamental attribute of the Divine Being, to wit, self-subsistence : and vainly, because it were impossible this world should be made of such matter, if there were any such : for whatsoever is necessarily self-subsisting is unchangeable ; that which is necessarily what it is, can never be other than it is. And it is altogether impossible that a world could be made of it, without its undergoing various changes. If it be necessarily such, of,

and from, itself which now it is; that which is necessarily what it is, is eternally what it is. And therefore, can never be liable to any change, not so much as that intrinsic change of motion. For suppose any minute particle of matter to be of itself necessarily, it must be somewhere; and if it be necessarily any where, it can by no succeeding change be any where else: and so must be simply unmoveable. And then, this world could never be made of it, that is, of unmoving matter: and it must be unmoving matter, and incapable of motion, if it be of itself what it is. For if it be of itself, it must be necessarily somewhere; and if it be somewhere necessarily, it must be somewhere eternally, and can never change its place. And again,

(iii.) That opinion of eternal, necessary, self-subsisting matter, the absurdity of it is enough to be evinced from hence, that is, that the ground upon which it is asserted, equally serves for the asserting of a manifest falsehood; that is, that nothing else is made out of nothing. We may as well suppose matter to be made out of nothing, as any thing else to be made out of nothing; but something else must be acknowledged to be made out of nothing. We told you, at first, speaking of the object of creation, that the universal distinction that created things are capable of, is into two heads, of mind and matter. Now, they must acknowledge minds to be made of nothing, that they are not eternally self-subsisting. And if a mind can be made out of nothing, why may not matter as well as mind? and it is plain, that (speaking of the mind of a creature) that must be made out of nothing: for it could never be made out of matter, matter being incapable of thought; and thought is the most essential thing we can conceive of in the notion of a mind. This can never, upon any terms, agree to matter; that is a material thing: as such it is impossible that that should be capable of thought, or of the power of thinking.

There is no part of matter to which that can agree, for you can conceive nothing of matter, or of the several particles of matter, but either its size, that is, being bigger or lesser, or its figure, that is, being so shaped; or its situation, that is, being in this place or that, in reference to other parts or particles of matter: or its motion to one part or another. Now, none of these can make the power of thought to be any way at all compatible to matter: for it must be grossly absurd to imagine, that if matter be of such a size, such a bigness, now it is true, being of such a size, it cannot think; but if it were a little bigger, or a little less, it could think. And then, again, if you speak of the figure of it, if it be round, it cannot think; but if it were square, or triangular, it would; how absurd is such a conception.

or imagination as this! So likewise, to think that motion should endow it with a power of thought is most absurd: that, being here, it could not think, but carry it there, and then it can think. Or to think that situation could give it that capacity. And you cannot think or conceive any thing of matter but one of these. Now if any of these cannot contribute to make it have a power of thought, to make a mind of it, I say, since there were minds that were not of themselves from all eternity, and could not be made out of matter, then those minds were made out of nothing. And if minds were made out of nothing, why not matter as well as minds? And that is a third consideration to evince the absurdity of that imagination of self-subsisting matter, from eternity, out of which the world must be supposed to be made. And,

(iv.) It will be farther proved from hence, not only to be absurd, but blasphemous; that is, that it would make God to be a finite being. That was intimated another way before, but it will also appear this way that is now offered to your consideration. That is the only reason that is pretended, why there must be self-subsisting matter, because God cannot make something out of nothing; and so that he had not power in himself of creating matter: and then he cannot be understood to have in himself infinite power, or to be himself, virtually, the all-comprehending Being. But most certain it is, that the name God, doth comprehend all; as even the significancy of that title Pan, given to the god among the pagans did import, that he was virtually all things; that is, that there is virtually, nothing which is not comprehended in the most perfect excellency of his being. And therefore, if matter be something, if it be a real something, then it must be comprehended within the virtual power of the divine power: otherwise, that is not all-comprehending, and that it should not be so, is repugnant to the very notion of God, a Being of infinite perfection in himself. If he be such, then he comprehends this perfection in himself, the power of making matter, as it is a greater perfection, sure, to be able to do this, than to be, as to this, impotent. And then,

iii. A third absurdity which is conjunct with no less blasphemy too, which they are cast upon who deny the creation, at first, to have been out of nothing; and that is the conceit of many of the stoics of old, and which hath been taken up by some more lately is, that God made things out of himself. Not meaning, nor referring as the efficient, as the agent, (as we all do) but to himself as the *subjectum ex quo*, the *subject out of which* things were made. So that all the creation, and

the greatest sorts of creatures, they are several parts of God, so and so diversified. But to this, nothing more needs to be said than,

(i.) That the Divine Being is simple, impartable, incapable of division into parts: it is inconsistent with the perfection of God, that it should be otherwise: and,

(ii.) The Divine Being is the most perfectly spiritual Being, the most purely and perfectly spiritual; and therefore material things were never made out of it. For it is altogether as impossible to turn a spirit into matter, as it is to turn matter into spirit.

Something I would say by way of *Use*, before I go off from this head, and proceed to the other, the manner, here, as ascertained how we come by this notion of the creation; that is, faith. Pray make this reflection, upon what hath been already said: If this creation could originally come out of nothing, then let no doubt, I beseech you, trouble your minds about a new creation. Did God, at first, make heaven and earth, or make the worlds out of nothing? Sure he can as easily make a new world out of that ill state of things in which we now behold them, as he did the whole world, as now it is, out of nothing. If you will say, There are no appearances looking that way: if there shall be a new heaven, and a new earth, how can we admit that thought, when there are no appearances tending thereunto? Why, this world was first made out of things that did not appear. There were no appearances as to the creation of this world before it was made: what if there be no appearance, nay if there be contrary appearances, if things look quite another way, and with a quite contrary face and aspect? What is all that to Him who, at first, made heaven and earth with a word? It would greatly facilitate our faith, if we did this, if we did but consider these two things: first of all, the greatness, and secondly, the facility of this work of God. The greatness of it, so vast a thing and so great a thing as this world is; and the facility of his doing: he spake and it was done; as the Psalmist expresses it; *Dictum factum*, As soon as it could be spoken, Let such a thing be! and it was, "Let there be light, and there was light;" Let there be heaven and earth, and they were. So to make a new heaven, and a new earth, when the season thereof comes, is equally easy, as all things are equally easy to Him that can do all things.

LECTURE XII.*

Before we proceed to the next head, it remains only to consider somewhat that is wont to be *objected*, by such as too much indulge a litigious temper and disposition of spirit, against the one and the other of these acts; the putting things into this order wherein we find them, and the bringing of things into being that were nothing before.

1. There are that do *object* against that act, which is here expressed in our English, by the name of framing of worlds, the putting things in them into the order which we now behold. That is, It is objected, that if this order which we see in the universe, were the effect of divine wisdom and design, it would be certainly much more accurate than we find it; things would be done with more exactness, there would not be so many defects as we see in the universe. It seems not to be congruous (such do imagine) to the wisdom of God, that he should undertake the settling of an order in this creation, and that it should, in such respects as have been mentioned, and many other, be liable to so much exception. And to this, there are several things to be said. As,

(1.) That it is very true, indeed, the order of things would be more exact, and accurate than it is, if it had been God's design to make every creature, and the whole frame of things as perfect as he could have made it. But we have no reason to imagine that that was any thing of his design. He did not make it to answer our purpose, but his own, all being to run into an eternal state of things at last, and this temporary state to be of short continuance. And therefore, let such as do think, there should have been greater exactness and accuracy in this frame of things, (if this will not satisfy them) sit down and wonder, that when it was intended, one time or another, such creatures as they, should be raised up into being in the world, that God did not put things into better order for their entertainment, that he did not make every thing more exactly to answer their fancies, appetites, and humours. But,

(2.) It is enough to the purpose here asserted, that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, by the Eternal Logos, that did predetermine the order of things, and by a powerfully exerted word, in the time and season, when things were to exist and come forth into being. I say, it sufficiently answers what

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is here asserted, if it doth appear that all things were done with design, and so as that they could not be done by any wisdom or power less than divine. This is enough for our purpose, that there are characters of design upon the whole frame of things : but that such a design as this could never have been laid, nor could ever have been effected by any created wisdom or power whatsoever, for the wisdom we see in the contexture of the things which we behold, is no where, in the creature, accompanied with power capable of doing such things. Not to speak of things in particular, if you do but consider these two properties of things that are framed and made, either first, the magnitude of some, or the parvitude of others ; (only to instance in those two,) as it is manifest there was a design, so it is equally manifest that no created agent could have done any thing like either of these. Either,

[1.] As to magnitude: the magnitude of the universe, what created agent could have made so vast a fabric as heaven and earth, as “the worlds?” which is the expression in the text. All created agency must confess itself outdone. Nothing is left us upon that account to consider, when we ask the question, How came there to be such worlds? It is resolvable by nothing else, but that the worlds were framed by the word of God. And then,

[2.] On the other hand, if you do but consider the parvitude of things, the many multitudes of things that have life : no created agent can contrive or do any such thing. Multitudes of little creatures, in the kinds of them, too little to be seen by our naked eye, but that by instruments may be seen to have their respective motive powers. And those that are capable of dissection, that there should be as many parts observable, for the several functions of life, in some of the minutest insects as are to be found in an elephant. It is plain, that a wise design there was in the framing of things as they are made, and that it is altogether impossible it should be done by any other but a Divine Agent: whether you consider the magnitude or the parvitude of things that are made. And again,

(3.) There is this further to be considered as to this objection, that in looking upon, and taking notice of, the works of God, we are not to consider them abstractly and severally, but we are to consider them as parts of one entire whole, and in their reference to that. As a heathen philosopher, among the Greeks, tells us, “If we should make a judgment of the whole work of creation by this or that less comely part of it, it were the same thing as if one would give an account what sort of creature man is, and take for instance and example, such a one as Ther-

sites, or one of the most deformed of all men, and so give an account of the structure of the human body by such a one, that there would be as little cause of cavil, as he would have with a picture drawer, who should find great fault with him that he put not bright colours every where, that there are, any where, dark shadows to be found." This, and much more to this purpose, is discoursed by a heathen, for the vindication of God as to this thing, that there should be any thing of defect, or not the most absolute perfection to be found in every creature that we can look upon. And again,

(4.) It is further to be considered to this purpose, That we are to consider the time and texture of things in this universe, not barely as now it is, but as at first it was, and to consider what this inferior part of the creation, which was made for the use and service of man, was in its original state, when he was in his original state: that man for whom all this lower world appears to have been made, is become a degenerate creature, an apostate creature. And that, as he is gone very far from his original, things are very far gone from their original, in which they were made for him. The frame of this world is not like what it was. What changes there were in it for the sin of man, before the flood, we know not. But that must have inferred a universal change in all this earth. And we find, as to the point of longevity, things have altered apace and did gradually alter in that respect. So as in a short compass of time, in comparison, lives of seven or eight hundred years, or more, were come to sixty or eighty years, a very great, and hardly a tolerable age, all labour and sorrow. That sickness and mortality are come into this world, it is true: but who brought them in? They were sinners that introduced them. It is sin that hath so slurred the creation of God, as to that noble creature, and as to the subservient creature, proportionally. And,

(5.) It is further to be considered too, that God hath, since the first creation of things, settled an ordinary course of nature in the world, which ordinarily he doth not invert or alter, but for some very great purposes. As when, now and then, a miracle is to be wrought; otherwise, usually, he doth not interpose to change the course of nature, but lets things run on according to the tendency and current of second causes.

(6.) In the last place, as to this objection, this is further to be considered, that this is more an argument, that the order we find in things should proceed from God, that there is not such an accuracy in every punctilio to be beheld, than if it were so: that is, it is more suitable to the divine greatness. There is

this, among men, to be observed, that according as they are of greater minds and spirits, they do less concern themselves about light and trivial matters. And they reckon a kind of rational neglect to be greater, to have more in it of majesty, more that doth beseeem a great man and a great mind. They are little minds that do minutely concern themselves about trifles and small matters.

2. But again, there lies matter of *objection*, with some, against the other of these acts. The former, his putting things into order, the latter, his putting things into being. And with this, the objection that lies with divers, and hath done, in latter and former ages, is the authority of that maxim, *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*, that nothing can come out of nothing, and therefore, there can have been no such thing as a mere creation; which (as I told you) the act supposed, the act of framing of things: the order of things doth suppose the being of them. But this, say they, could never be, that that which was nothing should become something; for common reason doth allege, that out of nothing, nothing can be made, nothing will be nothing still, everlastingly.

But to them, I have only two things to *answer*—that herein they do mistake the maxim that they rely upon, and—that they contradict themselves.

(1.) That they mistake the maxim, upon the authority whereof they pretend to rely, that nothing can come out of nothing: for it can only imply these two things—that it is impossible for any thing to comè out of nothing by itself, and—that it is impossible that any thing should come out of nothing by a created agent. In both these senses, the maxim is most certainly true.

[1.] That it is impossible, that any thing should come out of nothing of itself: that is evident to every understanding that reflects and considers. If we should but, in our own supposition, imagine, that there were nothing now at all in being of one kind or another, it is certain that to all eternity there would never be any thing in being: as we have had occasion to argue to you heretofore. We find that somewhat now is, and therefore, we are sure that something hath always been: for if there were any time when there was nothing, to all eternity there would be nothing. Because it is impossible that something should ever itself arise out of nothing. In that sense, the maxim is most indubitable; that it is impossible that something should arise out of nothing. And,

[2.] It is equally indubitable in this sense too, that a created agency, or all created agency put together, if it were all to be

exerted into one act, could never raise something out of nothing. But to bring the authority of this maxim against the omnipotent agency of the supreme and sovereign Cause, is the most absurd collection that can be thought. As if we could measure the Divine Agency by that of the creatures. It might every whit as well be said, that because a child newly born, cannot build a house or a city, that therefore, it can never be done, no agency could ever do it: and the difference is infinitely greater between God's agency and any creature's, than between that of the meanest and weakest creature, and that of the mightiest that can be supposed. This is to circumscribe omnipotency, and to deny omnipotency to be omnipotent, which is a contradiction. What greater contradiction can there be, than to deny a thing of itself, to say there is any thing that is not what it is? But it is no contradiction, that that which was not, should be made to be, that that which did not exist, should exist, and so to bring something out of nothing; for that is within the compass of the object of almighty power. And then, I answer,

(2.) As they that do so object, do most manifestly contradict the truth, so it is equally evident that they contradict themselves, in giving the account they do give of the original of things, such as it is. There are two sorts of them.

[1.] There are some; first, that will have all substance to be one, (such as Spinoza and his followers) and so to be uncreated, and that there is nothing created but the modifications of things. But as to them, I inquire whether these modifications were in that substance before, yea or no? If they were before, then they were not produced, and so nothing is produced. But if they were not in that substance before, (which they imagine) and yet be something, (as they cannot pretend them to be nothing) then this something is throughout of nothing: and they cannot but be compelled to own so much. And we find it actually to be, for we find things are modified so and so. And then,

[2.] There is a second sort, who do not make all substance to be self-existent and eternal, but only matter, as the passive subject, which the eternal, unmade Mind doth work upon.

But even they also, must be constrained to contradict themselves. And it will appear most evident, that they do so, the matter being pursued: for a mind is not made of matter; there is no kind of cognation between a partiele of matter and a thought, and so between the whole of matter and of mind. A mind can never be made of matter, or out of matter. But

there are minds that are made; our own, theirs, if there were any that were not always; and then, they must be made out of nothing, for out of matter they cannot be made. And so, as to that objection, the objections are manifestly found, both to contradict the truth, and to contradict themselves; and we need concern ourselves no further with them. †

LECTURE XIII.*

Secondly. The second general head we now come to is, how or by what principle we are to understand all this. And for that, the text tells us, it is by "faith" that we are to understand it. How come we to know that this vast universe, these worlds, (which how many they are we cannot tell,) did all spring up into being by the word of God? How come we to be informed, or how are we informed of all this? Why it is by faith. Here, it is requisite to shew how this is to be taken, that we are by faith to understand the worlds to have been created by the word of God. Why,

It is not to be taken exclusively, as if it were to be understood no way, but by faith. It is plain, and hath been made plain, that it may be understood by reason too. And there is no prejudice at all in it, that the same conclusion should be capable of being proved by more arguments than one; and by more sorts of arguments than by one sort. Nothing is more ordinary, than to bring many arguments of one sort, of those we call artificial arguments, to prove the same conclusion: many such arguments may be useful to serve one and the same purpose: and it is no more inconvenient, and incongruous, that there should be arguments of more sorts than one, to prove the same thing, than that there should be many arguments used of one sort. Therefore, this is not to be understood exclusively, that we are to have the notice of the worlds being made by the word of God no way at all but by faith; or that we are to understand this by faith only: that the text doth not say, and we are not to take it so. But,

We are to take it thus, that is, that we are to understand this by faith more advantageously; not exclusively, but with

† Several things, by way of use, were at this time inferred: but the enlargement thereof, being on the entire use made on this act of God; what was now said, is to be found in the Lecture preached December 26, 1690. vide vol. 6, page 428,

* Preached November 25, 1693.

much more advantage than by any other way alone. My meaning is, that having plain, rational evidence of the creation, (as indeed we have such as is irrefragable, and as no mind which considers, can withstand) then, it is a great superadded advantage, to understand the same thing by divine Revelation too. It adds a great deal, to have the matter so stated, that I may also understand this by faith, that the worlds were made by the word of God.

And, I shall now shew wherein this great superadded advantage lies; and wherein, if we compare the two ways of understanding this by reason, and of understanding it by faith, this latter way hath the advantage, even of the other. For, first, we understand more of it by faith, than we can by reason; and, secondly, what we understand by faith, we understand better.

1. We understand more of it by faith, than by mere rational indagation or search, we could understand. We have a more circumstantial account of very important, considerable circumstances of this creation, as faith represents the matter to us, out of God's own Revelation, than by rational disquisition we could have had. We understand within what limits of time; and we understand in what order this work of creation was performed, by faith. Reason could never have informed us of either of these,

(1.) We understand within what limits of time this work was done, that is, that all was absolved within the space of six days: no reason could ever have informed us of that. But it signifies much towards the liveliness of any representation, that the matter be represented in its circumstances. Reason, in the gross, could only have informed us generally, that all these things which do appear, are not of themselves, and were, some time or other, raised up out of nothing, by an almighty, creative power; but it could never have informed us within what limits of time such a mighty work as this was done. But our faith in the divine Revelation informs us of that too. And then,

(2.) It informs us of the order in which things were produced, which no reason could ever have informed us of, or found out; that is, that on the first day, there being nothing at all but a disorderly chaos, (which must have been supposed first raised out of its primitive nothing) that God causeth a glorious light to spring out of that horrid darkness, that had every where spread itself over this chaos, this vast confused heap. He did but say the word, "Let there be light, and it was so."

And then, it informs us, that on the second day, God ordereth a firmament, dividing the waters, or the fluid matter that was superior, made up of finer particles, from that which was inferior and more gross: the one, being designed for a nobler kind of use, and the other, for meaner services and purposes.

And then, we are informed, again, that on the third day, God made, in this inferior world of ours, dry land and sea to appear, severally divided, and separate one from another, and distinct. And, that, as to the dry land, God doth implant in it the seminal principles of all sorts of vegetation, to make it capable of serving its after uses and purposes.

And then, on the fourth day, all these glorious lights are made to appear, and shine forth in the firmament, that are ever since observable and conspicuous in the world.

And then, on the fifth day, he replenisheth this earth with all those sorts of sensible animals that we find it inhabited with, and by which they are so much the more to be fitted for the habitation and use of man.

And then, on the sixth day, he makes man, and brings him forth into this orderly and so well prepared world; all things being fitted and accommodated to his use and purpose, as was most suitable and congruous; and gives him dominion over all; as the matter is so copiously, and with admiration of God, represented to us in that 8th psalm.

And then, that having thus, in six days, absolved and finished all this great and glorious work, he now sanctifies, and hallows, and blesses, the seventh day. The Lord himself, (as it were) resting with complacency in the view of his own work, finding it to be good, and answering to the complete, eternal idea which lay in his own all-comprehending Mind. He beholds, with complacency, all that he had done, and so takes up that satisfying rest that was suitable to a God, in the contemplation of his own work. He did it with delight and pleasure; and now beholds it with delight and pleasure done. And so, takes man (the creature, here in this lower world, which he had made capable thereof) into communion and participation with him, in this blessed rest of his: upon which is founded the law of the sabbath.

Now, all these things that could not otherwise have been known to us, but by divine Revelation, and our faith therein, God, telling us that things were so and so, and we believing him, and relying on the truth of his word therein, He did graciously provide that those things should be made manifest; that they should be made known to the children of men, in

succeeding times, by casting all into sacred records. Though, that, indeed, were not done till a considerable time after this beginning of all things; yet, till it was done, the knowledge of these things was more easily transmitted or conveyed; three or four men, having seen all from the beginning of the world, and so were capable of telling one another, until the time when these things were capable of being transmitted into sacred records; these records themselves giving an account of those particulars that were transmitted, from hand to hand, by three or four of those that lived, successively, nearest to the beginning of time, who seeing and knowing, might tell one another.

And we have these notices, all of us, from God, that thus these worlds began. And, indeed, if such a notification of these things, did but now first arrive to us; if there were but one such manuscript in being, that should give this account of the first rise and production of all things, and it were sufficiently attested and proved to be divine, of how great value and account would it be! Your great antiquaries, that have been so highly pleased in searching into the ancientest original of things, what would not one of them have given for such a monument of antiquity as this, informing us distinctly, from point to point, how all things came into being, and in that order wherein they now lie to our notice and view? The price thereof, would be above that of rubies, and all that could be desired, would not be compared therewith.

That is one thing, whereby this understanding, by faith, the creation of the world, hath its advantage over any other way of coming to the knowledge or notice of it: that is, that we know more of it, by faith, than we could do any other way. And,

2. What we do know, we know better. It is a better way of knowledge, or we may know better this way, to speak of the one and the other, comparatively, in several respects. As,

(1.) It is an easier way of knowledge, than that of rational search and disquisition. There must, in order to that, to know things so, be usually a laborious inquiry into the reference of one thing to another. There must be an adaption of a frame and series of consequences and deductions; some whereof may be more obscure, but leads us gradually into clearer light, step by step. This is a more painful way of understanding things: it requires a very great exercise of mind to know many things by the deduction of a long series of consequences, one following upon another; and which the minds of men, generally, are less apt for, in this low and lapsed state of man.

But how easy a thing is it, to have such a matter told us, by One who, we are sure, will not deceive us, and cannot deceive us? and then, to believe it, and take his word that so it is? This brings us to a satisfaction about this matter presently, and with the greatest facility. It is true, indeed, that as to this particular point of the creation, the matter is most plainly demonstrable, and very soon, to any capable and apprehensive mind: but if men were left to themselves, though they may be capable of discerning things represented to them in their dependencies, one upon another, they would not so easily find it out of themselves; and, therefore, as this is far the more easy way of knowing, so,

(2.) It is a way, too, by which the thing may be more commonly known: so far as the divine Revelation doth obtain and extend, it may be more commonly known. Very true, as I told you, it may be demonstrable, most plainly, to an intelligent, apprehensive, unprejudiced person, that this world was raised up out of nothing, by divine power. But as there are few that have ever made it their business, so far to cultivate their minds, as to be capable of demonstrating this to themselves; so there are few, that have opportunity of consulting with those, who will take the pains, (having acquired so much knowledge themselves) as to make such a demonstration to them; so as that, with the most, it goes but as a matter of opinion. But few, if they were put to it, are able to prove that this world had its rise thus, at first. But now, if it be to be believed, as a matter of divine Revelation, so far as that divine Revelation doth obtain, every one may presently be informed; and so this knowledge would become as much more common, as it is much more easy:—every one can read, or hear this read, to wit, the account that Scripture gives concerning the original of things: and so this knowledge, by this means, shall not be confined to a few, as it would be confined to a few, if none could come to the knowledge but those whose minds are sufficiently cultivated, so as to be capable of demonstrating this to themselves, or of apprehending well the demonstration made of it by others. And again,

(3.) It is a much clearer and more satisfying way, as well as it is more easy and more common. When the understanding of this matter is grounded this way, it is more satisfying to the mind; it makes things much more clear. They are but dark, and confused, and indistinct notices that we could have had in a rational way, of the beginning of things. But to be told this, from point to point, how all things were produced at first, and brought forth into that being, and order, wherein we behold

them; what a satisfaction is it to an inquiring mind, to have such notices of these things!

How much hath the matter been otherwise, with those that have been destitute of divine Revelation, in this matter, and who could not discern the state of this affair by faith. How conjectural have their apprehensions been; and how wild and exorbitant their conjectures, even concerning their own beginning. Man is nearest to himself: and if one would inquire concerning the beginning of things, one would inquire first of all, and chiefly, How did we begin? How came it first to be, that there should be such a creature as man here in this world? Those that have not had the help of divine Revelation, so as to be capable of understanding the matter by faith, as their apprehensions have been conjectural, so their conjectures have been the most strangely disorderly, inordinate, that could be thought; some imagining, that men were thrust out, at first, in little bags out of this earth, having been formed there: others have apprehended, that they were begotten in the bellies of fishes; (these were the conjectures of the great philosophers in the former ages of the world,) and by those fishes exposed and thrown out upon the earth. But to have an account given us, by the word of God; so plainly, how satisfying it is to the mind of an inquiring man! All dubious hallucinations about this matter, come now to be decisively and plainly represented, so as here is no more place left for dubious, and uncertain conjecture in the case. But this was the determination of heaven; and according to the determination of heaven, the thing was done. "Let us now make man:" and so God made man: "In his own image male and female created he them." Here is an expedite, clear, and satisfying account how we had our beginning. And then,

(4.) This way of understanding, by faith, the beginning of things, the creation of all things, is much more impressive; which is the greatest, and most important thing of all the rest. It is more easy; it is more common; (where divine Revelation obtains,) it is more satisfying; and, lastly, more impressive; more apt to make deep, and suitable, and useful impressions upon our mind and heart. By faith, we understand, that is, to make the thing enter into our souls. That notice of such a thing, of so great importance to us, which is by faith, transforms the subject; moulds it into a suitable frame towards the Creator, towards itself, and towards its fellow-creatures, especially, those of the same order and kind. Here will be corresponding impressions made by faith: whereas, mere rational knowledge of the same things, makes very little, or that, that is, at best, but faint and languid.

And the matter is very plain, that till faith comes, it is but an empty, notional knowledge, which people have of God's Creator-ship; and of their own creature-ship: of God, as their Creator, and of themselves as his creatures. It is but a slight, superficial knowledge that any have of these things, till faith comes: that carries a transforming power with it, so as to work the truth revealed, and believed, into the very inwards of our souls. And it is more impressive, the knowledge and understanding even of this matter, which comes by faith, upon several accounts.

[1.] Because the ground of this my faith, is distinctly and immediately divine. I believe such a thing, as God reveals it, because it is reported to me upon the authority of God, which carries a mighty awe with it, upon the soul, and so makes the thing revealed and believed, the more impressive. I attend to God in the matter, the authority of God. If I believe such a thing, with a divine faith, it strikes my soul, and carries the matter to my heart. And again,

[2.] The notice that I have by faith, of these things, is very agreeable to an apprehensive mind; and so it enters in the more. Look to the matter really, as it is revealed, and the substance of the divine Revelation, concerning this matter, is congruous, and suitable to the mind and spirit of a man. There lie no unanswerable exceptions against it. The knowledge that comes by rational inquiry, and search, admits of objections: when the matter is to be wrought out by mere ratiocination, there will be reasons *pro* and *con*; arguments on the one hand, and arguments on the other hand: and many things that may seem reasonable to one, will not seem reasonable to another. But, as to what we are here required to believe about this matter, or what is matter of faith in this case, there is nothing in it but what is very congenerous to an apprehensive and unprejudiced mind, that is willing to know the truth of things. It may be, there is what should never have been found out, or known, if it had not been told: but to a considering mind, the thing appears to be just as it is told it is. I should not have thought of it before; but now I am told of it, it is very agreeable it should be so. And things do impress the more, accordingly as they are more suitable to them, they are the more easily received, there is less of obstruction lies against them. And,

[3.] The notice we have of such things by faith, is the more impressive, for that this very faith itself is a divine principle, immediately divine, implanted, inwrought into the heart by the Divine Spirit. We find faith reckoned among the fruits of the Spirit. Gal. 5. 22. And we read of such a thing as the

spirit of faith. 2 Cor. 4. 13. The Divine Spirit, when it comes to new-create, to raise the new creation, amongst all the necessary principles of the divine life that are now to be implanted in this new creature of God, there is faith, that great receptive principle, by which it is to take in all light and gracious influences from him. The very principle itself, is from God; and therefore, the discoveries that are made by it, must needs be so much the more deeply impressive upon the soul, because, that faith by which the impression is made, is immediately a divine thing. And, then,

[4.] If you look to the act of faith, or its more immediate and connatural effect, it must be more impressive: faith, being described by its most appropriate act, or by its immediate effect, is called, “the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen:” expressions that represent faith to us as looking forward and backward, as what goes so immediately before the text in this same chapter. Hope, that always refers to somewhat future, is that by which we have the prospect of futurities; faith is the substance of those hoped for things, those futurities; that is one expression of the work of faith, to substantiate future things that we do but hope for. And, then, there is another work of it, or its work is otherwise expressed: it is, “the evidence of things not seen:” and that is larger and more extensive, and represents faith to us as a principle that can look backward as well as forward. We do not see how this world was raised out of nothing: no matter for that, we can believe it; faith will be to us the evidence of that we never saw, or have not seen: faith will (as it were) place us upon the verge of this world: and let us see, as if we had stood by, when God did, in this orderly way, raise up this creation, part by part, out of a disorderly chaos, and heap of confusion, wherein all things lay. If we have that obediential subjection to the divine authority, revealing things, (which subjection, faith doth involve and carry in it,) this faith serves us instead of eyes; doth the same thing (being the evidence to us of things not seen, or of what we never saw) as if we had been by as spectators, when God was doing this great and mighty and noble work; one thing raising up after another into view before our eyes. Faith shews all this with evidence, and, therefore, is much the more impressive: so that, after the hearing of such a discourse as this, if it be entertained by faith, we should go away with hearts deeply impressed, having God in all the glorious excellencies of a Creator in view before our eyes; and our own spirits formed as dutiful, loyal, dependant, subject creatures, all full of adoration and praise; so as continu-

ally to behold him, and his fulness, filling all in all, which way soever we look or cast our eye : and that is the general use indeed which is to be made of all this.

LECTURE XIV.*

And now, it is the particular *Use* of the whole which we are next to come to. And you see the heads of discourse, hitherto, have been two ; and so we shall have two things to improve by way of use, that is, first, that we are to understand the worlds to have been made by the word of God : and, secondly, that we are to have this understanding by faith. Each of these do claim their distinct improvement. And,

1. For the former. This is a matter to be understood, that these worlds were made, created ; that this great universe which comprehends all the worlds, (we do not know how many the text means ; but we noted to you, that it is not the dual number that is used here, but the plural,) is, most undoubtedly, a made thing. That the worlds were made, this we do understand. And we learn from thence,

(1.) That the world was not eternal, that it had a beginning. This hath, on the by, been hinted before, and we have formerly proved this to you in itself ; and, I think, sufficiently. We now consider it as an inference, that, because it hath been created, therefore, it was not eternal ; therefore, it some time began. Indeed, this inference hath been doubted, and disputed by philosophers, whether it were good and strong, yea or no, that, because the world hath been created, therefore, it cannot have been eternal, but must have begun. Some have imagined, that it might be dependently eternal, notwithstanding its being a created thing. Some such as grant it to be a creature, have yet imagined also, that it might be, in a way of dependance, eternal. But in truth, the question would only need to be distinguished, and then it would be soon and easily answered : for that supposed dependance upon a cause, must be understood to be, either upon a necessary cause, necessarily acting and producing such an effect, or upon an arbitrary cause. If we should suppose this world to have been from God, as the necessary Producer of it, that would make this world itself to be a necessary being, and would be simply inconsistent with its being a creature. All necessary being must be divine, must be God ; whatsoever is necessarily, can be no

* Preached December 9, 1693,

other than God. But if it be meant of dependance on God as an arbitrary cause, considering an act of the divine will to intervene; that is, that it was his perfect choice whether the world should be, or not be, so it is impossible it can have been eternal, dependantly eternal, if the matter were determinable by divine pleasure. Shall this be, or not be? that supposeth it some time not to have been. It supposeth a *transitus* from not being to being; but that it is impossible it should be eternal; for there can be no change in eternity. That of which eternity is spoken, must have been always what it is, and as it is. Therefore, nothing can be more manifest, than that this world began: its being, depended upon the divine word, upon his pleasure: for that is the notion that the Scripture gives of the creation: "for thy pleasure all things are and were created." Rev. 4. 11.

And that should be a measure to us, how we are to conceive of this universe of things. Be it, or they, (the things contained in it) as great as we can imagine; let our thoughts be enlarged and raised as much as is fit, or they are capable of, upon such a subject,—the greatness and vastness of this universe; yet presently think, once this was all nothing, raised up out of nothing, sprang from nothing. It is a mighty disgrace upon created being, once to have been nothing. This is a disgrace upon created being, which it is fit it should bear; all shrinking into nothing before him who is the *All*. Magnify it to yourselves as much as you will or can, yet presently think it back into nothing: great it is indeed; but once it was nothing, mere nothing. It began to be, and therefore, there was a vast, immense duration wherein it was not, wherein there was no such thing.

And, moreover, the worlds, in that frame wherein we behold them, cannot have been eternal: for it would be the most absurd contradiction, and nonsense, imaginable, to say, that in this changeable state, wherein things are, they could be from eternity. It is a manifest contradiction to the understanding of any body, that would use his thoughts, that there should be eternal changes. And pray consider it. It may seem a little dark and obscure to you at first hearing, but stay a little upon it in your thoughts, and there is not any here of so mean capacity, but if they would use their thoughts a little, they may easily apprehend it impossible that there can be such a thing as an eternal change. Now there is in this world a continual succession, and a succession of changes. As to things that have life, to instance, there we see a continual succession of living and dying amongst all things that have life, and come

under our view from day to day. But it is altogether impossible that there can have been such changes from eternity; for there can be no death; but there must have been life before: nothing can be said to die, that did not live. But to suppose any such change from eternity, an eternal change from life to death, it is a contradiction in itself; one must be first in its place; life must be first; and if life were eternal, it could never die; what lies under the measure of eternity must be always as it is. *Eternum non patitur novum*, there can be nothing new in eternity. And, again,

(2.) As it is manifest, that this universe, these worlds, were not eternal, but began to be; so it is also manifest, that it did not begin to be by any kind of chance or fate. Some, who have admitted this world not to have been always what it is, in that order we behold it, yet thought, that it came, by a sort of casualty into this state we now see it. That matter having always been of itself, (as they absurdly imagine) they have thought that the eternal motion of this matter, the various rollings to and fro, of it, have at last produced this strange and orderly frame of things which we behold. But nothing is more plain, than as this world is a late thing, in comparison; for there was a vast, immense duration wherein it was not; and in comparison of which it is but lately come into being: so that, when it did come into being, it was brought forth, into that being, by a designing cause.

The word, in the text, is emphatically enough expressive of that; it was brought into that exact and accurate order, wherein we see things lie, designedly, as the greek word here used, implies; as the several parts and limbs of a body are joined together, so as to consummate and make up one orderly frame. Order is the effect of design; wisdom is the parent of order. To behold that orderly frame of things which is observable to every eye in this universe of created beings, doth sufficiently shew, that it was not chance, but most profound wisdom, that hath brought things into this state wherein they are.

That is most plain; that is, if the worlds were made, they are not eternal, but did begin; so that they did not begin without design. The wisdom of him that did design this orderly frame of things, ought to be discerned, acknowledged, and adored; and a continual disposition of heart to adore it, ought to be habitual to us, and often going forth into actual exercise. It hath been the constant frame of holy ones of old, and we should take heed of letting it be an alien thing to us. "Lift up thine eyes on high, and consider; Who hath made all these things," that we behold, in so much lustre, and beauty,

and glory, over our heads? who hath made them, and produced all the hosts of heaven, and called them by name? "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands," (saith the psalmist) when I do, (it implies he did it often, that it was his wont.) then, I say, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" Look to such places as I relate to, that Isaiah 40, 26 and psalm 8. throughout, and many more. It should be more our business to contemplate and admire the unsearchable wisdom of God, in the creation of this world. The great exercise and argument it is of a holy heart, that wherein it doth exercise itself, and by which it discovers itself to be such. Again,

(3.) We may learn hence, the meanness and poverty of all creature-being, even upon the account of its being such; created and made. The worlds were made. As that doth argue them all, once, not to have been, so it argues them still to be next to nothing, continually depending. What was not of itself, cannot continue to be by itself: that which was drawn forth out of nothing, by an almighty power, still needs the continual exercise of the same power, to keep it from a relapsing, and sliding back into nothing again; which otherwise it must soon do. Sin being come into the creation, there needed a mediator, for this purpose, that all might not be thrown back into nothing again: "By him all things consist." Col. 1. 17. It is he that upholds and bears up the pillars of a tottering world; even where it was not obnoxious to justice, to a divine *nemesis*; yet, as being created, the mere liability, its dependableness, (which is proper to all created beings as such,) must have rendered it continually liable to relapse into nothing, if not continually upheld.

You see hence, therefore, by the way, what an ungodly creature hath to trust in; what he hath, for the final object of his trust, to wit, that which is every moment ready to *mutare*, to drop into nothing, to go out of being, that is only sustained momentarily by him that made it. This is all that a wretched soul, that is off from God, hath to rely upon, to trust in; nothing but creature; nothing but that which itself is next to nothing: all such a one's dependance is upon that which doth itself, too, depend. He that hath not a God to trust, to rely upon, what doth he depend upon? Let him but name it to you; be it what it will, God it is not. Alas! mistaken man! thou dependest upon that which depends, itself: and how miserable a case art thou in? Indeed, the vanity of creature dependance, is obvious to every man's thoughts, that will but allow himself to think. But the wickedness of it, is but a little

thought of : few think of that. Any man may apprehend how vain a thing it is to place confidence in a creature that is next to nothing : but it enters into the minds of but few to consider how wicked a thing it is. You must know, that to be the final Object, is the divine peculiarity of the Deity ; and one of the highest, and most appropriate : a glory that he will not impart. As to be prayed to, to be invocated, that is but secondary to this of his being trusted in : we trust first, and then invoke. This is a glory that he will not give to another. It is a homage due to Deity, which belongs to God alone, to be, I say, the final Object of trust ; he, into whom my trust doth ultimately resolve. I know there may be a subordination ; you may trust in a friend, in a relation : but for the final, supreme Object of trust, it is the highest, supreme worship of the Deity, to be placed only upon him.

And therefore, it doth not only infer misery by disappointment, when a man trusts in a creature ; but it infers a curse by revenge. It is not only an infelicity, that doth befall a man in such a case, when he doth expect that which is not to be had, from that which affords it not ; but it is a wickedness, that is followed with a divine curse, with a just *vindicta*, for a wrong and injury done to him ; that is, that I place upon a creature, that which is peculiar and belongs to him alone ; and so, I do not only punish myself as a foolish, mistaken creature ; but God punisheth me as a sinful, guilty creature, upon this account : “ Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.” Jer. 17. 5. But, alas ! how many do place their trust in ignobler creatures than man is, in things beneath man ? So much the meaner and baser is the temper of their spirits herein, to place a reliance upon that which is meaner than themselves. To neglect and forsake, to avert and turn off from God : and then sink beneath themselves, creep to an inferior creature, this calls for the blast of heaven upon such a one that hath “ forsaken God, the Fountain of living waters, to dig to himself broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” For which the prophet (Jer. 2. 12, 13.) doth call heaven and earth to behold, with astonishment, as witnesses of such folly and wickedness as this ; especially as being found in a people pretending to God. “ My people, they that call themselves my people, have committed these two evils, to forsake me the Fountain of living waters, and dig unto themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water.” When a man lets his heart unite, by trust, in that which hath nothing in it, forsaking the All for that which is of itself nothing ; and which in itself cannot be a moment, what folly and wickedness is this !

This is the snare that carnal, worldly-minded men run themselves into, and do not consider it as a deadly one; it is a snare of death: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they trust not in uncertain riches, (the lubrious things, the uncertain things of riches, as the words admit to be read, (1 Tim. 6. 17.) but in the living God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy." That trust which is not reposed on the living God, it is not only the greatest folly, but the highest iniquity: folly lies in it, that they place Deity upon a nullity, a mere nullity. That which thou makest the final object of thy trust, is thy god; and, then, likewise, that trust is idolatry. God will be jealous in this case, when his rival is set up in his place; when a creature is made his rival; and the little minute things in this creation are made to fill up his room, and to be to thee instead of God.

Naturally, every one affects to be happy, and when this is the natural tendency of a man's spirit, that it is now quiet, in some measure quiet, either in the possession of what he hath got, or in the probable hope of getting more; and of having within one's compass, that which one doth desire and covet, and reckon most suitable: here is my felicity, and I am so far quiet, because, I think here I have enough. As he is brought in, in the parable of the wicked fool, saying, "Soul take thy rest, thou hast goods laid up for many years." That which he had in his barns, that was his god; and now he thought his soul should rest, as thinking to have enough no where but there. Alas! thou fool, thy soul will be gone from thee this night, and then what will become of thee, and all these? What folly it is to set a man's heart upon such things: as the heart is set by trusting upon any thing. Trust fixeth it, as in its own place, as is spoken concerning trust in God; "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Trust, is that which fixeth a man's heart. But thou dost fix thy heart like a fool, who fixeth it upon any thing unfixed itself: for then what becomes of thee and thy trust, when that is gone? So do they who trust in uncertain riches; for "riches make themselves wings and fly away, as an eagle to heaven."—A strangely emphatical expression! It may be the soul would say to itself, "Shall my wealth, and my riches be gone? why, I intend they shall have no wings." Alas! they make themselves wings: they will not be beholden to you for wings; they will be gone of themselves, though you would never so fain they would stay. And there is an expression that is likewise strangely emphatical, and which is very proper to our present purpose, of setting the heart upon that which is not. All created being is so poor a

dependant being, that it is next to nothing, and is rather fit to be called a mere nullity, a mere nothing: and that so despicable a thing should be put into the place of God! should supply the room of Deity: O! what an indignity is this to the Majesty of heaven; and how severely to be reproved! Because there is nothing else stable besides God; when the soul is once off from him, it offers to fix, but cannot be fixed; because its object is not fixed. Therefore, heathen light hath seen this, and a most significant expression was it of a heathen. "That a soul off from God, is like a cylinder upon a plain, that moves necessarily and perpetually, cannot be fixed, but continually rolls and moves this way and that; and cannot be otherwise, for it hath nothing to fix upon." And, again,

This lets us see the absolute independency of the Divine Being; for what is there without himself for him to depend upon? These worlds are all that can be thought of *extra Deum*, without God; and they were all made by him. Can he depend upon that which he himself made? The worlds were created by the word of God; therefore, his being must be absolutely independent. And herein we should give our thoughts scope, it is pity we do not do it oftener, and more designedly, to consider the difference between that which is of itself, and which is not of itself. We might even lose ourselves and be swallowed up in the contemplation, to think of a Being, that, by its own peculiar excellency, could never not be, to which it was impossible not to be; which was not beholden to any thing; for all things were beholden to it.

How is the great God magnified before our eyes, upon this account, in that 40 chap. of Isaiah, in several verses of it together, from the twelfth verse and onwards. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hands, and meted out the heavens with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance." Who is he that hath done all this? The "who is he?" there, is not an expression of doubt; but of admiration and wonder. O! what a One is he! How glorious a One that hath done so! "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him, in the path of judgment?" Who had he to commune with, besides what was himself, in going about this mighty work of creation? Who prompted him, who suggested it to him? "Come now make a world, give being to a creation." No! all was *proprio motu*. Who instructed this Spirit of God, as to this great affair of the creation, or any thing else that he doth? "Who doth

all things after the counsel of his own will ! Behold the nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the balance ; behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are accounted to him less than nothing and vanity. To whom then will you liken God ? or what likeness will ye compare unto him ?”

So should we, upon this account, greaten to ourselves the Divine Being, and heighten and raise our own thoughts and apprehensions concerning him : that when all things else, of this vast universe of beings, are so absolutely and purely dependant every moment upon him, he, in the mean time, depends upon nothing. All that he is, he is in, of, and by, and for, himself. He can have no dependance upon the creature, either for the support of his being, or for any other addition to his felicity : but is his own All. And how convictively doth the apostle reason with those philosophers at Athens, to this purpose, Acts 17. 24. 25. “ God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor is he worshipped with men’s hands as though he needed any thing, inasmuch as he hath given to all, life and breath and all things.” And what can you add to this ? What support can he have from you ? what improvement of his felicity any way from you, or from any thing else, since all things are his own creatures ? And further,

(5.) You may learn, hence, the divine all-sufficiency ; and how vast an amplitude of being there is in him, when all this great creation sprang from him ; and yet, nothing could be detracted from him by it neither. How vast an amplitude of being must that be, when all this great creation is gone out from him, sprung from him, and yet his being not diminished, nothing the less ! O ! consider this, and think how great and desirable a thing it is, to have him for a portion ; the All ; he that comprehends in himself the all of the creature, and who formally possesseth his own All still : that is, is simply All. What can he want that hath him for his portion, who is All ? All his own creation, it was virtually in him before, and is still virtually in him, depending still upon that power of his, for its sustentation, that gave it being at first. And there is his own infinite All too. O ! happy that soul that can say, “ The Lord is my portion.” How rich, how full, how satisfying a portion ! And,

(6.) We may, further learn hence, the absoluteness of God’s dominion over all his creatures. Will you not allow him to do whatsoever he will in heaven and earth, who maketh

both by his own word? Shall he not do what he will with his own? We are apt, most unreasonably and peevishly, to regret it when there is a disposal of creatures; or any little minute part of this creation of God, this way or that, any otherwise than we would. But how absurd it is to repine at God's disposition of his own! He gives more of this world to such a one, and less of it to me. What then? What he gives to me, and what he gives to the other, was it not all made by himself? And may he not dispose, as he pleaseth, with what he had made?

How doth he plead the matter with Job, to exalt his own dominion upon the ground of his creation? Job thought it hard that he who was so rich a man, so healthy a man, should be bereaved of all so suddenly, and of his health, and comforts of his life besides: "Why," says God to him, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding. Did I consult thee when I made this and that, and the other creature? And may I not dispose of the creatures I have made, my own way, and as I will?" And,

(7.) We may further learn, that if these worlds thus began, that is, were thus framed by the word of God; if they had such a beginning, even at his pleasure, then at his pleasure, too, we must reckon they will have an end. That which began to be at some time or other, it began to be what it is. Such and such things began to be at the pleasure of the great Creator: and at the pleasure of the great Creator they must cease to be what they are. And we ought not to think it strange, that there should be such an end determined for this world, as the Scripture informs us there is: that is, a time will come, at length, when, the purposes of the great Creator having been sufficiently served upon it, these visible heavens, which we behold, "shall be rolled up as a scroll; pass away with a great noise; and the elements melt with fervent heat; and the earth, and all things therein, be consumed and burnt up," as 2 Peter 3. 10. and we are not to think it strange. And it is only upon this ground, that it hath been thought strange, that this should be the end of this world, because the beginning of it was not understood, as we may see, looking in the same chapter, at the 3d and 4th verses: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts; and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" "It is talked of that he will come, and then an end will be put to time, and all the successions of time. But all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation to this day. And therefore, we cannot imagine that

there should be any such end." But (saith the apostle) "this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of the Lord the heavens were of old;" and because they are willingly ignorant of this, therefore, they are wilfully ignorant of that end which is determined concerning this world. They will not believe it, because they believe not its framing at first: "that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing in the water, and out of the water." Because they do not believe the beginning of things, therefore, they will not believe that which is told them expressly, too, concerning the end of them.

There are a great many things more, that we might learn hence, but they will more immediately belong to the consideration of our own creatorship, than of the world: they do not so immediately result from the consideration of God's having made the world, as the consideration, more particularly, of his having made us; and therefore, I shall not insist on them till I come more particularly to speak to the creation of man from another text.

LECTURE XV.*

2. I shall, therefore, now proceed to make application of that second general head of discourse; that the more principal and advantageous way of our coming to understand the creation, is by faith. And it is a very manifold use that may be made of this. As,

(1.) We may learn from it, the excellency of faith; how soul-enabling a thing it is. It hath a certain power, with very great light, to help a man's understanding, and to clear his intellectuals. By faith we understand. It hath, in great part, its seat in the understanding: there it is originally, though it is not finally there; thence it descends, too, into the heart. But it hath a great work in the minds of men. Faith doth supply minds with notions; so it is if we would read the words literally to you. It doth furnish us with notions, which we should otherwise never have. It is true, if it be faith indeed, it will not let them always remain mere notions; it will inspirit them; it will make them vital, and powerful, and operative. But notions they must be first, and faith makes them so. By faith we have notions of things, that otherwise we never should have had. But this, I say, speaks faith to be

* Preached December 16, 1693.

a soul-enabling thing. It nobilitates the mind and spirit of a man; acquaints it with things from God, (for that is the business of faith,) unto which it would otherwise be a stranger.

This should raise and heighten our apprehensions of faith, that despised thing; that little understood thing. That by which we are to understand; men do not understand.

Whatsoever it is that divine Revelation doth, in order to the informing us of needful and useful things, that faith doth. And take we the compass of divine Revelation, and consider all the great and glorious things that are contained and brought to light in it, and by it, and thence you are to collect the excellencies of faith. Because, without that, the divine Revelation signifies nothing to us; no more than light doth to a blind man. The divine Revelation and faith, must both concur to the same effect, to wit, our understanding of things; as light and the eye do both concur to the same effect, our seeing of a thing. We cannot see by light without an eye; nor will an eye enable us to see without light, but both together. The divine Revelation, that is light to us; faith is the thing by which we discern things in that light. And so, if we do apprehend an excellency in the divine Revelation, which brings so many great and important things into view before us, we are proportionally to apprehend the excellency of faith too; without which all that divine Revelation could signify nothing to us. And,

(2.) We may further learn, hence, how wonderfully kind and gracious God's condescension is to us, that he should make such a discovery, and offer it to our faith, of things, in reference to which we should be at so great a loss, and understand so very little of: as for instance, this creation of God: what we do owe to the bounty of heaven for this, that it should condescend, so distinctly, to tell us how things came at first to begin. Faith, in that discovery which God makes to us of this matter, supplies the room and place of sight; and so it is the same thing in effect, as if he had let us see him making the world; for faith is the evidence, to us, of things we have not seen. We were not present, we were not by, when this mighty glorious work was done. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Where wast thou? saith God to Job: chap. 38. 4. But now, God having vouchsafed to us, such a Revelation and discovery of this mighty work of his; if he also gives us faith by which we believe this discovery, it is as if he had set us by him while all this was doing; so, we have (as it were) the idea, the representation, the landscape of the rising creation; as if God should before that time have created one

of us, and have taken us, and set us up, spectators of his whole work.

Whereas, yet, there was nothing but horrid darkness spread every where, then for God to have taken one of us, made us stand up out of nothing, and said to such a one—"Come, cast about thine eye, there is nothing but vacuity, emptiness and darkness every where; come see me make light out of this darkness." He that calls things where they were not, and makes them be, or as if they were, saying, "Light, where art thou? come out of that dark, profound abyss;" and immediately it springs forth, what an amazing light were that! Why, faith in God's discovery gives you this light: by faith we come to be so intelligible, to have so much understanding about us, as to know how this world did rise out of nothing, eternal nothing, into that state in which now it is. And what vouchsafement is this to such as we, to do, in effect, the same thing, as if he had set us by him at making of the world. "Come see me collect a mass of grosser matter; see me (as it were) spin out of it that fine texture of the vast and spacious firmament, those heavens that do encircle this little habitable world in which we dwell; see me adorn it with sun, moon and stars; see arising on this earth, plants, and trees, and woods, and springs, and rivers: all lately nothing, and now begin to be: see me replenishing this world with living creatures, in their several varieties and kinds." O! what condescension is this, that God should vouchsafe to tell us all this over again, and give us the representation so distinctly, of what, in so many successive days, he did and wrought in this kind. But, again,

(3.) We may further learn, hence, how inexcusable it is, that they who pretend to faith in this matter, should use it so little. If we falsely pretend, it is a most unjust usurpation of a name, to call ourselves believers; and that, of such things, when we are not. But if we pretend truly and justly to the faith of these things, then we are most inexcusable to use that faith no more hereabouts; to live so long, in such a world as this, and so seldom to consider how it began. A strange and inexcusable stupidity. That this world should be replenished with intelligent creatures, reasonable creatures; and that it should come into the minds of so few, and into any minds so seldom to consider, How did all things begin? Sure we are there, where multitudes of things are existing, that must have had a beginning, that are not self-existent, or unto which existence is not essential, so, as that they could not but be and exist. It is amazing to think that intelligent creatures should not more frequently consider with themselves, how things first

began to be, beholding such a world as this, which they are sure was not always, but had a beginning; and not consider how it began. That men can behold such varieties of creatures, and use such varieties, and enjoy such varieties, and never consider whence they are, whence came they, how came there to be such things in the world, and how came there to be such a world? It is most inexcusable and strange stupidity, and dotishness of mind, in any reasonable creature: but most of all in them that do pretend to believe and know by faith, that the worlds were created by the word of God. And,

(4.) We may, again, learn hence, that what is commonly called faith, about this matter, is really and indeed not faith: that is, the apprehension of such a thing as this, is without effect, and that impresseth nothing upon the soul. It hath been very justly and fitly told you, that we have the notions of things by faith, many things which we should otherwise have no notion of. But though faith first begets such notions, yet it will not let them continue mere notions long, if it be faith: that is a mighty, lively, operative principle, powerfully working in the soul, to form that suitably to the thing believed. But while there is so little of suitable impression upon the souls of men, in reference to this thing, what they call faith about it, is not faith, but must be something else.

For the most part, it is not any thing else but a negative faith, which men are wont to call faith in this and many other such cases. It is, I say, but a mere negative faith upon which they place that great name: that is, a not believing the contrary, not having formed explicit belief of the contrary, that they call faith. They have not yet (it may be) laid down in their minds any formed conclusions to this purpose, that the worlds were not made by the word of God; and their not disbelieving it, they call believing it: whereas, faith is a most positive thing, a thing of great reality, and a thing of great efficacy and power, wherever it is. And, therefore, for such as never yet found their souls impressed by their apprehensions of the world's creation, I would admonish them no more to call that apprehension of theirs by the name of faith, but call it something else,—call it by its true name,—call it a floating uncontradicted opinion; and that is the best they can make of it, while it is an apprehension that hath no power; and while it doth not represent God in his excellent glory, as the great Creator and Lord of all, so as to form the soul to adoration and subjection to him thereupon. Never say till then, that you do believe, or that you have faith concerning the creation of the worlds. Alas! how many that have it often in their

mouths—"I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth"—yet do but usurp the words, "I believe," and their heart, and their practice, contradict their tongue, and tell them they believe it not. Believe it! yea, as much as a known romance, while they live in affront of the Creator, and take upon them as if they were lords of the creation; and as if they had made the worlds; and not He.

These things we may, by way of just inference, collect from hence; that it is a thing to be understood by faith, that the worlds were made by the word of God. But we shall thence proceed to some further *Use*; that is, to counsel and exhort those that have faith in this matter, to use it more; to have their faith more in exercise upon this great and noble subject, the creation of the worlds by the word of God. And it is to many great purposes, that faith upon this important subject may be employed and used. As,

1. To engage us in the more frequent and serious meditations on the beginnings of things. To engage us, I say, in the more frequent, more serious, more affectionate, and more fruitful meditation of this matter. If we believe it indeed, let us think of it often. Our faith is an apprehension that it is true: and if it be once owned to be true, it cannot but be deemed to be a very important truth; a very considerable truth; a truth that requires, and challenges, great attention of mind, and application of heart and soul to it. Think and judge it an unreasonable thing, to live from day to day, in this world, and never consider whence it came, and how it began. And let your faith be set on work in frequent and most affectionate meditations of the beginning of the worlds.

2. Let your faith, hereupon, form your souls into adoration of the great Creator. Go up and down this world with adoring souls: let every thing you behold, from time to time, put you in mind of him, and make you bow your head, and worship. Admire that fulness of his, that fills all in all; and those variable displays of his wisdom, and power, and goodness, which are conspicuous every where, more or less, in all sorts of creatures. We are but nominal believers and christians, if there be not many, if there be not much of this about us; and if we are not aiming and endeavouring that there may be more and more.

3. Let our faith instruct us unto the grateful and reverential use of the creatures of God, as remembering they are made things; and that we have the use of them by divine vouchsafement and allowance. There ought to be a mixture, a temperature of reverence and gratitude in the habitual frames of our

spirits hereupon : and if we have a real and true faith in us about this matter, it will make it to be so ; it will impress our spirits ; it will fill us (as it ought to do) with a wondering gratitude, that such creatures as we, should be so accommodated by such a world as this, so suitably ordered for us. If we use faith in this matter, it will make us sit down and wonder ; look upon it as it is, an admirable thing, that the great God should have raised up such a creation, such a world, as this is, out of nothing, by the word of his power. That it being designed, “ I, in time, coming to have a place and being in it, should want nothing while I am there ; such and such creatures, made out of nothing to supply me, to furnish me. What is it that I eat ? What is it that I drink ? What is it that I wear ? Are they not all the creatures of God ? What is it that refreshes me ? What is it that delights me ? Are they not God’s creatures ? ” How full of reverential gratitude should our hearts continually be, on this account ! To think such and such parts of the creation were made on purpose that I might not be in distress, that I might not feel necessity ; and to think how this world generally accommodates its inhabitants : and to wonder with all, that their apostasy was foreseen ! O ! how should it replenish our souls with wondering gratitude, to think that there should be such a provision made with design, and upon foresight, for the entertainment of rebels and apostates ! This whole world replenished and filled with the divine goodness, all sorts of creatures made for the unthankful and the evil. A design laid through so many successions of ages, “ My goodness shall diffuse itself, and flow in such and such a part of my creation, (as this world is but a little, a very little part of it,) for the supply and support of those that will never give me thanks, (though they have natures capable of doing so,) even for the unthankful and for the evil.”

4. Our faith, upon this subject, should instruct and enable us to contend with difficulties in reference to whatsoever God hath encouraged us to expect, or told us he means to do. What can pose that faith which believes the creation of the world ? He that could make such worlds as these are, out of nothing, by his word ; what cannot he do ? what is there to be expected greater than this, that should be the matter of any present solicitude, thoughtfulness, concern and care ? If very perplexing thoughts of heart do arise about the ill state of things in this world, he that made heaven and earth, and all the worlds by his word, cannot he make new heavens and a new earth when he will, and when the time and season of it comes ? How frequently may we observe it to be, in Scripture, for the

people of God, to animate and raise their own hearts unto the belief and expectation of great things from God, upon this ground, that he hath made heaven and earth, that he is the Creator of all things. "Our God hath made the heavens." When those vain creatures that dislike the divine government, and oppose themselves to it, taking counsel against the Lord, and against his Anointed, when, I say, they have nothing to trust to, in the designs of this kind, they are forming and driving continually; nothing but stocks and stones, the work of men's hands; "Our God hath made the heavens;" (so you have it expressed, Psalm 115. 3, 4.) made the worlds; given being to all these worlds: and what cannot he do, when his time and season for it are come? And things will come to their full issue in the fittest time. Our God it is who hath power enough to do the things we expect, and wisdom enough to order the times and seasons for them. Again,

5. Our faith ought to have exercise with us, upon this subject, in order to the keeping of our minds quiet and composed, amidst the various expressions and instances that we behold of the divine dominion and sovereignty, doing what he will in the disposal of affairs in this world. It may be, some we find him exalting, and it pleaseth us; we find him depressing, and it displeaseth us; we have a little share and portion in this world, and we regret it: others have a great and large portion of it, and that we envy. But we should consider whose this world is, who made it. May not he dispose of what he hath made, as he pleaseth? This (as we noted to you before) is a just inference from the very thing itself, abstractly considered, that is, to form our spirits agreeably, and to make us content, and well pleased, that God does dispose of what he hath made, as seemeth good to him.

6. We should further learn, hence, to behold, with great complacency, what appearances there are of divine glory in this world, which he hath made by his word. And to behold, with just regret, the dishonours that he meets with in it; or that these appearances of his are so little taken notice of; and that such glory shines unregarded as to the most. These are but dutiful dispositions and affections towards the Creator and Maker of these worlds: and faith should furnish our souls with such dutiful affections; otherwise it is a fruitless faith, a lifeless faith, if it doth not do this. Do I believe that God made these worlds, by his word? how can it then but please me to behold his glory shining in such and such aspects and appearances of God? and how can it but fill my soul with such dutiful wishes? "O! may thy glory, more and more, be exalted

above the heavens, and shine through all the earth." And how can it but fill our souls with resentments, that there should be such glory shining, and not regarded? The great Maker and Lord of this world, excluded out of his own creation, as if the All in all did signify nothing! men taking upon them, every where, as if they were absolute, as if they had been self-created, and using the creatures of God at their own pleasure, and in affront to him that made them. If faith would do the part in our souls which belongs to it, it could not but fill them with regret, and with a dutiful concern, that the great Lord and Maker of this world, should be so little acknowledged, and taken notice of in it. Again,

7. The faith of the creation of the worlds, should engage our hearts in an earnest desire and endeavour to have a sure and clear interest in Him who created and made all. What doth this world signify to me, to behold it, to be in it, to be of it, a part of it, but to have nothing to do with him that made it? The faith of this, would make a soul restless till it can say, "The Lord of heaven and earth is my Lord." Were these worlds created by the word of God? then he shall be my God. He that could make such worlds as these, by his word, is it not a covetable thing to have an interest in him? Is it not desirable? Can I satisfy myself till I have it? especially, when I find it is matter of hope, a thing not to be despaired of; when there are such notifications of his pleasure, (that he is inviting and teaching men to take him, and choose him) published and proclaimed in his gospel to the world, declaring now the terms by which he offers himself to be our God, and invites us to take and accept him for ours? The serious belief of this thing, that these worlds were made by the word of God, would certainly put us upon a most industrious inquiry, "How shall I do to know him, and to be acquainted with him, and to be interested in him, by whose word these worlds were made? And, I cannot satisfy myself not to know him that made them, and not to have him for mine, since I find there is a possibility of the thing; that it is a thing not to be despaired of, and it is no unjust, or presumptuous aspiring, for me to seek an interest in him." My faith of the thing ought to make my soul restless in this case.

And if one consider, cast one's eye round about, and behold this world in the extent of it, (as far as our dim and short-sighted eyes can go,) and behold the great variety of creatures in it, methinks the thought should presently arise, "Amongst all these things, there is nothing suitable to me, to my spirit; nothing in which I can be satisfied, and in which I could take

rest, unless I could find out him that made these worlds by the power of his own word :” till then, methinks one should always look very wisely about one, and behold the amplitude of this world ; and then, presently to think, likewise, “Sure it is a sad, melancholy thing, to be in this world, as without God in the world, what an empty cipher is it, if God be out of my sight, if I cannot find out the Maker of all, so as to know him, and have him as mine.” And then,

8. If one can do so, how should our faith fill our souls with high gloriations in that God? I have him, that made the worlds, for my God. “All people will walk every one in the name of their God.” And we should say, And we will walk in the name of our God: and see, where there is such another God to be found that hath made these worlds. (how many soever they be, and how great soever they be,) and all by his word : I have him for my God. And again,

9. It should, by a little further recollection, make us apprehend too, the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon whom the business lay of redeeming and saving lost creatures in this world ; and must lie of making a new world ; of repairing a ruined and languishing creation. For you had to consider, that he had his part, he concurred, he was Creator even of this world. Look to the I chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews : He is styled “the brightness of the Father’s glory, the express image of his person ;” he that upholds all things by the word of his power—the heir of all things, and by whom he made the worlds. “By him he made all things, visible and invisible,” Col. 1. 16. and John 1. 1, 3. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. By him were all things made : and without him was not any thing made that was made.” And I will not undertake to exclude that from the signification and meaning of the text, “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God,” the essential Word, the divine Logos. Though, I would not lay a stress upon a thing that is not plainly and manifestly intended : yet, to take it in, is very suitable to the current of other texts of Scripture. The eternal Word had its hand and part in the creation ; and it was by *it*, that these worlds were made. And thereupon, by a right of creation as natural, as well as by the acquired right of a Redeemer of a lost world, by the effusion of his blood, and the sacrifice of himself, he comes to have a governing power over all this world : being ascended and gone up far above all heavens, he hath all power given into his hands, both in heaven and in earth.

I would only improve the consideration hereof, to this pur-

pose, to gretten your thoughts concerning your Redeemer. We are fain in very important cases, from time to time, to be beholden to our senses, even in the most important cases that can be thought. Our sense tells us something of the greatness and amplitude of the world; though it cannot tell us much, yet it tells us something: and by that, make your estimate (for we need such helps) how great a Redeemer we have; him that made these worlds. They were made by the word of God: he was the eternal Word; and as such, we are sure, having the eternal idea in him, according to which the worlds were to be made; by him, at length, they came to stand forth into being. Think this with yourself, "This is my Redeemer; he that had so mighty a hand in the formation of all these worlds; and in whose hand the government of them now lies. It is with him I am to trust my soul. It is to him that I am to subject and devote my soul. Have I not reason to do so? Have I not encouragement enough to trust him, that made this soul, and all these worlds, and to obey him who hath so great and universal a power over these worlds?"

10. Our faith in this matter should, more and more, release our spirits from mean and vile confinement to this one world only; for by faith we understand that there were more: therefore, our faith should release our spirits from a base confinement to one world, when it tells us of more. It tells us, there were worlds created by the word of God: therefore, it speaks an abject mind, a mean and base spirit, and so much the more if we have faith, (as we pretend to have,) to be confined in our thoughts, in our desires, in our designs, in our expectations and hopes, to this one world. Tell a believer, "Your all lies in this one world;" "No, (he will say,) my faith hath got ken of more, notice of more." By faith I understand that there were worlds, framed by the word of God; therefore, it is a base thing to be tied to the present: "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world." A believing soul would look upon that with disdain, (there is such a generosity in faith) and would say, "I scorn so base a confinement as that, to be limited to one world, when I know there were worlds created by the word of God." Though we are not told how many there were, yet we are sure they are more than one; and we have a very distinct account of one more, in which our principal concerns do lie, and are signified to be. And blessed be God for that, that we know so much, that there is one more, with which we have more to do than we have with this world, or can have, even where our principal interest lies, and where our Lord and our Head is. O! how should we bless God for this! that

since there are more worlds, he hath told us so, and hath let us know it. To be limited, in our spirits, to this one world, this present world, is to run counter to the design of our Lord's dying; "He gave himself for our sins, to deliver us from this present evil world." He gave himself for our sins: what doth that signify, in conjunction with the latter words? but that they are our sins that chain us in our present dungeon. And by how much the more we can be released from these chains of our sins, so much the more shall we get out of this confinement, and get above this present evil world. O! if we have many things that we dislike in this world, let us bless God that we know of more worlds. And in the last place,

11. We may further learn, that our faith concerning the creation and being of this world, should very much facilitate our faith concerning the end of it. If we can believe, that these worlds were made by the word of God, we may easily believe what he hath told us concerning the unmaking of them. And particularly, the unmaking of this, the dissolution of it as to its present frame. We may argue from the one to the other, that since the one hath been, the other is not harder to be: if one be a thing to be believed, the other is as believable as that, when we are told it will be so.

It is very true, indeed, that believing is not formally arguing; but as faith doth rest upon the strongest argument in all the world, so it may supply matter of further arguing, though it be not in itself formal arguing, it rests upon the strongest argument that ever was; that is, that because there is a Being infinitely perfect, therefore, he cannot but be true, therefore, it is impossible for him to lie; therefore, it is inconsistent with his nature to impose upon his creatures: heaven and earth cannot have a surer foundation than this which my faith hath upon this matter, and upon this ground. And then, resting upon the strongest argument imaginable, it can easily supply matter of further argument; that is, if my faith hath once believed this, that these worlds were made by the word of God, because God hath told us so, if also, he hath told us he will put an end to the present world, and how he will put an end to it, as he hath told us how it began; if I can believe the one, I can believe the other, too, with the same faith: and so am to live in the suitable expectation of such a time, when these visible heavens "shall be rolled up as a scroll, and pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all that is therein, be consumed and burnt up."

And, if I believe this, then how entertaining must the be-

lieve! How pleasant the belief of the other world (as was said before) that is to come afterwards, that pure, and peaceful, and orderly, and blissful world! that lasting, permanent, and everlasting world! that when this world and all the lusts thereof are past away and gone, shall abide for ever, and all they that do the will of God: as that expression is 1 John 2. 17. "The world passeth away and all the lusts thereof." Love it not, nor the things of it. If you love it, the love of the Father is not in you: and it is passing away. God is not so unkind to you as to place your love upon vanishing things, upon shadows. This world, I tell you, and all the lusts thereof, are vanishing, passing away; will shortly be gone; the show will be over: but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever in that blissful world, which it is his will and pleasure shall abide for ever.
