

SERMON XLIII.

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee : but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.—JOHN XVII. 25.

OUR Lord had laid down the object of his prayers and the matter of them, and now he comes to the reasons, though in such affectionate addresses to God we should not be anxious in stating the method. Some conceive this a doxology ; as Mat. xi. 25, 26, ' I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' He had fully discharged his office as a prophet, and therefore giveth thanks. But I rather look upon it as a part of the supplication. He had made his will and testament, and now allegeth the equity of it. Here—

1. A compellation, ' O righteous Father.'

2. The qualification of the disciples for that glory which he sought for them, saving knowledge. Which is illustrated—

[1.] By its opposite, the affected and obstinate ignorance of the world, ' The world hath not known thee.'

[2.] By its efficient and exemplary cause, ' But I have known thee.'

First, A compellation, ' Righteous Father.' In which there is an argument secretly couched, for always titles of God are suited to the matter in hand. It is brought to show the reason why the world is excluded the participation of heavenly glory, and the equity in bestowing it upon the elect. He had before called him ' Holy Father,' now ' Righteous Father.'

God is just and righteous two manner of ways—in a legal and in an evangelical sense. In a legal sense, his justice is rewarding men according to the merit of their actions. Thus he dealeth with the reprobate lost world. In the evangelical sense, God's righteousness doth not regard the merit of their actions, but the state of the person ; and judgeth them rather according to what they have received than what they have done. And so God dealeth with the elect and reprobate ; the one are rewarded according to their works, the other according to their state, evidenced by their works ; to both God is just. So that I might—

Observe, first, that in the condemnation of the world, God is just, though they remain in blindness.

1. Because God hath done enough ; God is aforehand with them ; they have more means than they use well. The Gentile world had light enough from the creatures to convince them of the true God : Rom. i. 19, 20, ' Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead ; so that they are *ἀναπολόγητοι*, without excuse.' Yet they would not acknowledge the true God. The Jewish world had miracles enough to convince them of the true Messiah : John xv. 24, ' If I had

not done among them the works that no other man did, they had not had sin ; but now they have both seen and hated me and my Father.'

The carnal world within the pale of the church have had means enough to be better ; and though it be blind in the things of God, yet the Lord is clear : Isa. v. 4, 'What could I have done more for my vineyard than I have done?' in point of external administration. The Lord loveth 'to be clear when he judgeth,' Ps. li. 4, compared with Rom. iii. 26. In all debates he loveth the victory : Isaiah lxx. 2, 'I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way which was not good, after their own thoughts.' None goeth to hell for want of warning : Mat. xxiii. 37, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee ; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not.'

2. They have not done their part. They dally with means, scorn wisdom ; their weakness is wilful, and their blindness affected. The things of God must be spiritually discerned. But they are folly to them : 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' There is not only an impotency, but a scorn ; there is a positive enmity, as well as an incapacity : John iii. 19, 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' Man is in love with his own misery ; when we should hate sins, we hate the light that discovereth them. An ignorant people love a sottish ministry ; the faithful witnesses are the world's torment : Rev. xi. 10, 'These two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.' The world would fain lie down upon the bed of ease, and sleep. Light is troublesome to sore eyes. Ignorant priests are the people's idols ; the blind lead the blind, and they both fall into the ditch. They do not only err in their minds, but err in their hearts ; the one is sad, the other worse. It is evil that we do not know, it is doubly evil that we desire not to know : Job xxi. 14, 'Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' Spiritual blindness is worse than bodily. When Elymas was stricken blind, he desired somebody to lead him by the hand, Acts xiii. 11. We count it our happiness to have fit guides ; but in spiritual blindness it is quite otherwise ; we cannot endure a faithful guide : 'the prophets prophesy lies and the people love to have it so.' Blind people are all for blind guides.

Use 1. Let it set God clear. He loveth to have it so. When he cometh to judgment, 'the books shall be opened,' Rev. xx. 12. We are apt to quarrel his justice, for leaving so great a part of the world in the dark. Remember he is aforehand with means, and they love the state they are in. God leaveth no man without a sufficient conviction and witness of himself.

Use 2. Let sottish men know that God is not all mercy and all honey. Usually our desires transform God into that shape which we fancy. A libertine would have God all mercy and all patience, because he desires him to be so. Affections make opinions : Ps. l. 21, 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.' But

be not deceived; to the blind world God will be severe, but just: Isa. xxvii. 11, 'It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour.' Ignorance is fatal and deadly to the heathens: 2 Thes. i. 8, 'In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' We pity them, and say, Poor ignorant creatures! We hate a drunkard, but we pity an ignorant man. But God is very angry with them, because he knoweth the wickedness of their hearts, how many means they have withstood, and how much light they have abused. God doth not measure sins by the foulness of the act, but by the unkindness and ingratitude of it. The blind and the lame are equally an abomination to the Lord. To want knowledge is as bad as to want obedience; it will be no excuse.

Object. Ay! but they have good meanings, and surely God will not deal in justice and rigour with them: we are ignorant, but our heart is good.

Ans. Prov. xix. 21, 'Without knowledge the heart is not good.' Ignorance is so far from being the mother of devotion, as the Papists say, that it is the great hindrance of it. Simple credulity may be more awful and scrupulous, as men in the night have many fears; but God loveth rational service, not blind obedience: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 'And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.' Worship without knowledge is but a blind guess and loose aim, as Christ reproveth the Samaritans for worshipping they knew not what, John iv. 22. Certainly we are not so sensible of the danger of ignorance as we should be. Men live sensually, and die sottishly, and then perish eternally; they live by guess at best, and some devout aims; and when they come to die, they die by guess, in a doubtful uncertain way; like men that leap over a deep gulf blindfold, they know not where their feet shall light.

Observe, secondly, that God is not only merciful, but just, in the reward of the godly or glorifying the elect. Christ is praying and arguing for heavenly glory, and he giveth God the title of 'Righteous Father.' You shall see all your privileges are made to come from righteousness. Pardon of sins, which is one of the freest acts of God, and wherein he discovereth most of his mercy: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' This is the mystery of divine grace. So also for eternal rewards: 2 Thes. i. 6, 7, 'Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you.' You will think that it is righteous indeed that God should punish the wicked; but read on: 'But to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed,' &c.

But how is God's righteousness and justice interested in our rewards?

1. Partly it is engaged by Christ's merit. Though to us it be mere grace, yet as to Christ it is just, Christ's satisfaction being equivalent to the violation of God's majesty, and therefore it is just to pardon us. It is just for the creditor to forgive the debtor when the surety hath paid. So Christ's blood is not only *λυτρώον*, a ransom, but *ἀντάλλαγμα*, a price. It is just with God to glorify us; Christ's

righteousness giveth us a right. This reason you have, Rom. iii. 24-26, 'Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.' God being satisfied by Christ, can be gracious to the creature without disparagement to his justice; the mediator interposeth, his satisfaction is accepted. This was that the wise men of all times busied themselves in, how God could do good to the creature without disparagement to his justice. But all their devices were frustrate; Christ alone bringeth the blood to the mercy-seat.

2. God is fast bound by his own promise: James i. 12, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.' And it is a part of justice to make good his word. *Pro-mittendo se facit debitorem*. The qualification being supposed, we may challenge him upon it: Ps. cxix. 49, 'Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' He biddeth us put him in remembrance he hath drawn us to these hopes: 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.' Upon which Bernard noteth, *Paulus expectat coronam justitiæ; sed justitiæ Dei, non suæ: justum est ut reddat quod debet, debet autem quod pollicitus est*. It is just with God to pay what he oweth, and he oweth what he promised. Therefore Chrysostom saith it was *στεφανὸς ἐλεοῦς καὶ δικαιοσύνης*. We may say to God, *Redde quod promisisti*, though not *Redde quod debes*.

3. By positive ordinance, that every man shall receive according to the kind of his work, the wicked according to their wicked actions, and the good according to their good actions: Mat. xvi. 27, 'Then he shall reward every man according to his works.' Now, lest any should think it is meant of wicked men only, the apostle tells us, 2 Cor. v. 10, 'Every one shall receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.' God is not arbitrary in his judgment, it is the rule of process. All shall be rewarded in the general, *quoad genus*, according to the kind of their works; wicked men *quoad meritum*, because eternal punishment is due to evil works, out of the nature of the works; but for the godly, the kind of their works is judged, but not in rigorous justice; they shall not be weighed in the balance, then all would be found wanting, but brought to the touchstone. *Væ laudabili vitæ hominum, si (remota misericordia) discutias eam*, saith Gregory. And the apostle, James ii. 12, 'So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.'

Use 1. See how careful God is to preserve the honour and the awe in us of his justice, even in his rewards of grace. God will be just; he is very careful to preserve the notions which the creature hath of his own essence inviolable. He will not exercise mercy to the prejudice of his justice; there must be some way to represent him still a righteous Father.' God would give his own Son to the death that he

might appear righteous. God will not love¹ that honour. Therefore stand in awe, and sin not, lest thou come short of the grace offered in Christ; lest you find him just in a legal sense, while you abuse the mercy of the gospel.

Use 2. It is to give us a sure ground of hope: Heb. vi. 10, 'For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love.' That which is most terrible in God is the pawn and pledge of our salvation. Conscience, which is God's deputy, is never satisfied till God be satisfied; for this thought cannot be plucked out of our minds, that God is an avenger. If we had not a sufficient satisfaction, we should always be troubled. Wherewith shall he be appeased? Micah vi. 6, 7, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' If a poor creature were in debt, and haling to prison, and a king should say, I will engage my whole revenue but I will pay it, how would this comfort him! Certainly Christ was responsible enough. We are not so cheerful in his service as we should be, now justice is made our friend. Make use of it in great dejections and pangs of conscience: Job xxxiii. 24, 'Then he is gracious to him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.' When the ram was taken, Isaac was let go. God will show mercy to our persons, for justice is satisfied in our surety. You have a double claim and hold fast upon him in every court; you may come before the tribunal of justice as well as the throne of grace. When you are fainting in service, encourage yourselves: 'Verily there is a reward for the righteous,' Ps. lviii. 11. One day or another the saints shall be rewarded, their labour and service shall not be lost.

Secondly, The qualification, saving knowledge 'These have known that thou hast sent me.' It is urged as a reason why they should behold his glory hereafter, because they make it their care to know God in Christ here. Here are two propositions:—

1. The only way to come to blessedness is by the knowledge of the true God.

2. There is no knowledge of the true God without the knowledge of Jesus Christ as mediator.

First proposition, That the only way to blessedness is by the knowledge of the true God. This I prove—

1. Because the foundation of the eternal state must be laid in this life. Now the foundation and superstructure must carry a proportion. What is the great happiness of heaven, and the blessedness of the creature? The beatifical vision; and therefore we must begin it here in knowledge, and in the study of God: John xvii. 3, 'This is life eternal, to know thee the only and true God;' that is, this is the beginning of life eternal. When there is a saving light in the soul, there is a spark kindled that will never be quenched. In the barn corn doth not grow, but in the field. Here we labour after knowledge, there we enjoy the perfection of it; and according to the degrees of

¹ Qu. 'lose' ?—Ed.

knowledge and grace we attain in this life, so will be our happiness hereafter. The state of the wicked is a growing darkness : Mat. viii. 12, 'The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness,' *εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἑξώτερον*. What is that? A darkness beyond a darkness—in *tenebras ex tenebris infœliciter exclusi* : they shall be cast out from one darkness into another. Here they are under the darkness of ignorance and sin, and there they shall be under the darkness of horror and terror for evermore. The state of the wicked in hell is a darkness that grows out of a darkness ; here they are dark, and care not to know God, or know his ways, and the mists of darkness are reserved for them for evermore. But now the state of the godly is an increasing light : Prov. iv. 18, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' Look, as the just do increase, and go on from knowledge to knowledge, till they attain the light of glory, as the sun climbeth up to the top of the meridian by degrees, so the way of the wicked is darkness ; they go on from darkness to darkness, and the mist of darkness is reserved for them. Ignorance makes way for sin, and sin for hell. They are hastening downwards from darkness to darkness, and we hasten to the perfect day, from grace to glory.

2. There is no serving or enjoying of God but by knowledge. I do not plead for a naked knowledge, and an inactive speculation, but such as is accompanied with faith, love, and obedience, otherwise it is no true knowledge. No knowledge, no faith : Rom. x. 14, 'How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?' We must know what Christ is before we can trust him with our souls. Would a woman accept of a man when she knows not what he is, nor from whence he came? Can the soul rest itself with Christ, and venture its salvation upon him, till it knows what he is? 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' Faith is an advised act, it is a child of light. Presumption is but a blind adventure, an act that is done hand-over-head, without advice and care ; but faith certainly presupposeth knowledge. The blind man speaks reason in this, when Christ asked him, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' John ix. 35. He answered, ver. 36, 'Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?' And then for love. No knowledge, no love. An unknown object never affects us. Love proceeds from sight. Those that have a sight of the excellences of God, by the light of the Spirit accompanying the word, they love the Lord. And then where there is no love, there is no knowledge : 1 John iv. 8, 'He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love.' And then for worship and obedience, that is also the fruit of knowledge ; that worship which is performed to the unknown God is never right. As those fruits that grow out of the sun are crabbed and sour, so all such acts of worship as proceed not from light and knowledge are not right and genuine. There cannot be a greater preservative from sin than knowledge : 3 John 11, 'He that doeth evil hath not seen God.' Certainly he that makes a trade and course of sin was never acquainted with God : 1 John ii. 4, 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' And there

can be no enjoyment of God without knowledge, neither in a way of grace nor in a way of comfort. Not in a way of grace: there can be no grace without knowledge; if we be renewed and changed, it is by knowledge: Col. iii. 10, 'And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.' If we be strengthened in affliction, and enabled for the duties of every condition, it is by knowledge: Phil. iv. 12, 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.' All communications of grace are conveyed by light. Nor can there be any enjoyment of God in a way of comfort without light and knowledge. Fears are in the dark; till we have a distinct knowledge of the nature and tenor of the covenant we are full of fears and doubts, which vanish as a mist before the sun when knowledge is wrought.

Second proposition, There is no knowledge of the true God without the knowledge of Christ as mediator. For two reasons:—

1. Because God will accept no honour from the creature but in and through Jesus Christ: John v. 23, 'That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father that hath sent him.' God hath revealed himself in Christ, and you make God an idol if you think of him otherwise.

2. Because God out of Christ is not comfortable, but terrible. The fallen creature cannot converse with God without a mediator. As waters, which are salt in the sea, strained through the earth, are sweet in rivers, so are the attributes of God in and through Christ sweet and comfortable to the soul; for we cannot draw nigh to God without a screen.

Use. To press us to get knowledge. The more knowledge, the more a man; the more ignorant, the more brutish: Ps. xlix. 20, 'Man that is in honour, and void of understanding, is like the beasts that perish.' And again, as knowledge doth distinguish you from beasts, so the knowledge of God doth distinguish you from other men; to know God is your excellency above other men: Jer. ix. 23. 24, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord,' &c. As if he had said, If you will needs glory, it is not who is most wealthy, nor most mighty, nor most wise, but who hath the greatest knowledge of God in Christ. Above all, know God in Christ, that is most comfortable. *Horrible est de Deo extra Christum cogitare.* It is a horrible thing to think of God out of Christ. God in Christ is the greatest mercy the world was ever acquainted with; this is a speculation fit for angels: 1 Peter i. 12, 'Which things the angels desire to look into;' Eph. iii. 10, 'To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' And therefore much more should it be the study of saints. But do not rest in a naked contemplation; there is 'a form of knowledge,' Rom. ii. 20, as well as 'a form of godliness,' 2 Tim. iii. 5, which is nothing

else but an artificial speculation, a naked model of truth in the brain, which, as the winter sun, shines but warms not. But what is true knowledge? How shall we discover it? I answer—1. It must be a serious prudent knowledge, &c. [See on ver. 8.]

I now come to speak to the illustration of this qualification of saving knowledge. It is illustrated—

1. By its opposite, the affected and obstinate ignorance of the world, ‘The world hath not known thee.’

2. By its efficient and exemplary cause, ‘But I have known thee.’

The first illustration is from the opposite ignorance and obstinacy of the world, ‘The world hath not known thee.’

Why is this alleged? I answer—Partly to show the reason why they should be otherwise dealt withal than the blind world. As if he had said, By thy righteous and wise constitution, thou hast appointed different recompenses to men of different states; but now ‘they have known thee,’ but ‘the world hath not known thee.’ Partly to commend their acknowledgment of Christ, the world neither knowing nor believing, yea, rather hating and persecuting thee. In the original there is *καὶ, though*; so that, neither hindered by fears nor snares, the rulers and great men were against the acknowledging of Christ, the multitude blind and obstinate; yet the disciples knew him, and owned him as the Messiah, or one sent of God.

Observe, first, that it is exceeding praiseworthy to own Christ when others disown him and reject him, to own him in the midst of the world’s blindness and madness against him. Now he is publicly received among the nations, it is no great matter to own him now; as those that followed Christ in his lifetime for the loaves, John vi. 26, when honours, and conveniences, and interests, look that way. But to own him then, when the powers of the world, the heads and rulers of the church are against him, when the stone is refused by the builders, this is praiseworthy.

Now the reasons are two. It is a sign God hath a great love to them, and it is a sign of their great love to God; of his choice, and their sincerity. There are two things hinder us from the sight of truth—prejudices and interests. Now it is a sign of the special direction of God’s Spirit when we can overlook prejudices; and it is a sign of our unfeigned zeal when we can deny interests.

1. It is an argument of God’s love to us. This looketh like election: Mat. xxiv. 24, ‘If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.’ There are some favourites whom God taketh into his special care, that he may show them his counsel, and lead them into all truth. In times when error is so countenanced, and appeareth with a plausible face, it is a matter of great skill to find out the truth. There are some choice ones to whom God manifests himself, when others are left to perish in their own ways. So it is said, Ps. xxv. 14, ‘The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.’ By the secret of the Lord is not meant the counsels of his providence; they are revealed but to a few, to the prophets; this is a promise common to all that fear him; therefore by it is intended the counsels of the word; those that are his favourites, that lie in his bosom, they shall know his secrets; as the disciples, when they would know anything of Christ, pointed to

the disciple whom Jesus loved: John xiii. 23, 24, 'Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of the disciples whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.'

2. It is an argument of our sincerity, to own God in times of public contest, when it is dangerous to own him. There are some times when God crieth, 'Who is on my side?' Exod. xxxii. 26, when he calleth upon us to manifest ourselves, and providence calleth for a public acknowledgment. Errors by God's permission are sent into the world to try us. The Lord trieth you to see if you will be led by every fancy, and swim with the stream. Many times the delusion is very strong, that our trial may be the greater; so 1 Cor. xi. 19, 'There must be heresies, that, *δοκιμοί*, they which are approved may be made manifest among you.' Winds are let loose to try who are chaff, who are solid grain; especially an error backed with power, as when a tree is shaken, rotten apples fall down; such times discover hypocrites: Prov. xxvi. 26, 'Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation.' But now it is a great argument of sincerity to own the truth, when the error is so plausible, and the inconvenience is great: 1 Kings xix. 10, 'I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away.' When we are left alone to contest, that is a great trial.

Use 1. Information.

1. That true zeal is not seen so much in fighting with antiquated errors, as in being 'established in the present truth,' 2 Peter i. 12, *ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ ἀληθείας*. The present truth of that age was to acknowledge Christ to be the Messiah. When truths are upon the stage, then to give our testimony to them, this is to be God's witnesses. To declaim against the errors of former ages is but a safe and wary zeal. The Jews that opposed Christ yet pleaded for the prophets slain by their fathers. Corah, Dathan, and Abiram were as hateful to them as Judas to us; but they had no eyes to see for the present. Christ taxeth the hypocrisy of them that maligned the living prophets, and garnished the tombs of the dead, Mat. xxiii. 29. It is no thank to own Christ in the day of his exaltation, as when he is opposed and slighted. Old truths are only opposed by natural prejudices, but present truths by carnal interests.

2. That it is a great folly in them that will profess nothing till the world be agreed. Laziness is apt to pretend want of certainty. This is the old prejudice. Chrysostom bringeth in a heathen disputing—I would fain become a Christian, but there are so many divisions among you, that I know not what to choose. Men are loath to put themselves to the trouble of prayer and search, and would have all fitted to their hands, and therefore, till all be agreed, keep themselves in a wary reservation. Should a traveller stand still because he meeteth with many ways? Jer. vi. 16, 'Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the way, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' Or should a man that is sick refuse physic till all physicians be of one mind? It is your

duty to search, and it is praiseworthy to own Christ in times of contest.

3. It informeth us that a multitude is no excuse, because all went that way. We should own Christ though the world know him not, though it hate him, though it persecute him. We should have an eagle eye. The old world was not spared for the multitude; there were but eight persons of another judgment. We often presume that many eyes see more than one, and so spare the labour of examination; but one man that hath the use of his eyes seeth more than a thousand blind men; and often-times it falleth out that a few find the true way: Mat. vii. 14, 'Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' Therefore it is brutish to follow the track. We should examine, because mostly the world is out, and the multitude followeth that which is evil; nay, it is rather a ground of suspicion; the most are not the best.

Use 2. It presseth us to be more earnest to get a clear and satisfactory knowledge in the controversies of the age, in the truths that are now upon the stage. To that end—

1. Desire the direction of Christ, and consult with him. As the woman of Samaria, John iv. 20, 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.' Whether Zion or Gerizim? Present it often to Christ. Prayer is the best way to get satisfaction, and our doubts are best solved by consulting with the oracle. You can have no certain light from men without his illumination.

2. Search and prove all things: 1 Thes. v. 21, 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.' We should stand in the ways and see: Jer. vi. 16, 'Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' We should be able to render λόγον, 1 Peter iii. 15, 'A reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.' And we have ἰδιον στήριγμα, 'a steadfastness of our own,' 2 Peter iii. 17. We must not only regard the consent of others, but our judgments must be balanced with sound and weighty grounds, otherwise we shall be carried about with every wind of doctrine, when the posture of interest is changed, or a new opinion is started. *Non exploratis traditionum rationibus probabilem fidem portant.* Such men have no principles.

But must we not hold fast what we have received? must we always be searching, and keeping ourselves in a wary reservation, and be never settled? I answer—

[1.] For principles and fundamental doctrines, we are not to doubt of them: Deut. xii. 30, 'Thou shalt not inquire after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.' It is dangerous to loosen foundation-stones, though with an intent to settle them better. Here we should be at a certainty.

[2.] For lesser truths, when they are already cleared, and God hath taught them, it is good to hold fast what we have already received, and not to loosen the assent, or keep the soul suspensive, out of a jealousy or supposal that something may be said against what we now hold. 'Ever learning, and never coming εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν, to the knowledge of the truth,' But in case of actual doubt, it is good to search.

Doubts smothered make way for atheism or hardness of heart. Therefore, in cases of anxiety, it is good to bring things to an issue. Smoke maketh way for flame.

[3.] In your choice, be not swayed with interests, nor vulgar prejudices, nor vile affections.

(1.) Not with interests. God puts us to trial, to see if we can love a hated truth. The world is a blinding thing: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'The god of the world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.' Why is Satan called 'the god of the world'? He throweth the dust of the world in our eyes, and then we cannot see. We easily believe what we readily desire, and are loath to search when we have a mind to hate. Let the weights be never so equal, yet, if the balances be not equal, you can never judge of the weight of anything. When the mind is prepossessed and infected with interests, we are not capable of making a right judgment; as the water, when it is muddied, doth not render and represent the face.

(2.) Not with vulgar prejudices, as prepossessions of custom and long tradition, the opinions of holy and learned men, general consent, pretences of a stricter way. Men would fain judge upon slight grounds, without entering into the merits of the cause, to save the pains of study and prayer. This is but to put a fallacy upon yourselves. Some are against novelty, and when the ways of God are revived, they are hardened, they will not change; as if there were no obstinacy as well as constancy, obstinacy in the bad angels, as well as constancy in the good. Others are swayed by the opinions of godly learned men, whose persons they have in admiration. There is no *ipse dixit* in the church but the Lord's. It is observed that the corruptions of the Roman synagogue were occasioned by admiration of some venerable pastors of that church. Paul withstood Peter to the face, Gal. ii. 12, when his credit and example was like to do hurt. Others are swayed by general consent; but it is dangerous following the multitude; the world hath been against Christ, when a few only have owned him. Others by pretences of a stricter way: Col. ii. 23, 'Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and neglecting of the body.' This is to be wiser than God, and to judge the law.

(3.) Not by vile affections, pride, passion, envy. Pride, or an overweening opinion of our own wit and learning: John ix. 40, 'The pharisees said, Are we blind also?' Proud persons, as the great rabbies, will not seem to be in an error. Men choose rather to be wicked than to be accounted weak. So envy at others, when men cannot be admitted into such places as they affect; and that puts them upon error and opposition: 1 Cor. iii. 3, 'For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?' So passion, revenge, and discontent. The devil worketh much upon spleen and anger, when offence is taken, whether justly, or upon supposed occasion, it mattereth not. Many in spite and stomach have turned atheists or heretics. Carnal Ham, when cursed of his father, began the way of atheism.

Observe, secondly, that the reprobate world can never have any true knowledge of God: 'The world hath not known thee.'

1. The reprobate world can go as far as nature can go : 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned ;' *ἄνθρωπος ψυχικός*, not *σάρκις*. There are two reasons urged by the apostle—a natural incapacity and a positive enmity. (1.) A natural incapacity. He supposeth a sufficient revelation : 'They are spiritually discerned.' There must be a cognation between the object and the faculty. Spiritual things must be seen by a spiritual light. Sense, which is the light of beasts, cannot trace the workings and flights of reason ; we cannot see a soul or an angel by the light of a candle. So that the object must not only be revealed, but there must be an answerable light in the faculty. There is light enough, but we have not eyes. There needeth not a plainer revelation. David prays, not that God would make a plainer rule, but open his eyes : Ps. cxix. 18, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' The understanding must be opened, as well as the scriptures : Luke xxiv. 45, 'Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.' (2.) Positive enmity : 'They are foolishness to him.' He looketh upon the things of God and solid piety as frivolous and vain. When Paul came to Athens, they called him babbler : Acts xvii. 18, 'What will this babbler say ?' The same disposition still remaineth in natural men. Though the truths of religion, by long tract of time, and by the consent of many ages, have obtained credit, yet men nauseate spiritual truths and the power of godliness. A stomach ill affected by choler casts up wholesome meats ; so do they scorn strictness and the holy ways of God.

2. Experience shows it. Take mere nature itself, and, like plants neglected, it soon runneth wild ; as the nations that are barbarous, and not polished with arts and civility, have more of the beast than of the man in them : Jude 10, 'What they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.' Suppose they use the spectacles of art to help the native light of reason with industry, yet their eyes are blind. How erroneous in religion were the civil nations ! Rom. i. 22, 'Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ;' very foolish in matters of worship. The Romans placed fear, human passions, and every paltry thing among their gods. The ruder and more brutish nations worshipped only the sun and thunder, things great and wonderful. And still now we see great scholars given over to fond superstitions. Nay, go higher ; suppose, besides the spectacles of art, nature be furnished with the glass of the word, yet we see great scholars very defective in the most useful and practical points. Nicodemus, a teacher in Israel, knew not regeneration, John iii. 10. Usually they delight rather in moral strains than mysteries of faith, and err in one point or another ; usually in the controversies of their age, they are blinded by pride or interest, are loath to stoop to truth revealed, and so are outstarted by the vulgar. *Surgunt indocti et rapiunt cælum*, &c.—they dispute away heaven while others surprise it. Nay, suppose they had an exact model and proportion of faith, and do pry into all the secrets of religion, as it is possible to do with the common light and help of the Spirit, which is as far as a reprobate

can go; yet all this is without any change of affection, without any favour or relish of truth. This speculative and artificial knowledge doth not change the heart.

But here is an objection; many carnal men have great parts, and profess the knowledge of the true God. I answer—

[1.] The greatest part of the world lieth in ignorance; they are born in darkness, live in darkness, love darkness more than light, and are under the powers of darkness: Eph. vi. 12, 'The rulers of the darkness of this world.' The devil hath a large territory over all the blind nations.

[2.] Carnal men, that own the true God, and profess him, yet in a scripture sense they do not know him. For knowledge not being affective, it is reputed ignorance: John viii. 54, 55, 'Of whom ye say, that he is your God. Yet ye have not known him, but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you; but I know him, and keep his saying.' It is a lie to pretend to knowledge without obedience: 1 John ii. 4, 5, 'And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' For all their great parts, they are but spiritual fools; they have no true wisdom, *ἀνοητοὶ*. So are all carnal men: Titus iii. 3, 'We ourselves also were sometimes foolish,' out of our wits. They do not understand things spiritual, and such as tend to maintain communion with God; they love and do those things with delight that are against all reason, hurtful to body and soul. Natural men are sometimes represented as fools that judge amiss, sometimes as infants that know nothing: Isa. xxviii. 9, 'Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? they that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breast.' Sometimes as beasts, that are incapable of understanding: Ps. xxxii. 9, 'Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, that hath no understanding.' Fools they are in their choice that prefer a nut or an apple before a jewel; they spend all their time in looking after riches, and honours, and such kind of things as do not conduce to eternity; for carnal pleasures forfeit their souls, and yet think themselves very wise. In their course they make war with heaven, and enter into the lists with God, as if they were stronger than he. In their presumption, they give out themselves for the sons of God, when they are the devil's children; as if a man, born of a beggar, should pretend to be the son of a king. Fools and madmen challenge all lands as theirs, so do they all promises and comforts. Within a little while experience will show them to be fools; their eyes are never opened to see their folly till it be too late: Luke xii. 20, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee;' Jer. xvii. 11, 'As a partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.' There is no fool to the carnal fool; godly men are only wise, that are wise to save their souls.

Use. It informeth us—

1. Of our misery by nature. For as the reprobate lost world are, so are we all by nature; we have no knowledge of the true God: Job

xi. 12, 'Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt.' We are apt to think ourselves angels, but we are beasts. Every one affects the repute of wisdom; we would rather be accounted wicked than weak. If a man were born with an ass's head, or were monstrous and misshapen in his body, this were sad. It is worse to be born with the heart of an ass, to be born like a wild ass's colt, with such gross and rude conceits of God and holy things. This is our estate by nature.

2. The danger of ignorance; it is the state of the reprobate world. It is good to think of it, partly that we may avoid it ourselves, and strive for knowledge; partly that we may be thankful if we have obtained knowledge; and partly that we might pity others, as Christ wept over Jerusalem: Luke xix. 41, 42, 'And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.' It is one of God's sorest judgments; when the Lord hath left threatening other things, then he threatens a blind heart and a vain mind. The great reproach that Nahash would lay upon Israel was to put out their right eyes. The great design of the god of this world upon the men of this world is to put out their eyes, that they might not come to the knowledge of the truth.

3. Positive ignorance is a sign that we are of the world; I mean, where we have means and opportunities to the contrary, and do not come to the knowledge of God, and of his ways: 1 John ii. 13, 'I write unto you little children, because ye have known the Father.' God hath no child so little but he knows his Father. The blind world knows him not; when there is night in the understanding, or frost in the heart, it is a sign of a worldling; when men are ignorant, unteachable, and do not grow in knowledge. God's children many times may be ignorant, and do not profit according to their advantages: John xiv. 9, 'Have I been so long with thee, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?' that is, not known so distinctly God the Father, and me, as coming out from him. But God's children are not altogether unteachable.

4. We have no reason to trust the judgment of carnal men in matters of godliness, for they do not know God. Can blind men judge of colours? I urge it, that you may not be discouraged though the world scoff at holiness. Who would take notice of the judgment of fools?

5. That ignorance is not only the badge of silly weak persons, but of great men, and those that are carnally wise: Mat. xi. 25, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' Whatever parts they have, they have no saving knowledge of God. The godly man is the only knowing and wise man; all others they are but fools, however they swell with an opinion of knowledge, and count it a reproach to be so called.

The second illustration is by the efficient and exemplary cause of our knowledge, 'But I have known thee,' &c. All along our likeness to Christ and unlikeness to the world is asserted.

Observe, that Christ's knowledge is the pattern and cause of ours.

We have all things at the second hand: 'I have known,' and 'they have known.' All the candles are lighted at this torch; or, to use a comparison more celestial, all the stars receive their light from the sun. Therefore he is called, 'the Father of lights,' James i. 17, and 'the Sun of righteousness,' Mal. iv. 2.

Christ giveth us knowledge two ways—by his word and by his Spirit. Now none is fit to establish the word, none to pour out the Spirit, but Christ.

1. None can give us a sufficient revelation of the Father but Christ, that came out of his bosom, that knew all his counsels: John i. 18, 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' Our knowledge is by the senses, by sight and hearsay. Now no man hath seen God, but Christ, that was God-man, who came out of his bosom. So Mat. xi. 27, 'No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' To know him perfectly and comprehensively, so neither men nor angels know him. To know him originally, so as to establish a revelation with authority, and so as fit to offer the light and knowledge of him to the creature, so none but Christ knows him; our faith is built on God. Human authority begets but a human faith and credulity. It was necessary that in the bed-roll of gospel preachers the Son of God should have the first place, that in the latter times he should preach to us by his Son, that the ultimate resolution of faith might be into divine authority: John vii. 29, 'But I know him, for I am from him, and he hath sent me;' and John x. 15, 'As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father.' It is for our confidence that the full discovery of this doctrine was reserved for the Son of God.

2. None else can give us a capacity to learn. Jesus Christ is such a teacher, that he doth not only give the lesson, but the wit and skill to learn: 1 John v. 20, 'We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.' No matter what the scholar is, when we have such a master. We use to inquire whether any one hath a capacity to learn. He openeth the scriptures, and openeth the understanding to learn: Luke xxiv. 27, 'And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself;' and ver. 45, 'Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures.' There is a double veil—upon the doctrine and upon the heart; Christ removeth both.

Use 1. If that the true knowledge of God is only to be had from Christ, it directeth us in the use of all ordinances to look up to him; there must our trust be fixed, in reading, hearing, meditating. We must use helps and means, else we tempt God, but our trust must be elsewhere. In reading, Ps. cxix. 18, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' There are wonders in the law, but our eyes must be opened to see them, otherwise we shall have but a superficial and literal knowledge, when men think to find more in books than in Christ. So in hearing, *cathedram habet in cælis*: Isa. ii. 3, 'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the

Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways.' You come to the word to be taught by man, and yet not to be taught by man; in obedience you use the means, but your confidence is on Christ, that you may hear his voice to the soul, that he that brought the gospel out of the bosom of God may bring it into your hearts. The dial is of no use without the sun; except the sun shine, you cannot see what is a-clock by the dial; so in meditation and study; Christ is 'Wonderful, counsellor,' Isa. ix. 6; Prov. viii. 14, 'Counsel is mine and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength.' How are men befooled that go forth in the confidence of their own wit! Flesh and blood are apt to stumble in God's plainest ways. Carnal hearts turn all to a carnal purpose: Prov. xxvi. 9, 'As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.' The same cloud that was light to the Israelites was darkness to the Egyptians. Luther calleth the promises 'bloody promises,' through our perverse applications. Truth is only renewing as taught by Christ: Eph. iv. 21, 'If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.' We cannot tell how to master corruptions without this. The light of common conviction is like a March sun, that draweth up aguish vapours; it discovereth sins, but cannot quell them. We should be apt to forsake truth upon every temptation, unless it were for Christ's teaching: Ps. cxix. 102, 'I have not departed from thy judgments, for thou hast taught me;' 1 John ii. 20, 'Ye have an unction from the holy one, and ye know all things.' When men lead us into truth, others may lead us out again. Those that have made trial can best judge of the difference between being taught of God and men: 1 Cor. ii. 4, 'My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.' When the arrow cometh out of God's quiver, it sticketh in our sides. Then we see truths with application.

Use 2. It teacheth us how to direct our prayers to Christ. Seek to him with confidence, and with all earnestness of affection.

1. With confidence; we despair many times because of our blockishness: Col. ii. 3, 'In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' Hidden, not that they should not be found out, but because they are seen by the eye of faith: hidden, because deposited there, to be dispensed to us. God made Christ a storehouse to furnish all our necessities: 1 Cor. i. 30, 'Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' Wisdom to give us spiritual illumination. Be not discouraged; it is not the pregnancy of the scholar that prevaieth here, but the excellency of the teacher. If Christ be the teacher, no matter how dull the scholar be. Pride in parts hath been a hindrance, but simpleness hath never been a hindrance: Ps. xix. 7, 'The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;' Jer. xxxi. 33, 34, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord;' Mat. xi. 25,

'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' God can give to shallow and weak people great understanding in spiritual things, as he cured him that was born blind, John ix.

2. With earnestness: 'Cry for knowledge, and lift up thy voice for understanding,' Prov. ii. 3. Many times God withholdeth knowledge that we may cry for it, especially when the case is doubtful and litigious. John wept when the book was sealed with seven seals, Rev. v. 4. We need to cry for all grace, but especially for saving knowledge. Let us groan and sigh when we are in the dark.

[1.] Consider the necessity of knowledge. The blind man cried after Christ, because he knew what it was to want eyes: Luke xviii. 41, 'Lord, that I may receive my sight.' We are not sensible of our natural blindness as we ought to be. There is ignorance and folly in all, but treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ. If we are not ignorant, yet we are indiscreet. Men know not how to guide and order their course. Certainly if you were acquainted with yourselves, you would not hold your peace.

[2.] Consider the excellency of knowledge. All knowledge is excellent, as all light is comfortable. Knowledge is your excellency above the beasts; that you have receptive faculties capable of knowing and understanding things, that you are intelligent creatures, this is your advantage above the beasts. But saving knowledge is far more excellent, even the knowledge of God in Christ. This is the glory of a man: Jer. xxix. 23, 24, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord,' &c. If men should be able to dispute of everything that might be known, from the highest star to the lowest shrub, this knowledge is nothing to the knowledge of God in Christ, which is far better than all the knowledge of the questionists and disputers of this world. The fear of God, that is the best excellency, and that is it which Christ teacheth. I observe the providence of God in that one thing, viz., Solomon had wrote many books of philosophy which are not extant, when the books of some heathens, as Aristotle's book *de Animalibus*, &c., are extant; but his books of the fear of God are preserved by a special providence, not one of them lost. We may want the other without any loss of true wisdom, but we cannot want these. And therefore you are more concerned in the getting of saving knowledge than you are aware of. Light was the first creature that God made, so it is the way by which all grace is wrought in the soul; for in all communications of grace God beginneth with the understanding: Jer. xxxi. 19, 'After I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh.' He makes the creature to submit to his providence, to be contented in all estates and conditions: Phil. iv. 12, 'In all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.' God draws you to Christ, but his drawing is accompanied with a teaching: John vi. 44, 'No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him;' ver. 45, 'And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard,

and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' God's drawing is not a blind force, but there is a teaching with it. God loves rational service, not blind obedience; and therefore cry for knowledge, and run to Christ that he may teach you, and lead you into the paths of righteousness.

SERMON XLIV.

And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.—JOHN XVII. 26.

THIS is the second reason, taken from the benefits Christ had bestowed upon them. Here is his gift and his aim. In the first, what he had done, what¹ he will do. Where—(1.) *Quid*, the manifestation of his Father's name; (2.) *Quibus*, to whom, principally to the apostles, and from them to believers; (3.) *Quomodo*, 'I have,' that is, by his ministry upon earth; and 'I will,' in the pouring out the Spirit, and his discourses with them after the resurrection. All that needeth explication is, What is meant by God's name? *Ans.* The use of names from the beginning was a distinction to separate creature from creature by their appellations. At first Adam gave names to the beasts, that their species and kinds might be distinguished, for beasts are distinguished only by their herds and kinds. But the names which men bear are individual and particular; man being an excellent creature, made for rule and commerce, and therefore is to be known not by his kind, but name. But now, what is God's name? Where there are many, there is need of names; but where there is but one, the singularity is distinction enough. But yet God hath his name, by way of distinction from creatures; so we have a negative name, removing the imperfections of the creature, and to distinguish him from those λεγόμενοι θεοί, gods that are so called. And his name is a jealous God: Exod. xxxiv. 14, 'For thou shalt worship no other God; for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.' And by way of notification, that we may conceive of him aright, as names are not only distinctive, but δηλώτικα τῶν πραγμάτων, as Damascene. So all that by which he is known or distinguished, that is his name; and so God hath many names, because one cannot enough express him. His works are a part of his name, but chiefly his word, the doctrine concerning his essence and will: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;' there he hath made himself most known. In creation and providence we may read much of God, but in the bible more; and chiefly his word of promise and covenant, which is that theatre upon which his mercy and truth is discovered, which is the representation wherein God delighteth. And again, the covenant, as it is revealed in the gospel, is a chief part of his name, for his name was secret before the New Testament dispensation was set afoot: Judges xiii. 18, 'Why

¹ Qu. 'in the second, what, &c.'?—ED.