

## LECTURE XLIII.\*

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LUKE II. 14.

*Good will towards men.*

[*The whole verse runs thus,—Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men.*]

**Y**OU know we have been largely, and very lately, discoursing to you of the apostacy, the fall of the first man, and the fallen state of men, with the continual descent of a corrupt nature through all the generations of men hereupon. It now follows, of course, (and according to the natural order of things as they lie,) to speak of man's recovery. And in order thereunto, in the first place, of God's kind propension towards men; which is to be considered as that which leads on the whole of any design or endeavour to that purpose; His good-will, the original, the source, the fountain, the well-head, of the glorious design which he hath set on foot for the recovery of such a lost and lapsed creature. This is more especially held forth to us in the close of this verse now read; and not more distinctly and fully any where else in Scripture. But it is in conjunction (as we shall come more particularly to take notice of by and by) with other things which we shall not overlook, though that which I design to fasten upon, is this particular only—"Good will towards men."

And if, with reference to what we have heard, we do but

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consider the summary import of these words, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men," it might fill us with amazement and wonder. And sure it would do so, if these things were now altogether new to us, or did now come at this time to our notice and hearing. Upon what hath been so largely discoursed concerning the fall, and the degenerate state of fallen creatures; how sin and death have spread themselves through this world; how an impure and poisoned nature was continually descending, and transmitting from age to age, a nature envenomed with enmity against the Best of beings, the Sovereign rightful Lord of all: and that by this continual descent and transmitting of such a nature, (which as you have heard it did not seem meet to the divine wisdom to hinder by preternatural means,) here was, hereupon, a continual war maintained, and kept up on earth against heaven; and this war carried on in an open hostility from age to age. Upon the discovery (I say) of all this the true representation (however defective and short of the full) of the state of the case between God and man; if we did not live under the gospel, or had no notice, no intimation or hint, of any such thing before, as now comes to be laid in open view before our eyes, we should be the most transported creatures that ever God made: the children of men would generally be so. And certainly, upon the supposition already made, two things we would have expected. And two things we would little ever have expected or thought of. We would,

1. Sure, have expected that there should have been an efficacious revelation of wrath from heaven. There hath been a verbal one, and a real one in degree; we would sure have expected it to have been most efficacious and total. We would wonder that it hath not been long ago; that it hath not turned this world into flames and ashes, many a day since; and in that way put a period to the propagation of a wicked nature, and the continuation of a war and hostility against heaven, and the Lord of heaven and earth. And we would have expected,

2. That, whereas men have been accomplices with the devil, in this apostacy from God, and in the continuation of this rebellion and war against him, from age to age; (accomplices with a sort of creatures of an higher order, a great part of the heavenly host that first made a defection from God, and drew in man with them into the same apostacy;) I say, we would sure have expected that none should have been more ready executioners of the just wrath of God upon

those disingenuous, apostate, ungrateful generations and race of creatures, than those angels that retained their integrity, that left not their first estate. We would have expected that they should have been the most prepared, expedite instruments of God's vengeance upon such a generation of creatures as we were, and have been most willing, to have come upon that errand, to vindicate their rightful Sovereign Lord, from all indignities and dishonours that have been done him, by the creatures of their own order first, who had drawn into a confederation with them, a whole race of creatures of an inferior nature and order. One would think that love to God, and a zeal for his honour and interest, should so universally have inspired them, the glorious inhabitants of heaven, that no errand would have been more grateful to them, than to be sent as the quick executioners of the divine revenge upon such a wicked world as this.

And again, upon the forementioned supposition, there are two things that we should as little ever have expected, to wit:

1. That there should ever have been a thought of favour and kindness in heaven, and with the God of heaven, towards such creatures as we. That we would little have looked for, that ever the sound of such a voice should have been heard from heaven towards such an apostate degenerate race of creatures, as "peace on earth, and good-will towards men." Who would ever have looked for it? That when they were breathing nothing but war, and enmity, and hostility, against heaven, there should be a proclamation from thence, of peace towards men on earth, proceeding from (as it could proceed from nothing else but) good will. And again,

2. We would as little have expected, that the angels of God should be the messengers of such tidings to this world, whose dutiful and loyal breasts we must conceive filled with indignation against apostate creatures, that had left, and put themselves off from so kind, so benign, so gracious, and so rightful a Lord. One would little have thought, that they should have come upon such an errand; that when they would rather have been waiting for a commission to execute the just wrath of God upon this wretched world, they should be sent to proclaim *peace*, and to signify the divine good-will towards men. Though, indeed, for the same reason for which they would have been executioners of the divine revenge upon this wretched world, they would also be messengers of such glad tidings, to wit, because they were

obsequious, dutiful, and loyal ; and had but one will with him, whose creatures and servants they were. His will, so far as it is notified and made known, is always perfectly complied with in heaven, as we are to desire it should be here on earth. But that was the case here ; the angels are sent upon this errand first, to bespeak “ glory to God in the highest,” and to speak out, “ peace upon earth, and goodwill towards men.”

And now finding ourselves outdone every way, that what we would most of all have expected, we find not ; but what we would never have expected, that we find ; That as to the most dismal and dreadful things that we would have looked for, we meet with a grateful disappointment : but as to such things that we would never have looked for, we meet with a most grateful surprise. When we find (I say) the matter to be so, then would our narrow minds begin to fall a wondering at somewhat else ; to wit, that since wrath did not break forth upon this world, to put a sudden end and period to it ; and that God having so many mighty and powerful agents to employ as instruments therein, prest and ready at his command, they were not yet employed in that work ; but, on the contrary, grace breathes from heaven upon this forlorn world, and the angels of God are here made the first ministers (as it were) thereof, to publish it and make it known ; we would, then, wonder why was not this much earlier ? Why was it not many ages before ? Why did not that gracious, kind design break forth sooner, so as to have mollified the world, to have assuaged and conquered down that enmity, and to have prevented the insolencies of wickedness, which, through a succession of many ages, for almost four thousand years together, had prevailed, and been acted on the stage of this rebellious world.

But we see that in all respects, “ God’s ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts ; but as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts,” Isaiah lv. 7. What was, with deepest and most profound wisdom, forelaid with him in the eternal counsel of his will, it was to have a gradual, and a very gradual, discovery and revelation to this world ; and not to have its fulness of accomplishment till the fulness of time set for it. Every part of that method, which he had laid with himself, every juncture in it being, by divine counsel, affixed to so many parts, and points of time, so as that every thing belonging to that glorious design must fall into that very season which was fore-determined for it, and then receive its punctual accomplishment :

according to that of the Apostle James, that sage saying of his, Acts xv. 18, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Not only known that they shall be, but known when every thing shall be, in what time, with what dependencies upon other things, with what references unto things that are to follow and ensue; according to that scheme and model which lay in the all-comprehending, Divine Mind; the thoughts and purposes of that mind being not hitherto unformed, but only unrevealed; hid in God, (as the expression is, Eph. i. 19;) folded up in mystery, and so concealed from ages and generations by past; in a mystery that was (as it were) inwrapt in rich glory, or in the riches of glory, as Eph. i. 22. This mysterious design, with the method of it, was not to come into view, but in the determinate season; all things being left by the supreme wisdom, in the dependence of one thing upon another, and with a particular reference to such and such seasons, that all things must have in the course and current of time.

Long it was, therefore, that this world was let sleep on in sin and darkness, unapprehensive generally, that there were any such kind thoughts in heaven towards them. Little was that thought of; and, indeed, for the most part, it was as little desired, as expected, that ever God should have given such relief or redress, to the sad, forlorn state of things in the world. It was, I say, as little desired, as it was expected or hoped; for, as the most deplorable things in this our calamitous state, such as distance from God, ignorance of him, unacquaintance with him, the presence of the sensible, and the debasement of the intellectual nature. These were not men's more real misery than they were their imagined felicity: things that they were generally very well pleased with; that which was their doom, was their choice. It was in every man's heart to say unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; we had rather live alone apart from God." If any scattered beam of divine light shone here and there, it shone amidst the darkness which refused to comprehend it; a malignant darkness, that was naturally bent to exclude and shut it out. So that it might be truly said, The wretchedness of this world was become con-natural to it—its very element; and men did enjoy their misery: those viperous lusts, that, as so many serpents, were inwrapping and preying upon the hearts and vitals of men, they were hugged as their only delectable darlings; and all their business, every where, was to

make provision for these lusts, and to satisfy, to the utmost, what was insatiable, and could not be satisfied. So that there was not less need of divine power, to apply a remedy in such a case, than there was of wisdom to contrive, or kindness to design it.

And thereupon, as men did all this while generally (as it were) enjoy (as we said) their own misery, enjoy it to themselves; so God did all this while enjoy his own love to himself; pleased himself in this design of his, which yet, for the most part, was concealed and hid in God, as was before noted to you; and he might do so, the whole method of that design, in all the parts and junctures of it, being so surely and firmly laid, and one thing so connected with another, that it was altogether undisappointable; he being Master of the design, having it perfectly in his power, and it being impossible any thing should intervene the accomplishment of whatsoever he had determined, and purposed within himself. He enjoyed his own love, this good will of his towards men, as it was a fountain of that designed good, which they should enjoy, and which, through the several successions of some ages of time, they did, in some measure, enjoy. And that also was an ever springing fountain to himself; for nothing can satisfy God but God: an everlasting complacency, therefore, he must be supposed to take in his own benignity, in the goodness of his own will, with all the other perfections thereof.

But now, at length, in the fulness of time, this design of his breaks forth unto men too; not till time was come to its fulness, its parturient fulness, and was to be disburthened of that birth, the greatest and most glorious that ever lay in the womb of time, nor was possible so to do. When the Son of God was to appear here upon this stage, and to be brought forth into this world, then it was not fit that so glorious a work as that, the manifestation of the Son of God in human flesh, should come forth without a previous knowledge. When he was come, it was fit it should be known what he was come for: and so Christ and a gospel, they do, in this world, commence both together: that is, now doth the Sun of Righteousness arise and shed his beams upon this world. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself was that Sun; the gospel was the beams of it, the radiations of that Sun.

And this beaming out of the light and grace of the gospel, it was, at first, in a way as extraordinary, as the thing itself was. How extraordinary was the thing, that God should descend, be manifested in human flesh, put on man, take the

name of "Emanuel, God with us:" a God among men, how extraordinary was that thing? And the way of its discovery, it was suitably, it was correspondently, extraordinary, too: that is, by an embassy of angels, this should be first made known to the world. They were not to be the ordinary ambassadors of those glad tidings among men, but they were ambassadors extraordinary. So you find this matter is represented in this context. First, one angel appears to a company of shepherds, and tells them, (as soon as they were recovered out of their sudden affright,) that he was come to publish to them glad tidings of great joy, that should be to all people—and by and by there is a numberless host, a vast chorus, a choir of angels; a multitude of the heavenly host, who all come together upon the same errand, to publish what we have here contained in the Scripture: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men."

So that look upon Christ as the Sun of Righteousness; look upon the gospel as the beaming forth, the irradiation of that Sun; and you may look upon this text as the epitome, or that which hath in it the contracted beams of all that irradiation: for a sum of the gospel it is. Look into the particulars of it, and it is made up especially of these parts.

1. The final issue and effect of this great and glorious undertaking of the Son of God, in descending and coming down into this world, putting on human flesh, and being manifested therein. And that is two-fold—supreme and subordinate.

(1.) Supreme: "Glory to God in the highest." That is the thing in which this whole dispensation shall finally result; all shall terminate in the highest glory to God above; to God that inhabits those highest and most glorious regions, that is there enthroned: all shall have a final resultancy into his highest glory, who inhabiteth those highest and most glorious regions of the universe. And then,

(2.) There is the subordinate effect, or final issue, out of which that glory is to result unto God: "Peace on earth." There is a peace-making design yet on foot. It shall not be abortive. It shall have its effect, and take place. God will, upon certain terms, be reconciled unto men. Men shall be brought first or last (many of them, multitudes of them) to comply and fall in with those terms. And so where there was nothing else but war, there shall be peace:

the Prince of Peace is now arrived into this world, and it shall not be without effect: his kingdom is a kingdom of peace, a peaceful kingdom. That peace is principally, and, in the first place, to be between the offended God, and his offending creatures here below. Other peace will proportionably, and in due time, ensue.

This is the final issue and effect of this undertaking of our Lord: that is, the ultimate effect—"Glory to God in the highest;" and the subordinate effect—"peace on earth." And that is the first part that we have considerable here of the words made up of these two. And,

2. The principal, the original, the source and fountain, of that whole undertaking of our Lord, and of this two-fold effect, which is to result from it: and that is God's good will towards men. From this fountain shall spring forth both peace on earth, and glory to God; the former more immediately, and the latter ultimately: the former being subordinate to the latter, as the supreme and last end of that. And so as to this matter, the same account is here given of the whole gospel-constitution, as we find given in that Ephes. i. 4, 5, 6. "According as he hath chosen us in him, that we might be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us to the adoption of children, according to the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, to the praise and the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." So that take the whole scheme of the gospel-revelation together, and it bears this inscription: It is a frame of things finally and ultimately dedicated to God, as all things must be to him, as well as from him. He that is the author is the end of all. He can do nothing but for himself. How or in what sense he doth so, to wit, doth things for his own glory, we shall have occasion to open more distinctly hereafter. But this being now the first thing that we have in view here; and which I design to touch upon as previous to that which comes last in the text, and is the main I intend to insist upon. Something, I say, I shall speak in reference to this—"Glory to God in the highest."

This you see is the final effect and issue of this mighty undertaking of a Redeemer. The Son of God descending and coming down into the world. Why, what shall be effected hereby? What shall be brought about? Why, "Glory to God in the highest." That should not fail to be effected. God would, it is true, have been glorified in the destruction of this world altogether: if it had been all laid



in ruin; if it had been turned into one heap, he would have had his glory. He might have continued that as an everlasting trophy of his power and justice; of his justice by his power.

But that was not the way chosen; and he will not lose by it, as to all revenue that it is possible can be added to the divine treasure. Nothing can be really added. Glory can be added, to wit, *reputation*, (as the word signifies,) which, therefore, must be supposed to have its place in the intelligent and apprehensive minds of men. For the word made use of here, comes from a word that signifies esteem, or to judge. There must be some that are capable of judging of what is honourable and glorious: God himself is the Supreme Judge: and, indeed, there is no competent judge besides. As it is altogether impossible that any should be his peer, or capable of making an estimate of what will be fully and adequately answerable to him in point of honour and glory. And as the matter doth relate to him, as he is to be himself the judge of honour, of what is becoming of God, what will be an honour to himself; so it is here considered,

(1.) Objectively, as the glory that could only be the thing designed by himself, to himself; to wit, the complacency that he takes in himself, which must bear some proportion to the excellency of his nature and being. And that cannot lie in the mere opinion that he hath in the minds of his creatures, (be those minds never so right, and never so comprehensive,) but the satisfaction that he receives to himself, in himself. This is an end worthy of God, and suitable unto God. Nothing can be an adequate satisfaction unto him, but what is in himself. Now there is an objective glory in himself—the glory of all his excellencies, of all his perfections: and this is the object in which he satisfies himself, and takes his own complacency there. There are, indeed, beamings forth of that excellency into the minds of creatures, but this cannot be his end; to wit, to be well thought of, or well spoken of, by his creatures: they are inconsiderable unto him. The whole creation is even as the dust of the balance, or the drop of the bucket; lighter than nothing and vanity, in comparison with him.

But there is, I say, to be considered, first, an objective glory, the excellency, the becomingness of the order of things, as they lie in God, which only comes under the notion of creatures, as he is pleased to make the discovery;

and when he so doth, that shines into their enlightened minds, which was, indeed, before; to wit, the order of things, that harmony, that comely dependance and reference of one thing to another, as it lies in the counsel of God's wisdom from eternity. Here is that glory which he beholds first in himself, and so he satisfies himself on the rectitude and perfection of all that is in him, and all that immediately proceeds from him, as it doth more immediately proceed. This only can be God's end. Indeed, the creature's end must be the display of this glory, when once it doth shine forth and come under their notice; then they are to reflect it from one to another, and to diffuse it among one another; so that there must be very different notions of the divine glory as it is his end, and as it is the creature's end. And that this matter may be the more distinctly explicated withal, consider two things here: first, the form, and, secondly, the matter, of this saying of the angels in this part of it. "Glory to God in the highest," which is the principal part of the effect or end of this undertaking, the Redeemer's descent into this world; it was to produce glory to God in the highest, as it should produce, in due time, peace on earth, a reconciliation between God and man. I say, the former of this speech is to be inquired into. What doth it mean, that it should be here said, "Glory to God in the highest?" And then, the matter of it, and what is signified under it, we shall come more distinctly to inquire into afterwards.

(1.) For the form of this speech, that it may be rightly understood, we must consider from what mouth it comes, or who are the speakers, who they are that utter it: they are an heavenly host; a most numerous heavenly host; an host of angels that descend upon this account, in this juncture of time, (as it were,) upon a visit, upon a kind visit unto our earth, and to pay a dutiful homage unto the Son of God, whose descent they wait upon at his first arrival into this world of ours. The form of expression will very much be collected by considering the speakers. And nothing, indeed, could be more decorous, more becoming, than that they should be first employed upon such an errand as this, who are the speakers and mouth by whom this first summary of the gospel is communicated amongst men, here in our world. It was fit there should be such messengers employed and sent; to wit, to celebrate his arrival into our world, who was so great an one, and who came upon so great an errand.

Let us but take notice, by the way, (before we come to collect from hence what the form of this saying must import,) why it should be said by such speakers, a multitude, a choir of angels, who were employed to utter it. Why, that was not all their business, to utter this saying here to a company of shepherds; that falls in with it, and that very aptly; but their great business is to wait upon the first arrival of the Son of God into this world, as a due honour to him. Upon which account we are told, (Heb. i. 6.) "That when he brought his first born into the world, all the angels of God were to worship him," or to pay an homage to him. When he brought this his first-born into the world, this was (as it were) a decree then published in heaven: "Now let all the angels of God worship him." The thing also refers to 1 Tim. iii. 6. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels." Seen? How seen? Not barely looked upon as by a company of gazers, or of idle, unconcerned spectators; but seen, beheld with an adoring eye; every one seeing and adoring at once.

It was a suitable dignity and honour to them; and it was very suitable from them, considering what a state the Son of God was now coming into. A state that was to be "a little lower than the angels," as Heb. ii. 7. quoted from the 8th Psalm, or "lower for a little while." So the word admits to be read. That in as much as this humiliation of his was spontaneous and voluntary, he might not lose their homage by it: and undoubtedly they tendered it him. That self-depression was elective, not necessitated; therefore, he was not to lose by it: he descends, goes down into a state a little lower than the angels; therefore, the justice of heaven determined thus concerning him, and the justice of their minds could not but so consent and fall in with it. "You shall pay your homage to the descending Son of God; he shall lose nothing that is due from you (*cœlites*) the inhabitants of heaven, for this self-debasement." Therefore, though this descent of his was to look with a dark side towards this our earth, because here he was to appear in obscurity; the ends of his coming down here among men would never have been composed and brought about, if he had been to shine as an illustrious person, in bright celestial glory, visibly and openly attended with guards of angels; his work would never have been done; he could never, on those terms, have arrived to the cross, which was finally the thing he had in his eye and design. Therefore, I say, this

descent of his must look with a dark side here towards us here below. But yet, care was taken that it should look with a bright side in heaven above, that the glorious inhabitants there, might be kept in a dutiful, adhering posture towards him, as understanding their own subserviency, and subjection to him; and that he was their Lord still, though he did voluntarily go down into a state a little lower than theirs; lower for a little while. Therefore, upon occasion, their subserviency to him is plainly signified, when he was at the lowest, in his last agonies, angels came and ministered unto him. And so his descent looks with a bright side towards heaven, and those vaster numbers of intelligent minds, that do inhabit those regions; all was lightsome thitherwards, and must be, though it was necessary it should look with a dark kind of gloominess and obscurity towards men on earth, that the design might be accomplished and not frustrated, for which he did descend and come down into this world.

And so much being premised, it is now obvious to collect what the form is of this same diction, this same saying, by these excellent, dutiful creatures. It must carry with it,

[1.] The form of an acclamation, giving glory to God; proclaiming the divine glory, upon this wonderful product of his wisdom and love, that began now to appear, and obtain, and take place in this world. It was an acknowledgment that he was worthy to receive all honour, and glory, upon this account. And,

[2.] It must bear, too, the form of an appreciation, that is, wishing he might continually do so; that all glory and honour might be continually given to God in the highest. And,

[3.] It might carry in it, too, the form of a narration, there being no verb in the sentence; and therefore, is to be understood as much as if it had been said, "Glory is to God in the highest;" that is, it is a representation how well the glorious inhabitants of the upper world were at that time employed, to wit, in celebrating the divine glory, and giving glory to him. This is the business of heaven: and upon this account, that the Son of God is now descended and come down upon this earth, it is their business on earth to be all giving glory to God in the highest. Or,

[4.] It may be also an invitation to angels above, and men below, so to do. All the glorious inhabitants of heaven, who behold and see; and so, likewise, all the men, and

wretched and miserable inhabitants of this earth, who are concerned in all that is now done, join in this, giving glory to God in the highest. And,

[5.] It may be a demand or claim of glory to God in the highest; not only a mere invitation, but a challenge: "Let God have his due glory; withhold not his glory from him. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." Psalm cl. last. Let the universe praise him, upon account of this marvellous undertaking, that his own Son is come down in glory, veiled and obscured into this world. And it may, in the last place,

[6.] Carry with it the form of a prediction; Glory shall be to God in the highest. As heaven is now full of this thing, earth shall be full of it; God will have his glory, even to the full, out of this wonderful thing, a thing infinitely more wonderful than the creation of this world was; even the extraction of such an universe out of nothing: that God should come down, and be manifest in such flesh as the children of men do wear, and carry about them here upon earth. We do all predict Glory to God in the highest hereupon. So great a thing can never be, but there must be a production of glory to God in the highest, some time or another, as far proportionable hereunto, as the capacity of such creatures can admit. He will not lose his glory. We foretel he shall have his glory, even from all the ends of the earth, directed to him in the highest, arising and springing up from this very thing. But then,

(2.) The matter expressed and signified under this various form, that will also require some further explication too, which now I shall not enter into: but, in the mean time, let us consider,

[Use.] Doth heaven appear to have been so full of this thing, the descent of the Son of God into this world, when we were the persons concerned? What amazing stupidity is it, that our souls should not be more taken up about it? It was, indeed, partly duty to God, and to the Son of God, that these blessed angels should be in such a transport upon this occasion: but it was also benignity and kindness, and wonderful kindness towards us. When they saw what was designed to us, they give glory to God in the highest, upon the prospect they had of peace springing up towards us on earth, and of the view they had by retrospection upon the divine good-will: finding now that anciently, and heretofore, his delights must have been with the children of men; (as miserable as their state and condition

was;) not upon the account of what they now were, but upon the account of what he would one day make them. He would yet one day make them a delectable sort of creatures. The angels of God are full of this; and heaven was full of it. And we are not to think it was only so seventeen hundred years ago; that the thoughts and apprehensions of the glorious inhabitants of heaven are lower about these matters now: no; there is the same occasion, and the same sense. They are in the same joyous and dutiful raptures, upon account of what was doing and designing hereupon earth, for producing of peace to men, and glory to himself.

What an amazing stupidity is it, that all this should signify so little with us? That when we are the persons chiefly concerned; when hell may be designing upon us from beneath, heaven is designing upon us from above; yet we are in a deep sleep all this while, neither feel the drawings of hell downward, nor the drawings of heaven upward. Hell is working upon us, and heaven is working upon us, and we seem insensible of the designs of either; the destructive designs of the one, or the kind designs of the other: but vanity fills our minds, and we wear out a few days here upon this earth, without considering what we are here for, or what the Son of God did one day come hither for! What awakenings do we need? And before God shall have his glory, and the earth its peace, what wonderful changes are there yet to be wrought in the minds and spirits of men? And surely if God have any kindness for us, there will be great change wrought upon us.

## LECTURE XLVI\*.

But now to go on to the second thing, the material import of these words; that is, that whereas, by universal consent, the glory of God is the end of all things, it must be very differently understood as it is his end, and as it is the creature's end. It cannot be understood in reference to both the same way.

In reference to the creature, it ought to be their design (to wit, the design of all reasonable creatures) to glorify God, by owning and by diffusing his glory to the uttermost. Their glorifying God consists in these two things; the

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first whereof is fundamental to the second, the agnition of his glory, and the manifestation of his glory. The acknowledgment of it in their own minds and souls, owning him to be the most glorious one. They add no glory to him; it is not possible they can; but they only acknowledge and take notice of, and adore, that which is; confess him to be what he is, and what he should be. And the manifestation of his glory; the spreading and propagating of it, as much as is possible, from one to another, through the world, even to their uttermost, at least, in the wish and desire of their own hearts. "Be thou exalted above the heavens, and thy glory over all the earth," as it is again and again found in Psalm lvii. and in multitudes of like passages of Scripture. "So is our light to shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our father which is in heaven." Matt. v. 16. That his glory may be transmitted by some to others, and by them to others, and so spread to our uttermost universally unto all.

But the matter is quite otherwise to be understood, when we speak of God's glory, as his own end. And it is very needful that we should state this matter to ourselves aright, lest we otherwise take up thoughts very unsuitable, and very dishonourable, and very injurious, to the great and blessed God. That design which hath been already mentioned, upon our first acknowledgment in our own minds and hearts, the excellent glory of the divine being, then to diffuse and spread it, is a most worthy and becoming end for creatures, nothing more. It ought to be their very terminative end; the end of ends with them; to wit, the end that must terminate all that they do. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God," is that great practical maxim, 1 Cor. x. 31. Whatsoever we do, must be done, must be all consecrated unto this end, have a stamp of holiness put upon it, by a dedication "to the glory of God." That is (as it were) to be the inscription upon every design, and upon every action, in pursuance of any of our designs. What can be expressed with larger and fuller universality. Whatsoever ye do (eating and drinking not excepted) is to have, and be levelled at this end, the glory of God, as being most suitable to the creature. But this is no end worthy of God, the matter being understood and taken so. Indeed, it is suitable enough for any one to design the praise of another; but it is not suitable to any one to design his own praise as his end. It would be thought unworthy of a wise and

good man, to do such and such good actions for this as his principal end, that he may be well thought of, and may be well spoken of by others. But the goodness, and suitableness, and agreeableness, of good actions in themselves to his own spirit, is his great inducement to any one that doth partake of the image of God, and that is so far become God-like.

But when we speak of God's having his own glory for his end, (whereas his glory as it is our end, doth but signify our agnition of it, or our manifestation of it, which is not his essential glory,) it is God's essential glory that must be his end; for he can have no end but himself. He is his own first and last: his own Alpha and Omega: and so his glory is, then, his essential glory, which is the lustre of all the excellencies of his being, shining to his own eye, which is his end. For only wisdom can be a competent judge of infinite excellency. And glory doth import and carry in the notion of it, a reference to a judicative principle, as the word from whence *esteem* doth come, plainly enough imports. He only is capable of judging what is worthy of himself: and so it is the rectitude of his own designs, as they lie in his own eternal mind, that lies before him under the notion of his end.

But it must be understood, too, that this is not his end neither, to be pursued by a desiderative will, but only by a fruitive; not by a desiderative will, as if there were any thing wanting to him; with us, indeed, all our end is always looked upon by us, as a thing to be attained; and that is suitable to the state of a creature, to act for an end to be obtained, and which we are yet short of. But all things are always present to him, to his all-comprehending mind, and especially that which belongs only to his own being, to which there can be no addition. He doth will himself; not with a desiderative will, but with a fruitive, a complacential will; and so doth act within himself, not from indigency, (as creatures do,) but from a superabundant, all-sufficient, self-sufficient fulness: He enjoys himself in himself.

And this is obvious enough to every one that will use his understanding to consider, as well as it is a philosophical maxim, in which all sorts of considering and studious men have agreed. And, I say, it is apprehensible enough to others when it is considered, that one's end, and one's good, are convertible terms, and signify the same thing. *Finis et bonus, convertuntur*, philosophers use to say; to wit, that



which is any one's ultimate end, which is so *de jure*, is his highest and chiefest good. Now nothing is plainer than that there is no good adequate to God, but himself: so that he cannot have his ultimate, final complacency, in any thing besides himself. And his glory, his essential glory, the lustre of all the excellencies of his being, is his end: not that which he covets and proposes as distant and unattained; but which he enjoyeth, and acquiesceth in, and which he cannot but have always in his own possession, as he cannot but be in the entire, uninterrupted, everlasting, possession of the excellencies of his own being.

And it ought seriously to be considered, that so we may not in our own thoughts debase the eternal, most excellent, and most blessed Being, by supposing that he proposeth it to himself as his end, to aim at that which would be thought unworthy of a wise and good man to aim at: that is, only to be well thought of, and applauded. This is a thing that is consequent, and which ought to be, and which we ought to propose to ourselves as our end. But it is too low and mean an end for God. We may design that for another man, to wit, his praise, which no other man, who is wise and good, will design for himself; but take pleasure in the rectitude of his design, and that goodness of his own actions; and enjoy them as every good man doth in bearing the image of God upon him. And therefore, this is a god-like thing; and so must be in the highest perfection in the ever blessed God himself, and in the excellency of his own being, and in the correspondent rectitude of all his own designs. But this is that which must consequently, and secondarily, come under the common notice of his intelligent and apprehensive creatures, whereupon it is their business, and indispensable duty, to own, and adore, and honour him, for the good that is in him; to wit, to think well and honourably of him, and speak well and honourably of him, upon this account, even as goodness in men, and amongst men, is a thing that claims and challenges acknowledgment and praises from them within whose notice it comes. And then,

2. That being the primary thing here spoken of, which is to result out of this great design, "Glory to God in the highest," all capable and apprehensive creatures being obliged, to their uttermost, to celebrate and glorify him, upon the account of what he was now doing in reference to this wretched world; that being, I say, the first result of this undertaking, upon which our Lord Jesus Christ

was now descending and coming down into this world, the second is—"Peace on earth." And that former was to spring out of this latter, as the whole economy of grace in that mentioned 4th chapter to the Ephesians, a design for the glory of God's grace; to wit, it is to be designed by all the subjects, and all the observers thereof.

And now concerning this peace on earth, I shall speak but very briefly to it, in my way to the third thing which I most principally intended, in my pitching upon this Scripture; to wit, the original and fountain of all the good-will after mentioned. This peace upon earth must be understood to design, first, somewhat more primarily; and then, secondly, somewhat more secondarily, and dependent upon the former.

The primary intendment of it must be peace between God and man, the inhabitants of this earth, its principal and more noble inhabitants, in relation to the state of war and hostility that was between him and them, they having revolted from him, agreed and combined in a rebellion against him; not only with one another, but with the other apostate creatures, who had made a defection before, the angels that fell and so drew man in as their accomplices in that horrid revolt. And this must be observed as spoken too with discrimination, as we shall have hereafter occasion to note to you: "Peace on earth"—not with hell: there is no proclamation of peace reaching that place. Those kind, benign creatures, this glorious host of angels, this celestial chorus, though it is like enough it might have been suitable to their inclinations (if that had been the design and counsel of heaven) to have carried tidings, and a message of peace, to their fellow creatures, of their own order and rank, in the creation of God; yet while it appears this had no place in the divine counsel, and they being so perfectly resigned creatures, and having the same will (objectively considered) with the divine, that is, not willing a different sort of objects from what he willed; they joyfully come on this errand to men on earth.

The will of God is perfectly complied with in heaven; that will which our desires, while we are here on earth, are to be guided by; in our measure we are to desire God's will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. It is perfectly complied with in heaven: they cannot have a dissentient will from their Maker; and, therefore, must

be understood to have been contentedly employed upon this errand, to proclaim peace, peace to the inhabitants of this earth, when they had none to proclaim for the inhabitants of that other horrid region; knowing that they, who were their brethren, and of their own order, in the creation of God, were bound up in the chains of everlasting darkness, without remedy or mercy, and reserved unto the judgment of the great day, they willingly come upon this errand, to proclaim peace to the inhabitants of this earth, and are made use of as heralds in this proclamation.

And as this peace must principally be between God and man, so it must be understood to be mutual in the intention of it between both, that God should be reconciled to them, and they should be reconciled unto God. And, indeed, there can be no such thing as peace between God and man upon other terms: for if he were willing upon other terms to be reconciled to man, it would be altogether insignificant, and to no purpose. He would be reconciled to an unreconciled or irreconcilable man, whose heart should still remain filled with enmity, poisoned with malignity and venom against God. It would be to no purpose to him, for man would be no nearer felicity: and it is impossible for me to be happy in what I hate: and it is also impossible for the children of men to be happy in any thing but God.

Now supposing this peace to be mutual between God and man; to wit, he is reconciled to them, and they are reconciled to him, the prosecution of his justice doth cease, and their enmity towards him ceaseth; there is no longer a contest kept up between his justice and their injustice; then this mutual peace must carry in it two things, agreeable to what is carried in the notion of peace between one nation, or sort of people, and another that have been mutually at war with one another; that is, there is somewhat privative, and somewhat positive, carried in such cases in the notion of peace;—1st. a cessation of hostility, and, 2ndly, freedom of commerce.

1. A cessation of hostility. They no longer war with one another; God doth no longer pursue them with revenge, with hostile acts in that kind; that is, if once a peace be brought about, whenever this peace obtains, and hath its effect, he doth no longer follow them with acts of vengeance. And they do no longer rise up against him in acts of hatred and aversion: they no longer say to him,

"Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" they are no longer fighting against the righteousness and equity of his holy precepts, as the carnal mind is "enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be." All this ceaseth; that is, it cannot be now in any prevalency, in a prevailing degree. And thereupon,

2. That which is positive doth ensue. As it was between nation and nation, which were at war, there is not only a cessation of hostilities, but there is a setting on foot a commerce, an amicable commerce, a free commerce; so it is between God and man now: there is not only no war, but there is a communion, there is a friendly intercourse: God freely flows in upon them in acts of grace, kindness, and goodness. His Spirit was under a restraint before, (according to the doom and judgment past—"My Spirit shall no longer strive,") is now at liberty, set at liberty, from under these restraints. It now freely breathes upon those souls, emits its light, lets it shine in upon them, pours in the influence of the Sun of Righteousness, the vital, sanative influences of that Sun, who is said to "arise with healing in his wings," or beams. These vital, healing beams are, by the Spirit of Christ, freely transmitted, let into the very hearts and souls of such creatures, as were at utmost distance from God before.

Alas! there was nothing to do between God and them, in a way of kindness or friendliness: his Spirit was a stranger to them; no beams of holy light ever shone upon them; no influence of grace; they went with barren and desolate souls, wrapt up in darkness and death: but now the way is open and free; there is no law against it, no bar, but the communications of the Holy Ghost may be without obstruction. And, thereupon, their spirits are set at liberty towards God, and his Spirit is at liberty towards them, and and not withheld. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. Their soul was under restraint and clouds before, a prisoner under the divine wrath and justice. They could not act, could not move, could not stir, God-ward; not so much as breathe, nor direct a breath towards God; no holy desires, no holy motions. But now when commerce is restored, as the Divine Spirit freely breathes on them, it enables them freely to breathe after God, to send forth desires, and take up their highest delight in him, so as to enable them to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, or whom can I desire on earth in

comparison of thee?" Psalm lxxiii. 25. This is the primary intendment of this peace, proclaimed by this glorious host of angels: this is the thing primarily intended to be brought about, and which shall have its effect, more or less, and more largely, before the world ends. But then, there is,

2. That which is consequential thereunto, to be considered, and that is—peace upon earth, among the inhabitants of it towards one another. This is not the primary design, but it is the secondary, consequential aim and effect of the great Peace-Maker's undertaking, whereof there was a precedent and a leading case in the reconciliation that was first to be brought about between Jew and Gentile. "He is our peace, having made both one," Ephes. ii. 13. so as that the highest enmities and animosities that ever were between one sort of people and another, were to be taken up between these Jews and Gentiles. How contumeliously were the Jews wont to speak of the Gentiles; and how ignominiously did they again speak of them. And the fraction was yet more fierce between the Jews and the Samaritans, that were all Israelites, all of one house: insomuch that common courtesies could not pass between them, as appears by that in the 4th chapter of John. "How dost thou," (saith the Samaritan woman to Christ,) being a Jew, ask water of me, that am a Samaritan? How strange is it, how can you expect that I, being a Samaritan, should give drink to you that are a Jew?" And so great was the distance between the Jews and other nations, that pagan writers have taken much notice of it. *Non monstrare vias* (saith a pagan poet) *cadem insi sacra volenti*; that a few would not so much as shew the way to one that was not of their own religion; no, not that common courtesy to tell a traveller his way. Why, he is our peace, he that brings it about, that shall finally, sooner or later, bring about an universal peace, not only between Jew and Gentile, (which was a precedent, a ruling case,) but among the several nations of the earth.

"He is our peace, when the Assyrian is in our land," and it is to be an universal thing foretold and prophesied; to wit, that "swords are to be beaten into plough shares, and spears into pruning hooks, and that men should learn war no more," when once the peaceful tendency of the kingdom of the Messiah doth reach its final and full effect; when it hath effect according to its tendency, so that, at the same time that the earth shall be filled with the know-

ledge of God, as the waters cover the seas, then is there to be that universal peace on earth too, among men towards one another; not only no more hurting or destroying in all the mountain of his holiness, but nation shall not lift up sword or hand against nation, and men shall be untaught that fierceness of nature, which a continued enmity against God had inferred on them: for when the union was once broken between God and man, it must appear, they must be made to understand and know to their cost, that that was central. And that union being dissolved, all union was dissolved besides, that they can never be at peace one with another, when they have broken with God, and the breach remains between him and them. According to what was emblematically held forth in reference to God, and the people of Israel and Judah; that is, by the two staves of beauty and of bands; the staff of beauty signifying the union between him and them; and the staff of bands the union between them with one another. But when one of these staves is broken, the other is shivered and shaken all to pieces.

Why this is the import of what is here proclaimed, the final and ultimate import of it—"Glory to God in the highest," and then, "peace on earth." This is the double effect of this great undertaking, upon which our Lord did now descend and come down into this world. But here comes next to be considered,

The principle, the well-spring, the eternal well-spring of this glorious and kind design; a design so glorious to God, and so kind to man, what is the fountain and well-spring of all? Nothing else but his own good-will. And this is the thing I mainly intended to insist upon from this scripture. That having so largely discoursed to you of the apostacy, the fall of the first man, and then of the fallen state of man; and of the way wherein man hath been continued in this fallen state, from age to age, and from generation to generation, I might afterwards come to speak of his designed restitution and recovery. And being so to do, (as the order of discourse should lead,) I shall tell you briefly what the scheme of our discourse now must be; to wit,

I. To speak of the original and fountain of this designed restitution of such fallen and lapsed creatures. And,

II. Of the constitution of a Redeemer and a Mediator in order hereunto. And,

III. To shew what sort of person this Redeemer or Mediator must be ; to wit, to treat of his person, of his nature, of his offices, and of his performances. And then,

IV. To lay before you the doctrine of the Covenant of God in Christ. And,

V. The office and operations of the Holy Ghost in the dispensation, and pursuantly to the design of the Covenant. And then,

VI. The effects wrought in all that shall actually appertain and belong to God, and be brought home to him, in and by Christ, this Great Head of the *reducees*, of returning souls. And then,

VII. The way and course of such as shall be thus savingly wrought upon, that holy work in which they are thereupon to be engaged, and wherein they are to persist, till they reach the end of that way. And then, lastly,

VIII. The end of all things, with the several things that shall be coincident thereunto.

The first thing in the course and order of discourse comes naturally to be insisted upon, (when we are to consider this business of the restitution of man,) is the original of such a design. Whence sprung it? What is the fountain, the well-head and spring of this great design? Why, good-will towards men. This is the summary account that the matter admits of. It can be from nothing else but mere good-will towards men. And in speaking to this, I have a two-fold subject of discourse ; to wit, first, God's general good-will, and, 2ndly, his special good-will. His good-will wherein it doth appear and is expressed towards men generally and indefinitely considered ; and his good-will in its more peculiar expressions, and exertions of itself towards a select sort of men. And so two things to be evinced.

1. That God's good-will, it hath some reference unto all. But,

2. That it hath not equal reference to all alike. There will be that two-fold subject of discourse distinctly to be pursued. And the former of these I chiefly intend from this scripture; the latter I intend from another more suitable scripture.

But, in the mean time, pray well inlay this in your own minds, that there are two such distinct sorts of divine good-will, or benignity, respecting men generally, and respecting some men especially; and that these two are by no means in the world opposed to one another. The doing of which, as it is a most unreasonable thing in itself, so it is a thing of the worst consequence that can be supposed; that is, it tends to confound the whole Christian Economy, to break the frame of Christianity, and make it an unintelligible scheme, as incoherent with itself; and this without any pretence, or shadow of a pretence. For these two things—general good-will, and special good-will; or as the generality of divines are wont to distinguish, common and special grace; these two, I say, are as distinguishable things, and as capable of being distinctly apprehended, as the general and special natures of any thing else that we can think of.

Now nothing could be more absurd to pretend, that because I have the notion of such and such a general nature, therefore, I must not admit the notion of a special nature, that is narrower than that; and superadds distinguishing to the former. As if when a person hath understood that God hath made such a sort of creatures as we are wont to call animals, living creatures, (that being the notion of a living creature at large,) that therefore, I should pretend there should be a difficulty of understanding the nature of man, one particular under that general; because I have the notion of a living creature taken at large, to wit, a creature that useth sense, that can see, and hear, and exerciseth spontaneous motion, can move this way and that, this, therefore, should be an hindrance to me in conceiving the special nature of man, a nobler sort of creature, that can do all this and something else; to wit, can reason and understand, and lay designs and pursue them, and is a subject susceptible of religion too, as well as ratiocination, would any man of ordinary understanding pretend an inconsistency between these two; or that I cannot fitly conceive the one sort of nature, because I do conceive the other? Because I do conceive the general notion of a living creature, an animal taken at large, therefore,



I can the less conceive or take in the special notion of a particular sort of living creatures, that can do more than an ordinary living creature, taken at large.

And the difficulty is not greater if we carry the matter higher or further, and consider that man, as man, having the natural image of God upon him, as such, may be conceived accordingly. And so that object, God's natural image remaining in him, terminates a general divine benignity. And consider, also, the same sort of creatures having, likewise somewhat beyond and superadded to the mere natural image of God, to wit, his holy image; this is the effect, (wherever it is, as the case of man is now become,) and can be the effect of nothing else, but special grace: but this I only lay before you by the way to that which we are to insist upon particularly.

## LECTURE XLV.\*

LUKE II. 14.

### *Good-will towards Men.*

THE former branches of this verse, wherein these angels proclaim, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace," have been opened, and something hath been said about this good-will towards men, both as it is general and special.

Now as to this general good-will of God to men, I shall,

1. Labour to evince it to you in an absolute consideration. And then, shall,

2. Speak in comparison of the way of his dealing with another sort of offending creatures, of an higher and nobler order than men. Now,

1. To evince this general good-will to men, according to the absolute consideration that is to be had of it, I shall make use of two sorts of mediums or arguments to that purpose,

(1.) Of such as are antecedent to a more express gospel revelation; and which will therefore respect them that have not the gospel, or that never had it. And,

(2.) Such as may be taken from the gospel itself, of which you have a summary, an epitome, in this same

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angelical proclamation from heaven : it seeming suitable to the majesty of God, to make his angels, though not the ordinary ambassadors, yet the extraordinary ones, of this gracious declaration of his mind and counsel towards men.

But as to both these sorts of arguments, I have this to advertise you, that the main thing I shall propose to myself in alleging them, will not be so much the evincing of the truth in this matter : for that is clear in itself, shines in its own light ; and indeed as to this part of God's general good-will to men, or that which is usually called common grace, I can have no adversary, we have none to oppose us in this thing, except Atheists. It is true, indeed, as to the other part, (his special grace,) there we have very subtil adversaries ; and when we come to that part, I do hope, through God's assistance, we shall be enabled to maintain the truth against them. But here my more principal design is, to let you see, by the arguments I shall allege, (which will clear the truth too,) the mighty importance of what we are now asserting, and to what purpose it is that we ought to assert this general good-will of God to men. Indeed, that we shall have occasion more distinctly to shew, when we come to the use. But I shall hint some of the more eminent purposes now, that it may the more engage the attention of all our minds unto what is to be insisted on to this purpose.

It will be of most direct use to convince, and (if it will seem good to God so far to bless his word) to mollify the hearts of hardened sinners that have yet nothing of special grace appearing to them, or in them, so as to make way for that, it being God's course to work methodically ; and to make things, which have an aptitude thereto, subservient unto other things, that are to be consequent thereupon. It would certainly induce any, that would use their thoughts, to look upon it as a black and horrid thing to be, in the course of my life, with an obstinate, obdurate heart fighting continually against goodness itself, and against kindness and good-will.

And it is of mighty importance, too, for the relieving of awakened and doubting souls, that may be hurried with terrors and temptations about their state God-wards ; and who, though (it may be) special grace hath taken place in them, yet think it hath not ; so as to let them see what relief is yet in their case, (as black as it looks to be,) while they are under the dispensation of more general and com-

mon grace, as hath a leadingness and tendency in it unto special.

And there is that too, which will be of general import to all of us, every day, to wit, that we may be brought more to value, and to savour, and relish those mercies which commonly go into the account, and under the *census* of common mercies, of which (God knows) we have too little sense. It is a most unaccountable absurdity, (that I have often reflected on in my own thoughts,) that very generally mercies should be thought less valuable, for that very reason for which they are the more valuable. And so it is commonly in reference to those that are called common mercies: they are less valued for the self-same reason for which they should be more valued; that is, because they come in an ordinary and in a constant course. As health, because it is constant, or is more ordinary, with the most, it may be, it is for that very reason less valued: but every body that considers, knows, that for that very reason it is the more valuable. It is better sure to have continual health, than health intermitted. So the use of our senses, our sight, (for instance,) the noblest of all the rest, because it is a common mercy, therefore it is cheap, and of less account with the most. How great a thing would it be thought, if a man should see but one hour in the day! How would the return of that hour be longed for! Or if but one day in the year; O when will that day come! We need to have the value enhanced more with us of such things as are indications of God's good-will towards men in general, that they may have their due weight with us, and that grateful savour and relish in our spirits which they challenge. And let us, therefore,

1. Upon such considerations go on to take notice of those arguments of the first rank, those which lie without the compass of the gospel-revelation, that were antecedent to that more explicit revelation of it, and do fill a larger sphere and region than that whither the gospel light diffuses and extends itself: for though it be true that the text hath a special reference to that glorious revelation which was now to commence, we are not to think that this good-will was then first to commence, as if God did then but begin more distinctly and explicitly to own it, and speak it out; but there were *not* obscure indications of it before, and which did commonly obtain all the world over, even there where gospel light obtained not.

I shall, therefore, in speaking to that head of arguments,

shew what it is that men might collect (if they would use their thoughts and understandings aright) from such appearances of divine favour towards them. And because that the reasonings of men may be looked upon as having an uncertainty in them, a sort of lubricity, and that we cannot with so much clearness conclude from mere arguings that are to be fetched from principles that lie without the compass of scripture; lest any one should think them infirm upon that account, I shall shew you, as we go along, how scripture doth strengthen the same sort of arguments; and how we are directed and prompted even by scripture itself, to make use of them to the same purposes. And that which I shall insist on, is,

1. The very nature of God, whereof all men that have the use of their understandings, have or are capable of having some notion or other. For he hath stamped more or less of his nature upon the very nature of man, upon the human nature that carries in it a signature of God. There is somewhat that may be known of God in men generally. But there is no notion of God that is more obvious unto any that do apprehend the existence of a Deity at large, than that he is the Best of Beings, the first seat of all goodness, kindness, and benignity. And this revelation of God, though it be natural, it is from himself, who is the author of all nature, and of this very nature in special; the immediate author, the author so as to be the exemplar of it to the human nature; that is a godlike nature in its first origination. And we are confirmed in it, that is not a false conception of God which we find to have obtained generally in the pagan world, *Optimus Maximus*, that hath been the common heathen language concerning him. But this is an impression from himself upon the mind of man, by which he is taught and instructed, even by nature itself, so to conceive of him.

And he speaks agreeably hereunto of himself, when he tells us his name. There is this sculpture, this signature of his name upon the minds of men every where, till men have studiously and industriously abolished and rased it out, which yet totally they cannot do neither; not so, but that the remainders of such a notion as this, cleaving to their minds, do fill their souls with so much the more horror by intervals, that they have been lately engaged in a course of wickedness, and in an hostility even against the Best of Beings, against Goodness itself. Those pangs which

such do find at such times in their own spirits from a secret and remaining suspicion, that when they have done all they can to think God out of being, they have been but rolling a returning stone; they have been but labouring for the wind; they can effect nothing when the thoughts return upon them, when in spite of them they must be yet constrained to conceive with a certain *formido*, that God is, though it may have been the wish of their hearts, O that he were not! then the main engine of their torture must be the apprehended goodness of God: For,

Do but consider if indeed he is, (whom we would fain think into nothing if it were possible,) then it cannot be but he must excel in goodness; the first thing conceivable in his nature, must be goodness. Mere philosophy hath taught men so to think of God, to think of the God, as a notion antecedent unto that of power and might. They place that in the very summitude of all that excellency, which they ascribe to the Divine Being. And so when God himself will expressly tell us his name, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; though he will in no wise clear the guilty—a thing most consistent with the most excellent goodness; for that goodness were fatuity, were stolidity, that were unaccompanied with such a severity, that were unexpressive of it. So he speaks of himself, who best knows his own nature, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, 8.* And the scripture is full of it elsewhere. That there is such a natural notion as this generally obtaining in the minds of men, is above all demonstration,—that it cannot but be so, that it must be so; for what is universal, must proceed from an universal cause; but there is no universal cause, but God alone. And then,

2. This good-will of God towards men, is to be further argued from his continuing of man (though apostate, though revolted from him) in a possession of those original excellencies of his nature, that were most essential to it, through the several successions of time so long. That is as to such excellencies as are essential to the nature of man, these he is pleased to continue man in the possession of from age to age, and from generation to generation, though he be a revolted apostate creature. He might have transformed him into another thing. Men might

have produced monsters from one generation to another, and that as a mark of divine severity, for that once they did apostatize. Into what an horrid thing might man have been turned upon the first transgression; and so this habitable world be inhabited only by creatures that should be terrors to themselves, and one to another!

It may be said, that they are turned into worse than monsters by sin; and it is very true, they are so. But that is their own production, and not God's; so they have made themselves, that is true: they are in a moral sense monsters; but so they are their miscreants; they might have been so in a natural sense, and that could have been no injury or reflection upon the Author of their nature. Merely natural evil is justly punitive of, and doth animadvert upon that, which is moral.

But that it is not so; that man should be still as to his naturals, the same intelligent creature that he was; that he should from age to age appear upon the stage of this earth, with a mind and understanding capable of comprehending so great things; that this understanding power should be so many ways improveable; that the soul to which it belongs should be so commodiously lodged in a tabernacle so curiously wrought by divine art, with God's own hand, and all the parts and members thereof written in his book; a contemplation, that put the psalmist into a transport, "Fearfully and wonderfully was I made, and that my soul knoweth right well. And how precious are thy thoughts to me, O God!" They were these thoughts that he was reflecting on, concerning the very frame, and make, and nature of man, in that 139th Psalm, and which he considers in so high a rapture of spirit.

We are encompassed with wonders, and we take no notice of them; that such creatures as we should spring up in a succession, a noble sort of creatures, God-like—bearing the natural image of God upon us. Thus it is with man; though revolted, yet God lets him live upon this earth, and propagate, and continue his kind. Let him (saith he) wear my image, to put him in mind, and that they may put one another in mind, whence they were, and who was the original of life and being to him, and of that nature which they have: a strange indulgence, and a most emphatical argument of the divine benignity, that he will let such creatures go up and down in this world, with his

image upon them, though they have fallen from him, and are universally engaged in a war and hostility against him !

You have heard, heretofore, (and I hope generally have not forgotten, at least cannot be ignorant,) of the necessary distinction of the natural image of God and the moral. And this is the wonder, that where the moral image of God is gone, men have put it away and blotted it out, that yet the natural remains. And God lets it be so, and lets such a sort of creatures still descend, and possess, and inhabit, this world ; minds, spirits, so commodiously lodged in so aptly figured tabernacles of flesh, where they have so many organs for the use and improvement of the reasonable and immortal mind, that is put into those tabernacles as the inhabitant ; by which it can exercise sense, and take in all the light, and lustre, and glory, of this world, and enjoy the sensitive objects wherewith it is so variously replenished. A continual argument of God's benignity and good-will towards men : but especially that he continues him an intelligent understanding creature upon this earth. A thing that Pagans have been apprehensive of with gratitude ; and it is a shame that we should not consider it more. It is that which history hath transmitted to us, concerning that noble Pagan, Plato, that when he lay a dying, he solemnly gave God thanks that he had made him a man, and not a beast ; and that he had made him a Grecian, and not a Barbarian ; and that he had made him to live in the time wherein Socrates lived, who was so great a luminary in his time.

But how great things have we to recount as additional to the human nature. The human nature itself is that which I am now principally pointing at, as an argument to us, of God's good-will towards men, that he lets men continue as to their natural being, what they were through so many ages wherein they have been in an apostacy from him, and rebellion against him ; especially when we consider that it is improveable ; for religion hath its ground, its foundation in humanity, in the human nature ; otherwise, a brute or a stone might be a capable subject of religion. But inasmuch as God doth continue the human nature, and make that descend, he doth thereby continue capable subjects of religion, and capable subjects of blessedness ; since religion and felicity are the two most connatural things to one another in all the world. And thus scripture

doth also teach us to recount with ourselves; to consider, to deduce, and make our collections from it, when it tells us of the spirit that is in man, and that the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding, to make him wiser than the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field. And when we are elsewhere told that the spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching into the inward parts of the belly; to wit, into the most abstruse and hidden things, those that are most recondite within a man's-self. And, again,

3. This is a further argument of God's good-will towards men, generally considered, that they are taught and prompted even by nature itself, to consider and look upon God as some way related to them; to look upon him as upon a natural account, a father to them. For this is a true account. It is true, also, that there is a more special notion under which he is so to some, as we shall have occasion hereafter to shew; but he is so in a common notion too. So natural light hath taught men to account and reckon when they have spoken of God as the paternal mind. They have considered themselves as all having minds, and they have conceived of the divine mind, as the paternal mind, the Father of all those minds. They have spoken of themselves as God's offspring, and you see the scripture quotes that from one of their writers, and approves and justifies the notion, Acts xvii. 28. "We are all his offspring, as one of your own Poets hath affirmed." The thing is true, (saith he,) your own Poets have spoken thus concerning men, that they are the offspring of God: and they have apprehended the matter aright; they are so, he is upon a natural account a father to them: as Adam is said to be the Son of God on the same account.

And it is a conception that carries a gleam of light with it, that God should style himself the Father of spirits, but more particularly the God of the spirits of all flesh, as in that, Numbers xxvii. 16. It is true, that he is in a more particular way and sense the God of some. But they are his own words, to call himself also the God of all, of all spirits that inhabit and dwell in flesh. He doth not call himself the God of another sort of spirits, that inhabit not flesh, that have sinned against him, that are apostate spirits; (as the spirits of men also are;) but he calls himself the God of the spirits of all flesh, implying, that he hath not universally abandoned the spirits of men. As if he



should have said, "I do not renounce, I do not quit all claim to them, I have affairs to transact with them, as I have not with those other spirits, that are thrown out of my sight, and bound up in chains of darkness, and reserved to the judgment of the great day;" as I shall have occasion more directly to speak, when I come to speak of God's good will to men, considered comparatively with the course of his dispensation towards that other order of apostate creatures. And,

4. The constant exercise of God's patience is a great argument of his good-will towards men. This is that whereof they not only have a notion in their minds, comprehended and included in that common notion of his benignity and goodness, but they have experience of it in fact; and it is from that I am now arguing: and it is a mighty cogent and convictive argument of God's good-will, if it be but considered what men have to argue from, in reference hereunto, especially these two topics, their own guilt, and God's power.

Their own guilt; whereof, since man hath been a sinner, he hath had some natural conscience of guilt always accompanying him. And more or less men have consciences accusing and excusing, by turns, as the matter lies in view before us, Romans ii. 15. Now let recourse be had to that topic of men's own guiltiness, that hath deserved ill at the hands of God; this is a common notion with men. Many of your heathens, though they do not know how the apostacy came about, have generally granted that man was in a state of apostacy; that he is not in the state that he was at first made in, but in a degenerate sinful state; and it is spoken of as a thing common to men, what I noted to you but now, out of Romans ii. 15., that they carry accusing consciences about with them. I say, then, do but consider that topic, and from thence go to the other, that of the divine power: and nothing is more obvious to men, (if they will use their thoughts,) than to consider this, that he that made such a world as this, can easily right himself upon such creatures as we are in a moment, at his pleasure. Then lay but these two things together, (which are obvious to common apprehension,) that we are guilty creatures, and he is an omnipotent God; we have deserved that he should severely animadvert upon us, and he can do it at pleasure; hath it in his power to do it when he will; and yet we are spared. What doth all this signify, but a continual miracle of divine patience? And what is

that to be resolved into, but divine goodness? "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God should lead thee to repentance?"

When we argue from hence to persuade sinners to turn unto God, do we argue from a feigned thing? Is it not a great reality from which we are thus directed to argue, when the Scripture itself gives us the direction? It teaches men so to consider the matter themselves, as in that, 2 Peter iii. 9, 10. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but he is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish; but that they may come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved." And we are to account the long-suffering of the Lord salvation. What doth he bear with an offending creature for, in so continued a course, when he hath so many advantages against him, so many thunderbolts in command at a moment? Why doth he spare, when the creature is guilty, and he is mighty? And yet he spares: what judgment is to be made of all this? Why, the Apostle tells you: Count the long-suffering of the Lord salvation; to wit, that he doth use this method as an apt medium, as a proper means to bring men to consider: and if they will not consider, they are loading themselves with guilt; so much the more, when they will not consider what is so obvious, what lies so much in view before them. And I might add, again, this farther argument, from,

5. The common exercise of God's bounty towards the children of men; that is, that he doth not only spare, but sustain them; not only withhold and keep off from them destructive evils, but supply them needful good things. That he should preserve this world in so much consistency, for the use and entertainment of offending and rebellious creatures, those that seldom or never take notice of him, and rarely ever give him thanks. That this earth should be so strangely fertile, through all the successions of time, and productive of so delicious things, so pleasant things; not only such things as are necessary for the support of human life, but such things as are delectable too, yielding a pleasing entertainment to man during his residence and abode here. Oh, the riches of the Divine goodness towards apostate, degenerate, fallen creatures! These very things have a ducture, a leadingness with them. When God doth immediately please and gratify sense, there is an aptitude in this to instruct minds to reach the understandings of men, to

oblige and prompt men to consider whence all this is, and upon what terms, and for what ends and purposes.

There are divers other things congenerous to these, which I cannot go through with now, as the continual care that he takes of men's lives, that he hath put a self-preserving principle into men. It is true, that is natural, but how came it to be so? It is from the Author of all nature, he could have made (if he had pleased) the contrary as natural; that he hath prompted men to live in societies for common mutual defence; that he hath so severely threatened the sin of homicide, of killing or destroying a man; and for that very reason, because he bears his image. "This creature of mine I will not have touched, for he carries my image upon him: I will not have any violence offered to my image." That he did take so particular a care even of that wicked Cain himself; put his mark upon him, lest any finding him should slay him. It speaks a strange tendency of man, (though now an apostate,) that there is a peculiar sacredness put upon the life of man, beyond all other creatures that do inhabit this earth; because this is an improveable life; this is a thing that may be grafted upon; noble grafts may be inserted here into an human life; therefore, that I will have counted precious, and preserved as such; so as, that if any man shall make a breach upon the human life, he shall break through my law, which I set as a boundary and guard, to preserve so valuable and so precious a thing.

And then he takes such care for the keeping up of common order in this world, that he hath appointed magistracy, government, and laws, in order hereunto, that all may not run into confusion. They must break his laws before they can break one another's peace; that he hath obliged men to the mutual love of one another, wherein, if it were observed and complied with, what a calm peaceful region would this world be! So that men might have an opportunity to consider, at leisure, the greater concerns of another world. He hath, as to this, done several things most highly becoming the goodness and benignity of a God towards such creatures as we were become.

And then the obligation that he holds men under unto natural religion, and the several exercises of it. Here is a mighty demonstration of his good-will towards men, that he will not dispense with them as to this thing; but as common as human nature is, so common is his law running in that nature, obliging men to some religion or other; in

general to be religious, obliging them unto the several principles and duties of natural religion ; to trust in God, and to love him as their supreme good, with all their heart and soul, and might, and mind, which is a natural law : to pray to him, to praise him, and give him thanks. And that, whereas he is pleased to have an house, a dwelling here on earth, that house is called the house of prayer to all nations, and he will have all flesh come to him ; and complains that they do not come to him, *nor will come*. When looking down upon the children of men, to see who inquires and seeks after God, he finds all gone out of the way, that they will not do this ; that they will not say, Where is God my Maker ? This he complains of.

All this carries a mighty argument in it, that there is still a good-will in heaven towards men on earth, as neglectful of God and themselves as the children of men are generally become. And it is necessary that men should understand, and now that when they are charged, when God doth so highly charge them with sinning against his goodness, it is not a nullity that they are charged to offend against, in all their neglects of God : and, in justice to him, we are obliged to heighten and magnify his goodness to men ; that so such as will never be won and overcome by this goodness of his, may be so much the more glorious trophies to that Justice which will vindicate the wrong upon them at last.