

virtue?' happiness is nothing else but the quintessence of holiness; holiness is glory militant, and happiness holiness triumphant.

Q. What shall we do to resemble God in holiness?

Ans. Have recourse to Christ's blood by faith; it is *lavacrum animæ*, legal purifications: were types and emblems of it, 1 John i. 7. The word is a glass to shew us our spots, and Christ's blood is a fountain to wash them away.

2. Pray for an holy heart, Pl. li. 10. 'Create in me a clean heart, O God.' Lay thy heart before the Lord, and say, Lord my heart is full of leprosy; it defiles all it toucheth: Lord, I am not fit to live with such an heart, for I cannot honour thee; nor die with such an heart, for I cannot see thee. O create in me a clean heart; send thy Spirit unto me, to refine and purify me, that I may be a temple fit for thee the holy God to inhabit.

3. Walk with them that are holy, Prov. xiii. 20. 'He that walketh with the wise shall be wise.' Be among the spices, and you will smell of them. Association begets assimilation: nothing hath a greater power and energy to effect holiness than the communion of saints.

OF GOD'S JUSTICE

THE next attribute is God's justice: all God's attributes are identical, and are the same with his essence. Though he hath several attributes whereby he is made known to us, yet he hath but one essence. A cedar tree may have several branches, yet it is but one cedar. So there are several attributes of God whereby we conceive of him, but one entire essence. Well then, concerning God's justice, Deut. xxxii. 4. 'Just and right is he.' Job xxxvii. 23. 'Touching the Almighty; we cannot find him out; he is excellent in plenty of justice.' God is said to dwell in justice, Psal. lxxxix. 14. 'Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.' In God power and justice meet. Power holds the sceptre, and justice holds the balance.

Q. What is God's justice?

Ans. "Justice is to give every one his due." God's justice is the rectitude of his nature, whereby he is carried to the doing of that which is righteous and equal; Prov. xxiv. 12. 'Shall not he render to every man according to his works?' God is an impartial judge; he judgeth the cause: men oft judge the person, but not the cause; which is not justice, but malice: God judgeth the cause, Gen. xviii. 21. 'I will go down and see whether they have done according to the cry which is come up

unto me.' When the Lord is upon a punitive act, he weighs things in the balance, he doth not punish rashly ; he doth not go in the way of a riot, but a circuit, against offenders. Concerning God's justice, I shall lay down these six positions.

1. God cannot but be just. His holiness is the cause of his justice. Holiness will not suffer him to do any thing but what is righteous. He can be no more unjust than he can be unholy.

2. God's will is the supreme rule of justice ; it is the standard of equity. His will is wise and good. God wills nothing but what is just ; and therefore it is just because he wills it.

3. God doth justice voluntarily : justice flows from his nature. Men may act unjustly, because they are bribed or forced : God will not be bribed, because of his justice ; he cannot be forced, because of his power. He doth justice out of love to justice, Heb. i. 9. ' Thou lovest righteousness.'

4. Justice is the perfection of the divine nature. Aristotle saith, " justice comprehends in it all virtues." To say God is just, is to say, he is all that is excellent : perfections meet in him, as lines in a centre. He is not only just, but justice itself.

5. God never did, nor can do the least wrong to his creature. God's justice hath been wronged, but never did any wrong. God doth not go according to the *summum jus*, or rigour of the law ; he abates something of his severity. He might inflict heavier penalties than he doth, Ezra ix. 14. ' Tho' hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve ;' our mercies are more than we deserve, and our punishments less.

6. God's justice is such, that it is not fit for any man or angel to expostulate with God, or demand a reason of his actions. God hath not only authority on his side, but equity : ' He lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet,' Isa. xxviii. 17. and it is below him to give an account to us of his proceedings. Which of these two is fittest to take place, God's justice or man's reason ; Rom. ix. 20. ' Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God ?' The plumb line of our reason is too short to fathom the depth of God's justice, Rom. xi. 33. ' How unsearchable are his judgments ?' We are to adore God's justice, where we cannot see a reason of it.

Now God's justice runs in two channels : It is seen in two things, the distribution of rewards and punishments.

1. In rewarding the virtuous ; Ps. lviii. 11. ' verily there is a reward for the righteous.' The saints shall not serve him for nought, he will reward *preces et lachrymas* ; though they may be losers for him, they shall not be losers by him, Heb. vi. 10. ' God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which you have shewed to his name.' He gives a re-

ward, not that we have deserved it, but because he hath promised it.

2. He is just in punishing offenders. And he is just, 1. Because he punisheth sinners by a law. 'Where there is no law there is no transgression,' Rom. iv. 15. But God hath given men a law, and they break it, therefore he punisheth them justly. 2. God is just in punishing the wicked; because he never punished them, but upon full proof and evidence. What greater evidence than for a man's own conscience to be witness against him? There is nothing God chargeth upon a sinner, but conscience doth set seal to the truth of it.

Use 1. See here another flower of God's crown, he is just and righteous. He is the exemplar and pattern of justice.

Obj. But how doth it seem to stand with God's justice, that the wicked should prosper in the world? Prov. xii. 1. 'Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?' This hath been a great stumbling, and been ready to make many question God's justice. Such as the highest in sin, are highest in power. Diogenes seeing Harpalus a thief go on prosperously, said, "Sure God hath cast off the government of the world, and minded not how things went here below."

Ans. 1. The wicked may be sometimes instruments to do God's work; though they do not design his glory, yet they may promote it. Cyrus, (Ezra i. 7.) was instrumental in the building of God's temple in Jerusalem. There is some kind of justice, that they should have a temporal reward: God lets them prosper, under whose wing his people are sheltered. God will not be in any man's debt, Mal. i. 10. 'who hath kindled a fire on my altar for nought?'

2. God lets men go on in sin, and prosper, that he may leave them more inexcusable, Rev. ii. 21. 'I gave her space to repent of her fornication.' God adjourns the sessions, spins out his mercies towards sinners: and if they repent not, his patience will be a witness against them, and his justice will be more cleared in their condemnation, Ps. li. 4. 'That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.'

3. God doth not always let the wicked prosper in their sin; some he doth punish openly, that his justice may be taken notice of, Psal. ix. 16. 'The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth:' that is, his justice is seen by striking men dead in the very act of sin. Thus he struck Zimri and Cozbi in the act of uncleanness.

4. If God let men prosper a while in their sin, his vial of wrath is all this while filling; his sword is all this time whetting: and though God may forbear men a while, yet long forbearance is no forgiveness. The longer God is in taking his

blow, the heavier it will be at last : as long as there is eternity, God hath time enough to reckon with his enemies.

Justice may be as a lion asleep, but at last this lion will awake, and roar upon the sinner. Do not Nero and Julian and Cain now meet with God's justice.

Obj. But God's own people suffer great afflictions, they are injured and persecuted, Pf. lxxiii. 14. All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning. How doth this stand with God's justice ?

Ans. 1. That is a true rule of St. Austin, *Judicia Dei possunt esse occulta, non injusta* : " God's ways of judgment are sometimes secret, but never unjust." The Lord never afflicts his people without a cause ; so that he cannot be unjust. There is some good in the godly, therefore the wicked afflict them ; there is some evil in them, therefore God afflicts them. God's own children have their blemishes, 2 Chron. xxviii. 10. ' Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord ?' These spiritual diamonds have they no flaws ? Do we not read of the ' spots of God's children ?' Deut. xxxii. 10. Are not they guilty of much pride, censoriousness, passion, worldliness ? Tho' by their profession, they seem to resemble the birds of paradise, to fly above and feed upon the dew of heaven : yet, as the serpent, they lick the dust. And these sins of God's people do more provoke God than others, Deut. xxxii. 19. ' Because of the provoking of his sons and daughters.' The sins of others pierce Christ's side, these wound his heart : therefore is not God just in all the evils that befall them ? Amos iii. 2. ' You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.' I will punish you sooner, surer, surer than others.

3. The trials and sufferings of the godly are to refine and purify them. God's furnace is in Sion, Isa. xxxi. 9. Is it any injustice in God to put his gold into the furnace to purify it ? Is it any injustice in God, by afflicting his people, to make them partakers of his holiness ? Heb. xii. 10. What doth more proclaim God's faithfulness, than to take a course with them as may make them better ? Pf. cxix. 75. ' In faithfulness thou hast corrected me.'

3. What injustice is it in God to inflict a lesser punishment, and prevent a greater ? The best of God's children have that in them, which is meritorious of hell : now, I pray, doth God do them any wrong, if he useth only the rod, where they have deserved the scorpion ? Is the father unjust, if he only corrects his child, who hath deserved to be disinherited ? If God deals so favourably with his children, he only puts wormwood in their cup, whereas he might put fire and brimstone : they are rather to admire his mercy, than complain of his injustice.

Obj. How can it stand with God's justice, that all men, being equally guilty by nature, God should pass by one and save another? Why doth not he deal with all alike?

Ans. Rom. ix. 14. 'Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.' Job viii. 3. 'Doth the Almighty pervert justice?'

1. God is not bound to give an account of his actions to his creatures. If none may say to a king, 'What doest thou?' Eccl. viii. 4. much less to God. It is sufficient: God is Lord paramount, he hath a sovereign power over his creatures, therefore can do no injustice, Rom. ix. 21. 'Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?' God hath a liberty left in his own breast, to save one, and not another; and his justice is not at all impeached or blemished. If two men owe you money, you may, without any injustice, remit the debt to one, and exact it of the other. If two malefactors be condemned to die, the king may pardon the one, and not the other: he is not unjust if he lets one suffer, because he offended the law; nor if he save the other, because he will make use of his prerogative as he is king. 2. Though some are saved and others perish, yet there is no unrighteousness in God; because, whoever perisheth, his destruction is of himself, Hos. xiii. 9. 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.' God offers grace, the sinner refuseth it; is God bound to give grace? If a chirurgeon comes to heal a man's wound, he will not be healed, but bolts out his chirurgeon; is the chirurgeon bound to heal him? Prov. i. 24. 'I have called, and ye refused.' Psal. lxxxii. 11. 'Israel would none of me.' God is not bound to force his mercies upon men: if they wilfully oppose the offer of grace, their sin is to be taxed as the cause of their perishing, and not God's justice.

2. See the difference between God and a great part of the world. They are unjust, 1. In their courts of judicature; they pervert justice, Isa. x. 1. 'They decree unrighteous decrees.' The Hebrew word for a judge's robe, signifies prevarication, deceit, or injustice: it is often truer of the judge than of the robe; the judge deserves rather to have that name than the robe. What is a good law, without a good judge? Injustice lies in two things, either not to punish where there is a fault, or, to punish where there is no fault! how frequent! again, (2.) Unjust in their dealings. This is, 1. Either in using false weights, Hos. xii. 7. 'The balances of deceit are in his hand.' It is sad, to have the Bible in one hand, and false weights in the other. Or, 2. In adulterating commodities, Isa. i. 22. 'Thy wine is mixed with water;' when they mix bad grain with good, yet sell it for pure grain. I can never believe he is good in the first table, who is not good in the second. He cau-

not be godly who is not just. Though God doth not bid you be omnipotent, as he is, yet be just, as he is.

Use 2. Imitate God in justice. Let Christ's golden maxim be observed, Mat. vii. 22. 'What you would have men to do to you, do ye even so to them.' You would not have them wrong you, neither do you them; rather suffer wrong, than do wrong, 1 Cor. vi. 7. 'Why do ye not rather take wrong?' O be exemplary for justice! Let justice be your ornament, Job xxix. 14. 'I put on righteousness (viz. justice) as a robe and a diadem.' A robe, for its graceful beauty; and I put it on, *et enduebam justitiam*. A judge puts on his robe, and puts it off again at night, but Job did so put on justice, as he did not put it off till death, *semper vestiti*. We must not lay off this robe of justice, till we lay down our tabernacle. If you have any thing of God in you, you will be like him. By every unjust action you do deny yourselves to be Christians, you stain the glory of your profession; heathens will rise up in judgment against you: the sun might sooner alter his course than he could be turned from doing justice.

Use 3. If God be just, there will be a day of judgment. Now things are out of course; sin is rampant, saints are wronged, they are often cast in a righteous cause, they can meet with no justice here, justice is turned into wormwood; but there is a day coming, when God will set things right; he will do every man justice; he will crown the righteous, and condemn the wicked, Acts xvii. 31. 'He hath appointed a day,' &c. If God be a just God, he will take vengeance. God hath given men a law to live by, they break it; there must be a day for the execution of offenders: a law not executed, is but like a wooden dagger, for a shew. At the last day, God's sword shall be drawn out against offenders; then his justice shall be revealed before all the world, — 'God will judge in righteousness,' Acts xvii. 31. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' Gen. xviii. 25. The wicked shall drink a sea of wrath; but not sip one drop of injustice. At that day shall all mouths be stopt, and God's justice shall be fully vindicated from all the cavils and clamours of unjust men.

Use 4. Comfort to the true penitent; as God is a just God, he will pardon him. *Homo agnoscit, Deus ignoscit*. 1 John i. 9. 'If we confess our sins, (i. e. *confess and forsake*) he is just to forgive us our sins.' Not only merciful but just? Why just? Because he hath promised to forgive such? Prov. xxviii. 13. If thy heart hath been broken for and from sin, thou mayest not only plead God's mercy, but his justice for the pardoning thy sin. Shew him his hand and seal, he cannot deny himself.