

The Existence and Attributes of God

by Stephen Charnock

DISCOURSE VIII - ON GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

PSALM 147:5.—*Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite.*

IT is uncertain who was the author of this psalm, and when it was penned; some think after the return from the Babylonish captivity. It is a psalm of praise, and is made up of matter of praise from the beginning to the end: God's benefits to the church, his providence over his creatures, and the essential excellency of his nature.

The psalmist doubles his exhortation to praise God (ver. 1), "Praise ye the Lord, sing praise to our God;" to praise him from his dominion as "Lord," from his grace and mere as "our God;" from the excellency of the duty itself, "it is good, it is comely:" some read it comely, some lovely, or desirable, from the various derivations of the word. Nothing doth so much delight a gracious soul, as an opportunity of celebrating the perfections and goodness of the Creator. The highest duties a creature can render to the Creator are pleasant and delightful in themselves; "it is comely." Praise is a duty that affects the whole soul. The praise of God is a decent thing; the excellency of God's nature deserves it, and the benefits of God's grace requires it. It is comely when done as it ought to be, with the heart as well as with the voice; a sinner sings ill, though his voice be good; the soul in it is to be elevated above earthly things. The first matter of praise is God's erecting and preserving his church (ver. 2): "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, he gathers together the outcasts of Israel." The walls of demolished Jerusalem are now re-edified; God hath brought back the captivity of Jacob, and reduced his people from their Babylonish exile, and those that were dispersed into strange regions, he hath restored to their habitations. Or, it may be prophetic of the calling of the Gentiles, and the gathering the outcasts of the spiritual Israel, that were before as without God in the world, and strangers to the covenant of promise. Let God be praised, but especially for building up his church, and gathering the Gentiles, before counted as outcasts (Isa. 11:12); he gathers them in this world to the faith, and hereafter to glory.

Obs. 1. From the two first verses, observe: 1. All people are under God's care; but he has a particular regard to his church. This is the signet on his hand, as a bracelet upon his arm; this is his garden which he delights to dress; if he prunes it, it is to purge it; if he digs about his vine, and wounds the branches, it is to make it beautiful with new clusters, and restore it to a fruitful vigor. 2. All great deliverances are to be ascribed to God, as the principal Author, whosoever are the instruments. The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, he gathers together the outcasts of Israel. This great deliverance from Babylon is not to be ascribed to Cyrus or Darius, or the rest of our favorers; it is the Lord that doth it; we had his promise for it, we have now his performance. Let us not ascribe that which is the effect of his truth, only to the good will of men; it is God's act, not by might, nor by power, nor by weapons of war, or strength of horses, but by the Spirit of the Lord. He sent prophets to comfort us while we were exiles; and now he hath stretched out his own arm to work our deliverance according to his word; blind man looks so much upon instruments, that he hardly takes notice of God, either in afflictions or mercies, and this is the cause that robs God of so much prayer and praise in the world. (ver. 3.) "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." He hath now restored those who had no hope but in his word; he hath dealt with them as a tender and skilful chirurgeon; he hath applied his curing plasters, and dropped in his sovereign balsams; he hath now furnished our fainting hearts with refreshing cordials, and comforted our wounds with strengthening ligatures. How gracious is God, that restores liberty to the captives, and righteousness to the penitent! Man's misery is the fittest opportunity for God to make his in mercy illustrious in itself, and most welcome to the patient. He proceeds (ver. 4), wonder not that God calls together the outcasts, and singles them out from every corner for a return; why can he not do this, as well as tell the number of the stars, and call them all by their names? There are none of his people so despicable in the eye of man, but they are known and regarded by God; though they are clouded in the world, yet they are the stars of the world; and shall God number the inanimate stars in the heavens, and make no account of his living stars on the earth? No, wherever they are dispersed, he will not forget them; however they are afflicted, he will not despise them; the stars are so numerous, that they are innumerable by man; some are visible and known by men; others lie more hid and undiscovered in a confused light, as those in the milky way; man cannot see one of them distinctly. God knows all his people. As he can do what is above the power of man to perform, so he understands what is above the skill of man to discover; shall man measure God by his scantiness? Proud man must not equal himself to God, nor cut God as short as his own line. He tells the number of the stars, and calls them all by their names. He hath them all in his list, as generals the names of their soldiers in their muster-roll, for they are his host, which he marshals in the heavens, as in Isaiah 40:26, where you have the like expression; he knows them more distinctly than man

can know anything, and so distinctly, as to call “them all by their names.” He knows their names, that is, their natural offices, influences the different degrees of heat and light, their order and motion; and all of them, the least glimmering star, as well as the most glaring planet: this, man cannot do; “Tell the stars if thou be able to number them” (Gen. 15:5), saith God to Abraham, whom Josephus represents as a great astronomer: “Yea, they cannot be numbered” (Jer. 33:22); and the uncertainty of the opinions of men, evidenceth their ignorance of their number; some reckoning 1022; others 1025; others 1098; others 7000, beside those that by reason of their mixture of light with one another, cannot be distinctly discerned, and others perhaps so high, as not to be reached by the eye of man. To impose names on things, and names according to their natures, is both an argument of power and dominion, and of wisdom and understanding: from the imposition of names upon the creatures by Adam, the knowledge of Adam is generally concluded; and it was also a fruit of that dominion God allowed him over the creatures. Now he that numbers and names the stars that seem to lie confused among one another, as well as those that appear to us in an unclouded night, may well be supposed accurately to know his people, though lurking in secret caverns, and know those that are fit to be instruments of their deliverance; the one is as easy to him as the other; and the number of the one as distinctly known by him as the multitude of the other. “For great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite” (ver. 5). He wants not knowledge to know the objects, nor power to affect his will concerning them. Of great power, יבכח. Much power, plenteous in power; so the word רב, is rendered (ver. 5), יבחר, a multitude of power, as well as a multitude of mercy; a power that exceeds all created power and understanding. His understanding is infinite. You may not imagine, how he can call all the stars by name, the multitude of the visible being so great, and the multitude of the invisible being greater; but you must know, that as God is Almighty, so he is omniscient; and as there is no end of his power, so no account can exactly be given of his understanding; his understanding is infinite, איוממסד.

No number or account of it; and so the same words are rendered, “a nation strong, and without number” (Joel 1:6): no end of his understanding: (Syriac) no measure, no bounds. His essence is infinite, and so is his power and understanding; and so vast is his knowledge, that we can no more comprehend it, than we can measure spaces that are without limits, or tell the minutes or hours of eternity. Who, then, can fathom that whereof there is no number, but which exceeds all, so that there is no searching of it out? He knows universals, he knows particulars: we must not take understanding here, as noting a faculty, but the use of the understanding in the knowledge of things, and the judgment, תגיוה, in the consideration of them, and so it is often used. In the verse there is a description of God. 1. In his essence, “great is our Lord.” 2. In his power of “great power.” 3. In his knowledge, “his understanding is infinite:” his understanding is his eye, and his power is his arm. Of his infinite understanding I am to discourse.

Doctrine. God hath an infinite knowledge and understanding. All knowledge. Omnipresence, which before we spake of, respects his essence; omniscience respects his understanding, according to our manner of conception. This is clear in Scripture; hence God is called a God of knowledge (1 Sam. 2:3), “the Lord is a God of knowledge,” (*Heb.*) knowledges, in the plural number, of all kind of knowledge; it is spoken there to quell man’s pride in his own reason and parts; what is the knowledge of man but a spark to the whole element of fire, a grain of dust, and worse than nothing, in comparison of the knowledge of God, as his essence is in comparison of the essence of God? All kind of knowledge. He knows what angels know, what man knows, and infinitely more; he knows himself, his own operations, all his creatures, the notions and thoughts of them; he is understanding above understanding, mind above mind, the mind of minds, the light of lights; this the Greek word, *Θεός*, signifies in the etymology of it, of *θεῖσθαι*, to see, to contemplate; and *δαίμων* of *δαίω*, *scio*. The names of God signify a nature, viewing and piercing all things; and the attribution of our senses to God in Scripture, as hearing and seeing, which are the senses whereby knowledge enters into us, signifies God’s knowledge.

1. The notion of God’s knowledge of all things lies above the ruins of nature; it was not obliterated by the fall of man. It was necessary offending man was to know that he had a Creator whom he had injured, that he had a Judge to try and punish him; since God thought fit to keep up the world, it had been kept up to no purpose, had not this notion been continued alive in the minds of men; there would not have been any practice of his laws, no bar to the worst of crimes. If men had thought they had to deal with an ignorant Deity, there could be no practice of religion. Who would lift up his eyes, or spread his hands towards heaven, if he imagined his devotion were directed to a God as blind as the heathens imagined fortune? To what boot would it be for them to make heaven and earth resound with their cries, if they had not thought God had an eye to see them, and an ear to hear them? And indeed the very notion of a God at the first blush, speaks him a Being endued with understanding; no man can imagine a Creator void of one of the noblest perfections belonging to those creatures, that are the flower and cream of his works.

2. Therefore all nations acknowledge this, as well as the existence and being of God. No nation but had their temples, particular ceremonies of worship, and presented their sacrifices, which they could not have been so vain as to do, without an acknowledgment of this attribute. This notion of God’s knowledge owed not its rise to tradition, but to natural implantation; it was born and grew up with every rational creature. Though the several nations and men of the world agreed not in one kind of deity, or in their sentiments of his nature or other perfections, some judging him clothed with a fine and pure body, others judging him an uncompounded spirit, some fixing him to a seat in the heavens, others owning his universal presence in all parts of the world; yet they all agreed in the universality of his knowledge, and their own consciences reflecting their crimes, unknown to any but themselves, would keep this notion in some vigor, whether they would or no. Now this being implanted in the minds of all men by nature, cannot be false, for nature imprints not in the minds of all men an assent to a falsity. Nature would not pervert the reason and minds of men. Universal notions of God are from original, not lapsed nature, and preserved in mankind in order to a restoration from a lapsed state. The heathens did acknowledge this: in all the solemn covenants, solemnized with oaths and the invocation of the name of God, this attribute was supposed. They confessed knowledge to be peculiar to the Deity; *scientia deorum vita*, saith Cicero.

Some called him *Noûs*, *mens*, mind, pure understanding, without any note, *Επόπιης*, the inspector of all. As they called him life, because he was the author of life, so they called him *intellectus*, because he was the author of all knowledge and understanding in his creatures; and one being asked, whether any man could be hid from God? Do, saith he, not so much as thinking. Some call him the eye of the world; and the Egyptians represented God by an eye on the top of a sceptre, because God is all eye, and can be ignorant of nothing.

And the same nation made eyes and ears of the most excellent metals, consecrating them to God, and hanging them up in the midst of their temples, in signification of God’s seeing and hearing all things; hence they called God light, as well as the Scripture, because all things are visible to him.

For the better understanding of this, we will enquire, I. What kind of knowledge or understanding there is in God. II. What God

knows. III. How God knows things. IV. The proof that God knows all things. V. The use of all to ourselves.

I. What kind of understanding or knowledge there is in God. The knowledge of God in Scripture hath various names, according to the various relations or objects of it: in respect of present things, it is called knowledge or sight; in respect of things past, remembrance; in respect of things future, or to come, it is called foreknowledge, or prescience (1 Pet. 1:2); in regard of the universality of the objects, it is called omniscience; in regard to the simple understanding of things, it is called knowledge; in regard of acting and modelling the ways of acting, it is called wisdom and prudence (Eph. 1:8). He must have knowledge, otherwise he could not be wise; wisdom is the flower of knowledge, and knowledge is the root of wisdom. As to what this knowledge is, if we know what knowledge is in man, we may apprehend what it is in God, removing all imperfection from it, and ascribing to him the most eminent way of understanding; because we cannot comprehend God, but as he is pleased to condescend to us in his own ways of discovery, that is, under some way of similitude to his perfectest creatures, therefore we have a notion of God by his understanding and will; understanding, whereby he conceives and apprehends things; will, whereby he extends himself in acting according to his wisdom, and whereby he doth approve or disapprove; yet we must not measure his understanding by our own, or think it to be of so gross a temper as a created mind; that he hath eyes of flesh, or sees or knows as man sees (Job 10:4). We can no more measure his knowledge by ours than we can measure his essence by our essence. As he hath an incomprehensible essence, to which ours is but as a drop of a bucket, so he hath an incomprehensible knowledge, to which ours is but as a grain of dust, or mere darkness: his thoughts are above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth. The knowledge of God is variously divided by the schools, and acknowledged by all divines.

1. A knowledge *visionis et simplicis intelligentiæ*; the one we may call a sight, the other an understanding; the one refers to sense, the other to the mind. (1.) A knowledge of vision or sight. Thus God knows himself and all things that really were, are, or shall be in time; all those things which he hath decreed to be, though they are not yet actually sprung up in the world, but lie couchant in their causes. (2.) A knowledge of intelligence or simple understanding. The object of this is not things that are in being, or that shall by any decree of God ever be existent in the world, but such things as are possible to be wrought by the power of God, though they shall never in the least peep up into being, but lie forever wrapt up in darkness and nothing. This also is a necessary knowledge to be allowed to God, because the object of this knowledge is necessary. The possibility of more creatures than ever were or shall be, is a conclusion that hath a necessary truth in it; as it is necessary that the power of God can produce more creatures, though it be not necessary that it should produce more creatures, so it is necessary that whatsoever the power of God can work, is possible to be. And as God knows this possibility, so he knows all the objects that are thus possible; and herein doth much consist the infiniteness of his knowledge, as shall be shown presently. These two kinds of knowledge differ; that of vision, is of things which God hath decreed to be, though they are not yet; that of intelligence is of things which never shall be; yet they may be, or are possible to be, if God please to will and order their being; one respects things that shall be, the other, things that may be, and are not repugnant to the nature of God to be. The knowledge of vision follows the act of God's will, and supposeth an act of God's will before, decreeing things to be. (If we could suppose any first or second in God's decree, we might say God knew them as possible before he decreed them; he knew them as future, because he decreed them.) For without the will of God decreeing a thing to come to pass, God cannot know that it will infallibly come to pass. But the knowledge of intelligence stands without any act of his will, in order to the being of those things he knows; he knows possible things only in his power; he knows other things both in his power as able to effect them, and in his will, as determining the being of them; such knowledge we must grant to be in God, for there is such a kind of knowledge in man; for man doth not oft know and see what is before his eyes in this world, but he may have a conception of many more worlds, and many more creatures, which he knows are possible to the power of God.

2. There is a speculative and practical knowledge in God. (1.) A speculative knowledge is, when the truth of a thing is known without a respect to any working or practical operation. The knowledge of things possible is in God only speculative, and some say God's knowledge of himself is only speculative, because there is nothing for God to work in himself: and though he knows himself, yet this knowledge of himself doth not terminate there, but flowers into a love of himself, and delight in himself; yet this love of himself, and delight in himself, is not enough to make it a practical knowledge, because it is natural, and naturally and necessarily flows from the knowledge of himself and his own goodness: he cannot but love himself, and delight in himself, upon the knowledge of himself. But that which is properly practice, is where there is a dominion over the action, and it is wrought not naturally and necessarily, but in a way of freedom and counsel. As when we see a beautiful flower or other thing, there ariseth a delight in the mind; this no man will call practice, because it is a natural affection of the will, arising from the virtue of the object, without any consideration of the understanding in a practical manner by counselling, commanding, &c. (2.) A practical knowledge: which tends to operation and practice, and is the principle of working about things that are known; as the knowledge an artificer hath in an art or mystery. This knowledge is in God: the knowledge he hath of the things he hath decreed, is such a kind of knowledge; for it terminates in the act of creation, which is not a natural and necessary act, as the loving himself, and delighting in himself is, but wholly free: for it was at his liberty whether he would create them or no; this is called discretion (Jer. 10:12): "He hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion." Such also is his knowledge of the things he hath created, and which are in being, for it terminates in the government of them for his own glorious ends. It is by this knowledge "the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down their dew" (Prov. 3:20). This is a knowledge whereby he knows the essence, qualities, and properties of what he creates and governs in order to his own glory, and the common good of the world over which he resides; so that speculative knowledge is God's knowledge of himself and things possible; practical knowledge is his knowledge of his creatures and things governable; yet in some sort this practical knowledge is not only of things that are made, but of things which are possible, which God might make, though he will not: for as he knows that they can be created, so he knows how they are to be created, and how to be governed, though he never will create them. This is a practical knowledge for it is not requisite to constitute a knowledge practical, actually to act, but that the knowledge in itself be referable to action.

3. There is a knowledge of approbation, as well as apprehension. This the Scripture often mentions. Words of understanding are used to signify the acts of affection. This knowledge adds to the simple act of the understanding, the complacency and pleasure of the will, and is improperly knowledge, because it belongs to the will, and not to the understanding; only it is radically in the understanding, because affection implies knowledge: men cannot approve of that which they are ignorant of. Thus knowledge is taken (Amos 3:2), "You only have I known of all the families of the earth"; and (2 Tim. 2:19), "The Lord knows who are his," that is, he loves them; he doth not only know them, but acknowledges them for his own. It notes, not only an exact understanding, but a special care of them; and so is that to be understood (Gen. 1.), "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." that is,

he saw it with an eye of approbation, as well as apprehension. This is grounded upon God's knowledge of vision, his sight of his creatures; for God doth not love or delight in anything but what is actually in being, or what he hath decreed to bring into being. On the contrary, also, when God doth not approve, he is said not to know (Matt. 25:12), "I know you not," and (Matt. 7:23), "I never knew you;" he doth not approve of their works. It is not an ignorance of understanding, but an ignorance of will; for while he saith he never knew them, he testifies that he did know them, in rendering the reason of his disapproving them, because he knows all their works: so he knows them, and doth not know them in a different manner: he knows them so as to understand them, but he doth not know them so as to love them. We must, then, ascribe an universal knowledge to God. If we deny him a speculative knowledge, or knowledge of intelligence, we destroy his Deity, we make him ignorant of his own power: if we deny him practical knowledge, we deny ourselves to be his creatures; for, as his creatures, we are the fruits of this, his discretion, discovered in creation: if we deny his knowledge of vision, we deny his governing dominion. How can he exercise a sovereign and uncontrollable dominion, that is ignorant of the nature and qualities of the things he is to govern? If he had not knowledge he could make no revelation; he that knows not cannot dictate; we could then have no Scripture. To deny God knowledge, is to dash out the Scripture, and demolish the Deity.

God is described in Zech. 3:9, "with seven eyes," to show his perfect knowledge of all things, all occurrences in the world; and the cherubims, or whatsoever is meant by the wings, are described to be full of eyes, both "before and behind" (Ezek. 1:18), round about them; much more is God all eye, all ear, all understanding. The sun is a natural image of God; if the sun had an eye, it would see; if it had an understanding, it would know all visible things; it would see what it shines upon, and understand what it influenceth, in the most obscure bowels of the earth. Doth God excel his creature, the sun, in excellency and beauty, and not in light and understanding? certainly more than the sun excels an atom or grain of dust. We may yet make some representation of this knowledge of God by a lower thing, a picture, which seems to look upon every one, though there be never so great a multitude in the room where it hangs; no man can cast his eye upon it, but it seems to behold him in particular, and so exactly, as if there were none but him upon whom the eye of it were fixed; and every man finds the same cast of it: shall art frame a thing of that nature, and shall not the God of art and all knowledge, be much more in reality than that is in imagination? Shall not God have a far greater capacity to behold everything in the world, which is infinitely less to him than a wide room to a picture?

II. . The second thing, What God knows; how far his understanding reaches.

1. God knows himself, and only knows himself. This is the first and original knowledge, wherein he excels all creatures. No man doth exactly know himself; much less doth he understand the full nature of a spirit; much less still the nature and perfections of God; for what proportion can there be between a finite faculty and an infinite object? Herein consists the infiniteness of Gods knowledge, that he knows his own essence, that he knows that which is unknowable to any else. It doth not so much consist in knowing the creatures, which he hath made, as in knowing himself, who was never made. It is not so much infinite, because he knows all things which are in the world, or that shall be; or things that he can make, because the number of them is finite; but because he hath a perfect and comprehensive knowledge of his own infinite perfections. Though it be said that angels "see his face" (Matt. 18:10), that sight notes rather their immediate attendance, than their exact knowledge; they see some signs of his presence and majesty, more illustrious and express than ever appeared to man in this life; but the essence of God is invisible to them, hid from them in the secret place of eternity; none knows God but himself (1 Cor. 2:11): "What man knows the things of a man save the spirit of a man? so the things of God knows no man but the Spirit of God; the Spirit of God searches the deep things of God;" searcheth, that is, exactly knows, thoroughly understands, as those who have their eyes in every chink and crevice, to see what lies hid there; the word search notes not an inquiry, but an exact knowledge, such as men have of things upon a diligent scrutiny as when God is said to search the heart and the reins, it doth not signify a precedent ignorance, but an exact knowledge of the most intimate corners of the hearts of men. As the conceptions of men are unknown to any but themselves, so the depths of the divine essence, perfections, and decrees, are unknown to any but to God himself; he only knows what he is, and what he knows, what he can do, and what he hath decreed to do. For first, if God did not know himself, he would not be perfect. It is the perfection of a creature to know itself, much more a perfection belonging to God. If God did not comprehend himself, he would want an infinite perfection, and so would cease to be God, in being defective in that which intellectual creatures in some measure possess. As God is the most perfect being, so he must have the most perfect understanding: if he did not understand himself, he would be under the greatest ignorance, because he would be ignorant of the most excellent object. Ignorance is the imperfection of the understanding; and ignorance of one's self is a greater imperfection than ignorance of things without. If God should know all things without himself, and not know himself, he would not have the most perfect knowledge, because he would not have the knowledge of the best of objects. Secondly, Without the knowledge of himself, he could not be blessed. Nothing can have any complacency in itself, without knowledge of itself. Nothing can in a rational manner enjoy itself, without understanding itself.

The blessedness of God consists not in the knowledge of anything without him, but in the knowledge of himself and his own excellency, as the principle of all things; if, therefore, he did not perfectly know himself and his own happiness, he could not enjoy a happiness; for to be, and not to know to be, is as if a thing were not. "He is God, blessed forever" (Rom. 9:5.), and therefore forever had a knowledge of himself. Thirdly, Without the knowledge of himself, he could create nothing. For he would be ignorant of his own power, and his own ability; and he that doth not know how far his power extends, could not act: if he did not know himself, he could know nothing; and he that knows nothing, can do nothing; he could not know an effect to be possible to him, unless he knew his own power as a cause. Fourthly, Without the knowledge of himself, he could govern nothing. He could not, without the knowledge of his own holiness and righteousness, prescribe laws to men, nor without a knowledge of his own nature order himself a manner of worship suitable to it. All worship must be congruous to the dignity and nature of the object worshipped: he must therefore know his own authority, whereby worship was to be enacted; his own excellency, to which worship was to be suited; his own glory, to which worship was to be directed. If he did not know himself, he did not know what to punish, because he would not know what was contrary to himself: not knowing himself, he would not know what was a contempt of him, and what an adoration of him; what was worthy of God, and what was unworthy of him. In fine, he could not know other things, unless he knew himself; unless he knew his own power, he could not know how he created things; unless he knew his own wisdom, he could not know the beauty of his works; unless he knew his own glory, he could not know the end of his works; unless he knew his own holiness, he could not know what was evil; and unless he knew his own justice, he could not know how to punish the crimes of his offending creatures. And, therefore,

(1.) God knows himself, because his knowledge, with his will, is the cause of all other things that can fall under his cognizance he knows himself first, before he can know any other thing; that is, first according to our conceptions; for, indeed God knows himself and all other things at once; he is the first truth, and therefore is the first object of his own understanding. There is nothing more excellent

than himself, and therefore nothing more known to him than himself. As he is all knowledge, so he hath in himself the most excellent object of knowledge. To understand, is properly to know one's self. No object is so intelligible to God as God is to himself, nor so intimately and immediately joined with his understanding as himself; for his understanding is his essence, himself.

(2.) He knows himself by his own essence. He knows not himself and his own power by the effect, because he knows himself from eternity, before there was a world, or any, effect of his power extant. It is not a knowledge by the cause, for God hath no cause; nor a knowledge of himself by any species, or anything from without: if it were anything from without himself, that must be created or untreated; if uncreated it would be God; and so we must either own many Gods, or own, it to be his essence, and so not distinct from himself: if created, then his knowledge of himself would depend upon a creature: he could not, then, know himself from eternity, but in time, because nothing can be created from eternity, but in time. God knows not himself by any faculty, for there is no composition in God; he is not made up of parts, but is a simple being; some, therefore, have called God, not *intellectus*, understanding, because that savors of a faculty, but *intellectio*, intellection: God is all act in the knowledge of himself and his knowledge of other things.

(3.) God, therefore, knows himself perfectly, comprehensively. Nothing in his own nature is concealed from him; he reflects upon everything that he is. There is a positive comprehension, so God doth not comprehend himself; for what is comprehended hath bounds, and what is comprehended by itself is finite to itself; and there is a negative comprehension—God so comprehends himself; nothing in his own nature is obscure to him, unknown by him; for there is as great a perfection in the understanding of God to know, as there is in the divine nature to be known. The understanding of God, and the nature of God, are both infinite, and so equal to one another: his understanding is equal to himself; he knows himself so well, that nothing can be known by him more perfectly than himself is known to himself. He knows himself in the highest manner, because nothing is so proportioned to the understanding of God as himself. He knows his own essence, goodness, power; all his perfections, decrees, intentions, acts, the infinite capacity of his own understanding, so that nothing of himself is in the dark to himself: and, in this respect, some use this expression, that the infiniteness of God is in a manner finite to himself, because it is comprehended by himself. Thus God transcends all creatures; thus his understanding is truly infinite, because nothing but himself is an infinite object for it: what angels may understand of themselves perfectly I know not, but no creature in the world understands himself. Man understands not fully the excellency and parts of his own nature; upon God's knowledge of himself depends the comfort of his people, and the terror of the wicked: this is also a clear argument for, his knowledge of all other things without himself; he that knows himself, must needs know all other things less than himself, and which were made by himself; when the knowledge of his own immensity and infiniteness is not an object too difficult for him, the knowledge of a finite and limited creature, in all his actions, thoughts, circumstances, cannot be too hard for him: since he knows himself, who is infinite, he cannot but know whatsoever is finite. This is the foundation of all his other knowledge; the knowledge of everything present, past, and to come, is far less than the knowledge of himself. He is more incomprehensible in his own nature, than all things created, or that can be created, put together can be. If he, then, have a perfect comprehensive knowledge of his own nature, any knowledge of all other things is less than the knowledge of himself; this ought to be well considered by us, as the fountain whence all his other knowledge flows.

2. Therefore God knows all other things, whether they be possible, past, present, or future; whether they be things that he can do, but will never do, or whether they be things that he hath done, but are not now; things that are now in being, or things that are not now existing, that lie in the womb of their proper and immediate causes. If his understanding be infinite, he then knows all things whatsoever that can be known, else his understanding would have bounds, and what hath limits is not infinite, but finite. If he be ignorant of any one thing that is knowable, that is a bound to him, it comes with an exception, a *but*, God knows all things *but* this; a bar is then set to his knowledge. If there were anything, any particular circumstance in the whole creation or non-creation, and possible to be known by him, and yet were unknown to him, he could not be said to be omniscient; as he would not be Almighty if any one thing, that implied not a repugnancy to his nature, did transcend his power.

First, All things possible. No question but God knows what he could create, as well as what he hath created; what he would not create, as well as what he resolved to create; he knew what he would not do before he willed to do it; this is the next thing which declares the infiniteness of his understanding; for, as his power is infinite, and can create innumerable worlds and creatures, so is his knowledge infinite, in knowing innumerable things possible to his power. Possibles are infinite; that is, there is no end of what God can do, and therefore no end of what God doth know; otherwise his power would be more infinite than his knowledge: if he knew only what is created, there would be an end of his understanding, because all creatures may be numbered, but possible things cannot be reckoned up by any creature. There is the same reason of this in eternity; when never so many numbers of years are run out, there is still more to come, there still wants an end; and when millions of worlds are created, there is no more an end of God's power than of eternity. Thus there is no end of his understanding; that is, his knowledge is not terminated by anything. This the Scripture gives us some account of: God knows things that are not, "for he calls things that are not as if they were" (Rom. 4:17); he calls things that are not, as if they were in being; what he calls is not unknown to him: if he knows things that are not, he knows things that may never be; as he knows things that shall be, because he wills them, so he knows things that might be, because he is able to effect them: he knew that the inhabitants of Keilah would betray David to Saul if he remained in that place (1 Sam. 23:11); he knew what they would do upon that occasion, though it was never done; as he knew what was in their power and in their wills, so he must needs know what is within the compass of his own power; as he can permit more than he doth permit so he knows what he can permit, and what, upon that permission, would be done by his creatures; so God knew the possibility of the Tyrians' repentance, if they had had the same means, heard the same truths, and beheld the same miracles which were offered to the ears, and presented to the eyes of the Jews (Matt. 11:21). This must needs be so, because,

1. Man knows things that are possible to him, though he will never effect them. A carpenter knows a house in the model he hath of it in his head, though he never build a house according to that model. A watch-maker hath the frame of a watch in his mind, which he will never work with his instruments; man knows what he could do, though he never intends to do it. As the understanding of man hath a virtue, that where it sees one man it may imagine thousands of men of the same shape, stature, form, parts; yea, taller, more vigorous, sprightly, intelligent, than the man he sees; because it is possible such a number may be. Shall not the understanding of God much more know what he is able to effect, since the understanding of man can know what he is never able to produce, yet may be produced by God, viz. that he who produced this man which I see, can produce a thousand exactly like him? If the Divine understanding did not know infinite things, but were confined to a certain number, it may be demanded whether God can understand anything farther than that number, or whether he cannot? If he can, then he doth actually understand all those things which he hath a power to understand; otherwise there would be an increase of God's knowledge, if it were actually now, and not before, and so he

would be more perfect than he was before; if he cannot understand them, then he cannot understand what a human mind can understand; for our understandings can multiply numbers in *in infinitum*; and there is no number so great, but a man can still add to it: we must suppose the divine understanding more excellent in knowledge. God knows all that a man can imagine, though it never were, nor never shall be; he must needs know whatsoever is in the power of man to imagine or think, because God concurs to the support of the faculty in that imagination; and though it may be replied, an atheist may imagine that there is no God, a man may imagine that God can lie, or that he can be destroyed; doth God know therefore that he is not? or that he can lie, or cease to be? No, he knows he cannot; his knowledge extends to things possible, not to things impossible to himself; he knows it as imaginable by man, not as possible in itself; because it is utterly impossible, and repugnant to the nature of God, since he eminently contains in himself all things possible, past, present, and to come; he cannot know himself without knowing them.

2. God knowing his own power, knows whatsoever is in his power to effect. If he knows not all things possible, he could not know the extent of his own power, and so would not know himself, as a cause sufficient for more things than he hath created. How can he comprehend himself, who comprehends not all effluxes of things possible that may come from him, and be wrought by him? How can he know himself as a cause, if he know not the objects and works which he is able to produce? Since the power of God extends to numberless things, his knowledge also extends to numberless objects; as if a unit is, could see the numbers it could produce, it would see infinite numbers: for a unit, as it were, all number.

God knowing the fruitfulness of his own virtue, knows a numberless multitude of things which he can do, more than have been done, or shall be done by him; he therefore knows innumerable worlds, innumerable angels, with higher perfections, than any of them which he hath created have: so that if the world should last many millions of years, God knows that he can every day create another world more capacious than this; and having created an inconceivable number, he knows he could still create more: so that he beholds infinite worlds, infinite numbers of men, and other creatures in himself, infinite kinds of things, infinite species, and individuals under those kinds, even as many as he can create, if his will did order and determine it; for not being ignorant of his own power, he cannot be ignorant of the effects wherein it may display and discover itself. A comprehensive knowledge of his own power doth necessarily include the objects of that power; so he knows whatsoever he could effect, and whatsoever he could permit, if he pleased to do it. If God could not understand more than he hath created, he could not create more than he hath created: for it cannot be conceived how he can create anything that he is ignorant of; what he doth not know, he cannot do: he must know also the extent of his own goodness, and how far anything is capable to partake of it: so much therefore, as any detract from the knowledge of God, they detract from his, power.

3. It is further evident that God knows all possible things, because he knew those things which he has created, before they were created, when they were yet in a possibility. If God knew things before they were created, he knew them when they were in a possibility, and not in actual reality. It is absurd to imagine that his understanding did lackey after the creatures, and draw knowledge from them after they were created. It is absurd to think that God did create, before he knew what he could or would create. If he knew those things he did create when they were possible, he must know all things which he can create, and therefore all things that are possible. To conclude this, we must consider that this knowledge is of another kind than his knowledge of things that are or shall be. He sees possible things as possible, not as things that ever are or shall be. If he saw them as existing or future, and they shall never be, this knowledge would be false, there would be a deceit in it, which cannot be. He knows those things not in themselves, because they are not, nor in their causes, because they shall never be: he knows them in his own power, not in his will: he understands them as able to produce them, not as willing to effect them. Things possible he knows only in his power; things future he knows both in his power and his will, as he is both able and determined in his own good pleasure to give being to them. Those that shall never come to pass, he knows only in himself as a sufficient cause; those things that shall come into being, he knows in himself as the efficient cause, and also in their immediate second causes. This should teach us to spend our thoughts in the admiration of the excellency of God, and the divine knowledge; his understanding is infinite.

Secondly, God knows all things past. This is an argument used by God himself to elevate his excellency above all the commonly adored idols (Isa. 41:22): "Let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them." He knows them as if they were now present, and not past for indeed in his eternity there is nothing past or future to his knowledge. This is called remembrance, in Scripture, as when God remembered Rachel's prayer for a child (Gen. 30:22), and he is said to put tears into his bottle, and write them in his book of accompts, which signifies the exact and unerring knowledge in God of the minute circumstances past in the world; and this knowledge is called a book of remembrance (Mal. 3:16), signifying the perpetual presence of things past, before him.

There are two elegant expressions, signifying the certainty and perpetuity of God's knowledge of sins past (Job 14:17), "My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity;" a metaphor, taken from men that put up in a bag the money they would charily keep, tie the bag, sew up the holes, and bind it hard, that nothing may fall out; or a vessel, wherein they reserve liquors, and daub it with pitch and glutinous stuff, that nothing may leak out, but be safely kept till the time of use; or else, as some think, from the bags attorneys carry with them, full of writings, when they are to manage a cause against a person. Thus we find God often in Scripture calling to men's minds their past actions, upbraiding them with their ingratitude, wherein he testifies his remembrance of his own past benefits and their crimes. His knowledge in this regard hath something of infinity in it, since though the sins of all men that have been in the world are finite in regard of number, yet when the sins of one man in thoughts, words, and deeds, are numberless in his own account, and perhaps in the count of any creature, the sins of all the vast numbers of men that have been, or shall be, are much more numberless, it cannot be less than infinite knowledge that can make a collection of them, and take a survey of them all at once. If past things had not been known by God, how could Moses have been acquainted with the original of things? How could he have declared the former transactions, wherein all histories are silent but the Scripture? How could he know the cause of man's present misery so many ages after, wherewith all philosophy was unacquainted? How could he have writ the order of the creation, the particulars of the sin of Adam, the circumstances of Cain's murder, the private speech of Lamech to his wives, if God had not revealed them? And how could a revelation be made, if things past were forgotten by him? Do we not remember many things done among men, as well as by ourselves, and reserve the forms of divers things in our minds, which rise as occasions are presented to draw them forth? And shall not God much more, who hath no cloud of darkness upon his understanding? A man that makes a curious picture, hath the form of it in his mind before he made it; and if the fire burn it, the form of it in his mind is not destroyed by the fire, but retained in it. God's memory is no less perfect than his understanding. If he did not know things past, he could not be a righteous Governor, or exercise any judicial act in a righteous manner; he could not dispense rewards and punishments, according to

his promises and threatenings, if things that were past could be forgotten by him; he could not require that which is past (Eccles. 3:15), if he did not remember that which is past. And though God be said to forget in Scripture, and not to know his people, and his people pray to him to remember them, as if he had forgotten them (Psalm 119:49), this is improperly ascribed to God. As God is said to repent, when he changes things according to his counsel beyond the expectation of men, so he is said to forget, when he defers the making good his promise to the godly, or his threatenings to the wicked; this is not a defect of memory belonging to his mind, but an act of his will. When he is said to remember his covenant, it is to will grace according to his covenant; when he is said to forget his covenant, it is to intercept the influences of it, whereby to punish the sin of his people; and when he is said not to know his people, it is not an absolute forgetfulness of them, but withdrawing from them the testimonies of his kindness, and clouding the signs of his favor; so God in pardon is said to forget sin, not that he ceaseth to know it, but ceaseth to punish it. It is not to be meant of a simple forgetfulness, or a lapse of his memory, but of a judicial forgetfulness; so when his people in Scripture pray, Lord, remember thy word unto thy servant, no more is to be understood but, Lord, fulfil thy word and promise to thy servant.

Thirdly, He knows things present (Heb. 4:13): "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;" this is grounded upon the knowledge of himself; it is not so difficult to know all creatures exactly, as to know himself, because they are finite, but himself is infinite; he knows his own power, and therefore everything through which his omnipotence is diffused, all the acts and objects of it; not the least thing that is the birth of his power, can be concealed from him; he knows his own goodness, and therefore every object upon which the warm beams of his goodness strike; he therefore knows distinctly the properties of every creature, because every property in them is a ray of his goodness; he is not only the efficient, but the exemplary cause; therefore as he knows all that his power hath wrought, as he is the efficient, so he knows them in himself as the pattern; as a carpenter can give an account of every part and passage in a house he hath built, by consulting the model in his own mind, whereby he built it. "He looked upon all things after he had made them, and pronounced them good" (Gen. 1:3), full of a natural goodness he had endowed them with: he did not ignorantly pronounce them so, and call them good, whether he knew them or not; and therefore he knows them in particular, as he knew them all in their first presence. Is there any, reason he should be ignorant of everything now present in the world, or that anything that derives an existence from him as a free cause, should be concealed from him? If he did not know things present in their particularities, many things would be known by man, yea, by beasts, which the infinite God were ignorant of; and if he did not know all things present, but only some, it is possible for the most blessed God to be deceived and be miserable: ignorance is a calamity to the understanding; he could not prescribe laws to his creatures, unless he knew their natures to which those laws were to be suited: no, not natural ordinances to the sun, moon, and heavenly bodies, and inanimate creatures, unless he knew the vigor and virtue in them, to execute those ordinances; for to prescribe laws above the nature of things, is inconsistent with the wisdom of government; he must know how far they were able to obey; whether the laws were suited to their ability: and for his rational creatures, whether the punishments annexed to the law were proper, and suited to the transgression of the creature.

1. He knows all creatures from the highest to the lowest, the least as well as the greatest. He knows the ravens and their young ones (Job 38:41); the drops of rain and dew which he hath begotten (Job 38:29); every bird in the air, as well as any man doth what he hath in a cage at home (Psalm 50:11): "I know all the fowls in the mountains, and the wild beasts in the field;" which some read creeping things. The clouds are numbered in his wisdom (Job 38:37); every worm in the earth, every drop of rain that falls upon the ground, the flakes of snow, and the knots of hail, the sands upon the sea-shore, the hairs upon the head; it is no more absurd to imagine that God knows them, than that God made them; they are all the effects of his power, as well as the stars which he calls by their names, as well as the most glorious angel and blessed spirit; he knows them as well as if there were none but them in particular for him to know; the least things were framed by his art as well as the greatest; the least things partake of his goodness as well as the greatest; he knows his own arts, and his own goodness, and therefore all the stamps and impressions of them upon all his creatures; he knows the immediate causes of the least, and therefore the effects of those causes. Since his knowledge is infinite, it must extend to those things which are at the greatest distance from him, to those which approach nearest to not being; since he did not want power to create, he cannot want understanding to know everything he hath created, the dispositions, qualities, and virtues of the minutest creature. Nor is the understanding of God embased, and suffers a diminution by the knowledge of the vilest and most inconsiderable things. Is it not an imperfection to be ignorant of the nature of anything? and can God have such a defect in his most perfect understanding? Is the understanding of man of an impurer alloy by knowing the nature of the rankest poisons? by understanding a fly, or a small insect? or by considering the deformity of a toad? Is it not generally counted a note of a dignified mind to be able to discourse of the nature of them? Was Solomon, who knew all from the cedar to the hyssop, debased by so rich a present of wisdom from his Creator? Is any glass defiled by presenting a deformed image? Is there anything more vile than the "imaginings, which are only evil, and continually?" Doth not the mind of man descend to the mud of the earth, play the adulterer or idolater with mean objects, suck in the most unclean things? yet God knows these in all their circumstances, in every appearance, inside and outside. Is there anything viler than some thoughts of men? than some actions of men? their unclean beds and gluttonous vomiting, and Luciferian pride? yet do not these fall under the eye of God, in all their nakedness? The Second Person's taking human nature, though it obscured, yet it did not disparage the Deity, or bring any disgrace to it. Is gold the worse for being formed into the image of a fly? doth it not still retain the nobleness of the metal? When men are despised for descending to the knowledge of mean and vile things, it is because they neglect the knowledge of the greater, and sin in their inquiries after lesser things, with a neglect of that which concerns more the honor of God and the happiness of themselves; to be ambitious of such a knowledge, and careless of that of more concern, is criminal and contemptible. But God knows the greatest as well as the least; mean things are not known by him to exclude the knowledge of the greater; nor are vile things governed by him to exclude the order of the better. The deformity of objects known by God doth not deform him, nor defile him; he doth not view them without himself, but within himself, wherein all things in their ideas are beautiful and comely: our knowledge of a deformed thing is not a deforming of our understanding, but is beautiful in the knowledge, though it be not in the object; nor is there any fear that the understanding of God should become material by knowing material things, any more than our understandings lose their spirituality by knowing the nature of bodies; it is to be observed, therefore, that only those senses of men, as seeing, hearing, smelling, which have those qualities for their objects that come nearest the nature of spiritual things, as light, sounds, fragrant odors, are ascribed to God in Scripture; not touching or tasting, which are senses that are not exercised without a more immediate commerce with gross matter; and the reason may be, because we should have no gross thoughts of God, as if he were a body, and made of matter, like the things he knows.

2. As he knows all creatures, so God knows all the actions of creatures. He counts in particular all the ways of men. "Doth he not see all my ways, and count all my steps" (Job 31:4)? He "tells" their "wanderings," as if one by one (Psalm 56:8). "His eyes are upon all the ways of man, and he sees all his goings" (Job 34:21); a metaphor taken from men, when they look wistly, with fixed eyes upon

a thing, to view it in every circumstance, whence it comes, whether it goes, to observe every little motion of it. God's eye is not a wandering, but a fixed eye; and the ways of man are not only "before his eyes," but he doth exactly "ponder them" (Prov. 5:21); as one that will not be ignorant of the least mite in them, but weigh and examine them by the standard of his law; he may as well know the motions of our members, as the hairs of our heads; the smallest actions before they be, whether civil, natural, or religious, fall under his cognizance; what meaner than a man carrying a pitcher, yet our Saviour foretels it (Luke 22:10); God knows not only what men do, but what they would have done, had he not restrained them; what Abimelech would have done to Sarah, had not God put a bar in his way (Gen. 20:6); what a man that is taken away in his youth would have done, had he lived to a riper age; yea, he knows the most secret words as well as actions; the words spoken by the king of Israel in his bed-chamber, were revealed to Elisha (2 Kings 6:12); and indeed, how can any action of man be concealed from God? Can we view the various actions of a heap of ants, or a hive of bees in a glass, without turning our eyes; and shall not God behold the actions of all men in the world, which are less than bees or ants in his sight, and more visible to him than an ant-hill or bee-hive can be to the acutest eye of man?

3. As God knows all the actions of creatures, so he knows all the thoughts of creatures. The thoughts are the most closeted acts of man, hid from men and angels, unless disclosed by some outward expressions; but God descends into the depths and abysses of the soul, discerns the most inward contrivances; nothing is impenetrable to him; the sun doth not so much enlighten the earth, as God understands the heart; all things are as visible to him, as flies and motes enclosed in a body of transparent crystal; this man naturally allows to God. Men often speak to God by the motions of their minds and secret ejaculations, which they would not do, if it were not naturally implanted in them, that God knows all their inward motions; the Scripture is plain and positive in this, "He tries the heart and the reins" (Psalm 7:9), as men, by the use of fire, discern the drossy and purer parts of metals. The secret intentions and aims, the most lurking affections seated in the reins; he knows that which no man, no angel, is able to know, which a man himself knows not, nor makes any particular reflection upon; yea, "he weighs the Spirit" (Prov. 16:2); he exactly numbers all the devices and inclinations of men, as men do every piece of coin they tell out of a heap. "He discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12); all that is in the mind, all that is in the affections, every stirring and purpose; so that not one thought can be withheld from him Job 42:2); yea, "Hell and destruction are before him, much more then the hearts of the children of men" (Prov. 15:11); he works all things in the bowels of the earth, and brings forth all things out of that treasure, say some; but more naturally, God knows the whole state of the dead, all the receptacles and graves of their bodies, all the bodies of men consumed by the earth, or devoured by living creatures; things that seem to be out of all being; he knows the thoughts of the devils and damned creatures, whom he hath cast out of his care forever into the arms of his justice, never more to cast a delightful glance towards them; not a secret in any soul in hell (which he hath no need to know, because he shall not judge them by any of the thoughts they now have, since they were condemned to punishment) is hid from him; much more is he acquainted with the thoughts of living men, the counsels of whose hearts are yet to be manifested, in order to their trial and censure; yea, he knows them before they spring up into actual being (Psalm 139:2): "Thou understandest my thoughts afar off;" my thoughts, that is, every thought; though innumerable thoughts pass through me in a day, and that in the source and fountain, when it is yet in the womb, before it is our thought; if he knows them before their existence, before they can be properly called ours, much more doth he know them when they actually spring up in us: he knows the tendency of them; where the bird will light when it is in flight; he knows them exactly, he is therefore called a "discerner" or criticiser "of the heart" (Heb. 4:12), as a critic discerns every letter, point, and stop; he is more intimate with us than our souls with our bodies, and hath more the possession of us than we have of ourselves; he knows them by an inspection into the heart, not by the mediation of second causes, by the looks or gestures of men, as men may discern the thoughts of one another. (1.) God discerns all good motions of the mind and will. These he puts into men, and needs must God know his own act; he knew the son of "Jeroboam to have some good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel" (1 Kings 14:13); and the integrity of David and Hezekiah; the freest motions of the will and affections to him: "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," saith Peter (John 21:17). Love can be no more restrained, than the will itself can; a man may make another to grieve and desire, but none can force another to love. (2.) God discerns all the evil motions of the mind and will; "Every imagination of the heart" (Gen. 6:5); the vanity of "men's thoughts" (Psalm 94:11); their inward darkness, and deceitful disguises. No wonder that God, who fashioned the heart, should understand the motions of it (Psalm 33:13, 15): "He looks from heaven and beholds all the children of men; he fashioneth their hearts alike, and considers all their works." Doth any man make a watch, and yet be ignorant of its motion? Did God fling away the key to this secret cabinet, when he framed it, and put off the power of unlocking it when he pleased? He did not surely frame it in such a posture as that anything in it should be hid from his eye; he did not fashion it to be privileged from his government; which would follow if he were ignorant of what was minted and coined in it. He could not be a Judge to punish men, if the inward frames and principles of men's actions were concealed from him; an outward action may glitter to an outward eye, yet the secret spring be a desire of applause, and not the fear and love of God. If the inward frames of the heart did lie covered from him in the secret recesses of the heart; those plausible acts, which in regard of their principles, would merit a punishment, would meet with a reward; and God should bestow happiness where he had denounced misery. As without the knowledge of what is just, he could not be a wise Lawgiver, so without the knowledge of what is inwardly committed, he could not be a righteous Judge: acts that are rotten in the spring, might be judged good by the fair color and appearance. This is the glory of God at the last day, "to manifest the secrets of all hearts" (1 Cor. 4:5); and the prophet Jeremiah links the power of judging and the prerogative of trying the hearts together (Jer. 11:20): "But thou, O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart;" and (Jer. 17:10): "I, the Lord, search, the heart, I try the reins;" to what end? even to "give every man according to his way, and according to the fruit of his doings." And, indeed, his binding up the whole law with that command of not coveting, evidenceth that he will judge men by the inward affections and frames of their hearts. Again, God sustains the mind of man in every act of thinking; in him we have not only the principle of life, but every motion, the motion of our minds as well as of our members: "In him we live and move," &c. (Acts 17:28). Since he supports the vigor of the faculty in every act, can he be ignorant of those acts which spring from the faculty, to which he doth at that instant communicate power and ability? Now this knowledge of the thoughts of men is,

1st. An incommunicable property, belonging only to the Divine understanding. Creatures, indeed, may know the thoughts of others by divine revelation, but not by themselves; no creature hath a key immediately to open the minds of men, and see all that lodgeth there; no creature can fathom the heart by the line of created knowledge. Devils may have a conjectural knowledge, and may guess at them, by the acquaintance they have with the disposition and constitution of men, and the images they behold in their fancies; and by some marks which an inward imagination may stamp upon the brain, blood, animal spirits, face, &c. But the knowing the thoughts merely as thought, without any impression by it, is a royalty God appropriates to himself, as the main secret of his government, and a perfection declarative of his Deity, as much as any else (Jer. 17:9, 10): "The heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it?" yes, there is one, and but one, "I, the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins." "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord

looks upon the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7); where God is distinguished by this perfection from all men whatsoever, others may know by revelation, as Elisha did what was in Gehazi's heart (2 Kings 5:26). But God knows a man more than any man knows himself; what person upon earth understands the windings and turnings of his own heart, what reserves it will have, what contrivances, what inclinations? all which God knows exactly.

2d. God acquires no new knowledge of the thoughts and hearts by the discovery of them in the actions. He would then be but equal in this part of knowledge to his creature; no man or angel but may thus arrive to the knowledge of them; God were then excluded from an absolute dominion over the prime work of his lower creation; he would have made a creature superior in this respect to himself, upon whose will to discover, his knowledge of their inward intentions should depend; and therefore when God is said to search the heart, we must not understand it as if God were ignorant before, and was fain to make an exact scrutiny and inquiry, before he attained what he desired to know; but God condescends to our capacity in the expression of his own knowledge, signifying that his knowledge is as complete as any man's knowledge can be of the designs of others, after he hath sifted them by a strict and thorough examination, and wrung out a discovery of their intentions, that he knows them as perfectly as if he had put them upon the rack, and and forced them to make a discovery of their secret plottings. Nor must we understand that in Gen. 22:12, where God saith, after Abraham had stretched out his hand to sacrifice his son, "Now I know that thou fearest God," as though God was ignorant of Abraham's gracious disposition to him; did Abraham's drawing his knife furnish God with a new knowledge? no, God knew Abraham's pious inclinations before (Gen. 18:19): "I know him, that he will command his children after him," &c.

Knowledge is sometimes taken for approbation; then the sense will be, Now I approve this fact as a testimony of thy fear of me, since thy affection to thy Isaac is extinguished by the more powerful flame of affection to my will and command; I now accept thee, and count thee a meet subject of my choicest benefits: or, Now I know, that is, I have made known and manifested the faith of Abraham to himself and to the world: thus Paul uses the word know (1 Cor. 2:2): "I have determined to know nothing;" that is, to declare and teach nothing, to make known nothing but Christ crucified: or else, Now I know, that is, I have an evidence and experiment in this noble fact, that thou fearest me. God often condescends to our capacity in speaking of himself after the manner of men, as if he had (as men do) known the inward affections of others by their outward actions.

4. God knows all the evils and sins of creatures. (1.) God knows all sin. This follows upon the other. (1. If he knows all the actions and thoughts of creatures, he knows also all the sinfulness in those acts and thoughts. This Zophar infers from God's punishing men (Job 11:11); for he knows vain man, he sees his wickedness also; he knows every man, and sees the wickedness of every man; he looks down from heaven, and beholds not only the filthy persons, but what is filthy in them (Psalm 14:2, 3), all nations in the world, and every man of every nation; none of their iniquity is hid from his eyes; he searches Jerusalem with candles (Jer. 16:17). God follows sinners step by step, with his eye, and will not leave searching out till he hath taken them; a metaphor taken from one that searches all chinks with a candle, that nothing can be hid from him. He knows it distinctly in all the parts of it, how an adulterer rises out of his bed to commit uncleanness, what contrivances he had, what steps he took, every circumstance in the whole progress; not only evil in the bulk, but every one of the blacker spots upon it, which may most aggravate it. If he did not know evil, how could he permit it, order it, punish it, or pardon it? Doth he permit he knows not what? order to his own holy ends what he is ignorant of? punish or pardon that which he is uncertain whether it be a crime or no? "Cleanse me," saith David, "from my secret faults" (Psalm 19:12), secret in regard of others, secret in regard of himself; how could God cleanse him from that whereof he was ignorant? He knows sins before they are committed, much more when they are in act; he foreknew the idolatry and apostacy of the Jews; what gods they would serve, in what measure they would provoke him. and violate his covenant (Deut. 31:20, 21); he knew Judas' sin long before Judas' actual existence, foretelling it in the Psalms; and Christ predicts it before he acted it. He sees sins future in his own permitting will; he sees sins present in his own supporting act. As he knows things possible to himself, because he knows his own power so he knows things practicable by the creature, because he knows the power and principles of the creature. This sentiment of God is naturally written in the fears of sinners, upon lightning, thunder, or some prodigious operation of God in the world; what is the language of them, but that he sees their deeds, hears their words, knows the inward sinfulness of their hearts; that he doth not only behold them as a mere spectator, but considers them as a just judge. And the poets say, that the sins of men leaped into heaven, and were writ in parchments of Jupiter, *scelus in terram geritur, in caelo scribitur*: sin is acted on earth, and recorded in heaven. God indeed doth not behold evil with the approving eye; he knows it not with a practical knowledge to be the author of it, but with a speculative knowledge, so as to understand the sinfulness of it; or a knowledge *simplicis intelligentiae*, of simple intelligence, as he permits them, not positively wills them; he knows them not with a knowledge of assent to them, but dissent from them. Evil pertains to a dissenting act of the mind, and an aversive act of the will; and what though evil formerly taken, hath no distinct conception, because it is a privation; a defect hath no being, and all knowledge is by the apprehension of some being; would not this lie as strongly against our own knowledge of sin? Sin is a privation of the rectitude due to an act; and who doubts man's knowledge of sin? by his knowing the act, he knows the deficiency of the act; the subject of evil hath a being, and so hath a conception in the mind; that which hath no being cannot be known by itself, or in itself; but will it follow that it cannot be known by its contrary? as we know darkness to be a privation of light, and folly to be a privation of wisdom. God knows good all by himself, because he is the sovereign good; is it strange then, that he should know all evil, since all evil is in some natural good. (2.) The manner of God's knowing evil is not so easily known. And indeed, as we cannot comprehend the essence of God, though it is easily intelligible that there is such a Being, so we can as little comprehend the manner of God's knowledge, though we cannot but conclude him to be an intelligent Being, a pure understanding, knowing all things. As God hath a higher manner of being than his creatures, so he hath another and higher manner of knowing; and we can as little comprehend the manner of his knowing, as we can the manner of his being. But as to the manner, doth not God know his own law? and shall he not know how much any action comes short of his rule? he cannot know his own rule without knowing all the deviations from it. He knows his own holiness, and shall he not see how any action is contrary to the holiness of his own nature? Doth not God know everything that is true? and is it not true that this or that is evil? and shall God be ignorant of any truth? How doth God know that he cannot lie, but by knowing his own veracity? How doth God know that he cannot die, but by knowing his own immutability? and by knowing those, he knows what a lie is, he knows what death is; so if sin never had been, if no creature had ever been, God would have known what sin was, because he knows his own holiness; because he knew what law was fit to be appointed to his creatures if he should create them, and that that law might be transgressed by them. God knows all good, all goodness in himself; he therefore hath a foundation in himself to know all that comes short of that goodness, that is opposite to that holiness: as if light were capable of understanding, it would know darkness only by knowing itself; by knowing itself, it would know what is contrary to itself knows all created goodness which he hath planted in the creature; he knows then all defects from this goodness, what perfection an act is deprived of; what is opposite to that goodness, and that is evil. As we know sickness by health,

discord by harmony, blindness by sight, because it is a privation of sight, whosoever knows one contrary knows the other; God knows unrighteousness by the idea which he hath of righteousness, and sees an act deprived of that rectitude and goodness which ought to be in it; he knows evil because he knows the causes whence evil proceeds. A painter knows a picture of his own framing, and if any one dashes any base color upon it, shall not he also know that? God by his hand painted all creatures, impressed upon man the fair stamp and color of his own image; the devil defiles it; man daubs it. Doth not God, that knows his own work, know how this piece is become different from his work? Doth not God, that knows his creatures' goodness, which himself was the fountain of, know the change of this goodness? Yea, he knew before, that the devil would sow tares where he had sown wheat; and therefore that controversy of some in the schools, whether God knew evil by its opposition to created or uncreated goodness, is needless. We may say God knows sin as it is opposite to created goodness, yet he knows it radically by his own goodness, because he knows the goodness he hath communicated to the creature by his own essential goodness in himself. To conclude this head: The knowledge of sin doth not bespot the holiness of God's nature; for the bare knowledge of a crime doth not infect the mind of man with the filth and pollution of that crime, for then every man that knows an act of murder committed by another, would, by that bare knowledge, be tainted with his sin; yea, and a judge that condemns a malefactor, may as well condemn himself if this were so: the knowledge of sins infects not the understandings that knows them, but only the will that approves them. It is no discredit to us to know evil, in order to pass a right judgment upon it; so neither can it be to God.

Fourthly, God knows all future things, all things to come. The differences of time cannot hinder a knowledge of all things by him, who is before time, above time, that is not measured by hours, or days, or years; if God did not know them, the hindrance must be in himself, or in the things themselves, because they are things to come: not in himself; if it did, it must arise from some impotency in his own nature, and so we render him weak; or from an unwillingness to know, and so we render him lazy, and an enemy to his own perfection; for, simply considered, the knowledge of more things is a greater perfection than the knowledge of a few; and if the knowledge of a thing includes something of perfection, the ignorance of a thing includes something of imperfection. The knowledge of future things is a greater perfection than not to know them, and is accounted among men a great part of wisdom, which they call foresight; it is then surely a greater perfection in God to know future things, than to be ignorant of them. And would God rather have something of imperfection than be possessor of all perfection? Nor doth the hindrance lie in the things themselves, because their futurity depends upon his will; for as nothing can actually be without his will, giving it existence, so nothing can be future without his will, designing the futurity of it. Certainly if God knows all things possible, which he will not do, he must know all things future, which he is not only able, but resolved to do, or resolved to permit. God's perfect knowledge of himself, that is, of his own infinite power and concluding will, necessarily includes a foreknowledge of what he is able to do, and what he will do. Again, if God doth not know future things, there was a time when God was ignorant of most things in the world; for before the deluge he was more ignorant than after; the more things were done in the world, the more knowledge did accrue to God, and so the more perfection; then the understanding of God was not perfect from eternity, but in time; nay, is not perfect yet, if he be ignorant of those things which are still to come to pass; he must tarry for a perfection he wants, till those futurities come to be in act, till those things which are to come, cease to be future, and begin to be present. Either God knows them, or desires to know them; if he desires to know them and doth not, there is something wanting to him; all desire speaks an absence of the object desired, and a sentiment of want in the person desiring: if he doth not desire to know them, nay, if he doth not actually know them, it destroys all providence, all his government of affairs; for his providence hath a concatenation of means with a prospect of something that is future: as in Joseph's case, who was put into the pit, and sold to the Egyptians in order to his future advancement, and the preservation both of his father and his envious brethren. If God did not know all the future inclinations and actions of men, something might have been done by the will of Potiphar, or by the free-will of Pharaoh, whereby Joseph might have been cut short of his advancement, and so God have been interrupted in the track and method of his designed providences. He that hath decreed to govern man for that end he hath designed him, knows all the means before, whereby he will govern him, and therefore hath a distinct and certain knowledge of all things; for a confused knowledge is an imperfection in government; it is in this the infiniteness of his understanding is more seen than in knowing things past or present; his eyes are a flame of fire (Rev. 1:14), in regard of the penetrating virtue of them into things impenetrable by any else. To make it further appear that God knows all things future, consider,

1. Everything which is the object of God's knowledge without himself was once only future. There was a moment when nothing was in being but himself: he knew nothing actually past, because nothing was past; nothing actually present, because nothing had any existence but himself; therefore only what was future. And why not everything that is future now, as well as only what was future and to come to pass just at the beginning of the creation? God indeed knows everything as present, but the things themselves known by him were not present, but future; the whole creation was once future, or else it was from eternity; if it begun in time, it was once future in itself, else it could never have begun to be. Did not God know what would be created by him, before it was created by him? Did he create he knew not what, and knew not before, what he should create? Was he ignorant before he acted, and in his acting, what his operation would tend to? or did he not know the nature of things, and the ends of them, till he had produced them and saw them in being? Creatures, then, did not arise from his knowledge, but his knowledge from them; he did not then will that his creatures should be, for he had then willed what he knew not, and knew not what he willed; they, therefore, must be known before they were made, and not known because they were made; he knew them to make them, and he did not make them to know them; By the same reason that he knew what creatures should be before they were, he knows still what creatures shall be before they are; for all things that are, were in God, not really in their own nature, but in him as a cause; so the earth and heavens were in him, as a model is in the mind of a workman, which is in his mind and soul, before it be brought forth into outward act.

2. The predictions of future things evidence this. There is not a prophecy of any thing to come, but is a spark of his foreknowledge, and bears witness to the truth of this assertion, in the punctual accomplishment of it; this is a thing challenged by God as his own peculiar, wherein he surmounts all the idols that man's inventions have godded in the world (Isa. 41:21, 22): Let them bring them forth (speaking of the idols) and show us what shall happen, or declare us things to come: show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods. Such a fore-knowledge of things to come, is here ascribed to God by God himself, as a distinction of him from all false gods; such a knowledge, that if any could prove that they were possessors of, he would acknowledge them gods as well as himself: "that we may know that you are gods." He puts his Deity to stand or fall upon this account, and this should be the point which should decide the controversy, whether he or the heathen idols were the true God; the dispute is managed by this medium,—He that knows things to come, is God; I know things to come, *ergo*, I am God; the idols know not things to come, therefore they are not gods; God submits the being of his Deity to this trial. If God know things to come no more than the heathen idols, which were either devils or men, he would be, in his own account, no more a God than devils or men, no more a God than the

pagan idols he doth scoff at for this defect. If the heathen idols were to be stripped of their deity for want of this foreknowledge of things to come, would not the true God also fall from the same excellency if he were defective in knowledge? He would, in his own judgment, no more deserve the title and character of a God than they. How could he reproach them for that, if it were wanting in himself? It cannot be understood of future things in their causes, when the effects necessarily arise from such causes, as light from the sun, and heat from the fire many of these men know; more of them angels and devils know if God, therefore, had not a higher and farther knowledge than this, he would not by this be proved to be God any more than angels and devils, who know necessary effects in their causes. The devils, indeed, did predict some things in the heathen oracles; but God is differenced from them here by the infiniteness of his knowledge, in being able to predict things to come that they knew not, or things in their particularities, things that depended on the liberty of man's will, which the devils could lay no claim to a certain knowledge of.

Were it only a conjectural knowledge that is here meant, the devils might answer, they can conjecture, and so their deity was as good as God's; for, though God might know more things, and conjecture nearer to what would be, yet still it would be but conjectural, and therefore not a higher kind of knowledge than what the devils might challenge. How much, then, is God beholden to the Socinians for denying the knowledge of all future things to him, upon which here he puts the trial of his Deity? God asserts his knowledge of things to come, as a manifest evidence of his Godhead; those that deny, therefore, the argument that proves it, deny the conclusion too; for this will necessarily follow, that if he be God, because he knows future things then he that doth not know future things is not God; and if God knows not future things but only by conjecture, then there is no God, because a certain knowledge, so as infallibly to predict things to come, is an inseparable perfection of the Deity: it was, therefore, well said of Austin, that it was as high a madness to deny God to be, as to deny him the foreknowledge of things to come. The whole prophetic part of Scripture declares this perfection of God; every prophet's candle was lighted at this torch; they could not have this foreknowledge of themselves; why might not many other men have the same insight, if it were nature? It must be from some superior Agent; and all nations owned prophecy as a beam from God, a fruit of Divine illumination. Prophecy must be totally expunged if this be denied; for the subjects of prophecy are things future, and no man is properly a prophet but in prediction. Now prediction is nothing but foretelling, and things foretold are not yet come, and the foretelling of them supposeth them not to be yet, but that they shall be in time; several such predictions we have in Scripture, the event whereof hath been certain. The years of famine in Egypt foretold that he would order second causes for bringing that judgment upon them; the captivity of his people in Babylon, the calling of the Gentiles, the rejection of the Jews. Daniel's revelation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; that prince refers to God as the revealer of secrets (Dan. 2:47). By the same reason that he knows one thing future by himself, and by the infiniteness of his knowledge before any causes of them appear, he doth know all things future.

3. Some future things are known by men; and we must allow God a greater knowledge than any creature. Future things in their causes may be known by angels and men, (as I said before); whosoever knows necessary causes, and the efficacy of them, may foretell the effects; and when he sees the meeting and concurrence of several causes together, he may presage what the consequent effect will be of such a concurrence: so physicians foretel the progress of a disease, the increase or diminution of it by natural signs; and astronomers foretel eclipses by their observation of the motion of heavenly bodies, many years before they happen; can they be hid from God, with whom are the reasons of all things? An expert gardener, by knowing the root in the depth of winter, can tell what flowers and what fruit it will bear, and the month when they will peep out their heads; and shall not God much more, that knows the principles of all his creatures, and is exactly privy to all their natures and qualities, know what they will be, and what operations shall be from those principles? Now, if God did know things only in their causes, his knowledge would not be more excellent than the knowledge of angels and men, though he might know more than they of the things that will come to pass, from every cause singly, and from the concurrence of many. Now, as God is more excellent in being than his creature, so he is more excellent in the objects of his knowledge, and the manner of his knowledge; well, then, shall a certain knowledge of something future, and a conjectural knowledge of many things, be found among men? and shall a determinate and infallible knowledge of things to come be found nowhere, in no being? If the conjecture of future things savours of ignorance, and God knows them only by conjecture, there is, then, no such thing in being as a perfect intelligent Being, and so no God.

4. God knows his own decree and will, and therefore must needs know all future things. If anything be future, or to come to pass, it must be from itself or from God: not from itself, then it would be independent and absolute: if it hath its futurity from God, then God must know what he hath decreed to come to pass; those things that are future, in necessary causes, God must know, because he willed them to be causes of such effects; he, therefore, knows them, because he knows what he willed. The knowledge of God cannot arise from the things themselves, for then the knowledge of God would have a cause without him; and knowledge, which is an eminent perfection, would be conferred upon him by his creatures. But as God sees things possible in the glass of his own power, so he sees things future in the glass of his own will; in his effecting will, if he hath decreed to produce them; in his permitting will, as he hath decreed to suffer them and dispose of them; nothing can pass out of the rank of things merely possible into the order of things future, before some act of God's will hath passed for its futurition. It is not from the infiniteness of his own nature, simply considered, that God knows things to be future; for as things are not future because God is infinite (for then all possible things should be future), so neither is any thing known to be future only because God is infinite, but because God hath decreed it; his declaration of things to come, is founded upon his appointment of things to come. In Isaiah 44:7, it is said, "And who, as I, shall call and declare it, since I appointed the ancient people, and the things that are coming?" Nothing is created or ordered in the world but what God decreed to be created and ordered. God knows his own decree, and therefore all things which he hath decreed to exist in time; not the minutest part of the world could have existed without his will, not an action can be done without his will; as life, the principle, so motion, the fruit of that life, is by and from God; as he decreed life to this or that thing, so he decreed motion as the effect of life, and decreed to exert his power in concurring with them, for producing effects natural from such causes; for without such a concurrence they could not have acted anything, or produced anything; and therefore as for natural things, which we call necessary causes, God foreseeing them all particularly in his own decree, foresaw also all effects which must necessarily flow from them, because such causes cannot but act when they are furnished with all things necessary for action: he knows his own decrees, and therefore necessarily knows what he hath decreed, or else we must say things come to pass whether God will or no, or that he wills he knows not what; but this cannot be, for "known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). Now this necessarily, flows from that principle first laid down, that God knows himself, since nothing is future without God's will; if God did not know future things, he would not know his own will; for as things possible could not be known by him, unless he knew the fulness of his own power, so things future could not be known by his understanding, unless he knew the resolves of his own will. Thus the knowledge of God differs from the knowledge of men; God's knowledge of his works precedes his works; man's knowledge of God's works follows his works, just as an

artificer's knowledge of a watch, instrument, or engine, which he would make, is before his making of it; he knows the motion of it, and the reason of those motions before it is made, because he knows what he hath determined to work; he knows not those motions from the consideration of them after they were made, as the spectator doth, who, by viewing the instrument after it is made, gains a knowledge from the sight and the consideration of it, till he understands the reason of the whole; so we know things from the consideration of them after we see them in being, and therefore we know not future things: but God's knowledge doth not arise from things because they are, but because he wills them to be; and therefore he knows everything that shall be, because it cannot be without his will, as the Creator and maintainer of all things; knowing his own substance, he knows all his works.

5. If God did not know all future things, he would be mutable in his knowledge. If he did not know all things that ever were or are to be, there would be upon the appearance of every new object, an addition of light to his understanding, and therefore such a change in him as every new knowledge causes in the mind of a man, or as the sun works in the world upon its rising every morning, scattering the darkness that was upon the face of the earth; if he did not know them before they came, he would gain a knowledge by them when they came to pass, which he had not before they were effected; his knowledge would be new according to the newness of the objects, and multiplied according to the multitude of the objects. If God did know things to come as perfectly as he knew things present and past, but knew those certainly, and the others doubtfully and conjecturally, he would suffer some change, and acquire some perfection in his knowledge, when those future things should cease to be future, and become present; for he would know it more perfectly when it were present, than he did when it was future, and so there would be a change from imperfection to a perfection; but God is every way immutable. Besides, that perfection would not arise from the nature of God, but from the existence and presence of the thing; but who will affirm that God acquires any perfection of knowledge from his creatures, any more than he doth of being? he would not then have that knowledge, and consequently that perfection from eternity, as he had when he created the world, and will not have a full perfection of the knowledge of his creature till the end of the world, nor of immortal souls, which will certainly act as well as live to eternity; and so God never was, nor ever will be, perfect in knowledge; for when you have conceived millions of years, wherein angels and souls live and act, there is still more coming than you can conceive, wherein they will act. And if God be always changing to eternity, from ignorance to knowledge, as those acts come to be exerted by his creatures, he will not be perfect in knowledge, no, not to eternity, but will always be changing from one degree of knowledge to another; a very unworthy conceit to entertain of the most blessed, perfect, and infinite God! Hence, then, it follows, that:

(1.) God foreknows all his creatures. All kinds which he determined to make; all particulars that should spring out of every species; the time when they should come forth of the womb; the manner how; "In thy Book all my members were written" (Psalm 139:16). Members is not in the *Heb.* whence some refer all, to all living creatures whatsoever, and all the parts of them which God did foresee; he knew the number of creatures with all their parts; they were written in the book of his foreknowledge; the duration of them, how long they shall remain in being, and act upon the stage; he knows their strength, the links of one cause with another, and what will follow in all their circumstances, and the series and combinations of effects with their causes. The duration of everything is foreknown, because determined (Job 14:5); "seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds, that he cannot pass;" bounds are fixed, beyond which none shall reach; he speaks of days and months, not of years, to give us notice of God's particular foreknowledge of everything, of every day, month, year, hour of a man's life.

(2.) All the acts of his creatures are foreknown by him. All natural acts, because he knows their causes; voluntary acts I shall speak of afterwards.

(3.) This foreknowledge was certain. For it is an unworthy notion of God to ascribe to him a conjectural knowledge; if there were only a conjectural knowledge, he could but conjecturally foretel anything; and then it is possible the events of things might be contrary to his predictions. It would appear then that God were deceived and mistaken, and then there could be no rule of trying things, whether there were from God or no; for the rule God sets down to discern his words from the words of false prophets, is the event and certain accomplishment of what is predicted (Deut. 18:21) to that question, "How shall we know whether God hath spoken or no?" he answers, that "if the thing doth not come to pass, the Lord hath not spoken." If his knowledge of future things were not certain, there were no stability in this rule, it would fall to the ground: we never yet find God deceived in any prediction, but the event did answer his forerevelation; his foreknowledge, therefore, is certain and infallible. We cannot make God uncertain in his knowledge, but we must conceive him fluctuating and wavering in his will; but if his will be not yea and nay, but yea, his knowledge is certain, because he doth certainly will and resolve.

(4.) This foreknowledge was from eternity. Seeing he knows things possible in his power, and things future in his will; if his power and resolves were from eternity, his knowledge must be so too, or else we must make him ignorant of his own power, and ignorant of his own will from eternity; and consequently not from eternity blessed and perfect. His knowledge of possible things must run parallel with his power, and his knowledge of future things run parallel with his will. If he willed from eternity, he knew from eternity what he willed; but that he did will from eternity, we must grant, unless we would render him changeable, and conceive him to be made in time of not willing, willing. The knowledge God hath in time, was always one and the same, because his understanding is his proper essence, and of an immutable nature. And indeed the actual existence of a thing is not simply necessary to its being perfectly known; we may see a thing that is past out of being, when it doth actually exist; and a carpenter may know the house he is to build, before it be built, by the model of it in his own mind; much more we may conceive the same of God whose decrees were before the foundation of the world; and to be before time was, and to be from eternity, hath no difference. As God in his being exceeds all beginning of time, so doth his knowledge all motions of time.

(5.) God foreknows all things as present with him from eternity. As he knows mutable things with an immutable and firm knowledge, so he knows future things with a present knowledge; not that the things which are produced in time, were actually and really present with him in their own beings from eternity; for then they could not be produced in time; had they a real existence, then they would not be creatures, but God; and had they actual being, then they could not be future, for future speaks a thing to come that is not yet. If things had been actually present with him, and yet future, they had been made before they were made, and had a being before they had a being; but they were all present to his knowledge as if they were in actual being, because the reason of all things that were to be made, was present with him. The reason of the will of God that they shall be, was aequally eternal with him, wherein he saw what, and when, and how he would create things, how he would govern them, to what ends he would direct them. Thus all things are present to God's knowledge, though in their own nature they may be past or future, not in *esse reali*, but in *esse intelligibili*, objectively, not actually present for as the unchangeableness and infiniteness of God's knowledge of changeable and finite things, doth

not make the things he knows immutable and infinite, so neither doth the eternity of his knowledge make them actually present with him from eternity; but all things are present to his understanding, because he hath at once a view of all successions of times; and his knowledge of future things is as perfect as of present things, or what is past; it is not a certain knowledge of present things, and an uncertain knowledge of future, but his knowledge of one is as certain and unerring as his knowledge of the other; as a man that beholds a circle with several lines from the centre, beholds the lines as they are joined in the centre, beholds them also as they are distant and severed from one another, beholds them in their extent and in their point all at once, though they may have a great distance from one another. He saw from the beginning of time to the last minute of it, all things coming out of their causes, marching in their order according to his own appointment; as a man may see a multitude of ants, some creeping one way, some another, employed in several businesses for their winter provision. The eye of God at once runs through the whole circle of time; as the eye of man upon a tower sees all the passengers at once, though some be past, some under the tower, some coming at a farther distance. "God," saith Job, "looks to the end of the earth, and sees under the whole heaven" (Job 28:24); the knowledge of God is expressed by sight in Scripture, and futurity to God is the same thing as distance to us; we can with a perspective-glass make things that are afar off appear as if they were near; and the sun, so many thousand miles distant from us, to appear as if it were at the end of the glass: why, then, should future things be at so great a distance from God's knowledge, when things so far from us may be made to approach so near to us? God considers all things in his own simple knowledge, as if they were now acted; and therefore some have chosen to call the knowledge of things to come, not prescience, or foreknowledge, but knowledge; because God sees all things in one instant, *scientià nunquam deficientis instantiæ*. Upon this account, things that are to come, are set down in Scripture as present, and sometimes as past (Isa. 9:6): "Unto us a child is born," though not yet born; so of the sufferings of Christ (Isa. 53:4, &c.): "He hath borne our griefs, he was wounded for our transgressions, he was taken from prison," &c., not shall be; and (Psalm 22:18): "they part my garments among them," as if it were present; all to express the certainty of God's foreknowledge, as if things were actually present before him.

(6.) This is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature. Nothing but what is eternal can know all things that are to come. Suppose a creature might know things that are to come, after he is in being, he cannot know things simply as future, because there were things future before he was in being. The devils know not men's heart, therefore cannot foretel their actions with any certainty; they may indeed have a knowledge of some things to come, but it is only conjectural, and often mistaken; as the devil was in his predictions among the heathen, and in his presage of "Job's cursing God to his face" upon his pressing calamities (Job 1:11). Sometimes, indeed, they have a certain knowledge of something future by the revelation of God, when he uses them as instruments of his vengeance, or for the trial of his people, as in the case of Job, when he gave him a commission to strip him of his goods; or, as the angels have, when he uses them as instruments of the deliverance of his people.

(7.) Though this be certain, that God foreknows all things and actions, yet the manner of his knowing all things before they come, is not so easily resolved. We must not, therefore, deny this perfection in God, because we understand not the manner how he hath the knowledge of all things. It were unworthy for us to own no more of God than we can perfectly conceive of him; we should then own no more of him than that he doth exist. "Canst thou," saith Job, "by searching, find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7). Do we not see things unknown to inferior creatures, to be known to ourselves? Irrational creatures do not apprehend the nature of a man, nor what we conceived of them when we look upon them; nor do we know what they fancy of us when they look wistly upon us; for ought as I know, we understand as little the manner of their imaginations, as they do of ours; and shall we ascribe a darkness in God as to future things, because we are ignorant of them, and of the manner how he should know them? shall we doubt whether God doth certainly know those things which we only conjecture? As our power is not the measure of the power of God, so neither is our knowledge the judge of the knowledge of God, no better nor so well as an irrational nature can be the judge of our reason. Do we perfectly know the manner how we know? shall we therefore deny that we know anything? We know we have such a faculty which we call understanding, but doth any man certainly know what it is? and became he doth not, shall he deny that which is plain and evident to him? Because we cannot ascertain ourselves of the causes of the ebbing and flowing of the sea, of the manner how minerals are engendered in the earth, shall we therefore deny that which our eyes convince us of? And this will be a preparation to the last thing.

Fifthly, God knows all future contingencies, that is, God knows all things that shall accidentally happen, or, as we say, by chance; and he knows all the free motions of men's wills that shall be to the end of the world. If all things be open to him (Heb. 4:13), then all contingencies are, for they are in the number of things; and as, according to Christ's speech, those things that are impossible to man, are possible to God, so those things which are unknown to man, are known to God; because of the infinite fulness and perfection of the divine understanding. Let us see what a contingent is. That is contingent which we commonly call accidental, as when a tile falls suddenly upon a man's head as he is walking in the street; or when one letting off a musket at random shoots another he did not intend to hit; such was that arrow whereby Ahab was killed, shot by a soldier at a venture (1 Kings 22:39); this some call a mixed contingent, made up partly of necessity, and partly of accident; it is necessary the bullet, when sent out of the gun, or arrow out of the bow, should fly and light somewhere; but it is an accident that it hits this or that man, that was never intended by the archer. Other things, as voluntary actions, are purely contingents, and have nothing of necessity in them; all free actions that depend upon the will of man, whether to do, or not to do, are of this nature, because they depend not upon a necessary cause, as burning doth upon the fire, moistening upon water, or as descent or falling down is necessary to a heavy body; for those cannot in their own nature do otherwise; but the other actions depend upon a free agent, able to turn to this or that point, and determine himself as he pleases. Now we must know, that what is accidental in regard of the creature, is not so in regard of God; the manner of Ahab's death was accidental, in regard of the hand by which he was slain, but not in regard of God who foretold his death, and foreknew the shot, and directed the arrow; God was not uncertain before of the manner of his fall, nor hovered over the battle to watch for an opportunity to accomplish his own prediction; what may be or not be, in regard of us, is certain in regard of God; to imagine that what is accidental to us, is so to God, is to measure God by our short line. How many events following upon the results of princes in their counsels, seem to persons, ignorant of those counsels, to be a haphazard, yet were not contingencies to the prince and his assistants, but foreseen by him as certainly to issue so as they do, which they knew before would be the fruit of such causes and instruments they would knit together! That may be necessary in regard of God's foreknowledge, which is merely accidental in regard of the natural disposition of the immediate causes which do actually produce it; contingent in its own nature, and in regard of us, but fixed in the knowledge of God. One illustrates it by this similitude; a master sends two servants to one and the same place, two several ways, unknown to one another; they meet at the place which their master had appointed them; their meeting is accidental to them, one knows not of the other, but it was foreseen by the master that they should so meet; and that in regard of them it would seem a mere accident, till they

came to explain the business to one another; both the necessity of their meeting, in regard of their master's order, and the accidentalness of it in regard of themselves, were in both their circumstances foreknown by the master that employed them. For the clearing of this, take it in this method.

1. It is an unworthy conceit of God in any to exclude him from the knowledge of these things.

(1.) It will be a strange contracting of him to allow him no greater a knowledge than we have ourselves. Contingencies are known to us when they come into act, and pass from futurity to reality; and when they are present to us, we can order our affairs accordingly; shall we allow God no greater a measure of knowledge than we have, and make him as blind as ourselves, not to see things of that nature before they come to pass? Shall God know them no more? Shall we imagine God knows no otherwise than we know? and that he doth, like us, stand gazing with admiration at events? man can conjecture many things; is it fit to ascribe the same uncertainty to God, as though he, as well as we, could have no assurance till the issue appear in the view of all? If God doth not certainly foreknow them, he doth but conjecture them; but a conjectural knowledge is by no means to be fastened on God; for that is not knowledge, but guess, and destroys a Deity by making him subject to mistake; for he that only guesseth, may guess wrong; so that this is to make God like ourselves, and strip him of an universally acknowledged perfection of omniscience. A conjectural knowledge, saith one, is as unworthy of God as the creature is unworthy of omniscience. It is certain man hath a liberty to act many things this or that way as he pleases; to walk to this or that quarter, to speak or not to speak; to do this or that thing, or not to do it; which way a man will certainly determine himself, is unknown before to any creature, yea, often at the present to himself, for he may be in suspense; but shall we imagine this future determination of himself is concealed from God?

Those that deny God's foreknowledge in such cases, must either say, that God hath an opinion that a man will resolve rather this way than that; but then if a man by his liberty determine himself contrary to the opinion of God, is not God then deceived? and what rational creature can own him for a God that can be deceived in anything? or else they must say that God is at uncertainty, and sustains his opinion without determining it any way; then he cannot now free acts till they are done; he would then depend upon the creature for his information; his knowledge would be every instant increased, as things, he knew not before, came into act; and since there are every minute an innumerable multitude of various imaginations in the minds of men, there would be every minute an accession of new knowledge to God which he had not before; besides, this knowledge would be mutable according to the wavering and weathercock resolutions of men, one while standing to this point, another while to that, if he depended upon the creature's determination for his knowledge.

(2.) If the free acts of men were unknown before to God, no man can see how there can be any government of the world by him. Such contingencies may happen, and such resolves of men's free-wills unknown to God, as may perplex his affairs, and put him upon new counsels and methods for attaining those ends which he settled at the first creation of things; if things happen which God knows not of before, this must be the consequence; where there is no foresight, there is no providence; things may happen so sudden, if God be ignorant of them, that they may give a check to his intentions and scheme of government, and put him upon changing the whole model of it. How often doth a small intervening circumstance, unforeseen by man, dash in pieces a long meditated and well-formed design! To govern necessary causes, as sun and stars, whose effects are natural and constant in themselves, is easy to be imagined; but how to govern the world that consists of so many men of free-will, able to determine themselves to this or that, and which have no constancy in themselves, as the sun and stars have, cannot be imagined; unless we will allow in God as great a certainty of foreknowledge of the designs and actions of men, as there is inconstancy in their resolves. God must be altering the methods of his government every day, every hour, every minute, according to the determinations of men, which are so various and changeable in the whole compass of the world in the space of one minute; he must wait to see what the counsels of men will be, before he could settle his own methods of government; and so must govern the world according to their mutability, and not according to any certainty in himself. But his counsel is stable in the midst of multitudes of free devices in the heart of man (Prov. 19:21), and knowing them all before, orders them to be subservient to his own stable counsel. If he cannot know what to-morrow will bring forth in the mind of a man, how can he certainly settle his own determination of governing him? His decrees and resolves must be temporal, and arise *pro re nata*, and he must always be in counsel what he should do upon every change of men's minds. This is an unworthy conceit of the infinite majesty of heaven, to make his government depend upon the resolves of men, rather than their resolves upon the design of God.

2. It is therefore certain, that God doth foreknow the free and voluntary acts of man. How could he else order his people to ask of him things to come, in order to their deliverance, such things as depended upon the will of man, if he foreknew not the motions of their will (Isa. 45:11)?

(1.) Actions good or indifferent depending upon the liberty of man's will as much as any whatsoever. Several of these he hath foretold; not only a person to build up Jerusalem was predicted by him, but the name of that person, Cyrus (Isa. 44:28). What is more contingent, or is more the effect of the liberty of man's will, than the names of their children? Was not the destruction of the Babylonish empire foretold, which Cyrus undertook, not by any compulsion, but by a free inclination and resolve of his own will?

And was not the dismissal of the Jews into their own country a voluntary act in that conqueror? If you consider the liberty of man's will, might not Cyrus as well have continued their yoke, as have struck off their chains, and kept them captive, as well as dismissed them? Had it not been for his own interest, rather to have strengthened the fetters of so turbulent a people, who being tenacious of their religion and laws different from that professed by the whole world, were like to make disturbances more when they were linked in a body in their own country, than when they were transplanted and scattered into the several parts of his empire? It was in the power of Cyrus (take him as a man) to choose one or the other; his interest invited him to continue their captivity, rather than grant their deliverance; yet God knew that he would willingly do this rather than the other; he knew this which depended upon the will of Cyrus; and why may not an infinite God foreknow the free acts of all men, as well as of one? If the liberty of Cyrus' will was no hindrance to God's certain and infallible foreknowledge of it, how can the contingency of any other thing be a hindrance to him? for there is the same reason of one and all; and his government extends to every village, every family, every person, as well as to kingdoms and nations. So God foretold, by his prophet, not only the destruction of Jeroboam's altar, but the name of the person that should be the instrument of it (1 Kings 13:2), and this about 300 years before Josiah's birth. It is a wonder that none of the pious kings of Judah, in detestation of idolatry, and hopes to recover again the kingdom of Israel, had in all that space named one of their sons by that name of Josiah, in hopes that that prophecy should be accomplished by him; that Manasseh only should do this, who was the

greatest imitator of Jeroboam's idolatry among all the Jewish kings, and indeed went beyond them; and had no mind to destroy in another kingdom what he propagated in his own. What is freer than the imposition of a name? yet this he foreknew, and this Josiah was Manasseh's son (2 Kings 21:26). Was there anything more voluntary than for Pharaoh to honor the butler by restoring him to his place, and punish the baker by hanging him on a gibbet? yet this was foretold (Gen. 40:8). And were not all the voluntary acts of men, which were the means of Joseph's advancement, foreknown by God, as well as his exaltation, which was the end he aimed at by those means? Many of these may be reckoned up. Can all the free acts of man surmount the infinite capacity of the Divine understanding? If God singles out one voluntary action in man as contingent as any, and lying among a vast number of other designs and resolutions, both antecedent and subsequent, why should he not know the whole mass of men's thoughts and actions, and pierce into all that the liberty of man's will can effect? why should he not know every grain, as well as one that lies in the midst of many of the same kind? And since the Scripture gives so large an account of contingents, predicted by God, no man can certainly prove that anything is unforeknown to him. It is as reasonable to think he knows every contingent, as that he knows some that he as much hid from the eye of any creature, since there is no more difficulty to an infinite understanding to know all, than to know some. Indeed, if we deny God's foreknowledge of the voluntary actions of men, we must strike ourselves off from the belief of scripture predictions that yet remain unaccomplished, and will be brought about by the voluntary engagements of men, as the ruin of antichrist, &c. If God foreknows not the secret motions of man's will, how can he foretell them? if we strip him of this perfection of prescience, why should we believe a word of scripture predictions? all the credit of the word of God is torn up by the roots. If God were uncertain of such events, how can we reconcile God's declaration of them to his truth; and his demanding our belief of them to his goodness? Were it good and righteous in God to urge us to the belief of that he were uncertain of himself, how could he be true in predicting things he were not sure of? or good, in requiring credit to be given to that which might be false? This would necessarily follow, if God did not foreknow the motions of men's wills, whereby many of his predictions were fulfilled, and some remain yet to be accomplished.

(2.) God foreknows the voluntary sinful motions of men's wills. First, God had foretold several of them. Were not all the minute sinful circumstances about the death of our blessed Redeemer, as the piercing him, giving him gall to drink, foretold, as well as the not breaking his bones, and parting his garments? What were those but the free actions of men, which they did willingly without any constraint? and those foretold by David, Isaiah, and other prophets; some above a thousand, some eight hundred, and some more, some fewer years before they came to pass; and the events punctually answered the prophecies. Many sinful acts of men, which depended upon their free will, have been foretold. The Egyptians' voluntary oppressing Israel (Gen. 15:13); Pharaoh's hardening his heart against the voice of Moses (Exod. 3:19); that Isaiah's message would be in vain to the people (Isa. 6:9); that the Israelites would be rebellious after Moses' death, and turn idolaters (Deut. 31:16); Judas' betraying of our Saviour, a voluntary action (John 6. *ult.*); he was not force to do what he did, for he had some kind of repentance for it; and not violence, but voluntariness falls under repentance. Second, His truth had depended upon this foresight. Let us consider that in Gen. 15:16, "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again;" that is, the posterity of Abraham shall come into Canaan, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. God makes a promise to Abraham, of giving his posterity the land of Canaan, not presently, but in the fourth generation; if the truth of God be infallible in the performance of his promise, his understanding is as infallible in the foresight of the Amorites' sin; the fullness of their iniquity was to precede the Israelites' possession. Did the truth of God depend upon an uncertainty? did he make the promise hand over head (as we say)? How could he, with any wisdom and truth, assure Israel of the possession of the land in the fourth generation, if he had not been sure that the Amorites would fill up the measure of their iniquities by that time? If Abraham had been a Socinian, to deny God's knowledge of the free acts of men, had he not a fine excuse for unbelief? What would his reply have been to God? Alas, Lord, this is not a promise to be relied upon, the Amorites' iniquity depends upon the acts of their free will, and such thou canst have no knowledge of; thou canst see no more than a likelihood of their iniquity being full, and therefore there is but a likelihood of thy performing thy promise, and not a certainty!

Would not this be judged not only, a saucy, but a blasphemous answer? And upon these principles the truth of the most faithful God had been dashed to uncertainty and a peradventure. Third, God provided a remedy for man's sin, and therefore foresaw the entrance of it into the world by the fall of Adam. He had a decree before the foundation of the world, to manifest his wisdom in the gospel by Jesus Christ, an "eternal purpose in Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:11), and a decree of election past before the foundation of the world;—a separation of some to redemption, and forgiveness of sin in the blood of Christ, in whom they were from eternity chosen, as well as in time accepted in Christ (Eph. 1:4, 6, 7), which is called a "purpose in himself" (ver. 9); had not sin entered, there had been no occasion for the eath of the Son of God, it being everywhere in Scripture laid upon that score;—a decree for the shedding of blood, supposed a decree for the permission of sin, and a certain foreknowledge of God, that it would be committed by man. An uncertainty of foreknowledge, and a fixedness of purpose, are not consistent in a wise man, much less in the only wise God. God's purpose to manifest his wisdom to men and angels in this way might have been defeated, had God had only a conjectural foreknowledge of the fall of man; and all those solemn purposes of displaying his perfections in those methods had been to no purpose; the provision of a remedy supposed a certainty of the disease. If a sparrow fall not to the ground without the will of God, how much less could such a deplorable ruin fall upon mankind, without God's will permitting it, and his knowledge foreseeing it? It is not hard to conceive how God might foreknow it? he indeed decreed to create man in an excellent state; the goodness of God could not but furnish him with a power to stand; yet in his wisdom he might foresee that the devil would be envious to man's happiness, and would, out of envy, attempt his subversion. As God knew of what temper the faculties were he had endued man with, and how far they were able to endure the assaults of a temptation, so he also foreknew the grand subtelties of Satan, how he would lay his mine, and to what point he would drive his temptation; how he would propose and manage it, and direct his battery against the sensitive appetite, and assault the weakest part of the fort; might he not foresee that the efficacy of the temptation would exceed the measure of the resistance; cannot God know how far the malice of Satan would extend, what shots he would, according to his nature, use, how high he would charge his temptation without his powerful restraint, as well as an engineer judge how many shots of a cannon will make a breach in a town, and how many casks of powder will blow up a fortress, who never yet built the one, nor founded the other? We may easily conclude God could not be deceived in the judgment of the issue and event, since he knew how far he would let Satan loose, how far he would permit man to act; and since he dives to the bottom of the nature of all things, he foresaw that Adam was endued with an ability to stand; as he foresaw that Benhadad might naturally recover of his disease; but he foresaw also that Adam would sink under the allurements of the temptation, as he foresaw that Hamel would let Benhadad live (2 Kings 8:10). Now since the whole race of mankind lies in corruption, and is subject to the power of the devil (1 John 3:18), may not God, that knows that corruption in every man's nature, and the force of every man's spirit, and what every particular nature will incline him to upon such objects proposed to him, and what the reasons of the temptation will be, know also the issues? is there any difficulty in God's foreknowing this, since man knowing the nature of one he is well acquainted with, can conclude what sentiments he will have, and how he will behave himself

upon presenting this or that object to him? If a man that understands the disposition of his child or servant, knows before what he will do upon such an occasion, may not God much more, who knows the inclinations of all his creatures, and from eternity run with his eyes over all the works he intended? Our wills are in the number of causes; and since God knows our wills, as causes, better than we do ourselves, why should he be ignorant of the effects? God determines to give grace to such a man, not to give it to another, but leave him to himself, and suffer such temptations to assault him; now God knowing the corruption of man in the whole mass, and in every part of it, is it not easy for him to foreknow what the future actions of the will will be, when the tinder and fire meet together, and how such a man will determine himself, both as to the substance and manner of the action? Is it not easy for him to know how a corrupted temper and a temptation will suit? God is exactly privy to all the gall in the hearts of men, and what principles they will have, before they have a being. He "knows their thoughts afar off" (Psalm 139:2), as far off as eternity, as some explain the words, and thoughts are as voluntary as anything; he knows the power and inclinations of men in the order of second causes; he understands the corruption of men, as well as "the poison of dragons, and the venom of asps;" this is "laid up in store with him, and sealed among his treasures" (Deut. 32:33, 34): among the treasures of his foreknowledge, say some. What was the cruelty of Hazael, but a free act? yet God knew the frame of his heart, and what acts of murder and oppression would spring from that bitter fountain, before Hazael had conceived them in himself (2 Kings 8:12), as a man that knows the minerals through which the waters pass, may know what relish they will have before they appear above the earth, so our Saviour knew how Peter would deny him; he knew what quantity of powder would serve for such a battery, in what measure he would let loose Satan, how far he would leave the reins in Peter's hands, and then the issue might easily be known; and so in every act of man, God knows in his own will what measure of grace he will give, to determine the will to good, and what measure of grace he will withdraw from such a person, or not give to him; and, consequently, how far such a person will fall or not. God knows the inclinations of the creature; he knows his own permissions, what degrees of grace he will either allow him, or keep from him, according to which will be the degree of his sin. This may in some measure help our conceptions in this, though, as was said before, the manner of God's foreknowledge is not so easily explicable.

(3.) God's foreknowledge of man's voluntary actions doth not necessitate the will of man. The foreknowledge of God is not deceived, nor the liberty of man's will diminished. I shall not trouble you with any school distinctions, but be as plain as I can, laying down several propositions in this case.

Prop. I. It is certain all necessity doth not take away liberty, indeed a compulsive necessity takes away liberty, but a necessity of immutability removes not liberty from God; why should, then, a necessity of infallibility in God remove liberty from the creature? God did necessarily create the world, because he decreed it; yet freely, because his will from eternity stood to it, he freely decreed it and freely created it, as the apostle saith in regard of God's decrees, "Who hath been his counsellor" (Rom. 11:34)? so in regard of his actions I may say, Who hath been his compeller? he freely decreed, and he freely created. Jesus Christ necessarily took our flesh, because he had covenanted with God so to do, yet he acted freely and voluntarily according to that covenant, otherwise his death had not been efficacious for us. A good man doth naturally, necessarily, love his children, yet voluntarily: it is part of the happiness of the blessed to love God unchangeably, yet freely, for it would not be their happiness if it were done by compulsion.

What is done by force cannot be called felicity, because there is no delight or complacency in it; and, though the blessed love God freely, yet, if there were a possibility of change, it would not be their happiness, their blessedness would be damped by their fear of falling from this love, and consequently from their nearness to God, in whom their happiness consists: God foreknows that they will love him forever, but are they therefore compelled forever to love him? If there were such a kind of constraint, heaven would be rendered burdensome to them, and so no heaven. Again, God's foreknowledge of what he will do, doth not necessitate him to do: he foreknew that he would create a world, yet he freely created a world. God's foreknowledge doth not necessitate himself; why should it necessitate us more than himself? We may instance in ourselves: when we will a thing, we necessarily use our faculty of will; and when we freely will any thing, it is necessary that we freely will; but this necessity doth not exclude, but include, liberty; or, more plainly, when a man writes or speaks, whilst he writes or speaks, those actions are necessary, because to speak and be silent, to write and not to write, at the same time, are impossible; yet our writing or speaking doth not take away the power not to write or to be silent at that time if a man would be so; for he might have chose whether he would have spoke or writ. So there is a necessity of such actions of man, which God foresees; that is, a necessity of infallibility, because God cannot be deceived, but not a coactive necessity, as if they were compelled by God to act thus or thus.

Prop. II. No man can say in any of his voluntary actions that he ever found any force upon him. When any of us have done anything according to our wills, can we say we could not have done the contrary to it? were we determined to it in our own intrinsic nature, or did we not determine ourselves? did we not act either according to our reason, or according to outward allurements? did we find anything without us, or within us, that did force our wills to the embracing this or that? Whatever action you do, you do it because you judge it fit to be done, or because you will do it. What, though God foresaw that you would do so, and that you would do this or that, did you feel any force upon you? did you not act according to your nature? God foresees that you will eat or walk at such a time; do you find anything that moves you to eat, but your own appetite? or to walk, but your own reason and will? If prescience had imposed any necessity upon man, should we not probably have found some kind of plea from it in the mouth of Adam? he knew as much as any man ever since knew of the nature of God, as discoverable in creation; he could not in innocence fancy an ignorant God, a God that know nothing of future things; he could not be so ignorant of his own action, but he must have perceived a force upon his will, had there been any; had he thought that God's prescience imposed any necessity upon him, he would not have omitted the plea, especially when he was so daring as to charge the providence of God in the gift of the woman to him, to be the cause of his crime. (Gen. 3:12) How come his posterity to invent new charges against God, which their father Adam never thought of, who had more knowledge than all of them? He could find no cause of his sin but the liberty of his own will; he charges it, not upon any necessity from the devil, or any necessity from God; nor doth he allege the gift of the woman as a necessary cause of his sin, but an occasion of it, by giving the fruit to him. Judas knew that our Saviour did foreknow his treachery, for he had told him of it in the hearing of his disciples (John 13:21-26), yet he never charged the necessity of his crime upon the foreknowledge of his Master; if Judas had not done it freely, he had had no reason to repent of it; his repentance justifies Christ from imposing any necessity upon him by that foreknowledge. No man acts anything, but he can give an account of the motives of his action; he cannot father it upon a blind necessity; the will cannot be compelled, for then it would cease to be the will: God doth not root up the foundations of nature, or change the order of it, and make men unable to act like men, that is, as free agents. God foreknows the actions of irrational creatures; this concludes no violence upon their nature, for we find their actions to be according to their nature, and spontaneous.

Prop. III. God's foreknowledge is not, simply considered, the cause of anything. It puts nothing into things, but only beholds them as

present, and arising from their proper causes. The knowledge of God is not the principle of things, or the cause of their existence, but directive of the action; nothing is because God knows it, but because God wills it, either positively or permissively; God knows all things possible; yet, because God knows them they are not brought into actual existence, but remain still only as things possible; knowledge only apprehends a thing, but acts nothing; it is the rule of acting, but not the cause of acting; the will is the immediate principle, and the power the immediate cause; to know a thing is not to do a thing, for then we may be said to do everything that we know: but every man knows those things which he never did, nor never will do; knowledge in itself is an apprehension of a thing, and is not the cause of it. A spectator of a thing is not the cause of that thing which he sees, that is, he is not the cause of it, as he beholds it. We see a man write, we know before that he will write at such a time; but this foreknowledge is not the cause of his writing. We see a man walk, but our vision of him brings no necessity of walking upon him; he was free to walk or not to walk. We foreknow that death will seize upon all men, we foreknow that the seasons of the year will succeed one another, yet is not our foreknowledge the cause of this succession of spring after winter, or of the death of all men, or any man? We see one man fighting with another; our sight is not the cause of that contest, but some quarrel among themselves, exciting their own passions. As the knowledge of present things imposeth no necessity upon them while they are acting, and present, so the knowledge of future things imposeth no necessity upon them while they are coming. We are certain there will be men in the world to-morrow, and that the sea will ebb and flow; but is this knowledge of ours the cause that those things will be so? I know that the sun will rise to-morrow, it is true that it shall rise; but it is not true that my foreknowledge makes it to rise. If a physician prognosticates, upon seeing the intemperances and debaucheries of men, that they will fall into such a distemper, is his prognostication any cause of their disease, or of the sharpness of any symptoms attending it? The prophet foretold the cruelty of Hazael before he committed it; but who will say that the prophet was the cause of his commission of that evil? And thus the foreknowledge of God takes not away the liberty of man's will, no more than a foreknowledge that we have of any man's actions takes away his liberty. We may upon our knowledge of the temper of a man, certainly foreknow, that if he falls into such company, and get among his cups; lie will be drunk; but is this foreknowledge the cause that he is drunk? No; the cause is the liberty of his own will, and not resisting the temptation. God purposes to leave such a man to himself and his own ways; and man being so left, God foreknows what will be done by him according to that corrupt nature which is in him; though the decree of God of leaving a man to the liberty of his own will be certain, yet the liberty of man's will as thus left, is the cause of all the extravagances he doth commit. Suppose Adam had stood, would not God certainly have foreseen that he would have stood? yet it would have been concluded that Adam had stood, not by any necessity of God's foreknowledge, but by the liberty of his own will. Why should then the foreknowledge of God add more necessity to his falling than to his standing? And though it be said sometimes in Scripture, that such a thing was done "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," as John 12:38, "that the saving of Esais might be fulfilled, Lord, who hath believed our report?" the word *that* doth not infer that the prediction of the prophet was the cause of the Jews' belief, but infers this, that the prediction was manifested to be true by their unbelief, and the event answered the prediction; this prediction was not the cause of their sin, but their foreseen sin was the cause of this prediction; and so the particle that is taken (Psalm 51:6), "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, that thou mightest be justified," &c.; the justifying God was not the end and intent of the sin, but the event of it upon his acknowledgment.

Prop. IV. God foreknows things, because they will come to pass; but things are not future, because God knows them. Foreknowledge presupposeth the object which is foreknown; a thing that is to come to pass is the object of the Divine knowledge, but not the cause of the act of divine knowledge; and though the foreknowledge of God doth in eternity precede the actual presence of a thing which is foreseen as future, yet the future thing, in regard of its futurity, is as eternal as the foreknowledge of God: as the voice is uttered before it be heard, and a thing is visible before it be seen, and a thing knowable before it be known. But how comes it to be knowable to God? it must be answered, either in the power of God as a thing possible, or in the will of God as a thing future; he first willed, and then knew what he willed; he knew what he willed to effect, and he knew what he willed to permit; as he willed the death of Christ by a determinate counsel, and willed the permission of the Jew's sin, and the ordering of the malice of their nature to that end (Acts 2:22). God decrees to make a rational creature, and to govern him by a law; God decrees not to hinder this rational creature from transgressing his law; and God foresees that what he would not hinder, would come to pass. Man did not sin because God foresaw him; but God foresaw him to sin, because man would sin. If Adam and other men would have acted otherwise, God would have foreknown that they would have acted well; God foresaw our actions because they would so come to pass by the motion of our freewill, which he would permit, which he would concur with, which he would order to his own holy and glorious ends, for the manifestation of the perfection of his nature. If I see a man lie in a sink, no necessity is inferred upon him from my sight to lie in that filthy place, but there is a necessity inferred by him that lies there, that I should see him in that condition if I pass by, and cast my eye that way.

Prop. V. God did not only foreknow our actions, but the manner of our actions. That is, he did not only know that we would do such actions, but that we would do them freely; he foresaw that the will would freely determine itself to this or that; the knowledge of God takes not away the nature of things; though God knows possible things, yet they remain in the nature of possibility; and though God knows contingent things, yet they remain in the nature of contingencies; and though God knows free agents, yet they remain in the nature of liberty. God did not foreknow the actions of man, as necessary, but as free; so that liberty is rather established by this foreknowledge, than removed. God did not foreknow that Adam had not a power to stand, or that any man hath not a power to omit such a sinful action, but that he would not omit it. Man hath a power to do otherwise than that which God foreknows he will do. Adam was not determined by any inward necessity to fall, nor any man by any inward necessity to commit this or that particular sin; but God foresaw that he would fall, and fall freely; for he saw the whole circle of means and causes whereby such and such actions should be produced, and can be no more ignorant of the motions of our wills, and the manner of them, than an artificer can be ignorant of the motions of his watch, and how far the spring will let down the string in the space of an hour; he sees all causes leading to such events in their whole order, and how the free-will of man will comply with this, or refuse that; he changes not the manner of the creature's operation, whatsoever it be.

Prop. VI. But what if the foreknowledge of God, and the liberty of the will, cannot be fully reconciled by man? shall we therefore deny a perfection in God to support a liberty in ourselves? Shall we rather fasten ignorance upon God, and accuse him of blindness, to maintain our liberty? That God doth foreknow everything, and yet that there is liberty in the rational creature, are both certain; but how fully to reconcile them, may surmount the understanding of man. Some truths the disciples were not capable of bearing in the days of Christ; and several truths our understandings cannot reach as long as the world doth last; yet, in the mean time, we must, on the one hand, take heed of conceiving God ignorant, and on the other hand, of imagining the creature necessitated; the one will render God imperfect, and the other will seem to render him unjust, in punishing man for that sin which he could not avoid, but was

brought into by a fatal necessity. God is sufficient to render a reason of his own proceedings, and clear lip all at the day of judgment; it is a part of man's curiosity, since the fall, to be prying into God's secrets, things too high for him; whereby he sings his own wings, and confounds his own understanding. It is a cursed affectation that runs in the blood of Adam's posterity, to know as God, though our first father smarted and ruined his posterity in that attempt; the ways and knowledge of God are as much above our thoughts and conceptions as the heavens are above the earth (Isa. 55:9), and so sublime, that we cannot comprehend them in their true and just greatness; his designs are so mysterious, and the ways of his conduct so profound, that it is not possible to dive into them. The force of our understandings is below his infinite wisdom, and therefore we should adore him with an humble astonishment, and cry out with the apostle (Rom. 11:33): "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Whenever we meet with depths that we cannot fathom, let us remember that he is God, and we his creatures; and not be guilty of so great extravagance, as to think that a subject can pierce into all the secrets of a prince, or a work understand all the operations of the artificer. Let us only resolve not to fasten anything on God that is unworthy of the perfection of his nature, and dishonorable to the glory of his majesty; nor imagine that we can ever step out of the rank of creatures to the glory of the Deity, to understand fully everything in his nature. So much for the second general, what God knows.

III. The third is, how God knows all things. As it is necessary we should conceive God to be an understanding being, else he could not be God, so we must conceive his understanding to be infinitely more pure and perfect than ours in the act of it, else we liken him to ourselves, and debase him as low as his footstool. As among creatures there are degrees of being and perfection, plants above earth and sand, because they have a power of growth, beasts above plants, because to their power of growth there is an addition of excellency of sense, rational creatures above beasts, because to sense there is added the dignity of reason. The understanding of man is more noble than all the vegetative power of plants, or the sensitive power of beasts: God therefore must be infinitely more excellent in his understanding, and therefore in the manner of it. As man differs from a beast in regard of his knowledge, so doth God also from man, in regard of his knowledge. As God therefore is in being and perfection, infinitely more above a man than a man is above a beast, the manner of his knowledge must be infinitely more above a man's knowledge, than the knowledge of a man is above that of a beast; our understanding can clasp an object in a moment that is at a great distance from our sense; our eye, by one elevated motion, can view the heavens; the manner of God's understanding must be unconceivably above our glimmerings; as the manner of his being is infinitely more perfect than all beings, so must the manner of his understanding be infinitely more perfect than all created understandings. Indeed, the manner of God's knowledge can no more be known by us than his essence can be known by us; and the same incapacity in man, which renders him unable to comprehend the being of God, renders him as unable to comprehend the manner of God's understanding. As there is a vast distance between the essence of God and our beings, so there is between the thoughts of God and our thoughts; the heavens are not so much higher than the earth, as the thoughts of God are above the thoughts of men, yea, and of the highest angel (Isa. 55:8, 9), yet though we know not the manner of God's knowledge, we know that he knows; as though we know not the infiniteness of God, yet we know that he is infinite. It is God's sole prerogative to know himself, what he is; and it is equally his prerogative to know how he knows; the manner of God's knowledge therefore must be considered by us as free from those imperfections our knowledge is encumbered with. In general, God doth necessarily know all things; he is necessarily omnipresent, because of the immensity of his essence; so he is necessarily omniscient, because of the infiniteness of his understanding. It is no more at the liberty of his will, whether he will know all things, than whether he will be able to create all things; it is no more at the liberty of his will, whether he will be omniscient, than whether he will be holy; he can as little be ignorant, as he can be impure; he knows not all things, because he will know them, but because it is essential to his nature to know them. In particular,

Prop. I. God knows by his own essence; that is, he sees the nature of things in the ideas of his own mind, and the events of things in the decrees of his own will; he knows them not by viewing the things, but by viewing himself; his own essence is the mirror and book, wherein he beholds all things that he doth ordain, dispose and execute; and so he knows all things in their first and original cause; which is no other than his own essence willing, and his own essence executing what he wills; he knows them in his power, as the physical principle; in his will, as the moral principle of things, as some speak. He borrows not the knowledge of creatures from the creatures, nor depends upon them for means of understanding, as we poor worms do, who are beholden to the objects abroad to assist us with images of things, and to our senses to convey them into our minds; God would then acquire a perfection from those things which are below himself, and an excellency from those things which are vile; his knowledge would not precede the being of the creatures, but the creatures would be before the act of his knowledge. If he understood by images drawn from the creatures, as we do, there would be something in God which is not God, viz. the images of things drawn from outward objects: God would then depend upon creatures for that which is more noble than a bare being; for to be understanding, is more excellent than barely to be. Besides, if God's knowledge of his creatures were derived from the creatures by the impression of anything upon him, as there is upon us, he could not know from eternity, because from eternity there was no actual existence of anything but himself; and therefore there could not be any images shot out from anything, because there was not anything in being but God; as there is no principle of being to anything, but by his essence; so there is no principle of the knowledge of anything by himself but his essence; if the knowledge of God were distinct from his essence, his knowledge were not eternal, because there is nothing eternal but his essence. His understanding is not a faculty in him as it is in us, but the same with his essence, because of the simplicity of his nature; God is not made up of various parts, one distinct from another, as we are, and therefore doth not understand by a part of himself, but by himself; so that to be, and to understand, is the same with God; his essence is not one thing, and the power whereby he understands another; he would then be compounded, and not be the most simple being. This is also necessary for the perfection of God; for the more perfect and noble the way and manner of knowing is, the more perfect and noble is the knowledge. The perfection of knowledge depends upon the excellency of the medium whereby we know. As a knowledge by reason, is a more noble way of knowing than knowledge by sense; so it is more excellent for God to know by his essence, than by anything without him, anything mixed with him; the first would render him dependent, and the other would demolish his simplicity. Again, the natures of all things are contained in God, not formally; for then the nature of the creatures would be God; but eminently, "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" (Psalm 94:9) He hath in himself eminently the beauty, perfection, life and vigor of all creatures; he created nothing contrary to himself, but everything with some footsteps of himself in them; he could not have pronounced them good, as he did, had there been anything in them contrary to his own goodness; and therefore as his essence primarily represents itself, so it represents the creatures, and makes them known to him. As the essence of God is eminently all things, so by understanding his essence, he eminently understands all things. And therefore he hath not one knowledge of himself, and another knowledge of the creatures; but by knowing himself as the original and exemplary cause of all things, he cannot be ignorant of any creature which he is the cause of; so that he knows all things, not by an understanding of them, but by an understanding of himself; by understanding his own power as

the efficient of them, his own will as the orderer of them, his own goodness as the adorning and beautifier of them, his own wisdom as the disposer of them, and his own holiness, to which many of their actions are contrary. As he sees all things possible in his own power, because he is able to produce them; so he sees all things future in his own will, decreeing to effect them, if they be good, or decreeing to permit them if they be evil. In this class he sees what he will give being to, and what he will suffer to fall into a deficiency, without looking out of himself, or borrowing knowledge from his creatures; he knows all things in himself. And thus his knowledge is more noble, and of a higher elevation than ours, or the knowledge of any creature can be; he knows all things by one comprehension of the causes in himself.

Prop. II. God knows all things by one act of intuition. This the schools call an intuitive knowledge. This follows upon the other; for if he know by his own essence, he knows all things by one act, there would be otherwise a division in his essence, a first and a last, a nearness and a distance. As what he made, he made by one word; so what he sees, he pierceth into by one glance from eternity to eternity: as he wills all things by one act of his will, so he knows all things by one act of his understanding: he knows not some things discursively from other things, nor knows one thing successively after another. As by one act he imparts essence to things; so by one act he knows the nature of things.

1. He doth not know by discourse, as we do;—that is, by deducing one thing from another, and from common notions drawing out other rational conclusions and arguing one thing from another, and springing up various consequences from some principle assented to. But God stands in no need of reasonings; the making inferences and abstracting things, would be stains in the infinite perfection of God; here would be a mixture of knowledge and ignorance; while he knew the principle, he would not know the consequence and conclusion, till he had actually deduced it; one thing would be known after another, and so he would have an ignorance, and then a knowledge; and there would be different conceptions in God, and knowledge would be multiplied according to the multitude of objects; as it is in human understandings. But God knows all things before they did exist, and never was ignorant of them (Acts 15:18)

“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” He therefore knows them all at once; the knowledge of one thing was not before another, nor depended upon another, as it doth in the way of human reasoning. Though, indeed, some make a virtual discourse in God; that is, though God hath a simple knowledge, yet it doth virtually contain a discourse by the flowing of one knowledge from another; as from the knowledge of his own power, he knows what things are possible to be made by him; and from the knowledge of himself, he passes to the knowledge of the creatures; but this is only according to our conception, and because of our weakness they are apprehended as two distinct acts in God, one of which is the reason of another; as we say that one attribute is the reason of another; as his mercy may be said to be the reason of his patience; and his omnipresence to be the reason of the knowledge of present things done in the world. God, indeed, by one simple act, knows himself and the creatures; but when that act whereby he knows himself, is conceived by us to pass to the knowledge of the creatures, we must not understand it to be a new act, distinct from the other; but the same act upon different terms or objects; such an order is in our understandings and conceptions, not in God’s.

2. Nor doth he know successively as we do: that is, not by drops, one thing after another. This follows from the former; a knowledge of all things without discourse, is a knowledge without succession. The knowledge of one thing is not in God before another, one act of knowledge doth not beget another; in regard of the objects, one thing is before another, one year before another, one generation of men before another, one is the cause, the other is the effect; in the creatures there is such a succession, and God knows there will be such a succession; but there is no such order in God’s knowledge, for he knows all those successions by one glance, without any succession of knowledge in himself. Man, in his view of things, must turn sometimes his body, sometimes only his eyes, he cannot see all the contents of a letter at once; and though he beholds all the lines in the page of a book at once, and a whole country in a map, yet to know what is contained in them, he must turn his eye from word to word, and line to line, and so spin out one thing after another by several acts and motions. We behold a great part of the sea at once, but not all the dimensions of it; for to know the length of the sea, we move our eyes one way; to see the breadth of it, we turn our eyes another way; to behold the depth of it, we have another motion of them.

And when we cast our eyes up to heaven, we seem to receive in an instant, the whole extent of the hemisphere; yet there is but one object the eye can attentively pitch upon, and we cannot distinctly view what we see in a lump, without various motions of our eyes, which is not done without succession of time. And certainly the understanding of angels is bounded, according to the measure of their beings; so that it cannot extend itself at one time, to a quantity of objects, to make a distinct application of them, but the objects must present themselves one by one; but God is all eye, all understanding; as there is no succession in his essence, so there is none in his knowledge; his understanding in the nature and in the act, is infinite, as it is in the text. He therefore sees, eternally and universally, all things by one act, without any motion, much less various motions; the various changes of things, in their substance, qualities, places, and relations, withdraw not anything from his eye, nor bring any new thing to his knowledge; he doth not upon consideration of present things turn his mind from past; or when he beholds future things turn his mind from present; but he sees them not one after another, but all at once and all together; the whole circle of his own counsels, and all the various lines drawn forth from the centre of his will, to the circumference of his creatures; just as if a man were able in one moment to read a whole library; or, as if you should imagine a transparent crystal globe, hung up in the midst of a room, and so framed as to take in the images of all things in the room, the fretwork in the ceiling, the inlaid parts of the floor and the particular parts of the tapestry about it, the eye of a man would behold all the beauty of the room at once in it. As the sun by one light and heat frames sensible things, so God by one simple act knows all things; as he knows mutable things by an immutable knowledge, bodily things by a spiritual knowledge, so he knows many things by one knowledge (Heb.4:13): “All things are open and naked to him,” more than any one thing can be to us; and therefore he views all things at once, as well as we can behold and contemplate one thing alone. As he is the Father of lights, a God of infinite understanding, there is no variableness in his mind, nor any shadow of turning of his eye, as there is of ours, to behold various things (James 1:17); his knowledge being eternal, includes all times; there is nothing past or future with him, and therefore he beholds all things by one and the same manner of knowledge, and comprehends all knowable things by one act, and in one moment. This must needs be so,

(1.) Because of the eminency of God. God is above all, and therefore cannot but see the motions of all. He that sits in a theatre, or at the top of a place, sees all things, all persons; by one aspect he comprehends the whole circle of the place; whereas, he that sits below, when he looks before, he cannot see things behind; God being above all, about all, in all, sees at once the motions of all. The whole world, in the eye of God, is less than a point that divides one sentence from another in a book; as a cypher, a “grain of dust” (Isa. 40:15); so little a thing can be seen by man at once; and all things being as little in the eye of God, are seen at once by him. As all time

is but a moment to his eternity, so all things are but as a point to the immensity of his knowledge, which he can behold with more ease than we can move or turn our eye.

(2.) Because all the perfections of knowing are united in God. As particular senses are divided in man,—by one he sees, by another he smells, yet all those are united in one common sense, and this common sense comprehends all,—so the various and distinct ways of knowledge in the creatures are all eminently united in God. A man when he sees a grain of wheat, understands at once all things that can in time proceed from that seed; so God, by beholding his own virtue and power, beholds all things which shall in time be unfolded by him. We have a shadow of this way of knowledge in our own understanding; the sense only perceives a thing present, and one object only proper and suitable to it; as the eye sees color, the ear hears sounds; we see this and that man, one time this, another minute that; but the understanding abstracts a notion of the common nature of man, and frames a conception of that nature wherein all men agree; and so in a manner beholds and understands all men at once, by understanding the common nature of man, which is a degree of knowledge above the sense and fancy; we may then conceive an infinite vaster perfection in the understanding of God. As to know, is simply better than not to know at all; so to know by one act comprehensive, is a greater perfection than to know by divided acts, by succession to receive information, and to have an increase or decrease of knowledge; to be like a bucket, always descending into the well, and fetching water from thence. It is a man's weakness that he is fixed on one object only at a time; it is God's perfection that he can behold all at once, and is fixed upon one no more than upon another.

Prop. III. God knows all things independently. This is essential to an infinite understanding. He receives not his knowledge from anything without him; he hath no tutor to instruct him, or book to inform him: "Who hath been his counsellor?" saith the prophet (Isa. 40:13); he hath no need of the counsels of others, nor of the instructions of others. This follows upon the first and second propositions; if he knows things by his essence, then, as his essence is independent from the creatures, so is his knowledge; he borrows not any images from the creature; hath no species or pictures of things in his understanding, as we have; no beams from the creature strike upon him to enlighten him, but beams from him upon the world; the earth sends not light to the sun, but the sun to the earth. Our knowledge, indeed, depends upon the object, but all created objects depend upon God's knowledge and will; we could not know creatures unless they were; but creatures could not be unless God knew them. As nothing that he wills is the cause of his will, so nothing that he knows is the cause of his knowledge; he did not make things to know them, but he knows them to make them: who will imagine that the mark of the foot in the dust is the cause that the foot stands in this or that particular place? If his knowledge did depend upon the things, then the existence of things did precede God's knowledge of them: to say that they are the cause of God's knowledge, is to say that God was not the cause of their being; and if he did create them, it was effected by a blind and ignorant power; he created he knew not what, till he had produced it. If he be beholden for his knowledge to the creatures he hath made, he had then no knowledge of them before he made them. If his knowledge were dependent upon them, it could not be eternal, but must have a beginning when the creatures had a beginning, and be of no longer a date than since the nature of things was in actual existence; for whatsoever is a cause of knowledge, doth precede the knowledge it causes, either in order of time, or order of nature: temporal things, therefore, cannot be the cause of that knowledge which is eternal. His works could not be foreknown to him, if his knowledge commenced with the existence of his works (Acts 15:18): if he knew them before he made them, he could not derive a knowledge from them after they were made. He made all things in wisdom (Psalm 104:24). How can this be imagined, if the things known were the cause of his knowledge, and so before his knowledge, and therefore before his action. God would not then be the first in the order of knowing agents, because he would not act by knowledge, but act before he knew, and know after he had acted; and so the creature which he made would be before the act of his understanding, whereby he knew what he made. Again, since knowledge is a perfection, if God's knowledge of the creatures depended upon the creatures, he would derive an excellency from them, they would derive no excellency from any idea in the Divine mind; he would not be infinitely perfect in himself; if his perfection in knowledge were gained from anything without himself and below himself; he would not be sufficient of himself, but be under an indigence, which wanted a supply from the things he had made, and could not be eternally perfect till he had created and seen the effects of his own power, goodness, and wisdom, to render him more wise and knowing in time than he was from eternity. Who can fancy such a God as this without destroying the Deity he pretends to adore? for if his understanding be perfected by something without him, why may not his essence be perfected by something without him; that, as he was made knowing by something without him, he might be made God by something without him? How could his understanding be infinite if it depended upon a finite object, as upon a cause? Is the majesty of God to be debased to a mendicant condition, to seek for a supply from things inferior to himself? Is it to be imagined that a fool, a toad, a fly, should be assistant to the knowledge of God? that the most noble being should be perfected by things so vile; that the Supreme Cause of all things should receive any addition of knowledge, and be determined in his understanding, by the notion of things so mean? To conclude this particular, all things depend upon his knowledge, his knowledge depends upon nothing, but is as independent as himself and his own essence.

Prop. IV. God knows all things distinctly. His understanding is infinite in regard of clearness; "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (John 1:5); he sees not through a mist or cloud; there is no blemish in his understanding, no mote or beam in his eye, to render any thing obscure to him. Man discerns the surface and outside of things; little or nothing of the essence of things; we see the noblest thing but "as in a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12); the too great nearness, as well as the too great distance of a thing, hinders our sight; the smallness of a mote escapes our eye, and so our knowledge; also the weakness of our understanding is troubled with the multitude of things, and cannot know many things but confusedly: but God knows the forms and essence of things, every circumstance; nothing is so deep, but he sees to the bottom; he sees the mass, and sees the motes of beings; his understanding being infinite, is not offended with a multitude of things, or distracted with the variety of them; he discerns every thing infinitely more clearly and perfectly than Adam or Solomon could any one thing in the circle of their knowledge; what knowledge they had, was from him; he hath, therefore, infinitely a more perfect knowledge than they were capable in their natures to receive a communication of. All things are open to him (Heb. 4:13); the least fibre, in its nakedness and distinct frame, is transparent to him, as, by the help of glasses, the mouth, feet, hands, of a small insect, are visible to a man, which seem to the eye, without that assistance, one entire piece, not diversified into parts. All the causes, qualities, natures, properties of things, are open to him; "he brings out the host of heaven by number, and calleth them by names" (Isa. 40:26); he numbers the hairs of our heads: what more distinct than number? Thus God beholds things in every unity, which makes up the heap; he knows, and none else can, every thing in its true and intimate causes, in its original and intermediate causes; in himself, as the cause of every particular of their being, every property in their being. Knowledge by the causes is the most noble and perfect knowledge, and most suited to the infinite excellency of the Divine Being; he created all things, and ordered them to a universal and particular end; he, therefore, knows the essential properties of every thing, every activity of their nature, all their fitness for those distinct ends, to which he orders them, and for which he governs and disposeth them, and understands their darkest

and most hidden qualities infinitely clearer than any eye can behold the clear beams of the sun. He knows all things as he made them; he made them distinctly, and therefore knows them distinctly, and that every individual; therefore God is said (Gen. 1:31) to see every thing that he had made; he took a review of every particular creature he had made, and upon his view pronounced it good. To pronounce that good, which was not exactly known in every creek, in every mite of its nature, had not consisted with his veracity; for every one that speaks truth ignorantly, that knows not that he speaks truth, is a liar in speaking that which is true. God knows every act of his own will, whether it be positive or permissive, and therefore every effect of his will. We must needs ascribe to God a perfect knowledge; but a confused knowledge cannot challenge that title. To know things only in a heap is unworthy of the Divine perfection; for if God knows his own ends in the creation of things, he knows distinctly the means whereby he will bring them to those ends for which he hath appointed them: no wise man intends an end, without a knowledge of the means conducing to that end; an ignorance, then, of any thing in the world, which falls under the nature of a means to a Divine end (and there is nothing in the world but doth), would be inconsistent with the perfection of God; it would ascribe to him a blind providence in the world. As there can be nothing imperfect in his being and essence, so there can be nothing imperfect in his understanding and knowledge, and therefore not a confused knowledge, which is an imperfection. "Darkness and light are both alike to him" (Psalm 139:12); he sees distinctly into the one, as well as the other; what is darkness to us, is not so to him.

Prop. V. God knows all things infallibly. His understanding is infinite in regard of certainty; every tittle of what he knows is as far from failing as what he speaks; our Saviour affirms the one (Matt. 5:18), and there is the same reason of the certainty of one as well as the other; his essence is the measure of his knowledge; whence it is as impossible that God should be mistaken in the knowledge of the least thing in the world, as it is that he should be mistaken in his own essence; for, knowing himself comprehensively, he must know all others things infallibly; since he is essentially omniscient, he is no more capable of error in his understanding than of imperfection in his essence; his counsels are as unerring as his essence is perfect, and his knowledge as infallible as his essence is free from defect. Again, since God knows all things with a knowledge of vision, because he wills them, his knowledge must be as infallible as his purpose; now his purpose will certainly be effected "what he hath thought shall come to pass, and what he hath purposed shall stand" (Isa. 14:24); "his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure" (Isa. 46:10). There may be interruptions of nature, the foundation of it may be out of course, but there can be no bar upon the Author of nature; he hath an infinite power to carry on and perfect the resolves of his own will; he can effect what he pleases by a word. Speech is one of the least motions; yet when God said, "Let there be light, there was light" arising from darkness. No reason can be given why God knows a thing to be, but because he infallibly wills it to be. Again, the schools make this difference between the knowledge of the good and bad angels, that the good are never deceived; for that is repugnant to their blessed state; for deceit is an evil and an imperfection inconsistent with that perfect blessedness the good angels are possessed of; and would it not much more be a stain upon the blessedness of that God, that is blessed forever, to be subject to deceit? His knowledge therefore is not an opinion, for an opinion is uncertain; a man knows not what to think, but leans to one part of the question proposed, rather than to the other. If things did not come to pass therefore as God knows them, his knowledge would be imperfect; and since he knows by his essence, his essence also would be imperfect, if God were exposed to any deceit in his knowledge; he knows by himself, who is the highest truth; and therefore it is impossible he should err in his understanding.

Prop. VI. God knows immutably. His understanding else could not be infinite; everything and every act that is mutable, is finite, it hath its bounds; for there is a term from which it changeth, and a term to which it changes. There is a change in the understanding, when we gain the knowledge of a thing, which was unknown to us before; or when we actually consider a thing which we did not know before, though we had the principles of the knowledge of it; or, when we know that distinctly, which we before knew confusedly. None of these can be ascribed to God without a manifest disparagement of his infiniteness. Our knowledge indeed is always arriving to us or flowing from us; we pass from one degree to another; from worse to better, or from better to worse; but God loses nothing by the ages that are run, nor will gain anything by the ages that are to come. If there were a variation in the knowledge of God, by the daily and hourly changes in the world, he would grow wiser than he was, he was not then perfectly wise before. A change in the objects known, infers not any change in the understanding exercised about them; the wheel moves round, the spokes that are lowest are presently highest, and presently return to be low again; but the eye that beholds them changes not with the motions of the wheels. God's knowledge admits no more of increase or decrease, than his essence doth; since God knows by his essence, and the essence of God is God himself, his knowledge must be void of any change. The knowledge of possible things, arising from the knowledge of his own power, cannot be changed unless his power be changed, and God become weak and impotent; the knowledge of future things cannot be changed, because that knowledge ariseth from his will, which is irreversible, "the counsel of the Lord that shall stand" (Prov. 19:21); so that if God can never decay into weakness, and never turn to inconstancy, there can be no variation of his knowledge. He knows what he can do, and he knows what he will do; and both these being immutable, his knowledge must, consequently, be so too: It was not necessary that this or that creature should be, and therefore it was not necessary that God should know this or that creature with a knowledge of vision; but after the will of God had determined the existence of this or that creature, his knowledge being then determined to this or that object, did necessarily continue unchangeable. God, therefore, knows no more now than he did before; and at the end of the world, he shall know no more than he doth now; and from eternity, he knows no less than he doth now, and shall do to eternity. Though things pass into being and out of being, the knowledge of God doth not vary with them, for he knows them as well before they were, as when they are, and knows them as well when they are past, as when they are present.

Prop. VII. God knows all things perpetually, *i. e.* in act. Since he knows by his essence, he always knows, because his essence never ceaseth, but is a pure act; so that he doth not know only in habit, but in act. Men that have the knowledge of some art or science, have it always in habit, though when they are asleep they have it not in act: a musician hath the habit of music, but doth not so much as think of it when his senses are bound up. But God is an unsleepy eye; he never slumbers nor sleeps; he never slumbers, in regard of his providence, and therefore never slumbers in regard of his knowledge. He knows not himself, nor any other creature more perfectly at one time than at another; he is perpetually in the act of knowing, as the sun is in the act of shining; the sun never ceased to shine in one or other part of the world, since it was first fixed in the heavens; nor God to be in the act of knowledge, since he was God; and therefore since he always was, and always will be God, he always was and always will be in the act of knowledge; always knowing his own essence, he must always actually know what hath been gone and ceased from being, and what shall come and arise into being; as a watchmaker knows what watch he intends to make, and after he hath made it, though it be broken to pieces, or consumed by the fire, he still knows it, because he knows the copy of it in his own mind. Some, therefore, in regard of this perpetual act of the Divine knowledge, have called God not *intellectus*, but the intellection of intellections; we have no proper English word to express the act of

the understanding; as his power is co-eternal with him, so is his knowledge; all times past, present, and to come, are embraced in the bosom of his understanding; he fixed all things in their seasons, that nothing new comes to him, nothing old passes from him. What is done in a thousand years, is actually present with his knowledge, as what is done in one day, or in one watch in the night, is with ours; since a "thousand years are no more to God than a day," or a "watch in the night" is to us (Psalm 90:4). God is in the highest degree of being, and therefore in the highest degree of understanding. Knowledge is one of the most perfect acts in any creature. God therefore hath all actual, as well as essential and habitual knowledge; his understanding is infinite.

IV. The fourth general is, Reasons to prove this.

Reason 1. God must know what any creature knows, and more than any creature knows. There is nothing done in the world but is known by some creature or other; every action is at least known by the person that acts, and therefore known by the Creator, who cannot be exceeded by any of the creatures, or all of them together; and every creature is known by him, since every creature is made by him. And as God works all things by an infinite power, so he knows all things by an infinite understanding. First, the perfection of God requires this. All perfections that include no essential defect, are formally in God; but knowledge includes no essential defect in itself, therefore it is in God. Knowledge in itself is desirable, and an excellency; ignorance is a defect; it is impossible that the least grain of defect can be found in the most perfect Being. Since God is wise, he must be knowing; for wisdom must have knowledge for the basis of it. A creature can no more be wise without knowledge, than he can be active without strength. Now God is "only wise" (Rom. 16:27); and, therefore, only knowing in the highest degree of knowledge, incomprehensibly beyond all degrees of knowledge, because infinite. Again, the more spiritual anything is, the more understanding it is. The dull body understands nothing; sense perceives, but the understanding faculty is seated in the soul, which is of a spiritual nature, which knows things that are present, remembers things that are past, foresees many things to come. What is the property of a spiritual nature, must be, in a most eminent manner, in the supreme spirit of the world; that is, in the highest degree of spirituality, and most remote from any matter. Again, nothing can enjoy other things, but by some kind of understanding them; God hath the highest enjoyment of himself, of all things he hath created, of all the glory that accrues to him by them; nothing of perfection and blessedness can be wanting to him. Felicity doth not consist with ignorance, and all imperfect knowledge is a degree of ignorance: God, therefore, doth perfectly know himself, and all things from whence he designs any glory to himself. The most noble manner of acting must be ascribed to God, as being the most noble and excellent Being; to act by knowledge is the most excellent manner of acting; God hath, therefore, not only knowledge, but the most excellent manner of knowledge; for as it is better to know than to be ignorant, so it is better to know in the most excellent manner, than to have a mean and low kind of knowledge; his knowledge, therefore, must be every way as perfect as his essence, infinite as well as that. An infinite nature must have an infinite knowledge: a God ignorant of anything cannot be counted infinite, for he is not infinite to whom any degree of perfection is wanting.

Reason 2. All the knowledge in any creature is from God. And you must allow God a greater and more perfect knowledge than any creature hath, yea, than all creatures have. All the drops of knowledge any creature hath, come from God; and all the knowledge in every creature, that ever was, is, or shall be, in the whole mass, was derived from him. If all those several drops in particular creatures, were collected into one spirit, into one creature, it would be an unconceivable knowledge, yet still lower than what the Author of all that knowledge hath; for God cannot give more knowledge than he hath himself; nor is the creature capable of receiving so much knowledge as God hath. As the creature is incapable of receiving so much power as God hath, for then it would be almighty, so it is incapable of receiving so much knowledge as God hath, for then it would be God.

Nothing can be made by God equal to him in anything; if anything could be made as knowing as God, it would be eternal as God, it would be the cause of all things as God. The knowledge that we poor worms have, is an argument God uses for the asserting the greatness of his own knowledge (Psalm 94:10): "He that teaches man knowledge, shall not he know?" Man hath here knowledge ascribed to him; the author of this knowledge is God; he furnished him with it, and therefore doth in a higher manner possess it, and much more than can fall under the comprehension of any creature; as the sun enlightens all things, but hath more light in itself than it darts upon the earth or the heavens: and shall not God eminently contain all that knowledge he imparts to the creatures, and infinitely more exact and comprehensive?

Reason 3. The accusations of conscience evidence God's knowledge of all actions of his creatures. Doth not conscience check for the most secret sins, to which none are privy but a man's self, the whole world beside being ignorant of his crime? Do not the fears of another Judge gall the heart? If a judgment above him be feared, an understanding above him, discerning their secrets is confessed by those fears; whence can those horrors arise, if there be not a superior that understands and records the crime? What perfection of the Divine Being can this relate unto, but omniscience? What other attribute is to be feared, if God were defective in this? The condemnation of us by our own hearts, when none in the world can condemn us, renders it legible, that there is One "greater than our hearts" in respect of knowledge, who "knoweth all things" (1 John 3:20). Conscience would be a vain principle, and stingless without this; it would be an easy matter to silence all its accusations, and mockingly laugh in the face of its severest frowns. What need any trouble themselves, if none knows their crimes but themselves? Concealed sins, gnawing the conscience, are arguments of God's omniscience of all present and past actions.

Reason 4. God is the first cause of everything, every creature is his production. Since all creatures, from the highest angel to the lowest worm, exist by the power of God, if God understands his own power and excellency, nothing can be hid from him, that was brought forth by that power, as well as nothing can be unknown to him, that that power is able to produce. "If God knows nothing besides himself; he may then believe there is nothing besides himself; we shall then fancy a God miserably mistaken: if he knows nothing besides himself, then things were not created by him, or not understandingly and voluntarily created, but dropped from him before he was aware." To think that the First Cause of all should be ignorant of those things he is the cause of, is to make him not a voluntary, but natural agent, and therefore necessary; and then that the creature came from him as light from the sun, and moisture from the water; this would be an absurd opinion of the world's creation; if God be a voluntary agent, as he is, he must be an intelligent agent. The faculty of will is not in any creature, without that of understanding also. If God be an intelligent agent, his knowledge must extend as far as his operation, and every object of his operation, unless we imagine God hath lost his memory, in that long tract of time since the first creation of them. An artificer cannot be ignorant of his own work: if God knows himself, he knows himself to be a cause; how can he know himself to be a cause, unless he know the effects he is the cause of? One relation implies another; a man cannot know himself to be a father, unless he hath a child, because it is a name of relation, and in the notion of it refers to another. The name of cause is a name of relation, and implies an effect; if God therefore know himself in all his perfections, as the cause of

things, he must know all his acts, what his wisdom contrived, what his counsel determined, and what his power effected. The knowledge of God is to be supposed in a free determination of himself; and that knowledge must be perfect, both of the object, act, and all the circumstances of it. How can his will freely produce anything that was not first known in his understanding? From this the prophet argues the understanding of God, and the unsearchableness of it, because he is the "Creator of the ends of the earth" (Isa. 40:28), and the same reason David gives of God's knowledge of him, and of everything he did, and that afar off, because he was formed by him (Psalm 139:2, 15, 16). As the perfect making of things only belongs to God: so doth the perfect knowledge of things; it is as absurd to think, that God should be ignorant of what he hath given being to; that he should not know all the creatures and their qualities, the plants and their virtues; as that a man should not know the letters that are formed by him in writing. Everything bears in itself the mark of God's perfection; and shall not God know the representation of his own virtue?

Reason 5. Without this knowledge, God could no more be the Governor, than he could be the Creator of the world. Knowledge is the basis of providence; to know things, is before the government of things; a practical knowledge cannot be without a theoretical knowledge. Nothing could be directed to its proper end, without the knowledge of the nature of it, and its suitability to answer that end for which it is intended. As everything, even the minutest, falls under the conduct of God, so everything falls under the knowledge of God. A blind coachman is not able to hold the reins of his horses, and direct them in right paths: since the providence of God is about particulars, his knowledge must be about particulars; he could not else govern them in particular; nor could all things be said to depend upon him in their being and operations. Providence depends upon the knowledge of God, and the exercise of it upon the goodness of God; it cannot be without understanding and will; understanding, to know what is convenient, and will to perform it. When our Saviour therefore speaks of providence, he intimates these two in a special manner, "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things" (Matt. 6:32), and goodness, in Luke 11:13. The reason of providence is so joined with omniscience, that they cannot be separated. What a kind of God would he be that were ignorant of those things that were governed by him! The ascribing this perfection to him, asserts his providence; for it is as easy for one that knows all things, to look over the whole world, if writ with monosyllables, in every little particular of it; as it is with a man to take a view of one letter in an alphabet. Again, if God were not omniscient, how could he reward the good, and punish the evil? the works of men are either rewardable or punishable; not only according to their outward circumstances, but inward principles and ends, and the degrees of venom lurking in the heart. The exact discerning of these, without a possibility to be deceived, is necessary to pass a right and infallible judgment upon them, and proportion the censure and punishment to the crime: without such a knowledge and discerning, men would not have their due; nay, a judgment just for the matter, would be unjust in the manner, because unjustly past, without an understanding of the merit of the cause. It is necessary, therefore that the Supreme Judge of the world should not be thought to be blindfold, when he distributes his rewards and punishments, and muffle his face when he passes his sentence. It is necessary to ascribe to him the knowledge of men's thoughts and intentions; the secret wills and aims; the hidden works of darkness in every man's conscience, because every man's work is to be measured by the will and inward frame. It is necessary that he should perpetually retain all those things in the indelible and plain records of his memory, that there may not be any work without a just proportion of what is due to it. This is the glory of God, to discover the secrets of all hearts at last, as 1 Cor. 4:5, "The Lord shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of all hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God." This knowledge fits him to be a judge; the reason why the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, is because God knows their ways, which is implied in his knowing the way of the righteous (Psalm 1:5, 6). I now proceed to the use.

Use I. is of information or instruction. If God hath all knowledge; then,

Instruct 1. Jesus Christ is not a mere creature. The two titles of wonderful Counsellor, and mighty God, are given him in conjunction (Isa. 9:6), not only the Angel of the covenant, as he is called (Mal. 3:1), or the executor of his counsels, but a counsellor, in conjunction with him in counsel as well as power: this title is superior to any title given to any of the prophets in regard of their predictions; and therefore I should take it rather as the note of his perfect understanding, than of his perfect teaching and discovering; as Calvin doth. He is not only the revealer of what he knows, so were the prophets according to their measures; but the counsellor of what he revealed, having a perfect understanding of all the counsels of God, as being interested in them, as the mighty God. He calls himself by the peculiar title of God, and declares that he will manifest himself by this prerogative to all the churches (Rev. 2:23): "And all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts," the most hidden operations of the minds of men, that lie locked up from the view of all the world besides. And this was no new thing to Him, after his ascension; for the same perfection he had in the time of his earthly flesh (Luke 6:8), he knew their thoughts; his eyes are therefore compared (Cant. 5:12) to doves' eyes, which are clear and quick; and to a flame of fire (Rev. 1:14), not only heat to consume his enemies, but light to discern their contrivances against the church; he pierceth by his knowledge, into all parts, as fire pierceth into the closest particle of iron, and separates between the most united parts of metals; and some tell us, he is called a Roe, from the perspicacity of his sight, as well as from the swiftness of his motion.

1. He hath a perfect knowledge of the Father; he knows the Father, and none else knows the Father; angels know God, men know God, but Christ in a peculiar manner knows the Father; no man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son (Matt. 11:27); he knows so, as that he learns not from any other; he doth perfectly comprehend him, which is beyond the reach of any creature, with the addition of all the divine virtue; not because of any incapacity in God to reveal, but the incapacity of the creature to receive; finite is incapable of being made infinite, and therefore incapable of comprehending infinite; so that Christ cannot be *Deus factus*, made of a creature a God, to comprehend God; for then of finite he would become infinite, which is a contradiction. As the Spirit is God, because he searches the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10), that is comprehends them, as the spirit of a man doth the things of a man (now the spirit of man understands what it thinks, and what it wills), so the Spirit of God understands what is in the understanding of God, and what is in the will of God. He hath an absolute knowledge ascribed to him, and such as could not be ascribed to anything but a divinity: now if the Spirit knows the deep things of God, and takes from Christ what he shows to us of him (John 16:15), he cannot be ignorant of those things himself; he must know the depths of God, that affords us that Spirit, that is not ignorant of any of the counsels of the Father's will; since he comprehends the Father, and the Father him, he is in himself infinite; for God whose essence is infinite, is infinitely knowable; but no created understanding can infinitely know God. The infiniteness of the object hinders it from being understood by anything that is not infinite. Though a creature should understand all the works of God, yet it cannot be therefore said to understand God himself: as though I may understand all the volitions and motions of my soul, yet it doth not follow that therefore I understand the whole nature and substance of my soul; or if a man understood all the effects of the sun, that therefore he understands fully the nature of the sun. But Christ knows the Father, he lay in the bosom of the

Father, was in the greatest intimacy with him (John 1:18), and from this intimacy with him, he saw him and knew him; so he knows God as much as he is knowable; and therefore knows him perfectly as the Father knows himself by a comprehensive vision; this is the knowledge of God wherein properly the infiniteness of his understanding appears: and our Saviour uses such expressions which manifest his knowledge to be above all created knowledge, and such a manner of knowledge of the Father, as the Father hath of him.

2. Christ knows all creatures. That knowledge which comprehends God, comprehends all created things as they are in God; it is a knowledge that sinks to the depths of his will, and therefore extends to all the acts of his will in creation and providence; by knowing the Father he knows all things that are contained in the virtue, power, and will of God; "whatsoever the Father doth, that the Son doth" (John 5:19.) As the Father therefore knows all things he is the cause of, so doth the Son know all things he is the worker of; as the perfect making of all things belongs to both, so doth the perfect knowledge of all things belong to both; where the action is the same, the knowledge is the same. Now the Father did not create one thing and Christ another; "but all things were created by him, and for him, all things both in heaven and earth" (Col. 1:16): as he knows himself as the cause of all things, and the end of all things, he cannot be ignorant of all things that were effected by him, and are referred to him; he knows all creatures in God, as he knows the essence of God, and knows all creatures in themselves, as he knows his own acts and the fruits of his power; those things must be in his knowledge that were in his power; all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God are hid in him (Col. 2:3). Now it is not the wisdom of God to know in part, and be in part ignorant. He cannot be ignorant of anything, since there is nothing but what was made by him (John 1:3), and since it is less to know than create; for we know many things which we cannot make. If he be the Creator, he cannot but be the discerner of what he made; this is a part of wisdom belonging to an artificer, to know the nature and quality of what he makes. Since he cannot be ignorant of what he furnished with being, and with various endowments, he must know them not only universally, but particularly.

3. Christ knows the heart and affections of men. Peter scruples not to ascribe to him this knowledge, among the knowledge of all other things (John 21:17). "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." From Christ's knowledge of all things, he concludes his knowledge of the inward frames and dispositions of men. To search the heart is the sole prerogative of God (1 Kings 8:39), for thou, even thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men: shall we take *only* here with a limitation, as some that are no friends to the Deity of Christ would, and say, God only knows the hearts of men from himself, and by his own infinite virtue? Why may we not take only in other places with a limitation, and make nonsense of it, as Psalm 86:10, "Thou art God alone." Is it to be understood that God is God alone from himself, but other gods may be made by him, and so there may be numberless infinities? As God is God alone, so that none can be God but himself; so he alone knows all the hearts of all the children of men, and none but he can know them; this knowledge is from his nature. The reason why God knows the hearts of men, is rendered in the Scripture double, because he created them, and because he is present everywhere (Psalm 33:13, 15), these two are by the confession of Christians and Pagans universally received as the proper characters of divinity, whereby the Deity is distinguished from all creatures. Now when Christ ascribes this to himself, and that with such an emphasis, that nothing greater than that could be urged, as he doth (Rev. 2:23), we must conclude that he is of the same essence with God, one with him in his nature, as well as one with him in his attributes. God only knows the hearts of the children of men; there is the unity of God: Christ searches the hearts and reins; there is a distinction of persons in a oneness of essence; he knows the hearts of all men, not only of those that were with him in the time of the flesh, that have been, and shall be, since his ascension; but of those that lived and died before his coming; because he is to be the Judge of all that lived before his humiliation on earth, as well as after his exaltation in heaven. It pertains to him, as a Judge, to know distinctly the merits of the cause of which he is to judge; and this excellency of searching the hearts is mentioned by himself with relation to his judicial proceeding, "I will give to every one of you according to your works." And though a creature may know what is in a man's heart, if it be revealed to him, yet such a knowledge is a knowledge only by report, not by inspection; yet this latter is ascribed to Christ (John 2:24, 25): "he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man:" he looked into their hearts. The Evangelist, to allay the amazement of men at his relation of our Saviour's knowledge of the inward falsity of those that made a splendid profession of him, doth not say the Father revealed it to him, but intimates it to be an unseparable property of his nature. No covering was so thick as to bound his eye; no pretence so glittering as to impose upon his understanding. Those that made a profession of him, and could not be discerned by the eye of man from his faithfulest attendants, were in their inside known to him plainer than their outside was to others; and, therefore, he committed not himself to them, though they seemed to be persuaded to a real belief in his name, because of the power of his miracles, and were touched with an admiration of him, as some great prophet, and, perhaps, declared him to be the Messiah (ver. 23.)

4. He had a foreknowledge of the particular inclinations of men, before those distinct inclinations were in actual being in them. This is plainly asserted, John 6:64: "But there are some of you that believe not; for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." When Christ assured them, from the knowledge of the hearts of his followers, that some of them were void of that faith they professed, the Evangelist, to stop their amazement that Christ should have such a power and virtue, adds, that he "knew from the beginning;" that he had not only a present knowledge, but a foreknowledge, of every one's inclination; he knew, not only now and then what was in the hearts of his disciples, but from the beginning, of any one's giving up their names to him; he knew whether it were a pretence or sincere; he knew who should betray him; and there was no man's inward affection but was foreseen by him. "From the beginning," whether we understand it from the beginning of the world, as when Christ saith, concerning divorces, "From the beginning it was not so," that is, from the beginning of the world, from the beginning of the law of nature; or, from the beginning of their attending him, as it is taken, Luke 1:2; he had a certain prescience of the inward dispositions of men's hearts, and their succeeding sentiments; he foreknew the treacherous heart of Judas in the midst of his splendid profession, and discerned his resolution in the root, and his thought in the confused chaos of his natural corruption; he knew how it would spring up before it did spring up, before Judas had any distinct and formal conception of it himself, or before there was any actual preparation to a resolve. Peter's denial was not unknown to him, when Peter had a present resolution, and no question spake it in the present sincerity of his soul, "never to forsake him;" he foreknew what would be the result of that poison which lurked in Peter's nature, before Peter himself imagined anything of it; he discerned Peter's apostatizing heart, when Peter resolved the contrary: our Saviour's prediction was accomplished, and Peter's valiant resolution languished into cowardice. Shall we then conclude our blessed Saviour a creature, who perfectly and only knew the Father, who knew all creatures; who had all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge who knew the inward motions of men's hearts by his own virtue, and had, not only a present knowledge, but a prescience of them?

Instruct. 2. The second instruction from this position, That God hath an infinite knowledge and understanding. Then there is a providence exercised by God in the world, and that about everything. As providence infers omniscience as the guide of it, so

omniscience infers providence as the end of it. What exercise would there be of this attribute, but in the government of the world? To this, this infinite perfection refers (Jer. 17:10), "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." He searches the heart to reward, he rewards every man according to the rewardableness of his actions; his government, therefore, extends to every man in the world; there is no heart but he searches, therefore no heart but he governs; to what purpose, else, would be this knowledge of all his creatures? for a mere contemplation of them? No. What pleasure can that be to God, who knows himself, who is infinitely more excellent than all his creatures? Doth he know them to neglect all care of them? this must be either out of sloth; but how incompatible is laziness to a pure and infinite activity! or out of majesty; but it is no less for the glory of his majesty to conduct them, than it was for the glory of his power to erect them into being. He that counts nothing unworthy of his arms to make, nothing unworthy of his understanding to know, why should he count anything unworthy of his wisdom to govern? If he knows them to neglect them, it must be because he hath no will to it, or no goodness for it; either of these would be a stain upon God; to want goodness is to be evil, and to want will is to be negligent and scornful, which are inconsistent with an infinite, active goodness. Doth a father neglect providing for the wants of the family which he knows? or a physician, the cure of that disease he understands? God is omniscient, he therefore sees all things; he is good, he doth not therefore neglect anything, but conducts it to the end he appointed it. There is nothing so little that can escape his knowledge, and therefore nothing so little but falls under his providence; nothing so sublime as to be above his understanding, and therefore nothing can be without the compass of his conduct; nothing can escape his eye, and therefore nothing can escape his care; nothing is known to him in vain, as nothing was made by him in vain; there must be acknowledged, therefore, some end of this knowledge of all his creatures.

Instruct 3. Hence, then, will follow the certainty of a day of judgment. To what purpose can we imagine this attribute of omniscience, so often declared and urged in Scripture to our consideration, but in order to a government of our practice, and a future trial? Every perfection of the Divine nature hath sent out brighter rays in the world than this of his infinite knowledge. His power hath been seen in the being of the world, and his wisdom in the order and harmony of the creatures; his grace and mercy hath been plentifully poured out in his mission of a Redeemer, and his justice hath been elevated by the dying groans of the Son of God upon the cross. But hath his omniscience yet met with a glory proportionable to that of his other perfections? All the attributes of God that have appeared in some beautiful glimmerings in the world, wait for a more full manifestation in glory, as the creatures do for the "manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19); but especially this, since it hath been less evidenced than others, and as much, or more, abused than any; it expects, therefore, a public righting in the eye of the world. There have been, indeed, some few sparks of this perfection sensibly struck out now and then in the world in some horrors of conscience, which have made men become their own accusers of unknown crimes, in bringing out hidden wickedness to a public view by various providences. This hath also been the design of sprinklings of judgments upon several generations, as (Psalm 90:8), "We are consumed by thy anger, and by thy wrath we are troubled; thou hast set our iniquities before thee, and our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." The word צלומי signifies youth, as well as secret, *i. e.*, sins committed long ago, and that with secrecy. By this he hath manifested that secret sins are not hid from his eye. Though inward terrors and outward judgments have been let loose to worry men into a belief of this, yet the corruptions of men would still keep a contrary notion in their minds, that "God hath forgotten, that he hides his face from transgression, and will not regard their impiety" (Psalm 10:11). There must, therefore, be a time of trial for the public demonstration of this excellency, that it may receive its due honor, by a full testimony that no secrecy can be a shelter from it. As his justice, which consists in giving every one his due, could not be glorified, unless men were called to an account for their actions, so neither would his omniscience appear in its illustrious colors, without such a manifestation of the secret motions of men's hearts, and of villainies done under lock and key, when none were conscious to them, but the committers of them. Now the last judgment is the time appointed for the "opening of the books" (Dan. 7:10). The book of God's records, and conscience the counterpart, were never fully opened and read before, only now and then some pages turned to, in particular judgments; and out of those "books shall men be judged according to their works" (Rev. 20:12). Then shall the defaced sins be brought, with all their circumstances, to every man's memory; the counsels of men's hearts fled far from their present remembrance, all the habitual knowledge they had of their own actions, shall, by God's knowledge of them, be excited to an actual review; and their works not only made manifest to themselves, but notorious to the world: all the words, thoughts, deeds of men, shall be brought forth into the light of their own minds by the infinite light of God's understanding reflecting on them. His knowledge renders him an unerring witness, as well as his justice "a swift witness" (Mal. 3:5); a swift witness, because he shall, without any circuit, or length of speech, convince their consciences, by an inward illumination of them, to take notice of the blackness and deformity of their hearts and works. In all judgments God is somewhat known to be the searcher of hearts; the time of judgment is the time of his remembrance (Hos. 8:13): "Now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins;" but the great instant, or now, of the full glorifying it, is the grand day of account. This attribute must have a time for its full discovery; and no time can be fit for it but a time of a general reckoning. Justice cannot be exercised without omniscience; for as justice is a giving to every one his due, so there must be knowledge to discern what is due to every man; the searching the heart is in order to the rewarding the works.

Instruct 4. This perfection in God gives us ground to believe a resurrection. Who can think this too hard for his power, since not the least atom of the dust of our bodies can escape his knowledge? An infinite understanding comprehends every mite of a departed carcase; this will not appear impossible, nor irrational, to any, upon a serious consideration, of this excellency in God. The body is perished, the matter of it hath been since clothed with different forms and figures; part of it hath been made the body of a worm, part of it returned to the dust that hath been blown away by the wind; part of it hath been concocted in the bodies of canibals, fish, ravenous beasts; the spirits have evaporated into air, part of the blood melted into water; what, then, is the matter of the body annihilated? is that wholly perished? no; the foundation remains, though it hath put on a variety of forms; the body of Abel, the first man that died, nor the body of Adam, are not, to this day, reduced to nothing; indeed, the quantity and the quality of those bodies have been lost by various changes they have past through since their dissolution; but the matter, or substance of them, remains entire, and is not capable to be destroyed by all those transforming alterations, in so long a revolution of time. The body of a man in his infancy and his old age, if it were Methuselah's, is the same in the foundation in those multitude of years; though the quantity of it be altered, the quality different; though the color and other things be changed in it, the matter of this body remains the same among all the alterations after death. And can it be so mixed with other natures and creatures, as that it is past finding out by an infinite understanding? Can any particle of this matter escape the eye of Him that makes and beholds all those various alterations, and where every mite of the substance of those bodies is particularly lodged, so as that he cannot compact it together again for a habitation of that soul, that many a year before fled from it? Since the knowledge of God is infinite, and his providence extensive over the least as well as the greatest parts of the world, he must needs know the least as well as the greatest of his creatures in their beginning, progress, and dissolution; all the forms through which the bodies of all creatures roll, the particular instants of time, and the particular place when and where those changes are made, they are all present with him; and, therefore, when the revolution of time allotted by

him for the reunion of souls and deceased bodies is come, it cannot be doubted but, out of the treasures of his knowledge, he can call forth every part of the matter of the bodies of men, from the first to the last man that expired, and strip it of all those forms and figures which it shall then have, to compact it to be a lodging for that soul which before it entertained; and though the bodies of men have been devoured by wild beasts in the earth, and fish in the sea, and been lodged in the stomachs of barbarous men-eaters, the matter is not lost. There is but little of the food we take that is turned into the substance of our own bodies; that which is not proper for nourishment, which is the greatest part, is separated, and concocted, and rejected; whatsoever objections are made, are answered by this attribute. Nothing hinders a God of infinite knowledge from discerning every particle of the matter, wheresoever it is disposed; and since he hath an eye to discern, and a hand to recollect and unite, what difficulty is there in believing this article of the christian faith? he that questions this revealed truth of the resurrection of the body, must question God's omniscience as well as his omnipotence and power.

Instruct. 5. What semblance of reason is there to expect a justification in the sight of God by anything in ourselves? Is there any action done by any of us, but upon a scrutiny we may find flaws and deficiency in it? What then? shall not this perfection of God discern them? the motes that escape our eyes cannot escape his (1 John 3:20): "God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things;" so that it is in vain for any man to flatter himself with the rectitude of any work, or enter into any debate with him who can bring a thousand articles against us, out of his own infinite records, unknown to us, and unanswerable by us. If conscience, a representative or counterpart of God's omniscience in our own bosoms, find nothing done by us, but in a copy short of the original, and beholds, if not blurs, yet imperfections in the best actions, God must much more discern them; we never knew a copy equally exact with the original. If our own conscience be as a thousand witnesses, the knowledge of God is as millions of witnesses against us; if our corruption be so great, and our holiness so low, in our own eyes, how much greater must the one, and how much meaner must the other, appear in the eyes of God? God hath an unerring eye to see, as well as an unspotted holiness to hate, and an unbribable justice to punish; he wants no more understanding to know the shortness of our actions, than he doth holiness to enact, and power to execute, his laws; nay, suppose we could recollect many actions, wherein there were no spot visible to us, the consideration of this attribute should scare us from resting upon any or all of them, since it is the Lord that, by a piercing eye, sees and judges according to the heart, and not according to appearance. The least crookedness of a stick, not sensible to an acute eye, yet will appear when laid to the line; and the impurity of a counterfeit metal be manifest when applied to the touchstone; so will the best action of any mere man in the world, when it comes to be measured in God's knowledge by the straight line of his law. Let every, man, therefore, as Paul, though he should know nothing by himself, think not himself therefore justified; since it is the Lord, who is of an infinite understanding, that judgeth (1 Cor. 4:4). A man may be justified in his own sight, "but not any living man can be justified in the sight of God" (Psalm 143:2); in his sight, whose eye pierceth into our unknown secrets and frames: it was, therefore, well answered of a good man upon his death bed, being asked "What he was afraid of?" "I have labored," saith he, "with all my strength to observe the commands of God; but since I am a man, I am ignorant whether my works are acceptable to God, since God judges in one manner, and I in another manner." Let the consideration therefore of this attribute, make us join with Job in his resolution (Job 9:21): "Though we were perfect, yet would we not know our own souls." I would not stand up to plead any of my virtues before God. Let us, therefore, look after another righteousness, wherein the exact eye of the Divine omniscience, we are sure, can discern no stain or crookedness.

Instruct. 6. What honorable and adoring thoughts ought we to have of God for this perfection! Do we not honor a man that is able to predict? do we not think it a great part of wisdom? Have not all nations regarded such a faculty as a character and a mark of divinity? There is something more ravishing in the knowledge of future things, both to the person that knows them, and the person that hears them, than there is in any other kind of knowledge; whence the greatest prophets have been accounted in the greatest veneration, and men have thought it a way to glory, to divine and predict. Hence it was that the devils and pagan oracles gained so much credit; upon this foundation were they established, and the enemies of mankind owned for a true God;—I say, from the prediction of future things, though their oracles were often ambiguous, many times false; yet those poor heathens framed many ingenious excuses to free their adored gods from the charge of falsity and imposture: and shall we not adore the true God, the God of Israel, the God blessed for ever, for this incommunicable property, whereby he flies above the wings of the wind, the understandings of men and cherubims? Consider how great it is to know the thoughts and intentions, and works of one man, from the beginning to the end of his life; to foreknow all these before the being of this man, when he was lodged afar off in the loins of his ancestors, yea, of Adam; how much greater is it to foreknow and know the thoughts and works of three or four men, of a whole village or neighborhood! It is greater still to know the imaginations and actions of such a multitude of men as are contained in London, Paris, or Constantinople; how much greater still to know the intentions and practices, the clandestine contrivances of so many millions that have, do, or shall swarm in all quarters of the world, every person of them having millions of thoughts, desires, designs, affections, and actions! Let this attribute, then, make the blessed God honorable in our eyes, and adorable in all our affections; especially since it is an excellency which hath so lately discovered itself, in bringing to light the hidden things of darkness, in opening, and in part confounding, the wicked devices of bloody men. Especially let us adore God for it, and admire it in God, since it is so necessary a perfection, that without it the goodness of God had been impotent, and could not have relieved us; for what help can a distressed person expect from a man of the sweetest disposition and the strongest arm, if the eyes which should discover the danger, and direct the defence and rescue, were closed up by blindness and darkness? Adore God for this wonderful perfection.

Instruct. 7. In the consideration of this excellent attribute, what low thoughts should we have of our own knowledge, and how humble ought we to be before God! There is nothing man is more apt to be proud of than his knowledge; it is a perfection he glories in; but if our own knowledge of the little outside and barks of things puffs us up, the consideration of the infiniteness of God's knowledge should abate the tumor: as our beings are nothing in regard to the infiniteness of his essence, so our knowledge is nothing in regard of the vastness of his understanding. We have a spark of being, but nothing to the heat of the sun; we have a drop of knowledge, but nothing to the Divine ocean. What a vain thing is it for a shallow brook to boast of its streams before a sea, whose depths are unfathomable! As it is a vanity to brag of our strength, when we remember the power of God, and of our prudence, when we glance upon the wisdom of God, so it is no less a vanity to boast of our knowledge, when we think of the understanding and knowledge of God. How hard is it for us to know anything! Too much noise deafens us, and too much light dazzles us; too much distance alienates the object from us, and too much nearness bars up our sight from beholding it. When we think ourselves to be near the knowledge of a thing, as a ship to the haven, a puff of wind blows us away, and the object which we desired to know eternally flies from us; we burn with a desire of knowledge, and yet are oppressed with the darkness of ignorance; we spend our days more in dark Egypt, than in enlightened Goshen. In what narrow bounds is all the knowledge of the most intelligent persons included! How few

understand the exact harmony of their own bodies, the nature of the life they have in common with other animals! Who understands the nature of his own faculties, how he knows, and how he wills; how the understanding proposeth, and how the will embraceth; how his spiritual soul is united to his material body; what the nature is of the operation of our spirits? Nay, who understands the nature of his own body, the offices of his senses, the motion of his members, how they come to obey the command of the will, and a thousand other things? What a vain, weak, and ignorant thing is man, when compared with God! yet there is not a greater pride to be found among devils, than among ignorant men, with a little, very little, flashy knowledge. Ignorant man is as proud as if he knew as God. As the consideration of God's omniscience should render him honorable in our eyes, so it should render us vile in our own. God, because of his knowledge, is so far from disdainning his creatures, that his omniscience is a minister to his goodness. No knowledge that we are possessed of should make us swell with too high a conceit of ourselves, and a disdain of others. We have infinitely more of ignorance than knowledge. Let us therefore remember, in all our thoughts of God, that he is God, and we are men; and therefore ought to be humble, as becomes men, and ignorant and foolish men, to be; as weak creatures should lie low before an Almighty God, and impure creatures before a holy God, false creatures before a faithful God, finite creatures before an infinite God, so should ignorant creatures before an all-knowing God. All God's attributes teach admiring thoughts of God, and low thoughts of ourselves.

Instruct. 8. It may inform us how much this attribute is injured in the world. The first error after Adam's eating the forbidden fruit was the denial of this, as well as the omnipresence of God, (Gen. 3:10,) "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I hid myself;" as if the thickness of the trees could screen him from the eye of his Creator. And after Cain's murder, this is the first perfection he affronts, (Gen. 4:9), "Where is Abel, thy brother?" saith God. How roundly doth he answer, "I know not!" as if God were as weak as man, to be put off with a lie. Man doth as naturally hate this perfection as much as he cannot naturally but acknowledge it; he wishes God stripped of this eminency, that he might be incapable to be an inspector of his crimes, and a searcher of the closets of his heart. In wishing him deprived of this, there is a hatred of God himself; for it is a loathing an essential property of God, without which he would be a pitiful Governor of the world. What a kind of God should that be, of a sinner's wishing, that had wanted eyes to see a crime, and righteousness to punish it! The want of the consideration of this attribute, is the cause of all sin in the world (Hos. 7:2), "They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness;" they speak not to their hearts, or make any reflection upon the infiniteness of my knowledge; it is a high contempt of God, as if he were an idol, a senseless stock or stone; in all evil practices this is denied. We know God sees all things, yet we live and walk as if he knew nothing. We call him omniscient, and live as if he were ignorant; we say he is all eye, yet act as if he were wholly blind.

In particular, this attribute is injured, by invading the peculiar rights of it, by presuming on it, and by a practical denial of it. First, By invading the peculiar rights of it. 1. By invocation of creatures. Praying to saints, by the Romanists, is a disparagement to this divine excellency; he that knows all things, is only fit to have the petitions of men presented to him; prayer supposeth an omniscient Being, as the object of it; no other being but God ought to have that honor acknowledged to it; no understanding but his is infinite; no other presence but his is everywhere; to implore any deceased creature for a supply of our wants, is to own in them a property of the Deity, and make them deities that were but men, and increase their glory by a diminution of God's honor, in ascribing that perfection to creatures which belongs only to God. Alas! they are so far from understanding the desires of our souls, that they know not the words of our lips: it is against reason to address our supplications to them that neither understand us nor discern us (Isa. 63:16), "Abraham ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledges us not" The Jews never called upon Abraham, though the covenant was made with him for the whole seed; not one departed saint for the whole four thousand years, between the creation of the world, and the coming of Christ, was ever prayed to by the Israelites, or ever imagined to have a share in God's omniscience: so that to pray to St. Peter, St. Paul, much less to St. Roch, St. Swithin, St. Martin, St. Francis, &c. is such a superstition, that hath no footing in the Scripture. To desire the prayers of the living, with whom we have a communion, who can understand and grant our desires, is founded upon a mutual charity; but to implore persons that are absent, at a great distance from us, with whom we have not, nor know how to have, any commerce, supposeth them, in their departure, to have put off humanity, and commenced gods, and endued with some part of the Divinity to understand our petitions; we are, indeed, to cherish their memories, consider their examples, imitate their graces, and observe their doctrines; we are to follow them as saints, but not elevate them as gods, in ascribing to them such a knowledge, which is the only necessary right of their and our common Creator. As the invocation of saints mingles them with Christ, in the exercise of his office, so it sets them equal with God in the throne of his omniscience, as if they had as much credit with God as Christ, by way of mediation, and as much knowledge of men's affairs as God himself. Omniscience is peculiar to God, and incommunicable to any creature; it is the foundation of all religion, and therefore one of the choicest acts of it; viz. prayer and invocation. To direct our vows and petitions to any one else, is to invade the peculiarity of this perfection in God, and to rank some creatures in a partnership with him in it.

2. This attribute is injured by curiosity of knowledge; especially of future things, which God hath not discovered in natural causes, or supernatural revelation. It is a common error of men's spirits to aspire to know what God would have hidden, and to pry into Divine secrets; and many men are more willing to remain without the knowledge of those things which may, with a little industry, be attained, than be divested of the curiosity of inquiring into those things which are above their reach; it is hence that some have laid aside the study of the common remedies of nature to find out the philosopher's stone, which scarce any ever yet attempted but sunk in the enterprise. From this inclination to know the most abstruse and difficult things, it is that the horrors of magic and vanities of astrology have sprung, whereby men have thought to find, in a commerce with devils and the jurisdiction of the stars, the events of their lives, and the disposal of states and kingdoms. Hence, also, arose those multitudes of ways of divination, invented among the heathen, and practised too commonly in these ages of the world. This is an invasion of God's prerogative, to whom secret things belong (Deut. 29:29); "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but revealed things belong to us and our children." It is an intolerable boldness to attempt to fathom those, the knowledge whereof God hath reserved to himself, and to search that which God will have to surpass our understandings, whereby we more truly envy God a knowledge superior to our own, than we, in Adam, imagined that he envied us. Ambition is the greatest cause of this; ambition to be accounted some great thing among men, by reason of a knowledge estranged from the common mass of mankind, but more especially that soaring pride to be equal with God, which lurks in our nature ever since the fall of our first parents: this is not yet laid aside by men, though it was the first thing that embroiled the world with the wrath of God. Some think a curiosity of knowledge was the cause of the fall of devils; I am sure it was the fall of Adam, and is yet the crime of his posterity; had he been contented to know what God had furnished him with, neither he nor his posterity had smarted under the venom of the serpent's breath. All curious and bold inquiries into things not revealed are an attempt upon the throne of God, and are both sinful and pernicious, like to glaring upon the sun, where, instead of a greater acuteness, we meet with blindness, and too dearly buy our ignorance in attempting a superfluous knowledge. As God's knowledge is destined to the

government of the world, so should ours be to the advantage of the world, and not degenerate into vain speculations.

3. This attribute is injured by swearing by creatures. To swear by the name of God, in a righteous cause, when we are lawfully called to it by a superior power, or for the necessary decision of some controversy, for the ends of charity and justice, is an act of religion, and a part of worship, founded upon, and directed to, the honor of this attribute; by it we acknowledge the glory of his infallible knowledge of all things; but to swear by false gods, or by any creature, is blasphemous; it sets the creature in the place of God, and invests it in that which is the peculiar honor of the Divinity; for when any swear truly, they intend the invocation of an infallible Witness, and the bringing an undoubted testimony for what they do assert: while, any, therefore, swear by a creature, or a false god, they profess that that creature, or that which they esteem to be a god is an infallible witness, which to be is only the right of God; they attribute to the creature that which is the property of God alone, to know the heart, and to be a witness whether they speak true or no: and this was accounted, by all nations, the true design of an oath. As to swear falsely is a plain denial of the all-knowledge of God, so to swear by any creature is to set the creature upon the throne of God, in ascribing that perfection to the creature which sovereignly belongs to the Creator; for it is not in the power of any to witness to the truth of the heart, but of him that is the searcher of hearts.

4. We sin against this attribute by censuring the hearts of others. An open crime, indeed, falls under our cognizance, and therefore under our judgment; for whatsoever falls under the authority of man to be punished, falls under the judgment of man to be censured, as an act contrary to the law of God; yet, when a censure is built upon the evil of the act which is obvious to the view, if we take a step farther to judge the heart and state, we leave the revealed rule of the law, and ambitiously erect a tribunal equal with God's, and usurp a judicial power, pertaining only to the Supreme Governor of the world, and consequently pretend to be possessed of the perfection of omniscience, which is necessary to render him capable of the exercise of that sovereign authority: for it is in respect of his dominion that God hath the supreme right to judge; and in respect of his knowledge that he hath an incommunicable capacity to judge. In an action that is doubtful, the good or evil whereof depends only upon God's determination, and wherein much of the judgment depends upon the discerning the intention of the agent, we cannot judge any man without a manifest invasion of God's peculiar right such actions are to be tried by God's knowledge, not by our surmises; God only is the master in such cases, to whom a person stands or falls (Rom. 14:4). 'Till the true principle and ends of an action be known by the confession of the party acting it, a true judgment of it is not in our power. Principles and ends lie deep and hid from us; and it is intolerable pride to pretend to have a joint key with God to open that cabinet which he hath reserved to himself: Besides the violation of the rule of charity in misconstruing actions which may be great and generous in their root and principle, we invade God's right, as if our ungrounded imaginations and conjectures were in joint commission with this sovereign perfection; and thereby we become usurping judges of evil thoughts (James 2:4). It is, therefore, a boldness worthy to be punished by the judge, to assume to ourselves the capacity and authority of him who is the only Judge: for as the execution of the Divine law, for the inward violation of it, belongs only to God, so is the right of judging a prerogative belonging only to his omniscience; his right is, therefore, invaded, if we pretend to a knowledge of it. This humor of men the apostle checks, when he saith (1 Cor. 4:5), "He that judgeth me is the Lord; therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will manifest the counsels of all hearts." It is not the time yet for God to erect the tribunal for the trial of men's hearts, and the principles of their actions; he hath reserved the glorious discovery of this attribute for another season: we must not, therefore, presume to judge of the counsels of men's hearts till God hath revealed them by opening the treasures of his own knowledge; much less are we to judge any man's final condition. Manasseh may sacrifice to devils, and unconverted Paul tear the church in pieces; but God had mercy on them, and called them. The actions may be censured, not the state, for we know not whom God may call. In censuring men, we may doubly imitate the devil, in a false accusation of the brethren, as well as in an ambitious usurpation of the rights of God.

Secondly, This perfection is injured by presuming upon it, or making an ill use of it. As in the neglect of prayer for the supply of men's wants, because God knows them already, so that that which is an encouragement to prayer, they make the reason of restraining it before God. Prayer is not to administer knowledge to God, but to acknowledge this admirable perfection of the Divine nature. If God did not know, there were indeed no use of prayer; it would be as vain a thing to send up our prayers to heaven, as to implore the senseless statue, or picture of a prince, for a protection. We pray because God knows: for though he knows our wants with a knowledge of vision, yet he will not know them with a knowledge of supply, till he be sought unto (Matt. 6:32, 33; 7:11.) All the excellencies of God are ground of adoration; and this excellency is the ground of that part of worship we call prayer. If God be to be worshipped, he is to be called upon: invocations of his name in our necessities is a chief act of worship; whence the temple, the place of solemn worship, was not called the house of sacrifice, but the house of prayer. Prayer was not appointed for God's information, as if he were ignorant, but for the expression of our desires; not to furnish him with a knowledge of what we want, but to manifest to him, by some rational sign convenient to our nature, our sense of that want, which he knows by himself. So that prayer is not designed to acquaint God with our wants, but to express the desire of a remedy of our wants. God knows our wants, but hath not made promises barely to our wants, but to our asking, that his omniscience in hearing, as well as his sufficiency in supplying, many have a sensible honor in our acknowledgments and receipts. It is therefore an ill use of this excellency of God to neglect prayer to him as needless, because he knows already.

Thirdly. This perfection of God is wronged by a practical denial of it. It is the language of every sin, and so God takes it when he comes to reckon with men for their impieties. Upon this he charges the greatness of the iniquity of Israel, the overflowing of blood in the land, and the perverseness of the city: "They say, the Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord sees not" (Ezek. 9:9): they deny his eyes to see, and his resolution to punish.

1. It will appear, in forbearing sin from a sense of man's knowledge, not of God's. Open impieties are refrained because of the eye of man, but secret sins are not checked because of the eye of God. Wickedness is committed in darkness, that is restrained in light, as if darkness were as great a clog to God's eyes as it is to ours; as though his eyes were muffled with the curtains of the night (Job 22:14.) This, it is likely, was at the root of Jonah's flight; he might have some secret thought that his Master's eye could not follow him, as though the close hatches of a ship could secure him from the knowledge of God, as well as the sides of a ship could from the dashing of the waves. What lies most upon the conscience when it is graciously wounded, is least regarded or contemned when it is basely inclined. David's heart smote him not only for his sin in the gross, but as particularly circumstantiated by the commission of it in the sight of God (Psalm 1:4): "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." None knew the reason of Uriah's death but myself, and because others knew it not, I neglected any regard to this Divine eye. When Jacob's sons used their brother Joseph so barbarously, they took care to hide it from their father, but cast away all thoughts of God, from whom it could not be concealed. Doth not the presence of a child bridle a man from the act of a longed-for sin, when the eye of God is of no force to restrain

him, as if God's knowledge were of less value than the sight of a little boy or girl, as if a child only, could see, and God were blind? He that will forbear an unworthy action for fear of an informer, will not forbear it for God; as if God's omniscience were not as full an intelligencer to him, as man can be an informer to a magistrate. As we acknowledge the power of men seeing us when we are ashamed to commit a filthy action in their view, so we discover the power of God seeing us, when we regard not what we do before the light of his eyes. Secret sins are more against God than open: open sins are against the law; secret sins are against the law, and this prime perfection of his nature. The majesty of God is not only violated, but the omniscience of God disowned, who is the only witness; we must, in all of them, either imagine him to be without eyes to behold us, or without an arm of justice to punish us. And often it is, I believe, in such cases, that if any thoughts of God's knowledge strike upon men, they quickly damp them, lest they should begin to know what they fear, and fear that they might not eat their pleasant sinful morsels.

2. It appears in partial confessions of sin before God. As by a free, full, and ingenious confession, we offer a due glory to this attribute, so by a feigned and curtailed confession, we deny him the honor of it: for, though by any confession we in part own him to be a Sovereign and Judge, yet by a half and pared acknowledgment, we own him to be no more than a humane and ignorant one. Achan's full confession gave God the glory of his omniscience, manifested in the discovery of his secret crime. "And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and tnakc confession unto him" (Joshua 7:19.) And so (Psalm 50:23) "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me," or confession, as the word signifieth, in which sense I would rather take it, referring to this attribute, which God seems to tax sinners with the denial of (ver. 21), telling them that he would open the records of their sins before them, and indict them particularly for every one. If, therefore, you would glorify this attribute, which shall one day break open your consciences, offer to me a sincere confession. When David speaks of the happiness of a pardoned man, he adds, "in whose spirit there is no guile," not meaning a sincerity in general, but an ingenuity in confessing. To excuse, or extenuate sin, is to deny God the knowledge of the depths of our deceitful hearts: when we will mince it rather than aggravate it; lay it upon the inducements of others, when it was the free act of our own wills, study shifts to deceive our Judge; this is to speak lies of him, as the expression is (Hos. 7:13), as though he were a God easy to be cheated, and knew no more than we were willing to declare. What did Saul's transferring his sin from himself to the people (1 Sam. 14:15), but charge God with a defect in this attribute? When man could not be like God, in his knowledge, he would fancy a God like to him in his ignorance, and imagine a possibility of hiding himself from his knowledge. And all men tread, more or less, in their father's steps, and are fruitful to devise distinctions to disguise errors in doctrine, and excuses to palliate errors in practice: this crime Job removes from himself, when he speaks of several acts of his sincerity (Job 31:33): "If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom:" I hid not any of my sins in my own conscience, but acknowledged God a witness to them, and gave him the glory of his knowledge by a free confession. I did not conceal it from God as Adam did, or as men ordinarily do; as if God could understand no more of their secret crimes than they will let him, and had no more sense of their faults than they would furnish him with. As the first rise of confession is the owning of this attribute (for the justice of God would not scare men, nor the holiness of God awe them, without a sense of his knowledge of their iniquities), so to drop out some fragments of confession, discover some sins, and conceal others, is a plain denial of the extensiveness of the Divine knowledge.

3. It is discovered by putting God off with an outside worship. Men are often flatterers of God, and think to bend him by formal glavering devotions, without the concurrence of their hearts; as though he could not pierce into the darkness of the mind, but did as little know us as one man knows another. There are such things as feigned lips (Psalm 17:1), a contradiction between the heart and the tongue, a clamor in the voice, and scoffing in the soul; a crying out to God, thou art my Father, the guide of my youth, and yet speaking and doing evil to the utmost of our power (Jer. 3:4, 5). As if God could be imposed upon by fawning pretences; and like old Isaac, take Jacob for Esau, and be cozened by the smell of his garments: as if he could not discern the negro heart under an angel's garb. Thus Ephraim, the ten tribes, apostatized from the true religion, would go with their flocks and their herds to seek the Lord (Hos. 5:6), would sacrifice multitudes of sheep and heifers, which was the main outside of the Jewish religion; only with their flocks and their herds, not with their hearts, with those inward qualifications of deep humiliation and repentance for sin; as though outside appearances limited God's observation, whereas God had told them before (ver. 3), that he "knew Ephraim, and Israel was not hid from him." Thus to do is to put a cheat upon God, and think to blind his all-seeing eye, and therefore it is called deceit (Psalm 78:36). They did flatter him with their mouths. The word פתא signifies to deceive, as well as to flatter; not that they or any else, can deceive God, but it implies an endeavor to deceive him, by a few dissembling words and gestures, or an imagination that God was satisfied with bare professions, and would not concern himself in a further inquisition. This is an unworthy conceit of God, to fancy that we can satisfy for inward sins, and avert approaching judgments, by external offerings, by a loud voice with a false heart, as if God (like children) would be pleased with the glittering of an empty shell, or the rattling of stones, the chinkling of money, a mere voice and crying, without inward frames and intentions of service.

4. In cherishing multitudes of evil thoughts. No man but would blush for shame, if the base, impure, slovenly thoughts, either in or out of duties of worship, were visible to the understanding of man; how diligent would he be to curb his luxuriant and unworthy fancies, as well as bite in his words! but when we give the reins to the motions of our hearts, and suffer them to run at random without a curb, it is an evidence we are not concerned for their falling under the notice of the eye of God; and it argues a very weak belief of this perfection, or scarce any belief at all. Who can think any man's heart, possessed with a sense of this infinite excellency, that suffers his mind, in his meditations on God, to wander into every sty, and be picking up stones upon a dunghill? What doth it intimate, but that those thoughts are as invisible, or unaudible to God, as they are to men without the garments of words? When a man thinks of obscene things, his own natural notions, if revived, would tell him that God discerns what he thinks, that the depths of his heart are open to him: and the voice of those notions are—deface those vain imaginations out of your minds. But what is done? Men cast away rational light, muster up conceits that God sees them not, knows them not, and so sink into the puddle of their sordid imaginations, as though they remained in darkness to God. I might further instance. *In omissions of prayer*, which arise sometimes from a flat atheism: who will call upon a God, that believes no such Being? or from partial atheism, either a denial of God's sufficiency to help, or of his omniscience to know, as if God were like the statue of Jupiter in Crete, framed without ears. *In the hypocritical pretences of men, to exempt them from the service God calls them to*. When men pretend one thing and intend another: this lurks in the veins sometimes of the best men; sometimes it ariseth from the fear of man; when men are more afraid of the power of man, than of dissembling with the Almighty, it will pretend a virtue to cover a secret wile, and choose the tongue of the crafty as the expression in Job (ch. 15:5). The case is plain in Moses, who, when ordered to undertake an eminent service, pretends a want of eloquence, and an ungrateful "slowness of speech" (Exod. 4:10).

This generous soul, that before was not afraid to discover himself in the midst of Egypt for his countrymen, answers sneakingly to

God, and would veil his carnal fear with a pretence of insufficiency and humility; "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" (Exod. 3:11) He could not well allege an inability to go to Pharaoh, since he had had an education in the Egyptian learning, which rendered him capable to appear at court. God at last uncaseeth him, and shews it all to be a dissimulation, and whatsoever was the pretence, fear lay at the bottom. He was afraid of his life upon his appearance before Pharaoh, from whose face he had fled upon the slaying the Egyptians; which God intimates to him (Exod. 4:19), "Go, and return into Egypt, for all the men are dead which sought thy life." What doth this carriage speak, but as if God's eye were not upon our inward parts, as though we could lock him out of our hearts, that cannot be shut out from any creek of the hearts of men and angels?

Use II. is of comfort. It is a ground of great comfort under the present dispensation wherein we are; we have heard the doctrinal part, and God hath given us the experimental part of it in his special providence this day, upon the stage of the world. And, blessed be God; that he hath given us a ground of comfort, without going out of our ordinary course to fetch it, whereby it seems to be peculiarly of God's ordering for us.

1. It is a comfort in all the clandestine contrivances of men against the church. His eyes pierce as far as the depths of hell. Not one of his church's adversaries lies in a mist; all are as plain as the stars which he numbers: "Mine adversaries are all before thee" (Psalm 69:19), more exactly known to thee than I can recount them. It is a prophecy of Christ, wherein Christ is brought in speaking to God of his own and the church's enemies: he comforts himself with this, that God hath his eye upon every particular person among his adversaries: he knows where they repose themselves, when they go out to consult, and when they come in with their resolves. He discerns all the rage that spirits their hearts, in what corner it lurks, how it acts; all the disorders, motions of it, and every object of that rage; he cannot be deceived by the closest and subtlest person. Thus God speaks concerning Sennacherib and his host against Jerusalem (Isa. 37:28, 29). After he had spoke of the forming of his church, and the weakness of it, he adds, "But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back," &c. He knows all the methods of the counsels, the stages they had laid, the manner of the execution of their designs, all the ways whither they turned themselves, and would use them no better than men do devouring fish and untamed beasts, with a hook in the nose, and a bridle in the mouth. Those statesmen (in Isa. 29:15) thought their contrivances too deep for God to fathom, and too close for God to frustrate; "they seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay," of no more force and understanding than a potter's vessel, which understands not its own form wrought by the artificer, nor the use it is put to by the buyer and possessor; or shall be esteemed as a potter's vessel, that can be as easily flung back into the mass from whence it was taken, as preserved in the figure it is now endued with. No secret designer is shrouded from God's sight, or can be sheltered from God's arm; he understands the venom of their hearts better than we can feel it, and discovers their inward fury more plainly than we can see the sting or teeth of a viper when they are opened for mischief; and to what purpose doth God know and see them, but in order to deliver his people from them in his own due time? "I know their sorrow, and am come down to deliver them." (Exod. 3:7, 8). The walls of Jerusalem are continually before him; he knows, therefore, all that would undermine and demolish them; none can hurt Zion by any ignorance or inadvertency in God. It is observable, that our Saviour, assuming to himself a different title in every epistle to the seven churches, Both particularly ascribe to himself this of knowledge and wrath in that to Thyatira, an emblem or description of the Romish state (Rev. 2:18): "And unto the angel of the church of Thyatira write, These things, saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass." His eyes, like a flame of fire, are of a piercing nature, insinuating themselves into all the pores and parts of the body they encounter with, and his feet like brass, to crush them with, is explained (ver. 23), "I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and the heart, and I will give to every one of you according to your works." He knows every design of the Romish party, designed by that church of Thyatira. Jezebel, there, signifies a whorish church; such a church as shall act as Jezebel, Ahab's wife, who was not only a worshipper of idols, but propagated idolatry in Israel, slew the prophets, persecuted Elijah, murdered Naboth, the name whereof signifies prophecy, seized upon his possession. And if it be said that (ver. 19) this church was commended for her works, faith, patience, it is true Rome did at first strongly profess Christianity, and maintained the interest of it, but afterwards fell into the practice of Jezebel, and committed spiritual adultery: and is she to be owned for a wife, that now plays the harlot, because she was honest and modest at her first marriage? And though she shall be destroyed, yet not speedily (ver. 22); "I will cast her into a bed," seems to intimate the destruction of Jezebel, not to be at once and speedily, but in a lingering way, and by degrees, as sickness consumes a body.

2. This perfection of God fits him to be a special object of trust. If he were forgetful, what comfort could we have in any promise? How could we depend upon him, if he were ignorant of our state? His compassion to pity us, his readiness to relieve us, his power to protect and assist us, would be insignificant, without his omniscience to inform his goodness, and direct the arm of his power. This perfection is, as it were, God's office of intelligence: as you go to your memorandum-book to know what you are to do, so doth God to his omniscience; this perfection is God's eye, to acquaint him with the necessities of his church, and directs all his other attributes in their exercise for and about his people. You may depend upon his mercy that hath promised, and upon his truth to reform; upon his sufficiency to supply you, and his goodness to receive you, and his righteousness to reward you; because he hath an infinite understanding to know you and your wants, you and your services. And without this knowledge of his, no comfort could be drawn from any other perfection; none of them could be a sure nail to hang our hopes and confidence upon. This is that the church always celebrated (Psalm 105:7): "He hath remembered his covenant forever, and the word which he hath commanded to a thousand generations;" and (ver. 42), "He remembered his holy promise;" "And he remembered for them his covenant" (Psalm 106:45). He remembers and understands his covenant, therefore his promise to perform it, and therefore our wants to supply them.

3. And the rather, because God knows the persons of all his own. He hath in his infinite understanding, the exact number of all the individual persons that belong to him (2 Tim. 2:19): "The Lord knows them that are his." He knows all things, because he hath created them; and he knows his people because he hath not only made them, but also chose them; he could no more choose he knew not what, than he could create he knew not what; and he knows them under a double title; of creation as creatures, in the common mass of creation; as new creatures by a particular act of separation. He cannot be ignorant of them in time, whom he foreknew from eternity; his knowledge in time is the same he had from eternity; he foreknew them that he intended to give the grace of faith unto; and he knows them after they believe, because he knows his own act, in bestowing grace upon them, and his own mark and seal wherewith he hath stamped them. No doubt but he that "calls the stars of heaven by their names" (Psalm 147:4), knows the number of those living stars that sparkle in the firmament of his church. He cannot be ignorant of their persons, when he numbers the hairs of their heads, and hath registered their names in the book of life. As he only had an infinite mercy to make the choice, so he only hath

an infinite understanding to comprehend their persons. We only know the elect of God by a moral assurance in the judgment of charity, when the conversation of men is according to the doctrine of God. We have not an infallible knowledge of them, we may be often mistaken; Judas, a devil, may be judged by man for a saint, till he be stripped of his disguise. God only hath an infallible knowledge of them, he knows his own records, and the counterparts in the hearts of his people; none can counterfeit his seal, nor can any raise it out. When the church is either scattered like dust by persecution, or overgrown with superstition and idolatry, that there is scarce any grain of true religion appearing, as in the time of Elijah, who complained that he was left alone, as if the church had been rooted out of that corner of the world (1 Kings 19:14, 18); yet God knew that he had a number fed in a cave, and had reserved seven thousand men that had preserved the purity of his worship, and not bowed their knee to Baal. Christ knew his sheep, as well as he is known of them; yea, better than they can know him (John 10:14). History acquaints us, that Cyrus had so vast a memory, that he knew the name of every particular soldier in his army, which consisted of divers nations; shall it be too hard for an infinite understanding to know every one of that host that march under his banners? may he not as well know them, as know the number, qualities, influences, of those stars which lie concealed from our eye, as well as those that are visible to our sense?

Yes, he knows them, as a general to employ them, as a shepherd to preserve them; he knows them in the world to guard them, and he knows them when they are out of the world to gather them, and cull out their bodies, though wrapped up in a cloud of the putrified carcasses of the wicked. As he knew them from all eternity to elect them, so he knows them in time to clothe their persons with righteousness, to protect their persons in calamity, according to his good pleasure, and at last to raise and reward them according to his promise.

4. We may take comfort from hence, that our sincerity cannot be unknown to an infinite understanding. Not a way of the righteous is concealed from him, and, therefore, "they shall stand in judgment before him" (Psalm 1:6): "The Lord knows the way of the righteous;" he knows them to observe them, and he knows them to reward them. How comfortable is it to appeal to this attribute of God for our integrity, with Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:3)! "Remember, Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart." Christ himself is brought in in this prophetic psalm, drawing out the comfort of this attribute (Psalm 40:9): "I have not restrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest;" meaning his faithfulness in declaring the righteousness of God. Job follows the same steps, "Also now behold, my record is in heaven, and my witness is on high" (Job 16:19); my innocence hath the testimony of men, but my greatest support is in the records of God. Also now, or, besides the testimony of my own heart, I have another witness in heaven, that knows the heart, and can only judge of the principles of my actions, and clear me from the scorns of my friends and the accusations of men, with a justification of my innocence; he repeats it twice, to take the greater comfort in it. God knows that we do that in the simplicity of our hearts, which may be judged by men to be done for unworthy and sordid ends: he knows not only the outward action, but the inward affection, and praises that which men often dispraise, and writes down that with an *Euge!* "Well done, good and faithful servant," which men daub with their severest censures (Rom. 2:29). How refreshing is it to consider, that God never mistakes the appearance for reality, nor is led by the judgment of man! He sits in heaven, and laughs at their follies and censures. If God had no sounder and no more piercing a judgment than man, woe be to the sincerest souls that are often judged hypocrites by some. What a happiness is it for integrity to have a judge of infinite understanding, who will one day wipe off the dirt of worldly reproaches! Again, God knows the least dram of grace and righteousness in the hearts of his people, though but as a smoking flax, or the least bruise of a saving conviction (Matt. 12:20), and knows it so as to cherish it; he knows that work he hath begun, and never hath his eye off from it to abandon it.

5. The consideration of this excellent perfection in God may comfort us in our secret prayers, sighs, and works. If God were not of infinite understanding to pierce into the heart, what comfort hath a poor creature that hath a scantiness of expressions but a heart in a flame? If God did not understand the heart, faith and prayer, which are eternal works, would be in vain. How could he give that mercy our hearts plead for if he were ignorant of our inward affections? Hypocrites might scale heaven by lofty expressions, and a sincere soul come short of the happiness he is prepared for, for want of flourishing gifts. Prayer is an eternal work; words are but the garment of prayer; meditation is the body, and affection the soul and life of prayer; "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation" (Psalm 5:1). Prayer is a rational act; an act of the mind. not the act of a parrot: prayer is an act of the heart, though the speaking prayer is the work of the tongue; now God gives ear to the words, but he considers the meditation of the frame of the heart. Consideration is a more exact notice than hearing; the act only of the ear. Were not God of an infinite understanding, and omniscient, he might take fine clothes, a heap of garments, for the man himself, and be put off by glittering words, without a spiritual frame. What matter of rejoicing is it that we call not upon a deaf and ignorant idol, but on one that listens to our secret petitions, to give them a dispatch, that knows our desires afar off, and from the infiniteness of his mercy, joined with his omniscience, stands ready to give us a return? Hath he not a book of remembrance for them that fear him, and for their sighs and ejaculations to him, as well as their discourses of him, (Mal. 3:16); and not only what prayers they utter, but what gracious and holy thoughts they have of him that thought upon his name? Though millions of supplications be put up at the same time, yet they have all a distinct file (as I may say) in an infinite understanding, which perceives and comprehends them all. As he observes millions of sins committed at the same time, by a vast number of persons, to record them in order to punishment, so he distinctly discerns an infinite number of cries, at the same moment, to register them in order to an answer. A sigh cannot escape an infinite understanding, though crowded among a mighty multitude of cries from others, or covered with many unwelcome distractions in ourselves, no more than a believing touch from the woman that had the bloody issue could be concealed from Christ, and be undiscerned from the press of the thronging multitudes: our groans are as audible and intelligible to him as our words, and he knows what is the mind of his own Spirit, though expressed in no plainer language than sobs and heavings (Rom. 8:27). Thus David cheers up himself under the neglects of his friends (Psalm 38:9); "Lord, my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee." Not a groan of a panting spirit shall be lost, till God hath lost his knowledge; not a petition forgotten while God hath a record, nor a tear dried while God hath a bottle to reserve it in (Psalm 6:8). Our secret works are also known and observed by him; not only our outward labor, but our inward love in it (Heb. 6:10). If, with Isaac, we go privately into the field to meditate, or secretly "cast our bread upon the waters," he keeps his eye upon us to reward us, and returns the fruit into our own bosoms (Matt. 6:4, 6); yea, though it be but a cup of cold water, from an inward spring of love, given to a disciple, "He sees your works, and your labor, and faith, and patience" in working them (Rev. 2:2); all the marks of your industry, and strength of your intentions, and will be as exact at last, in order to a due praise, as to open sins, in order to a just recompense (1 Cor. 4:5).

6. The consideration of this excellent attribute affords comfort in the afflictions of good men. He knows their pressures, as well as hears their cries (Exod. 3:7). His knowledge comes not by information from us; but his compassionate listening to our cries springs

from his own inspection into our sorrows; he is affected with them, before we make any discovery of them; he is not ignorant of the best season, when they may be usefully inflicted, and when they may be profitably removed. The tribulation and poverty of his church is not unknown to him (Rev. 2:8, 9); "I know thy works and tribulation," &c. He knows their works, and what tribulation they meet with for him; he sees their extremities, when they are toiling against the wind and tide of the world (Mark 6:48); yea, the natural exigencies of the multitude are not neglected by him; he discerns to take care of them. Our Saviour considered the three days' fasting of his followers, and miraculously provides a dish for them in the wilderness. No good man is ever out of God's mind, and therefore never out of his compassionate care: his eye pierceth into their dungeons, and pities their miseries. Joseph may forget his brethren, and the disciples not know Christ, when he walks upon the midnight waves and turbulent sea, but a lion's den cannot obscure a Daniel from his sight, nor the depths of the whale's belly bury Jonah from the Divine understanding: he discerns Peter in his chains, and Stephen under the stones of martyrdom; he knows Lazarus under his tattered rags, and Abel wallowing in his blood; his eye and knowledge goes along with his people, when they are transplanted into foreign countries, and sold for slaves into the islands of the Grecian, "for he will raise them out of the place" (Joel 3:6, 7). He would defeat the hopes of the persecutors, and applaud the patience of his people. He knows his people in the tabernacle of life, and in the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23). He knows all penal evils, because he commissions and directs them. He knows the instruments, because they are his sword (Psalm 17:13); and he knows his gracious sufferer because he hath his mark. He discerns Job in his anguish, and the devil in his malice. By the direction of this attribute he orders calamities, and rescues from them. "Thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest mischief and spite" (Psalm 10:14). That is the comfort of the psalmist, and the comfort of every believer, and the ground of committing themselves to God under all the injustice of men.

7. It is a comfort in all our infirmities. As he knows our sins to charge them, so he knows the weakness of our nature to pity us. As his infinite understanding may scare us, because he knows our transgressions, so it may relieve us, because he knows our natural mutability in our first creation, "he knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14). 'Tis the reason of the precedent verses why he removes our transgression from us, why he is so backward in punishing, so patient in waiting, so forward in pitying; Why? He doth not only remember our sins, but remember our frame of forming; what brittle, though clear glasses we were by creation, how easy to be cracked! He remembers our impotent and weak condition by corruption; what a sink we have of vain imaginations that remain in us after regeneration; he doth not only consider that we were made according to his image, and therefore able to stand, but that we were made of dust and weak matter, and had a sensitive soul, like that of beasts, as well as an intellectual nature, like that of angels, and therefore liable to follow the dictates of it, without exact care and watchfulness. If he remembered only the first, there would be no issue but indignation; but the consideration of the latter moves his compassion. How miserable should we be for want of this perfection in the Divine nature, whereby God remembers and reflects upon his past act in our first frame, and the mindfulness of our condition excites the motion of his bowels to us! Had he lost the knowledge how he first framed us, did he not still remember the mutability of our nature, as we were formed and stamped in his mint, how much more wretched would our condition be than it is! If his remembrance of our original be one ground of his pity, the sense of his omniscience should be a ground of our comfort in the stirring of our infirmities: he remembers we were but dust when he made us, and yet remembers we are but dust while he preserves and forbears us.

8. It is some comfort in the fears of some lurking corruption in our hearts. We know by this whither to address ourselves for the search and discovery of it: perhaps some blessings we want are retarded; some calamities we understand not the particular cause of, are inflicted; some petitions we have put up, hang too long for an answer; and the chariot wheels of Divine goodness move slow, and are long in coming. Let us beg the aid of this attribute to open to us the remoras, to discover what base affection there is that retards the mercies we want, or attracts the affliction we feel, or bars the door against the return of our supplications. What our dim sight cannot discover, the clear eye of God can make visible to us (Job 10:2): "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." As in want of pardon, we particularly plead his mercy, and in our desires for the performance of his promise, we argue with him from his faithfulness, so in the fear of any insincerity or hidden corruption we should implore his omniscience: for as God is a God in covenant, our God, our God in the whole of his nature, so the perfections of his nature are employed in their several stations, as assistances of his creatures. This was David's practice and comfort, after that large meditation, on the omniscience and omnipresence of God, he turns his thoughts of it into petitions for the employment of it in the concerns of his soul, and begs a mercy suitable to the glory of this perfection (Psalm 139:23): "Search me, O God, and try my heart, try me, and know my thoughts;" dive to the bottom (ver. 24), "and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." His desire is not barely that God should know him, for it would be senseless to beg of God that he should have mercy, or faithfulness, or power, or knowledge in his nature; but he desires the exercise of this attribute, in the discovery of himself to himself, in order to his sight of any wicked way, and humiliation for it, and reformation of it, in order to his conduct to everlasting life. As we may appeal to this perfection to judge us when the sincerity of our actions is censured by others, so we may implore it to search us when our sincerity is questioned by ourselves, that our minds may be enlightened by a beam from his knowledge, and the little thieves may be pulled out of their dens in our hearts by the hand of his power. In particular, it is our comfort that we can, and our necessity that we must address particularly to this, when we engage solemnly in a work of self-examination; that we may have a clearer eye to direct us than our own, that we may not mistake brass for gold, or counterfeit graces for true; that nothing that is filthy and fit to be cast out, may escape our sight, and preserve its station. And we need not question the laying at the door of this neglect (viz. not calling in this attribute to our aid, whose proper office it is, as I may so say, to search and inquire) all the mistakes, ill success, and fruitlessness of our endeavors in self-examination, because we would engage in it in the pitiful strength of our own dimness, and not in the light of God's countenance, and the assistance of his eye, which can discern what we cannot see, and discover that to us which we cannot manifest to ourselves. It is a comfort to a learner of an art to have a skillful eye to overlook his work, and inform him of the defects. Beg the help of the eye of God in all your searches and self-examinations.

9. The consideration of this attribute is comfortable in our assurances of, and reflections upon, the pardon of sin, or seeking of it. As God punishes men for sin according to his knowledge of them, which is greater than the knowledge their own consciences have of them, so he pardons according to his knowledge: he pardons not only according to our knowledge, but according to his own; he is greater than any man's heart, to condemn for that which a man is at present ignorant of; and greater than our hearts, to pardon that which is not at present visible to us; he knows that which the most watchful conscience cannot take a survey of: if God had not an infinite understanding of us, how could we have a perfect and full pardon from him? It would not stand with his honor to pardon he knew not what. He knows what crimes we have to be pardoned, when we know not all of them ourselves, that stand in need of a gracious remission; his omniscience beholds every sin to charge it upon our Saviour. If he knows our sins that are black, he knows

every mite of Christ's righteousness which is pure, and the utmost extent of his merits, as well as the demerit of our iniquities. As he knows the filth of our sin, he also knows the covering of our Saviour: he knows the value of the Redeemer's sufferings, and exactly understands every plea in the intercession of our Advocate. Though God knows our sins *oculo indice*, yet he doth not see them *oculo iudice*, with a judicial eye: his omniscience stirs not up his justice to revenge, but his mercy to pity. His infinite understanding of what Christ hath done, directs him to disarm his justice, and sound an alarm to his bowels. As he understands better than we what we have committed, so he understands better than we what our Saviour hath merited; and his eye directs his hand in the blotting out guilt, and applying the remedy.

Use III. shall be to sinners, to humble them, and put them upon serious consideration. This attribute speaks terrible things to a profligate sinner. Basil thinks that the ripping open the sins of the damned to their faces by this perfection of God, is more terrible than their other torments in hell. God knows the persons of wicked men, not one is exempted from his eye; he sees all the actions of men, as well as he knows their persons (Job 11:11): "He knows vain men, he sees wickedness also" (Job 34:21): "His eye is upon all their goings." He hears the most private whispers (Psalm 139:4), the scope, manner, circumstance of speaking, he knows it altogether: he understands all our thoughts, the first bubblings of that bitter spring (Psalm 139:2); the quickest glances of the fancy, the closest musings of the mind, and the abortive wouldings or wishes of the will, the language of the heart, as well as the language of the tongue; not a foolish thought, or an idle word, not a wanton glance, or a dishonest action, not a negligent service, or a distracting fancy, but is more visible to him, than the filth of a dunghill can be to any man by the help of a sun beam. How much better would it be for desperate sinners to have their crimes known to all the angels in heaven, and men upon earth, and devils in hell, than that they should be known to their Sovereign, whose laws they have violated, and to their Judge, whose righteousness obligeth him to revenge the injury!

1. Consider what a poor refuge is secrecy to a sinner. Not the mists of a foggy day, nor the obscurity of the darkest night, nor the closest curtains, nor the deepest dungeon, can hide any sin from the eye of God. Adam is known in his thickets, and Jonah in his cabin. Achan's wedge of gold is discerned by him, though buried in the earth, and hooded with a tent. Shall Sarah be unseen by him, when she mockingly laughs behind the door? Shall Gehazi tell a lie, and comfort himself with an imagination of his master's ignorance, as long as God knows it? Whatsoever works men do, are not hid from God, whether done in the darkness or daylight, in the midnight darkness, or the noon-day sun: he is all eye to see, and he hath a great wrath to punish. The wheels of Ezekiel are full of eyes: a piercing eye to behold the sinner, and a swift wheel of wrath to overtake him. God is light, and of all things light is most difficultly kept out. The secretest sins are set in the light of his countenance (Psalm 90:8), as legible to him, as if written with a sun-beam; more visible to him than the greatest print to the sharpest eye. The fornications of the Samaritan woman, perhaps known only to her own conscience, were manifest to Christ (John 4:16.) There is nothing so secretly done, but there is an infallible witness to prepare a charge. Though God be invisible to us, we must not imagine we are so to him; it is a vanity, therefore, to think that we can conceal ourselves from God, by concealing the notions of God from our sense and practice. If men be as close from the eyes of all men, as from those of the sun, yea, if they could separate themselves from their own shadow, they could not draw themselves from God's understanding: how, then, can darkness shelter us, or crafty artifices defend us? With what shame will sinners be filled, when God, who hath traced their steps, and writ their sins in a book, shall make a repetition of their ways, and unveil the web of their wickedness!

2. What a dreadful consideration is this to the juggling hypocrite, that masks himself with an appearance of piety? An infinite understanding judges not according to veils and shadows, but according to truth; "He judges not according to appearance" (1 Sam. 16:7). The outward comeliness of a work imposeth not on him, his knowledge, and therefore his estimations are quite of another nature than those of men. By this perfection God looks through the veil, and beholds the litter of abominations in the secrets of the soul; the true quality and principle of every work, and judges of them as they are, and not as they appear. Disguised pretexts cannot deceive him; the disguises are known afar off, before they are weaved; he pierceth into the depths of the most abstruse wills; all secret ends are dissected before him; every action is naked in its outside, and open in its inside; all are as clear to him as if their bodies were of crystal; so that if there be any secret reserves, he will certainly reprove us (Job 13:10). We are often deceived; we may take wolves for sheep, and hypocrites for believers; for the eyes of men are no better than flesh, and dive no further than appearance; but an infinite understanding, that fathoms the secret depths of the heart, is too knowing to let a dream pass for a truth, or mistake a shadow for a body. Though we call God Father all our days, speak the language of angels, or be endowed with the gifts of miracles, he can discern whether we have his mark upon us; he can espy the treason of Judas in a kiss; Herod's intent of murdering under a specious pretence of worship; a Pharisee's fraud under a broad phylactery; a ravenous wolf under the softness of a sheep's skin; and the devil in Samuel's mantle, or when he would shroud himself among the sons of God (Job 1:6, 7). All the rooms of the heart, and every atom of dust in the least chink of it, is clear to his eye; he can strip sin from the fairest excuses, pierce into the heart with more ease than the sun can through the thinnest cloud or vapor; and look through all Ephraim's ingenuous inventions to excuse his idolatry (Hos. 5:3). Hypocrisy, then, is a senseless thing, since it cannot escape unmasking, by an infinite understanding. As all our force cannot stop his arm, when he is resolved to punish, so all our sophistry cannot blind his understanding, when he comes to judge. Woe to the hypocrite, for God sees him; all his juggling is open and naked to infinite understanding.

3. Is it not also a senseless thing to be careless of sins committed long ago? The old sins forgotten by men, stick fast in an infinite understanding: time cannot rase out that which hath been known from eternity. Why should they be forgotten many years after they were acted, since they were foreknown in an eternity before they were committed, or the criminal capable to practise them? Amalek must pay their arrears of their ancient unkindness to Israel in the time of Saul, though the generation that committed them were rotten in their graves (1 Sam. 15:2). Old sins are written in a book, which lies always before God; and not only our own sins, but the sins of our fathers, to be requited upon their posterity. What a vanity is it then to be regardless of the sins of an age that went before us! because they are in some measure out of our knowledge, are they therefore blotted out of God's remembrance? Sins are bound up with him, as men do bonds, till they resolve to sue for the debt; the iniquity of Ephraim is bound up (Hos. 13:12). As his foreknowledge extends to all acts that shall be done, so his remembrance extends to all acts that have been done, We may as well say, God foreknows nothing that shall be done to the end of the world, as that he forgets anything that hath been done from the beginning of the world. The former ages of the world are no further distant from him than the latter. God hath a calendar (as it were) or an account book of men's sins ever since the beginning of the world, what they did in their childhood, what in their youth, what in their manhood, and what in their old age: he hath them in store among his treasures (Deut. 32:34): he hath neither lost his understanding to know them, nor his resolution to revenge them as it follows, "to me vengeance belongs" (ver. 35). He intends to enrich his justice with a glorious

manifestation, by rendering a due recompense. And it is to be observed, that God doth not only necessarily remember them, but sometimes binds himself by an oath to do it (Amos 8:7); "The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works." Or, in the Hebrew, "If I ever forget any of their works;" that is, let me not be accounted a God forever, if I do forget; let me lose my godhead, if I lose my remembrance. It is not less a misery to the wicked, than it is a comfort to the godly, that their record is in heaven.

4. Let it be observed, that this infinite understanding doth exactly know the sins of men; he knows so as to consider. He doth not only know them, but intently behold them (Psalm 11:4): "His eyelids try the children of men," a metaphor taken from men that contract the eyelids, when they would wistly and accurately behold a thing; it is not a transient and careless look (Psalm 10:14): "Thou hast seen it;" thou hast intently beheld it, as the word properly signifies: he beholds and knows the actions of every particular man, as if there were none but he in the world; and doth not only know, but ponder (Prov. 5:21), and consider their works (Psalm 33:15); he is not a bare spectator, but a diligent observer (1 Sam. 2:3); "By him actions are weighed:" to see what degree of good or evil there is in them, what there is to blemish them, what to advantage them, what the quality and quantity of every action is. Consideration takes in every circumstance of the considered object: notice is taken of the place where, the minute when, the mercy against which it is committed; the number of them is exact in God's book: "They have tempted me now these ten times" (Numb. 14:22), against the demonstrations of my glory in Egypt and the wilderness. The whole guilt in every circumstance is spread before him: his knowledge of men's sins is not confused; such an imperfection an infinite understanding cannot be subject to: it is exact, for iniquity is marked before him (Jer. 2:22).

5. God knows men's miscarriage so as to judge. This use his omniscience is put to, to maintain his sovereign authority in the exercise of his justice. His notice of the sins of men is in order to a just retribution (Psalm 10:14): "Thou hast seen mischief to requite it with thy hand." The eye of his knowledge directs the hand of his justice; and no sinful action that falls under his cognizance, but will fall under his revenge; they can as little escape his censure as they can his knowledge: he is a witness in his omniscience, that he may be a judge in his righteousness; he knows the hearts of the wicked, so as to hate their works, and testify his abhorrence of that which is of high value with men (Luke 16:15). Sin is not preserved in his understanding, or written down in his book to be moth-eaten as an old manuscript, but to be opened one day, and copied out in the consciences of men: he writes them to publish them, and sets them in the light of his countenance, to bring them to the light of their consciences. What a terrible consideration is it, to think that the sins of a day are upon record in an infallible understanding, much more the sins of a week; what a number, then, do the sins of a month, a year, ten or forty years, arise to! How many actions against charity, against sincerity! what an infinite number is there of them, all bound up in the court rolls of God's omniscience, in order to a trial, to be brought out before the eyes of men! Who can seriously consider all those bonds, reserved in the cabinet of God's knowledge, to be sued out against the sinner in due time, without an inexpressible horror?

Use IV. is of exhortation. Let us have a sense of God's knowledge upon our hearts. All wickedness hath a spring from a want of due consideration and sense of it. David concludes it so (Psalm 86:14), "the proud rose against him, and violent men sought after his son, because they did not set God before them," They think God doth not know, and therefore care not what, nor how they act. When the fear of this attribute is removed, a door is opened to all impiety. What is there so villanous, but the minds of men will attempt to act? What reverence of a Deity can be left, when the sense of his infinite understanding is extinguished? What faith could there be in judgments in witnesses? How would the foundations of human society be overturned; the pillars upon which commerce stands, be utterly broken and dissolved! What society can be preserved, if this be not truly believed, and faithfully stuck to! But how easily would oaths be swallowed and quickly violated, if the sense of this perfection were rooted out of the minds of men!

What fear could they have of calling to witness a Being they imagine blind and ignorant? Men secretly imagine, that God knows not, or soon forgets, and then make bold to sin against him (Ezek. 8:12). How much does it therefore concern us to cherish and keep alive the sense of this? "If God writes us upon the palms of his hands," as the expression is, to remember us, let us engrave him upon the tables of our hearts to remember him. It would be a good motto to write upon our minds, God knows all, he is of infinite understanding.

1. This would give check to much iniquity. Can a man's conscience easily and delightfully swallow that which he is sensible falls under the cognizance of God, when it is hateful to the eyes of his holiness, and renders the actor odious to him? "Doth he not see my ways, and count all my steps," saith Job (31:4)? To what end doth he fix this consideration? To keep him from wanton glances; temptations have no encouragement to come near him, that is constantly armed with the thoughts that his sin is booked in God's omniscience. If any impudent devil hath the face to tempt us, we should not have the impudence to join issue with him under the sense of an infinite understanding. How fruitless would his wiles be against this consideration! How easily would his snares be cracked by one sensible thought of this! This doth Solomon prescribe to allay the heat of carnal imaginations (Prov. 5:20, 21). It were a useful question to ask, at the appearance of every temptation, at the entrance upon every action, as the church did in temptations to idolatry (Psalm 44:21): "Shall not God search this out, for he knows the secrets of the heart?" His understanding comprehends us more than our consciences can our acts, or our understanding our thoughts. Who durst speak treason against a prince, if he were sure he heard him, or that it would come to his knowledge? A sense of God's knowledge of wickedness in the first motion, and inward contrivance, would bar the accomplishment and execution. The consideration of God's infinite understanding would cry *stand* to the first glances of the heart to sin.

2. It would make us watchful over our hearts and thoughts. Should we harbor any unworthy thoughts in our cabinet, if our heads and hearts were possessed with this useful truth, that God knows everything which comes into our minds (Ezek. 11:5)? We should as much blush at the rising of impure thoughts before the understanding of God, as at the discovery of unworthy actions to the knowledge of men, if we lived under a sense, that not a thought of all those millions, which flutter about our minds, can be concealed from him. How watchful and careful should we be of our hearts and thoughts!

3. It would be a good preparation to every duty. This consideration should be the preface to every service; the Divine understanding knows how I now act. This would engage us to serious intention, and quell wandering and distracting fancies. Who would come before God, with a careless and ignorant soul, under a sense of his infinite understanding, and prerogative of searching the heart? "O thou that sittest in heaven!" was a consideration the psalmist had at the beginning of his prayer (Psalm 123:1?): whereby he testifies not only an apprehension of the majesty and power of God, but of his omniscience; as one sitting above, beholds all that is below;

would we offer to God such raw and undigested petitions? would there be so much flatness in our services? should our hearts so often give us the slip? would any hang down their heads like a bulrush, by an affected or counterfeit humility, while the heart is filled with pride, if we did actuate faith in this attribute? No; our prayers would be more sound, our devotions more vigorous, our hearts more close, our sprits like the chariots of Aminadab, more swift in their motions: everything would be done by us with all our might, which would be very feeble and faint, if we conceived God to be of a finite understanding like ourselves. Let us therefore, before every duty, not draw, but open the curtains between God and our souls, and think that we are going before him that sees us, before him that knows us (Gen. 1:12). And the stronger impressions of the Divine knowledge are upon our minds, the better would our preparation be for, and the more active our frames in every service: and certainly we may judge of the suitableness of our preparations, by the strength of such impressions upon us.

4. This would tend to make us sincere in our whole course. This prescription David gave to Solomon, to maintain a soundness and health of spirit in his walk before God (1 Chron. 28:9): “And thou, Solomon, my son, know the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, for the Lord understands all the imaginations of the thoughts.” Josephus gives this reason for Abel’s holiness, that he believed God was ignorant of nothing. As the doctrine of omniscience is the foundation of all religion, so the impression of it would promote the practice of all religion. When all our ways are imagined by us to be before the Lord, we shall then keep his precepts (Psalm 119:168). And we can never be perfect or sincere till we “walk before God” (Gen. 17:1); as under the eye of God’s knowledge. What we speak, what we think, what we act, is in his sight; he knows every place where we are, everything that we do, as well as Christ knew Nathaniel under the fig-tree. As he is too powerful to be vanquished, so he is too understanding to be deceived; the sense of this would make us walk with as much care, as if the understanding of all men did comprehend us and our actions.

5. The consideration of this attribute would make us humble. How dejected would a person be if he were sure all the angels in heaven and men upon earth, did perfectly know his crimes, with all their aggravations! But what is created knowledge to an infinite and just censuring understanding! When we consider that he knows our actions, whereof there are multitudes, and our thoughts, whereof there are millions; that he views all the blessings bestowed upon us; all the injuries we have returned to him; that he exactly knows his own bounty, and our ingratitude; all the idolatry, blasphemy, and secret enmity in every man’s heart against him; all tyrannical oppressions, hidden lusts, omissions of necessary duties, violations of plain precepts, every foolish imagination, with all the circumstances of them, and that perfectly in their full anatomy, every mite of unworthiness and wickedness in every circumstance; and add to this his knowledge, the wonders of his patience, which are miraculous upon the score of his omniscience, that he is not as quick in his revenge as he is in his understanding, but is so far from inflicting punishment, that he continues his former benefits, arms not his justice against us, but solicits our repentance, and waits to be gracious with all this knowledge of our crimes; should not the consideration of this melt our hearts into humiliation before him, and make us earnest in begging pardon and forgiveness of him? Again, do we not all find a worm in our best fruit, a flaw in our soundest duties? Shall any of us vaunt, as if God beheld only the gold, and not any dross; as if he knew one thing only, and not another? If we knew something by ourselves to cheer us, do we not also know something, yea, many things, to condemn us, and therefore to humble us? Let the sense of God’s infinite knowledge, therefore, be an incentive and argument for more humiliation in us. If we know enough to render ourselves vile in our own eyes, how much more doth God know to render us vile in his!

6. The consideration of this excellent perfection should make us to acquiesce in God, and rely upon him in every strait. In public, in private; he knows all cases, and he knows all remedies; he knows the seasons of bringing them, and he knows the seasons of removing them, for his own glory. What is contingent in respect of us, and of our foreknowledge, and in respect of second causes, is not so in regard of God’s, who hath the knowledge of the futuration of all things; he knows all causes in themselves, and, therefore, knows what every cause will produce, what will be the event of every counsel and of every action. How should we commit ourselves to this God of infinite understanding, who knows all things, and foreknows everything; that cannot be forced through ignorance to take new counsel, or be surprised with anything that can happen to us! This use the Psalmist makes of it (Psalm 10:14): “Thou hast seen it, the poor committeth himself unto thee.” Though “some trust in chariots and horses” (Psalm 20:7), some in counsels and counsellors, some in their arms and courage, and some in mere vanity and nothing; yet, let us remember the name and nature of the Lord our God, his divine perfections, of which this of his infinite understanding and omniscience is none of the least, but so necessary, that without it he could not be God, and the whole world would be a mere chaos and confusion.

DISCOURSE IX - ON THE WISDOM OF GOD

ROM. 16:27.—*To God only wise be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen.*

THIS chapter being the last of this Epistle, is chiefly made up of charitable and friendly salutations and commendations of particular persons, according to the earliness and strength of their several graces, and their labor of love for the interest of God and his people. In verse 17, he warns them not to be drawn aside from the gospel doctrine, which had been taught them, by the plausible pretences and insinuations which the corrupters of the doctrine and rule of Christ never want from the suggestions of their carnal wisdom. The brats of soul-destroying errors may walk about the world in a garb and disguise of good words and fair speeches, as it is in the 18th. verse; by “good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” And for their encouragement to a constancy in the gospel doctrine, he assures them, that all those that would dispossess them of truth, to possess them with vanity, are but Satan’s instruments, and will fall under the same captivity and yoke with their principal (ver. 18); “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Whence, observe,

1. All corrupters of divine truth, and troublers of the church’s peace, are no better than devils. Our Saviour thought the name, Satan, a title merited by Peter, when he breathed out an advice, as an axe at the root of the gospel, the death of Christ, the foundation of all gospel truth; and the apostle concludes them under the same character, which hinder the superstructure, and would mix their chaff with his wheat (Matt. 16:23), “Get thee behind me, Satan.” It is not, Get thee behind me, Simon, or, Get thee behind me, Peter; but “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me.” Thou dost oppose thyself to the wisdom, and grace, and authority of God, to the redemption of man, and to the good of the world. As the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth, so is Satan the spirit of falsehood as the Holy Ghost inspires believers with truth, so doth the devil corrupt unbelievers with error. Let us cleave to the truth of the gospel, that we may not be counted by God as part of the corporation of fallen angels, and not be barely reckoned as enemies of God, but in

league with the greatest enemy to his glory in the world.

2. The Reconciler of the world will be the Subduer of Satan. The God of peace sent the Prince of peace to be the restorer of his rights, and the hammer to beat in pieces the usurper of them. As a God of truth, he will make good his promise; as a God of peace, he will perfect the design his wisdom hath laid, and begun to act. In the subduing Satan, he will be the conqueror of his instruments: he saith not, God shall bruise your troublers and heretics, but Satan: the fall of a general proves the rout of the army. Since God, as a God of peace, hath delivered his own, he will perfect the victory, and make them cease from bruising the heel of his spiritual seed.

3. Divine evangelical truth shall be victorious. No weapon formed against it shall prosper: the head of the wicked shall fall as low as the feet of the godly. The devil never yet blustered in the world, but he met at last with a disappointment: his fall hath been like lightning, sudden, certain, vanishing.

4. Faith must look back as far as the foundation promise. "The God of peace shall bruise," &c. The apostle seems to allude to the first promise (Gen. 2:15),—a promise that hath vigor to nourish the church in all ages of the world: it is the standing cordial; out of the womb of this promise all the rest have taken their birth. The promises of the Old Testament were designed for those under the New, and the full performance of them is to be expected, and will be enjoyed by them. It is a mighty strengthening to faith, to trace the footsteps of God's truth and wisdom, from the threatening against the serpent in Eden, to the bruise he received in Calvary, and the triumph over him upon Mount Olivet.

5. We are to confide in the promise of God, but leave the season of its accomplishment to his wisdom. He will "bruise Satan under your feet," therefore do not doubt it; and shortly, therefore, wait for it. Shortly it will be done, that is, quickly, when you think it may be a great way off; or shortly, that is, seasonably, when Satan's rage is hottest. God is the best judge of the seasons of distributing his own mercies, and darting out his own glory: it is enough to encourage our waiting, that it will be, and that it will be shortly; but we must not measure God's shortly by our minutes.

The apostle after this, concludes with a comfortable prayer, that since they were liable to many temptations to turn their backs upon the doctrine which they had learned; yet he desires God, who had brought them to the knowledge of his truth, would confirm them in the belief of it, since it was the gospel of Christ, his dear Son, and a mystery he had been chary of and kept in his own cabinet, and now brought forth to the world in pursuance of the ancient prophecies, and now had published to all nations for that end that it might be obeyed; and concludes with a doxology, a voice of praise, to Him, who was only wise to effect his own purposes (ver. 25, 26, 27), "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." This doxology is interlaced with many comforts for the Romans. He explains the causes of this glory to God, power, and wisdom; power to establish the Romans in grace, which includes his will. This he proves from a divine testimony, viz., the gospel; the gospel committed to him, and preached by him, which he commends, by calling it the preaching of Christ; and describes it, for the instruction and comfort of the church from the adjuncts, the obscurity of it under the Old Testament, and the clearness of it under the New. It was hid from the former ages, and kept in silence; not simply and absolutely, but comparatively and in part; because in the Old Testament, the doctrine of salvation by Christ was confined to the limits of Judea, preached only to the inhabitants of that country: to them he gave "his statutes and his judgments, and dealt not so magnificently with any nation" (Psalm 147:19, 20); but now he causes it to spring with greater majesty out of those narrow bounds, and spread its wings about the world. This manifestation of the gospel he declares, 1. from the subject, All nations. 2. From the principal efficient cause of it, The commandment and order of God. 3. The instrumental cause, The prophetic Scriptures. 4. From the end of it, The obedience of faith.

Observ. 1. The glorious attributes of God bear a comfortable respect to believers. Power and wisdom are here mentioned as two props of their faith; his power here includes his goodness. Power to help, without will to assist, is a dry chip. The apostle mentions not God's power simply and absolutely considered, for that of itself is no more comfort to men, then it is to devils; but, as considered in the gospel covenant, his power, as well as his other perfections, are ingredients in that cordial of God's being our God. We should never think of the excellencies of the Divine nature, without considering the duties they demand, and gathering the honey they present.

Observ. 2. The stability of a gracious soul depends upon the wisdom as well as the power of God. It would be a disrepute to the Almightyness of God if that should be totally vanquished which was introduced by his mighty arm, and rooted in the soul by an irresistible grace. It would speak a want of strength to maintain it, or a change of resolution, and so would be no honor to the wisdom of his first design. It is no part of the wisdom of an artificer, to let a work wherein he determined to shew the greatness of his skill, be dashed in pieces, when he hath power to preserve it. God designed every gracious soul for a piece of his workmanship (Eph. 2:10). What, to have the skill of his grace defeated? If any soul which he hath graciously conquered should be wrested from him, what could be thought but that his power is enfeebled? If deserted by him, what could be imagined, but that he repented of his labor, and altered his counsel, as if rashly undertaken? These Romans were rugged pieces, and lay in a filthy quarry, when God came first to smooth them; for so the apostle represents them with the rest of the heathen (Rom. 1:19); and would he throw them away, or leave them to the power of his enemy, after all his pains he had taken with them to fit them for his building? Did he not foresee the designs of Satan against them, what stratagems he would use to defeat his purposes and strip him of the honor of his work; and would God so gratify his enemy, and disgrace his own wisdom? The deserting of what hath been acted is a real repentance, and argues an imprudence in the first resolve and attempt. The gospel is called the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10); the fruit of it, in the heart of any person, which is a main design of it, hath a title to the same character; and shall this grace, which is the product of this gospel, and therefore the birth of manifold wisdom, be suppressed? It is at God's hand we must seek our fixedness and establishment, and act faith upon these two attributes of God. Power is no ground to expect stability, without wisdom interesting the agent in it, and finding out and applying the means for it. Wisdom is naked without power to act, and power is useless without wisdom to direct. They are these two excellencies of the Deity the apostle here pitches the hope and faith of the converted Romans upon for their stability.

Observ. 3. Perseverance of believers in grace is a gospel doctrine. "According to my gospel," my gospel ministerially, according to that gospel doctrine I have taught you in this epistle (for, as the prophets were comments upon the law, so are the epistles upon the gospel), this very doctrine he had discoursed of (Rom. 8:38, 39), where he tells them, that neither death nor life, the terrors of a cruel death, or the allurements of an honorable and pleasant life, nor principalities and powers, with all their subtlety and strength, nor the things we have before us, nor the promises of a future felicity, by either angels in heaven or devils in hell, not the highest angel, nor

the deepest devil, is able to separate us, us Romans, “from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.” So that, according to my gospel, may be according to that declaration of the gospel, which I have made in this epistle, which doth not only promise the first creating grace, but the perfecting and crowning grace; for not only the being of grace, but the health, liveness, and perpetuity of grace is the fruit of the new covenant (Jer.32:40.)

Observ. 4. That the gospel is the sole means of a Christian’s establishment; “According to my gospel,” that is, by my gospel. The gospel is the instrumental cause of our spiritual life; it is the cause also of the continuance of it; it is the seed whereby we were born, and the milk whereby we are nourished (1 Pet. 1:23); it is the “power of God to salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2), and therefore to all the degrees of it (John 17:17); “Sanctify them by thy truth,” or through thy truth; by or through his truth he sanctifies us, and by the same truth he establisheth us. The first sanctification, and the progress of it, the first lineaments, and the last colors, are wrought by the gospel. The gospel, therefore, ought to be known, studied, and considered by us. It is the charter of our inheritance, and the security for our standing. The law acquaints us with our duty, but contributes nothing to our strength and settlement.

Observ. 5. The gospel is nothing else but the revelation of Christ (ver. 25); “According to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ;” the discovery of the mystery of redemption and salvation in and by him. It is *genitivus objecti*, that preaching wherein Christ is declared and set out, with the benefits accruing by him. This is the privilege, the wisdom of God reserved for the latter times, which the Old Testament church had only under a veil.

Observ. 6. It is a part of the excellency of the gospel that it had the Son of God for its publisher: “The preaching of Jesus Christ.” It was first preached to Adam, in Paradise, by God; and afterwards published by Christ in person, to the inhabitants of Judea. It was not the invention of man, but copied from the bosom of the Father by him that lay in his bosom. The gospel we have, is the same which our Saviour himself preached when he was in the world: he preached it not to the Romans, but the same gospel he preached is transmitted to the Romans. It, therefore, commands our respect; whoever slights it, it is as much as if he slighted Jesus Christ himself, were he in person to sound it from his own lips. The validity of a proclamation is derived from the authority of the prince that dictates it and orders it; yet the greater the person that publisheth it, the more dishonor is cast upon the authority of the prince that enjoins it, if it be contemned. The everlasting God ordained it, and the eternal Son published it.

Observ. 7. The gospel was of an eternal resolution, though of a temporary revelation (ver. 25); “According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.” It is an everlasting gospel; it was a promise “before the world began” (Titus 1:2.) It was not a new invention, but only kept secret among the arcana, in the breast of the Almighty. It was hidden from angels, for the depths of it are not yet fully made known to them; their desire to look into it, speaks yet a deficiency in their knowledge of it (1 Peter 1:12.) It was published in paradise, but in such words as Adam did not fully understand: it was both discovered and clouded in the smoke of sacrifices: it was wrapped up in a veil under the law, but not opened till the death of the Redeemer: it was then plainly said to the cities of Judah, “Behold! your God comes!” The whole transaction of it between the Father and the Son, which is the spirit of the gospel, was from eternity; the creation of the world was in order to the manifestation of it. Let us not, then, regard the gospel as a novelty; the consideration of it, as one of God’s cabinet rarities, should enhance our estimation of it. No traditions of men, no inventions of vain wits, that pretend to be wiser than God, should have the same credit with that which bears date from eternity.

Observ. 8. That divine truth is mysterious; “According to the revelation of the mystery, Christ manifested in the flesh.” The whole scheme of godliness is a mystery. No man or angel could imagine how two natures so distant as the Divine and human should be united; how the same person should be criminal and righteous; how a just God should have a satisfaction, and sinful man a justification; how the sin should be punished, and the sinner saved. None could imagine such a way of justification as the apostle in this epistle declares: it was a mystery when hid under the shadows of the law, and a mystery to the prophets when it sounded from their mouths; they searched it, without being able to comprehend it (1 Peter 1:10, 11.) If it be a mystery, it is humbly to be submitted to: mysteries surmount human reason. The study of the gospel must not be with a yawning and careless frame. Trades, you call mysteries, are not learned sleeping and nodding: diligence is required; we must be disciples at God’s feet. As it had God for the author, so we must have God for the teacher of it; the contrivance was his, and the illumination of our minds must be from him. As God only manifested the gospel, so he can only open our eyes to see the mysteries of Christ in it. In verse 26 we may observe,

1. The Scriptures of the Old Testament verify the substance of the New, and the New doth evidence the authority of the Old, by the Scriptures of the prophets made known. The Old Testament credits the New, and the New illustrates the Old. The New Testament is a comment upon the prophetic part of the Old. The Old shows the promises and predictions of God, and the New shews the performance. What was foretold in the Old, is fulfilled in the New; the predictions are cleared by the events. The predictions of the Old are divine, because they are above the reason of man to foreknow; none but an infinite knowledge could foretell them, because none but an infinite wisdom could order all things for the accomplishment of them. The Christian religion hath, then, the surest foundation, since the Scriptures of the prophets, wherein it is foretold, are of undoubted antiquity, and owned by the Jews and many heathens, which are and were the great enemies of Christ. The Old Testament is therefore to be read for the strengthening of our faith. Our blessed Saviour himself draws the streams of his doctrine from the Old Testament: he clears up the promise of eternal life, and the doctrine of the resurrection, from the words of the covenant, “I am the God of Abraham,” &c. (Matt. 22:32.) And our apostle clears up the doctrine of justification by faith from God’s covenant with Abraham (Rom. 4.) It must be read, and it must be read as it is writ: it was writ to a gospel end, it must be studied with a gospel spirit. The Old Testament was writ to give credit to the New, when it should be manifested in the world. It must be read by us to give strength to our faith, and establish us in the doctrine of Christianity. How many view it as a bare story, an almanack out of date, and regard it as a dry bone, without sucking from it the evangelical marrow! Christ is, in Genesis, Abraham’s seed; in David’s psalms and the prophets, the Messiah and Redeemer of the world.

2. *Observe*, The antiquity of the gospel is made manifest by the Scriptures of the prophets. It was of as ancient a date as any prophecy: the first prophecy was nothing else but a gospel charter; it was not made at the incarnation of Christ, but made manifest. It then rose up to its meridian lustre, and sprung out of the clouds, wherewith it was before obscured. The gospel was preached to the ancients by the prophets, as well as to the Gentiles by the apostles (Heb. 4:2); “Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them.” To them first, to us after; to them indeed more cloudy, to us more clear; but they as well as we, were evangelized, as the word signifies. The covenant of grace was the same in the writings of the prophets, and the declarations of the evangelists and apostles. Though by our Saviour’s incarnation, the gospel light was clearer, and, by his ascension, the effusions of the Spirit fuller and stronger; yet the believers under the Old Testament, saw Christ in the swaddling bands of legal ceremonies, and the lattice of prophetic

writings; they could not else offer one sacrifice, or read one prophecy with a faith of the right stamp. Abraham's justifying faith had Christ for its object, though it was not so explicit as ours, because the manifestation was not so clear as ours.

3. All truth is to be drawn from Scripture. The apostle refers them here to the gospel and the prophets: the Scripture is the source of divine knowledge; not the traditions of men, nor reason separate from Scripture. Whosoever brings another doctrine, coins another Christ; nothing is to be added to what is written, nothing detracted from it. He doth not send us for truth, to the puddles of human inventions, to the enthusiasms of our brain; not to the See of Rome, no, nor to the instructions of angels; but the writings of the prophets, as they clear up the declarations of the apostles. The church of Rome is not made here the standard of truth: but the Scriptures of the prophets are to be the touch-stone to the Romans, for the trial of the truth of the gospel.

4. How great is the goodness of God! The borders of grace are enlarged to the Gentiles, and not hid under the skirts of the Jews. He that was so long the God of the Jews, is now also manifest to be the God of the Gentiles: the gospel is now made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God. Not only in a way of common providence, but special grace; in calling them to the knowledge of himself, and a justification of them by faith, he hath brought strangers to him, to the adoption of children, and lodged them under the wings of the covenant, that were before alienated from him through the universal corruption of nature. Now he hath manifested himself a God of truth, mindful of his promise in blessing all nations in the seed of Abraham. The fury of devils, and the violence of men could not hinder the propagation of the gospel: its light hath been dispersed as far as that of the sun; and that grace that founded in the Gentile's ears, hath bent many of their hearts to the obedience of it.

5. Observe that libertinism and licentiousness find no encouragement in the gospel. It was made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. The goodness of God is published, that our enmity to him may be parted with. Christ's righteousness is not offered to us to be put on, that we may roll more warmly in our lusts. The doctrine of grace commands us to give up ourselves to Christ, to be accepted through him, and to be ruled by him. Obedience is due to God, as a sovereign lord in his law; and it is due out of gratitude, as he is a God of grace in the gospel. The discovery of a further perfection in God weakens not the right of another, nor the obligation of the duty the former attribute claims at our hands. The gospel frees us from the curse, but not from the duty and service: "We are delivered from the hands of our enemies, that we might serve God in holiness and righteousness" (Luke 1:74.) "This is the will of God" in the gospel, "even our sanctification." When a prince strikes off a malefactor's chains, though he deliver him from the punishment of his crime, he frees him not from the duty of a subject: his pardon adds a greater obligation than his protection did before, while he was loyal. Christ's righteousness gives us a title to heaven; but there must be a holiness to give us a fitness for heaven.

6. Observe, that evangelical obedience, or the obedience of Faith, is only acceptable to God. Obedience of faith; *genitivus speciei*, noting the kind of obedience God requires; an obedience springing from faith, animated and influenced by faith. Not obedience of faith, as though faith were the rule, and the law were abrogated; but to the law as a rule, and from faith as a principle. There is no true obedience before faith (Heb. 11:6.) "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" and therefore without faith impossible to obey him. A good work cannot proceed from a defiled mind and conscience; and without faith every man's mind is darkened, and his conscience polluted (Tit. 1:15.) Faith is the band of union to Christ, and obedience is the fruit of union; we cannot bring forth fruit without being branches (John 15:4, 5), and we cannot be branches without believing. Legitimate fruit follows upon marriage to Christ, not before it (Rom. 7:4.) "That you should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that you should bring forth fruit unto God." All fruit before marriage is bastard; and bastards were excluded from the sanctuary. Our persons must be first accepted in Christ, before our services can be acceptable; those works are not acceptable where the person is not pardoned, Good works flow from a pure heart; but the heart cannot be pure before faith. All the good works reckoned up in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews were from this spring; those heroes first believed and then obeyed. By faith Abel was righteous before God, without it his sacrifice had been no better than Cain's: by faith Enoch pleased God, and had a divine testimony to his obedience before his translation; by faith Abraham offered up Isaac, without which he had been no better than a murderer. All obedience hath its root in faith, and is not done in our own strength, but in the strength and virtue of another, of Christ, whom God hath set forth as our head and root.

7. Observe, faith and obedience are distinct, though inseparable "The obedience of faith." Faith, indeed, is obedience to a gospel command, which enjoins us to believe; but it is not all our obedience. Justification and sanctification are distinct acts of God; justification respects the person, sanctification the nature; justification is first in order of nature, and sanctification follows: they are distinct, but inseparable; every justified person hath a sanctified nature, and every sanctified nature supposeth a justified person. So faith and obedience are distinct: faith as the principle, obedience as the product; faith as the cause, obedience as the effect; the cause and the effect are not the same. By faith we own Christ as our Lord. by obedience we regulate ourselves according to his command. The acceptance of the relation to him as a subject, precedes the performance of our duty: by faith we receive his law, and by obedience we fulfil it. Faith makes us God's children (Gal. 3:26). Obedience manifests us to be Christ's disciples (John 15:8). Faith is the touchstone of obedience; the touchstone, and that which is tried by it, are not the same. But though they are distinct, yet they are inseparable. Faith and obedience are joined together; obedience follows faith at the heels. Faith purifies the heart, and a pure heart cannot be without pure actions. Faith unites us to Christ, whereby we partake of his life; and a living branch cannot be without fruit in its season, and "much fruit" (John 15:5), and that naturally from a "newness of spirit" (Rom. 7:9); not constrained by the rigors of the law, but drawn forth from a sweetness of love; for faith works by love. The love of God is the strong motive, and love to God is the quickening principle; as there can be no obedience without faith, so no faith without obedience. After all this, the apostle ends with the celebration of the wisdom of God; "To God only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ forever." The rich discovery of the gospel cannot be thought of, by a gracious soul, without a return of praise to God, and admiration of his singular wisdom.

Wise God. His power before, and his wisdom here, are mentioned in conjunction (in which his goodness is included, as interested in his establishing power) as the ground of all the glory and praise God hath from his creatures.

Only wise. As Christ saith (Matt. 19:17), "None is good, but God;" so the apostle saith, None wise, but God. As all creatures are unclean in regard of his purity, so they are all fools in regard of his wisdom; yea, the glorious angels themselves (Job 4:18). Wisdom is the royalty of God; the proper dialect of all his ways and works. No creature can lay claim to it; he is so wise, that he is wisdom itself.

Be glory, through Jesus Christ. As God is only known in and by Christ, so he must be only worshipped and celebrated in and through Christ. In him we must pray to him, and in him we must praise him. As all mercies flow from God through Christ to us, so all our duties are to be presented to God through Christ. In the Greek, *verbatim*, it runs thus: "To the alone wise God, through Jesus Christ,

to him be glory forever." But we must not understand it, as if God were wise by Jesus Christ, but that thanks is to be given to God through Christ; because in and by Christ God hath revealed his wisdom to the world. The Greek hath a repetition of the article ϕ , and expressed in the translation, "To him be glory." Beza expungeth this article, but without reason, for ϕ is as much as $\alpha\iota\phi$, "to him;" and joining this, "the only wise God" with ver. 25, "to him that is of power to establish you;" reading it thus, "To him that is of power to establish you, the only wise God," leaving the rest in a parenthesis, it runs smoothly, "to him be glory, through Jesus Christ," And Crellius, the Socinian, observes, that this article ϕ , which some leave out, might be industriously inserted by the apostle, to shew that the glory we ascribe to God is also given to Christ. We may observe, that neither in this place, nor any where in Scripture, is the Virgin Mary, or any of the saints, associated with God or Christ in the glory ascribed to them.

In the words there is, 1. An appropriation of wisdom to God, and a remotion of it from all creatures; "only wise God." 2. A glorifying him for it. The point I shall insist upon is, That wisdom is a transcendent excellency of the Divine nature. We have before spoken of the knowledge of God, and the infiniteness of it; the next attribute is the wisdom of God. Most confound the knowledge and wisdom of God together; but there is a manifest distinction between them in our conception. I shall handle it thus: I. Shew what wisdom is. Then lay down, II. Some propositions about the wisdom of God. And shew, III. That God is wise, and only wise. IV. Wherein his wisdom appears. V. The Use.

I. What wisdom is. Wisdom, among the Greeks, first signified an eminent perfection in any art or mystery; so a good statuary, engraver, or limner, was called wise, as having an excellent knowledge in his particular art. But afterwards the title of wise was appropriated to those that devoted themselves to the contemplation of the highest things that served for a foundation to speculative sciences. But ordinarily we count a man a wise man, when he conducts his affairs with discretion, and governs his passions with moderation, and carries himself with a due proportion and harmony in all his concerns. But in particular, wisdom consists,

1. In acting for a right end. The chiefest part of prudence is in fixing a right end, and in choosing fit means, and directing them to that scope; to shoot at random is a mark of folly. As he is the wisest man that hath the noblest end and fittest means, so God is infinitely wise; as he is the most excellent being, so he hath the most excellent end. As there is none more excellent than himself, nothing can be his end but himself; as he is the cause of all, so he is the end of all; and he puts a true bias into all the means he useth to hit the mark he aims at: "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36).

2. Wisdom consists in observing all circumstances for action. He is counted a wise man that lays hold of the fittest opportunities to bring his designs about, that hath the fullest foresight of all the little intrigues which may happen in a business he is to manage, and times every part of his action in an exact harmony with the proper minutes of it. God hath all the circumstances of things in one entire image before him; he hath a prospect of every little creek in any design. He sees what second causes will act, and when they will act this or that; yea, he determines them to such and such acts; so that it is impossible he should be mistaken, or miss of the due season of bringing about his own purposes. As he hath more goodness than to deceive any, so he hath more understanding than to be mistaken in any thing. Hence the time of the incarnation of our blessed Saviour is called the fulness of time, the proper season for his coming. Every circumstance about Christ was timed according to the predictions of God; even so little a thing as not parting his garment, and the giving him gall and vinegar to drink; and all the blessings he showers down upon his people, according to the covenant of grace, are said to come "in his season" (Ezek. 34:25, 26).

3. Wisdom consists in willing and acting according to the right reason, according to a right judgment of things. We can never count a wilful man a wise man; but him only that acts according to a right rule, when right counsels are taken and vigorously executed. The resolves and ways of God are not mere will, but will guided by the reason and counsel of his own infinite understanding (Eph. 1:11); "Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will." The motions of the Divine will are not rash, but follow the proposals of the Divine mind; he chooses that which is fittest to be done, so that all his works are graceful, and all his ways have a comeliness and decorum in them. Hence all his ways are said to be "judgment" (Deut. 32:4), not mere will. Hence it appears, that wisdom and knowledge are two distinct perfections. Knowledge hath its seat in the speculative understanding, wisdom in the practical. Wisdom and knowledge are evidently distinguished as two several gifts of the Spirit in man (1 Cor. 12:8); "To one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit." Knowledge is an understanding of general rules, and wisdom is a drawing conclusions from those rules in order to particular cases. A man may have the knowledge of the whole Scripture, and have all learning in the treasury of his memory, and yet be destitute of skill to make use of them upon particular occasions, and untie those knotty questions which may be proposed to him, by a ready application of those rules. Again, knowledge and wisdom may be distinguished, in our conception, as two distinct perfections in God: the knowledge of God is his understanding of all things; his wisdom is the skilful resolving and acting of all things. And the apostle, in his admiration of him, owns them as distinct; "O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom. 11:33)! Knowledge is the foundation of wisdom, and antecedent to it; wisdom the superstructure upon knowledge: men may have knowledge without wisdom, but not wisdom without knowledge; according to our common proverb, "The greatest clerks are not the wisest men." All practical knowledge is founded in speculation, either *secundum rem*, as in a man; or, *secundum rationem*, as in God. They agree in this, that they are both acts of the understanding; but knowledge is the apprehension of a thing, and wisdom is the appointing and ordering of things. Wisdom is the splendor and lustre of knowledge shining forth in operations, and is an act both of understanding and will; understanding in counselling and contriving, will in resolving and executing: counsel and will are linked together (Eph. 1:11).

II. . The second thing is to lay down some propositions in general, concerning the wisdom of God. First, There is an essential and a personal wisdom of God. The essential wisdom, is the essence of God; the personal wisdom is the Son of God. Christ is called Wisdom by himself (Luke 7:35). The wisdom of God by the apostle (1 Cor. 1:24). The wisdom I speak of belongs to the nature of God, and is considered a necessary perfection. The personal wisdom is called so, because he opens to us the secrets of God. If the Son were that wisdom whereby the Father is wise, the Son would be also the essence whereby the Father is God. If the Son were the wisdom of the Father, whereby he is essentially wise, the Son would be the essence of the Father, and the Father would have his essence from the Son, since the wisdom of God is the essence of God; and so the Son would be the Father, if the wisdom and power of the Father were originally in the Son.

Secondly, Therefore the wisdom of God is the same with the essence of God. Wisdom in God is not a habit added to his essence, as it is in man, but it is his essence. It is like the splendor of the sun, the same with the sun itself; or like the brightness of crystal, which is not communicated to it by anything else, as the brightness of a mountain is by the beam of the sun, but it is one with the crystal itself. It

is not a habit superadded to the Divine essence; that would be repugnant to the simplicity of God, and speak him compounded of divers principles; it would be contrary to the eternity of his perfections: if he be eternally wise, his wisdom is his essence; for there is nothing eternal but the essence of God. As the sun melts some things, and hardens others; blackens some things, and whitens others, and produceth contrary qualities in different subjects, yet it is but one and the same quality in the sun, which is the cause of those contrary operations; so the perfections of God seem to be diverse in our conceptions, yet they are but one and the same in God. The wisdom of God, is God acting prudently; as the power of God, is God acting powerfully; and the justice of God, is God acting righteously; and therefore it is more truly said, that God is wisdom, justice, truth, power, than that he is wise, just, true, &c. as if he were compounded of substance and qualities. All the operations of God proceed from one simple essence; as all the operations of the mind of man, though various, proceed from one faculty of understanding. Thirdly, Wisdom is the property of God alone: He is “only wise.” It is an honor peculiar to him. Upon the account that no man deserved the title of wise, but that it was a royalty belonging to God, Pythagoras would not be called *Zóφος*, a title given to their learned men, but *Φιλόσοφος*. The name philosopher arose out of a respect to this transcendent perfection of God.

1. God is “only wise” *necessarily*. As he is necessarily God, so he is necessarily wise; for the notion of wisdom is inseparable from the notion of a Deity. When we say, God is a Spirit, is true, righteous, wise; we understand that he is transcendently these, by an intrinsic and absolute necessity, by virtue of his own essence, without the efficiency of any other, or any efficiency in and by himself. God doth not make himself wise, no more than he makes himself God. As he is a necessary Being in regard of his life, so he is necessarily wise in regard of his understanding. Synesius saith, that God is essentiated; *οὐσιοῦθαι*, by his understanding. He places the substance of God in understanding and wisdom: wisdom is the first vital operation of God. He can no more be unwise than he can be untrue; for folly in the mind is much the same with falsity in speech. Wisdom among men is gained by age and experience, furthered by instructions and exercise; but the wisdom of God is his nature. As the sun cannot be without light, while it remains a sun, and as eternity cannot be without immortality, so neither can God be without wisdom as he only hath immortality (1 Tim. 6:16), not arbitrarily, but necessarily; so he only hath wisdom: not because he will be wise, but because he cannot but be wise. He cannot but contrive counsels, and exert operations, becoming the greatness and majesty of his nature.

2. Therefore “only wise” *originally*. God is *ἀνδιδακτος ἀντόσοφος*. Men acquire wisdom by the loss of their fairest years; but his wisdom is the perfection of the Divine nature, not the birth of study, or the growth of experience, but as necessary, as eternal, as his essence. He goes not out of himself to search wisdom: he needs no more the brains of creatures in the contrivance of his purposes, than he doth their arm in the execution of them. He needs no counsel, he receives no counsel from any (Rom. 11:34): “Who hath been his counsellor?” and (Isa. 40:14) “With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, or taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the path of understanding?” He is the only Fountain of wisdom to others; angels and men have what wisdom they have, by communication from him. All created wisdom is a spark of the Divine light, like that of the stars borrowed from the sun. He that borrows wisdom from another, and doth not originally possess it in his own nature, cannot properly be called wise. As God is the only Being, in regard that all other beings are derived from him, so he is only wise, because all other wisdom flows from him. He is the spring of wisdom to all; none the original of wisdom to him.

3. Therefore “only wise” *perfectly*. There is no cloud upon his understanding. He hath a distinct and certain knowledge of all things that can fall under action; as he hath a perfect knowledge without ignorance, so he hath a beautiful wisdom without mole or wart. Men are wise, yet have not an understanding so vast as to grasp all things, nor a perspicacity so clear, as to penetrate into the depths of all being. Angels have more delightful and lively sparks of wisdom, yet so imperfect, that in regard of the wisdom of God they are charged with folly (Job 4:18). Their wisdom as well as their holiness is veiled in the presence of God. It vanisheth, as the glowing of a fire doth before the beauty of the sun, or as the light of a candle in the midst of a sunshine contracts itself, and none of its rays are seen, but in the body of the flame. The angels are not perfectly wise, because they are not perfectly knowing: the gospel, the great discovery of God’s wisdom, was hid from them for ages.

4. Therefore “only wise” *universally*. Wisdom in one man is of one sort, in another of another sort; one is a wise tradesman, another a wise statesman, and another a wise philosopher: one is wise in the business of the world, another is wise in divine concerns. One hath not so much of plenty of one sort, but he may have a scantiness in another; one may be wise for invention, and foolish in execution; an artificer may have skill to frame an engine, and not skill to use it. The ground that is fit for olives may not be fit for vines; that will bear one sort of grain and not another. But God hath an universal wisdom, because his nature is wise; it is not limited, but hovers over everything, shines in every being. His executions are as wise as his contrivances: he is wise in his resolves, and wise in his ways: wise in all the varieties of his works of creation, government, redemption. As his will wills all things, and his power effects all things, so his wisdom is the universal director of the motions of his will, and the executions of his power: as his righteousness is the measure of the matter of his actions, so his wisdom is the rule that directs the manner of his actions. The absolute power of God is not an unruly power: his wisdom orders all things, so that nothing is done but what is fit and convenient, and agreeable to so excellent a Being: as he cannot do an unjust thing because of his righteousness, so he cannot do an unwise act, because of his infinite wisdom. Though God be not necessitated to any operation without himself, as to the creation of anything, yet supposing he will act, his wisdom necessitates him to do that which is congruous, as his righteousness necessitates him to do that which is just: so that though the will of God be the principle, yet his wisdom is the rule of his actions. We must, in our conceiving of the order, suppose wisdom antecedent to will none that acknowledges a God can have such an impious thought as to affix temerity and rashness to any of his proceedings. All his decrees are drawn out of the infinite treasury of wisdom in himself. He resolves nothing about any of his creatures without reason; but the reason of his purposes is in himself, and springs from himself, and not from the creatures: there is not one thing that he wills but “he wills by counsel, and works by counsel” (Eph. 1:11). Counsel writ down every line, every letter, in his eternal Book; and all the orders are drawn out from thence by his wisdom and will: what was illustrious in the contrivance, glitters in the execution. His understanding and will are infinite; what is therefore the act of his will, is the result of his understanding, and therefore rational. His understanding and will join hands; there is no contest in God, will against mind, and mind against will; they are one in God, one in his resolves, and one in all his works.

5. Therefore he is “only wise” *perpetually*. As the wisdom of man is got by ripeness of age, so it is lost by decay of years; it is got by instruction, and lost by dotage. The perfectest minds, when in the wane, have been darkened with folly: Nebuchadnezzar, that was wise for a man, became as foolish as a brute.

But the Ancient of Days is an unchangeable possessor of prudence; his wisdom is a mirror of brightness, without a defacing spot. It

was “possessed by him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old” (Prov. 8:22), and he can never be dispossessed of it in the end of his works. It is inseparable from him: the being of his Godhead may as soon cease as the beauty of his mind; “with him is wisdom” (Job 12:13); it is inseparable from him; therefore, as durable as his essence. It is a wisdom infinite, and therefore without increase or decrease in itself. The experience of so many ages in the government of the world hath added nothing to the immensity of it, as the shining of the sun since the creation of the world hath added nothing to the light of that glorious body. As ignorance never darkens his knowledge, so folly never disgraces his prudence. God infatuates men, but neither men nor devils can infatuate God; he is unerringly wise; his counsel doth not vary and flatter; it is not one day one counsel, and another day another, but it stands like an immovable rock, or a mountain of brass. “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Psalm 33:11).

6. He is only wise *incomprehensibly*. “His thoughts are deep” (Psalm 92:5); “His judgments unsearchable, his ways past finding out” (Rom. 11:33): depths that cannot be fathomed; a splendor more dazzling to our dim minds than the light of the sun to our weak eyes. The wisdom of one man may be comprehended by another, and over-comprehended; and often men are understood by others to be wiser in their actions than they understand themselves to be; and the wisdom of one angel may be measured by another angel of the same perfection. But as the essence, so the wisdom of God is incomprehensible to any creature; God is only comprehended by God. The secrets of wisdom in God are double to the expressions of it in his works (Job 11:6, 7): “Canst thou, by searching, find out God?” There is an unfathomable depth in all his decrees, in all his works; we cannot comprehend the reason of his works, much less that of his decrees, much less that in his nature; because his wisdom, being infinite as well as his power, can no more act to the highest pitch than his power. As his power is not terminated by what he hath wrought, but he could give further testimonies of it, so neither is his wisdom, but he could furnish us with infinite expressions and pieces of his skill. As in regard of his immensity he is not bounded by the limits of place; in regard of his eternity, not measured by the minutes of time; in regard of his power, not terminated with this or that number of objects; so, in regard of his wisdom, he is not confined to this or that particular mode of working; so that in regard of the reason of his actions, as well as the glory and majesty of his nature, he dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16); and whatsoever we understand of his wisdom in creation and providence, is infinitely less than what is in himself and his own unbounded nature. Many things in Scripture are declared chiefly to be the acts of the Divine will, yet we must not think that they were acts of mere will without wisdom, but they are represented so to us, because we are not capable of understanding the infinite reason of its acts: his sovereignty is more intelligible to us than his wisdom. We can better know the commands of a superior, and the laws of a prince, than understand the reason that gave birth to those laws. We may know the orders of the Divine will, as they are published, but not the sublime reason of his will. Though election be an act of God’s sovereignty, and he hath no cause from without to determine him, yet his infinite wisdom stood not silent while mere dominion acted. Whatsoever God doth, he doth wisely, as well as sovereignly; though that wisdom which lies in the secret places of the Divine Being be as incomprehensible to us as the effects of his sovereignty and power in the world are visible, God can give a reason of his proceeding, and that drawn from himself, though we understand it not. The causes of things visible lie hid from us. Doth any man know how to distinguish the seminal virtue of a small seed from the body of it, and in what nook and corner that lies, and what that is that spreads itself in so fair a plant, and so many flowers? Can we comprehend the justice of God’s proceedings in the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the godly? Yet as we must conclude them the fruits of an unerring righteousness, so we must conclude all his actions the fruits of an unspotted wisdom, though the concatenation of all his counsels is not intelligible to us; for he is as essentially and necessarily wise, as he is essentially and necessarily good and righteous. God is not only so wise that nothing more wise can be conceived, but he is more wise than can be imagined; something greater in all his perfections than can be comprehended by any creature. It is a foolish thing, therefore, to question that which we cannot comprehend; we should adore it instead of disputing against it; and take it for granted, that God would not order anything, were it not agreeable to the sovereignty of his wisdom, as well as that of his will. Though the reason of man proceed from the wisdom of God, yet there is more difference between the reason of man, and the wisdom of God, than between the light of the sun, and the feeble shining of the glow-worm; yet we presume to censure the ways of God, as if our purblind reason had a reach above him.

7. God is “only wise” *infallibly*. The wisest men meet with rubs in the way, that make them fall short of what they aim at; they often design, and fail; then begin again; and yet all their counsels end in smoke, and none of them arrive at perfection. If the wisest angels lay a plot, they may be disappointed; for though they are higher and wiser than man, yet there is One higher and wiser than they, that can check their projects. God always compasseth his end, never fails of anything he designs and aims at; all his undertakings are counsel and will; as nothing can resist the efficacy of his will, so nothing can countermine the skill of his counsel: “There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord” (Prov. 21:30). He compasseth his ends by those actions of men and devils, wherein they think to cross him; they shoot at their own mark, and hit his. Lucifer’s plot, by divine wisdom, fulfilled God’s purpose against Lucifer’s mind. The counsel of redemption by Christ, the end of the creation of the world, rode into the world upon the back of the serpent’s temptation. God never mistakes the means, nor can there be any disappointments to make him vary his counsels, and pitch upon other means than what before he had ordained. His “word that goeth forth of his mouth shall not return to him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleases, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto he sent it” (Isa. 55:11). What is said of his word is true of his counsel; it shall prosper in the thing for which it is appointed; it cannot be defeated by all the legions of men and devils; for “as he thinks, so shall it come to pass; and as he hath purposed, so shall it stand; the Lord hath purposed, and who shall disannul it” (Isa. 14:24, 27)? The wisdom of the creature is a drop from the wisdom of God, and is like a drop to the ocean, and a shadow to the sun; and, therefore, is not able to meet the wisdom of God, which is infinite and boundless. No wisdom is exempted from mistakes, but the Divine: he is wise in all his resolves, and never “calls back his words” and purposes (Isa. 31:2).

III. The third general is to prove that God is wise. This is ascribed to God in Scripture (Dan. 2:20); “Wisdom and might are his;” wisdom to contrive, and power to effect. Where should wisdom dwell, but in the head of a Deity? and where should power triumph, but in the arm of Omnipotency? All that God doth, he doth artificially, skilfully; whence he is called the “Builder of the heavens” (Heb. 11:10), *Τεχνίτης* an artful and curious builder, a builder by art: and that word (Prov. 8:30) meant of Christ; “Then I was by him as one brought up with him;” some render it, Then I was the curious artificer; and the same word, is translated, a cunning workman (Cant. 7:5). For this cause, counsel is ascribed to God; not properly, for counsel implies something of ignorance, or irresolution, antecedent to the consultation, and a posture of will afterwards, which was not before. Counsel is, properly, a laborious deliberation, and a reasoning of things; an invention of means for the attainment of the end, after a discussing and reasoning of all the doubts which arise, *pro re natâ*, about the matter in counsel. But God hath no need to deliberate in himself what are the best means to accomplish his ends: he is never ignorant or undetermined what course he should take, as men are before they consult. But it is an

expression, in condescension to our capacity, to signify that God doth nothing but with reason and understanding, with the highest prudence and for the most glorious ends, as men do after consultation and the weighing of every foreseen circumstance. Though he acts all things sovereignly by his will, yet he acts all things wisely by his understanding; and there is not a decree of his will but he can render a satisfactory reason for, in the face of men and angels. As he is the cause of all things, so he hath the highest wisdom for the ordering of all things. If wisdom among men be the knowledge of divine and human things, God must be infinitely wise, since knowledge is most radiant in him; he knows what angels and men do. and infinitely more; what is known by them obscurely, is known by him clearly; what is known by man after it is done, was known by God before it was wrought. By his wisdom, as much as by anything, he infinitely differs from all his creatures, as by wisdom man differs from a brute. We cannot frame a notion of God, without conceiving him infinitely wise. We should render him very inconsiderable, to imagine him furnished with an infinite knowledge, and not have an infinite wisdom to make use of that knowledge, or to fancy him with a mighty power destitute of prudence. Knowledge without prudence, is an eye without motion; and power without discretion, is an arm without a head; a hand to act, without understanding to contrive and model; a strength to act, without reason to know how to act: it would be a miserable notion of a God, to fancy him with a brutish and unguided power. The heathens, therefore, had, and could not but have, this natural notion of God. Plato, therefore, calls him *Mens*; and Cleanthes used to call God Reason; and Socrates thought the title of *Zoφός* too magnificent to be attributed to anything else but God alone.

Arguments to prove that God is wise.—*Reason 1.* God could not be infinitely perfect without wisdom.

A rational nature is better than an irrational nature. A man is not a perfect man without reason; how can God without it be an infinitely perfect God? Wisdom is the most eminent of all virtues; all the other perfections of God without this, would be as a body without an eye, a soul without understanding. A Christian's graces want their lustre, when they are destitute of the guidance of wisdom: mercy is a feebleness, and justice a cruelty; patience a timorousness, and courage a madness, without the conduct of wisdom; so the patience of God would be cowardice, his power an oppression, his justice a tyranny, without wisdom as the spring and holiness as the rule. No attribute of God could shine with a due lustre and brightness without it. Power is a great perfection, but wisdom a greater. Wisdom may be without much power, as in bees and ants; but power is a tyrannical thing without wisdom and righteousness. The pilot is more valuable because of his skill, than the galley slave because of his strength; and the conduct of a general more estimable than the might of a private soldier. Generals are chosen more by their skill to guide, than their strength to act; what a God is a man without prudence; what a nothing would God be without it! This is the salt that gives relish to all other perfections in a creature; this is the jewel in the ring of all the excellencies of the Divine nature, and holiness is the splendor of that jewel. Now God being the first Being, possesses whatsoever is most noble in any being. If therefore wisdom, which is the most noble perfection in any creature, were wanting to God, he would be deficient in that which is the highest excellency. God being the living God, as he is frequently termed in Scripture, he hath therefore the most perfect manner of living, and that must be a pure and intellectual life; being essentially living, he is essentially in the highest degree of living. As he hath an infinite life above all creatures, so he hath an infinite intellectual life, and therefore an infinite wisdom; whence some have called God, not *sapientem*, but *super sapientem*, not only wise, but above all wisdom.

Reason 2. Without infinite wisdom he could not govern the world. Without wisdom in forming the matter, which was made by Divine power, the world could have been no other than a chaos; and without wisdom in government, it could have been no other than a heap of confusion; without wisdom the world could not have been created in the posture it is. Creation supposeth a determination of the will putting power upon acting; the determination of the will supposeth the counsel of the understanding, determining the will: no work, but supposeth understanding as well as will in a rational agent. As without skill things could not be created, so without it things cannot be governed. Reason is a necessary perfection to him that presides over all things: without knowledge there could not be in God a foundation for government, and without wisdom there could not be an exercise of government; and without the most excellent wisdom, he could not be the most excellent governor. He could not be an universal governor, without a universal wisdom; nor the sole governor without an unimitable wisdom; nor an independent governor without an original and independent wisdom; nor a perpetual governor without an incorruptible wisdom. He would not be the Lord of the world in all points, without skill to order the affairs of it. Power and wisdom are foundations of all authority and government; wisdom to know how to rule and command; power to make those commands obeyed: no regular order could issue out without the first, nor could any order be enforced without the second. A feeble wisdom, and a brutish power, seldom or never produce any good effect. Magistracy without wisdom, would be a frantic power, a rash conduct; like a strong arm when the eye is out, it strikes it knows not what, and leads it knows not whither. Wisdom without power, would be like a great body without feet, like the knowledge of a pilot that hath lost his arm, who, though he knows the rule of navigation, and what course to follow in his voyage, yet cannot manage the helm: but when those two, wisdom and power, are linked together, there ariseth from both a fitness for government.

There is wisdom to propose an end, and both wisdom and power employ means that conduct to that end. And therefore when God demonstrates to Job his right of government, and the unreasonableness of Job's quarrelling with his proceedings, he chiefly urgeth upon him the consideration of those two excellencies of his nature, power and wisdom, which are expressed in his works (chap. 38–41) A prince without wisdom, is but a title without a capacity to perform the office; no man without it is fit for government; nor could God without wisdom exercise a just dominion in the world. He hath, therefore, the highest wisdom, since he is the universal governor. That wisdom which is able to govern a family, may not be able to govern a city; and that wisdom which governs a city, may not be able to govern a nation or kingdom, much less a world. The bounds of God's government being greater than any, his wisdom for government must needs surmount the wisdom of all. And though the creatures be not in number actually infinite, yet they cannot be well governed, but by One endowed with infinite discretion. Providential government can be no more without infinite wisdom, than infinite wisdom can be without Providence.

Reason 3. The creatures working for an end, without their own knowledge, demonstrate the wisdom of God that guides them. All things in the world work for some end; the ends are unknown to them, though many of their ends are visible to us. As there was some prime cause, which by his power inspired them with their several instincts; so there must be some supreme wisdom, which moves and guides them to their end. As their being manifests his power that endowed them, so the acting according to the rules of their nature, which they themselves understand not, manifests his wisdom in directing them. Everything that acts for an end, must know that end, or be directed by another to attain that end. The arrow doth not know who shoots it, or to what end it is shot, or what mark is aimed at; but the archer that puts it in, and darts it out of the bow, knows. A watch hath a regular motion, but neither the spring, nor the wheels that move, know the end of their motion; no man will judge a wisdom to be in the watch, but in the artificer that disposed the

wheels and spring, by a joint combination to produce such a motion for such an end.

Doth either the sun that enlivens the earth, or the earth that travels with the plant, know what plant it produceth in such a soil, what temper it should be of, what fruit it should bear, and of what color? What plant knows its own medicinal qualities, its own beautiful flowers, and for what use they are ordained? When it strikes up its head from the earth, doth it know what proportion of them there will be? yet it produceth all these things in a state of ignorance. The sun warms the earth, concocts the humors, excites the virtue of it, and cherishes the seeds which are cast into her lap, yet all unknown to the sun or the earth. Since, therefore, that nature, that is the immediate cause of those things doth not understand its own quality, nor operation, nor the end of its action, that which thus directs them must be conceived to have an infinite wisdom. When things act by a rule they know not, and move for an end they understand not, and yet work harmoniously together for an end, that all of them, we are sure, are ignorant of, it mounts up our minds to acknowledge the wisdom of that Supreme Cause that hath ranged all these inferior causes in their order, and imprinted upon them the laws of their motions. according to the ideas in his own mind, who orders the rule by which they act, and the end for which they act, and directs every motion according to their several natures, and therefore possessed with infinite wisdom in his own nature.

Reason 4. God is the fountain of all wisdom in the creatures, and, therefore, is infinitely wise himself.

As he hath a fulness of being in himself, because the streams of being are derived to other things from him, so he hath a fulness of wisdom, because he is the spring of wisdom to angels and men. That being must be infinitely wise from whence all other wisdom derives its original; for nothing can be in the effect, which is not eminently in the cause; the cause is always more perfect than the effect. If, therefore, the creatures are wise, the Creator must be much more wise. If the Creator were destitute of wisdom, the creature would be much more perfect than the Creator. If you consider the wisdom of the spider in her web, which is both her house and net; the artifice of the bee in her comb, which is both her chamber and granary; the provision of the pismire in her repositories for corn,—the wisdom of the Creator is illustrated by them: whatsoever excellency you see in any creature, is an image of some excellency in God. The skill of the artificer is visible in the fruits of his art; a workman transcribes his spirit in the work of his hands. But the wisdom of rational creatures, as men, doth more illustrate it; all arts among men are the rays of Divine wisdom shining upon them, and, by a common gift of the Spirit, enlightening their minds to curious inventions, as (Prov. 8:12): “I, wisdom, find out the knowledge of witty inventions;” that is, I give a faculty to men to find them out; without my wisdom all things would be buried in darkness and ignorance: whatsoever wisdom there is in the world, it is but a shadow of the wisdom of God, a small rivulet derived from him, a spark leaping out from uncreated wisdom (Isa. 54:16): “He created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and makes the instruments.” The skill to use those weapons in warlike enterprises is from him: “I have created the waster to destroy;” it is not meant of creating their persons, but communicating to them their art; he speaks it there to expel fear from the church of all warlike reparations against them; he had given men the skill to form and use weapons, and could as well strip them of it, and defeat their purposes. The art of husbandry is a fruit of divine teaching (Isa. 28:24, 25). If those lower kinds of knowledge, that are common to all nations, and easily learned by all, are discoveries of Divine wisdom, much more the nobler sciences, intellectual and political wisdom (Dan. 2:21): “He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding;” speaking of the more abstruse parts of knowledge, “The inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding” (Job 32:8). Hence the wisdom which Solomon expressed in the harlot’s case (1 Kings 3:28), was, in the judgment of all Israel, the wisdom of God; that is, a fruit of Divine wisdom, a beam communicated to him from God. Every man’s soul is endowed, more or less, with those noble qualities; the soul of every man exceeds that of a brute; if the streams be so excellent, the fountain must be fuller and clearer. The first Spirit must infinitely more possess what other spirits derive from him by creation; were the wisdom of all the angels in heaven, and men on earth, collected in one spirit, it must be infinitely less than what is in the spring; for no creature can be equal to the Creator. As the highest creature already made, or that we can conceive may be made by infinite power, would be infinitely below God in the notion of a creature, so it would be infinitely below God in the notion of wise.

IV, The fourth thing is, wherein the wisdom of God appears. It appears, 1st, In creation. 2dly, In government. 3dly, In redemption.

First, In creation. As in a musical instrument there is first the skill of the workman in the frame, then the skill of the musician in stringing it proper for such musical notes as he will express upon it, and after that the tempering of the strings, by various stops, to a delightful harmony, so is the wisdom of God seen in framing the world, then in tuning it, and afterwards in the motion of the several creatures. The fabric of the world is called the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:21): “After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God;” *i. e.*, by the creation the world knew not God. The framing cause is there put for the effect and the work framed; because the Divine wisdom stepped forth in the creatures, to a public appearance, as if it had presented itself in a visible shape to man, giving instructions in and by the creatures, to know and adore him. What we translate (Gen. 1:1) “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” the Targum expresseth, “In wisdom God created the heaven and the earth.” Both bear a stamp of this perfection on them; and when the apostle tells the Romans (Rom. 1:20) “The invisible things of God were clearly understood by the things that are made,” the word he uses is *ποίησι* not *ἐργοις*; this signifies a work of labor, but *ποίημα* a work of skill, or a poem. The whole creation is a poem, every species a stanza, and every individual creature a verse in it. The creation presents us with a prospect of the wisdom of God, as a poem doth the reader with the wit and fancy of the composer: “By wisdom he created the earth” (Prov. 3:19), “and stretched out the heavens by discretion” (Jer. 10:12). There is not anything so mean, so small, but glitters with a beam of Divine skill; and the consideration of them would justly make every man subscribe to that of the psalmist, “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all” (Psalm 104:24). All, the least as well as the greatest, and the meanest as well as the noblest; even those creatures which seem ugly and deformed to us, as toads, &c., because they fall short of those perfections which are the dowry of other animals: in these there is a footstep of Divine wisdom, since they were not produced by him at random, but determined to some particular end, and designed to some usefulness, as parts of the world in their several natures and stations. God could never have had a satisfaction in the review of his works, and pronounced them good or comely, as he did (Gen. 1:31), had they not been agreeable to that eternal original copy in his own mind. It is said he was refreshed, *viz.* with that review (Exod. 31:17), which could not have been, if his piercing eye had found any defect in any thing which had sprung out of his hand, or an unsuitableness to that end for which he created them. He seems to do as a man that hath made a curious and polite work, with exact care to peer about every part and line, if he could perceive any imperfection in it, to rectify the mistake: but no defect was found by the infinitely wise God upon this second examination. This wisdom of the creation appears,

1. In the variety. 2. In the beauty. 3. The fitness of every creature for its use. 4. The subordination of one creature to another, and the joint concurrence of all to one common end.

1. In the variety (Psalm 104:24): "O Lord, how manifold are thy works!" How great a variety is there of animals and plants, with a great variety of forms, shapes, figurations, colors, various smells, virtues, and qualities! and this rarity is produced from one and the same matter, as beasts and plants from the earth (Gen. 1:11, 24): "Let the earth bring forth living creatures; and the earth brought forth grass, and the herb yielding seed after his kind:" such diversity of fowl and fish from the water (Gen. 1:20): "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly;" such a beautiful and active variety from so dull a matter as the earth; so solid a variety from so fluid a matter as the water; so noble a piece as the body of man, with such variety of members fit to entertain a more-excellent soul as a guest, from so mean a matter as the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7). This extraction of such variety of forms out of one single and dull matter, is the chemistry of Divine wisdom. It is a greater skill to frame noble bodies of vile matter, as varieties of precious vessels of clay and earth, than of a nobler matter, as gold and silver. Again, all those varieties propagate their kind in every particular and quality of their nature, and uniformly bring forth exact copies according to the first pattern God made of the kind (Gen. 1:11, 12, 24). Consider, also, how the same piece of ground is garnished with plants and flowers of several virtues, fruits, colors, scents, without our being able to perceive any variety in the earth that breeds them, and not so great a difference in the roots that bear them. Add to this the diversities of birds of different colors, shapes, notes, consisting of various parts, wings like oars, to cut the air, and tails as the rudder of a ship, to guide their motion. How various, also, are the endowments of the creatures! some have vegetation, and the power of growth; others have the addition of sense, and others the excellency of reason; something wherein all agree, and something wherein all differ; variety in unity, and unity in variety: the wisdom of the workman had not been so conspicuous had there been only one degree of goodness: the greatest skill is seen in the greatest variety. The comeliness of the body is visible in the variety of members, and their usefulness to one another. What an inform thing had man been had he been all ear, or all eye! If God had made all the stars to be suns, it would have been a demonstration of his power, but, perhaps, less of his wisdom: no creatures, with the natures they now have, could have continued in being under so much heat: there was no less wisdom went to the frame of the least, than to the greatest creature. It speaks more art in a limner to paint a landscape exactly, than to draw the sun, though the sun be a more glorious body. might instance also, in the different characters and features imprinted upon the countenances of men and women, the differences of voices and statures, whereby they are distinguished from one another: these are the foundations of order and of human society, and administration of justice. What confusion would have been, if a grown-up son could not be known from his father, the magistrate from the subject, the creditor from the debtor, the innocent from the criminal! The laws God hath given to mankind could not have been put in execution: this variety speaks the wisdom of God.

2. The wisdom of the creation appears in the beauty, and order, and situation of the several creatures (Eccles. 3:11): "He hath made everything beautiful in his time." As their being was a fruit of Divine power, so their order is a fruit of Divine wisdom. All creatures are as members in the great body of the world, proportioned to one another, and contributing to the beauty of the whole; so that if the particular forms of everything, the union of all for the composition of the world, and the laws which are established in the order of nature for its conservation, be considered, it would ravish us with an admiration of God.

All the creatures are so many pictures or statues, exactly framed by line (Psalm 19:4): "Their line is gone through all the earth;" their "line," a measuring line, or a carpenter's rule, whereby he proportions several pieces to be exactly linked and coupled together. "Their line," that is, their harmonious proportion, and the instruction from it, is gone forth through all the earth. Upon the account of this harmony, some of the ancient heathens framed the images of their gods with musical instruments in their hands, signifying that God wrought all things in a due proportion. The heavens speak this wisdom in their order. The revolutions of the sun and moon determine the seasons of the year, and make day and night in orderly succession. The stars beautify the heavens, and influence the earth, and keep their courses (Judges 5:20). They keep their stations without interfering with one another; and though they have rolled about for so many ages, they observe their distinct laws, and in the variety of their motions have not disturbed one another's functions. The sun is set as the heart in the midst of this great body, to afford warmth to all: and had it been set lower, it had long since turned the earth into flame and ashes: had it been placed higher, the earth would have wanted the nourishment and refreshment necessary for it. Too much nearness had ruined the earth by parching heat, and too great a distance had destroyed the earth by starving it with cold. The sun hath also its appointed motion; had it been fixed without motion, half of the earth had been unprofitable; there had been a perpetual darkness in a moiety of it; nothing had been produced for nourishment, and so it had been rendered uninhabitable: but now, by its motion, it visits all the climates of the world, runs its circuit, so that "nothing is hid from the heat thereof" (Psalm 19:6). It imparts its virtue to every corner of the world in its daily and yearly visits. Had it been fixed, the fruits of the earth under it had been parched and destroyed before their maturity; but all those inconveniences are provided against by the perpetual motion of the sun. This motion is orderly; it makes its daily course from east to west, its yearly motion from north to south: it goes to the north, till it comes to the point God hath set it, and then turns back to the south, and gains some point every day: it never riseth nor sets in the same place one day, where it did the day before. The world is never without its light; some see it rising the same moment we see it setting. The earth also speaks the Divine wisdom; it is the pavement of the world, as the heaven is the ceiling of fretwork. It is placed lowermost, as being the heaviest body, and fit to receive the weightiest matter, and provided as an habitation proper for those creatures which derive the matter of their bodies from it, and partake of its earthly nature; and garnished with other creatures for the profit or pleasure of man. The sea also speaks the same Divine wisdom. "He strengthened the fountains of the deep, and gave the sea a decree that it should not pass his command" (Prov. 8:28, 29). He hath given it certain bounds that it should not overflow the earth (Job 28:11). It contains itself in the situation wherein God hath placed it, and doth not transgress its bounds. What if some part of a country, a little spot, hath been overflowed by it, and groaned under its waves? yet for the main, it retains the same channels wherein it was at first lodged. All creatures are clothed with an outward beauty, and endowed with an inward harmony; there is an agreement in all parts of this great body; every one is beautiful and orderly; but the beauty of the world results from all of them disposed and linked together.

3. This wisdom is seen in the fitness of everything for its end, and the usefulness of it. Divine wisdom is more illustrious in the fitness and usefulness of this great variety, than in the composure of their distinct parts: as the artificer's skill is more eminent in fitting the wheels, and setting them in order for their due motion, than in the external fabric of the materials which compose the clock. After the most diligent inspection, there can be found nothing in the creation unprofitable; nothing but is capable of some service, either for the support of our bodies, recreation of our senses, or moral instruction of our minds: not the least creature but is formed, and shaped, and furnished with members and parts, in a due proportion for its end and service in the world; nothing is superfluous, nothing defective. The earth is fitted in its parts; the valleys are appointed for granaries, the mountains to shadow them from the scorching heat of the sun; the rivers, like veins, carry refreshment to every member of this body; plants and trees thrive on the face of the earth, and metals are engendered in the bowels of it, for materials for building, and other uses for the service of man.

“There he causes the grass to grow for the cattle and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth” (Psalm 114:14). The sea is fitted for use; it is a fish pond for the nourishment of man; a boundary for the dividing of lands and several dominions: it joins together nations far distant: a great vessel for commerce (Psalm 114:26), “there go the ships.” It affords vapors to the clouds, wherewith to water the earth, which the sun draws up, separating the finer from the salter parts, that the earth may be fruitful without being burdened with barrenness by the salt. The sea hath also its salt, its ebbs, and floods; the one as brine, the other as motion, to preserve it from putrefaction, that it may not be contagious to the rest of the world. Showers are appointed to refresh the bodies of living creatures, to open the womb of the earth, and “water the ground to make it fruitful” Psalm 104:3. The clouds, therefore, are called the chariots of God; he rides in them in the manifestation of his goodness and wisdom. Winds are fitted to purify the air, to preserve it from putrefaction, to carry the clouds to several parts, to refresh the parched earth, and assist her fruits: and also to serve for the commerce of one nation with another by navigation. God, in his wisdom and goodness, “walks upon the wings of the wind” (Psalm 104:3). Rivers are appointed to water the ground, and render it fresh and lively; they fortify cities, are the limits of countries, serve for commerce; they are the watering-pots of the earth, and the vessels for drink for the living creatures that dwell upon the earth. God cut those channels for the wild asses, the beasts of the desert, which are his creatures as well as the rest (Psalm 104:10, 12, 13). Trees are appointed for the habitations of birds, shadows for the earth, nourishment for the creatures, materials for building, and fuel for the relief of man against cold. The seasons of the year have their use; the winter makes the juice retire into the earth, fortifies plants, and fixes their roots: it moistens the earth that was dried before by the heat of summer. and cleanseth and prepares it for a new fruitfulness. The spring calls out the sap in new leaves and fruit. The summer consumes the superfluous moisture, and produceth nourishment for the inhabitants of the world. The day and night have also their usefulness: the day gives life to labor, and is a guide to motion and action (Psalm 104:24), “The sun ariseth, man goeth forth to his labor until the evening.” It warms the air, and quickens nature; without day the world would be a chaos, an unseen beauty. The night indeed casts a veil upon the bravery of the earth, but it draws the curtains from that of heaven; though it darkens below, it makes us see the beauty of the world above, and discovers to us a glorious part of the creation of God, the tapestry of heaven, and the motions of the stars, hid from us by the eminent light of the day. It procures a truce from labor, and refresheth the bodies of creatures, by recruiting the spirits which are scattered by watching. It prevents the ruin of life, by a reparation of what was wasted in the day. It takes from us the sight of flowers and plants, but it washeth their face with dews for a new appearance next morning. The length of the day and night is not without a mark of wisdom; were they of a greater length, as the length of a week or month, the one would too much dry, and the other too much moisten; and for want of action, the members would be stupified. The perpetual succession of day and night is an evidence of the Divine wisdom in tempering the travel and rest of creatures. Hence, the psalmist tells us (Psalm 84:16, 17), “The day is thine, and the night is thine; thou hast prepared the light of the sun, and made summer and winter;” *i. e.* they are of God’s framing, not without a wise counsel and end. Hence, let us ascend to the bodies of living creatures, and we shall find every member fitted for use. What a curiosity is there in every member! Every one fitted to a particular use in their situation, form, temper, and mutual agreement for the good of the whole: the eye to direct; the ear to receive directions from others; the hands to act; the feet to move. Every creature hath members fitted for that element wherein it resides; and in the body, some parts are appointed to change the food into blood, others to refine it, and others to distribute and convey it to several parts for the maintenance of the whole: the heart to mint vital spirits for preserving life, and the brain to coin animal spirits for life and motion; the lungs to serve for the cooling the heart, which else would be parched as the ground in summer. The motion of the members of the body by one act of the will, and also without the will by a natural instinct, is an admirable evidence of Divine skill in the structure of the body; so that well might the psalmist cry out (Psalm 139:14), “I am fearfully and wonderfully made!” But how much more of this Divine perfection is seen in the soul! A nature, furnished with a faculty of understanding to judge of things, to gather in things that are distant, and to reason and draw conclusions from one thing to another, with a memory to treasure up things that are past, with a will to apply itself so readily to what the mind judges fit and comely, and fly so speedily from what it judges ill and hurtful. The whole world is a stage; every creature in it hath a part to act, and a nature suited to that part and end it is designed for; and all concur in a joint language to publish the glory of Divine wisdom; they have a voice to proclaim the “glory of God” (Psalm 19:1, 3). And it is not the least part of God’s skill, in framing the creatures so, that upon man’s obedience, they are the channels of his goodness; and upon man’s disobedience, they can, in their natures, be the ministers of his justice for the punishing of offending creatures.

4. This wisdom is apparent in the linking of all these useful parts together, so that one is subordinate to the other for a common end. All parts are exactly suited to one another, and every part to the whole, though they are of different natures, as lines distant in themselves, yet they meet in one common centre, the good and the preservation of the universe; they are all jointed together, as the word translated *framed* (Heb. 11:2) signifies; knit by fit hands and ligaments to contribute mutual beauty, strength, and assistance to one another; like so many links of a chain coupled together, that though there be a distance in place, there is a unity in regard of connection and end, there is a consent in the whole (Hos. 2:21, 22). “The heavens hear the earth; and the earth hears the corn, and the wine, and the oil.” The heavens communicate their qualities to the earth, and the earth conveys them to the fruits she bears. The air distributes light, wind and rain to the earth; the earth and the sea render to the air exhalations and vapors, and altogether charitably give to the plants and animals that which is necessary for their nourishment and refreshment.

The influences of the heavens animate the earth; and the earth affords matter, in part, for the influences it receives from the regions above. Living creatures are maintained by nourishment; nourishment is conveyed to them by the fruits of the earth; the fruits of the earth are produced by means of rain and heat; matter for rain and dew is raised by the heat of the sun; and the sun by its motion distributes heat and quickening virtue to all parts of the earth. So colors are made for the pleasure of the eye, sounds for the delight of the ear; light is formed, whereby the eye may see the one, and air to convey the species of colors to the eye, and sound to the ear; all things are like the wheels of a watch compacted: and though many of the creatures be endowed with contrary qualities, yet they are joined in a marriage-knot for the public security, and subserviency to the preservation and order of the universe; as the variety of strings upon an instrument, sending forth various and distinct sounds, are tempered together, for the framing excellent and delightful airs. In this universal conspiring of the creatures together to one end, is the wisdom of the Creator apparent; in tuning so many contraries as the elements are, and preserving them in their order, which if once broken, the whole frame of nature would crack, and fall in pieces; all are so interwoven and inlaid together, by the Divine workmanship, as to make up one entire beauty in the whole fabric: as every part in the body of man hath a distinct comeliness, yet there is besides, the beauty of the whole, that results from the union of divers parts exactly fashioned to one another, and linked together.

By the way, *Use*. How much may we see of the perfection of God in everything that presents itself to our eyes! And how should we be convinced of our unworthy neglect of ascending to him with reverend and admiring thoughts, upon the prospect of the creatures!

What dull scholars are we, when every creature is our teacher, every part of the creature a lively instruction! Those things that we tread under our feet, if used by us according to the full design of their creation, would afford rich matter, not only for our heads, but our hearts. As grace doth not destroy nature, but elevate it, so neither should the fresher and fuller discoveries of Divine wisdom in redemption deface all our thoughts of his wisdom in creation. Though the greater light of the sun obscures the lesser sparkling of the stars, yet it gives way in the night to the discovery of them, that God may be seen, known, and considered, in all his works of wonder, and miracles of nature. No part of Scripture is more spiritual than the Psalms; none filled with clearer discoveries of Christ in the Old Testament; yet how often do the penmen consider the creation of God, and find their meditations on him to be sweet, as considered in his works (Psalm 104:34)! "My meditation of him shall be sweet." When? why, after a short history of the goodness and wisdom of God in the frame of the world, and the species of the creatures.

Secondly. The wisdom of God appears in his government of his creatures. The regular motion of the creatures speaks for this perfection, as well as the exact composition of them. If the exquisiteness of the frame conducts us to the skill of the Contriver, the exactness of their order, according to his will and law, speaks no less the wisdom of the Governor. It cannot be thought that a rash and irrational power presides over a world so well disposed: the disposition of things hath no less characters of skill, than the creation of them. No man can hear an excellent lesson upon a lute, but must presently reflect upon the art of the person that touches it. The prudence of man appears in wrapping up the concerns of a kingdom in his mind, for the well-ordering of it; and shall not the wisdom of God shine forth, as he is the director of the world? I shall omit his government of inanimate creatures, and confine the discourse to his government of man, as rational, as sinful, as restored.

1st. In his government of man as a rational creature.

1. In the law he gives to man. Wisdom framed it, though will enacted it. The will of God is the rule of righteousness to us, but the wisdom of God is the foundation of that rule of righteousness which he prescribes us. The composure of a musician is the rule of singing to his scholars; yet the consent and harmony in that composure derives not itself from his will, but from his understanding; he would not be a musician if his composures were contrary to the rules of true harmony: so the laws of men are composed by wisdom, though they are enforced by will and authority. The moral law, which was the law of nature, the law imprinted upon Adam, is so framed as to secure the rights of God as supreme, and the rights of men in their distinctions of superiority and equality: it is therefore called "holy and good" (Rom. 7:12); holy, as it prescribes our duty to God in his worship; good, as it regulates the offices of human life, and reserves the common interest of mankind.

(1.) It is suited to the nature of man. As God hath given a law of nature, a fixed order to inanimate creatures, so he hath given a law of reason to rational creatures: other creatures are not capable of a law differentiating good and evil, because they are destitute of faculties and capacities to make distinction between them. It had not been agreeable to the wisdom of God to propose any moral law to them, who had neither understanding to discern, nor will to choose. It is therefore to be observed, that whilst Christ exhorted others to the embracing his doctrine, yet he exhorted not little children, though he took them in his arms, because, though they had faculties, yet they were not come to such a maturity as to be capable of a rational instruction. But there was a necessity for some command for the government of man; since God had made him a rational creature, it was not agreeable to his wisdom to govern him as a brute, but as a rational creature, capable of knowing his precepts, and voluntarily walking in them; and without a law, he had not been capable of any exercise of his reason in services respecting God. He therefore gives him a law, with a covenant annexed to it, whereby man is obliged to obedience, and secured of a reward. This was enforced with severe penalties, death, with all the horrors attending it, to deter him from transgression (Gen. 2:17); wherein is implied a promise of continuance of life, and all its felicities, to allure him to a mindfulness of his obligation. So perfect a hedge did Divine wisdom set about him, to keep him within the bounds of that obedience, which was both his debt and security, that wheresoever he looked, he saw either something to invite him, or something to drive him to the payment of his duty, and perseverance in it. Thus the law was exactly framed to the nature of man; man had twisted in him a desire of happiness; the promise was suited to cherish this natural desire. He had also the passion of fear; the proper object of this was any thing destructive to his being, nature, and felicity; this the threatening met with. In the whole it was accommodated to man as rational; precepts to the law in his mind, promises to the natural appetite, threatenings to the most prevailing affection, and to the implanted desires of preserving both his being and happiness in that being. These were rational motives, fitted to the nature of Adam, which was above the life God had given plants, and the sense he had given animals. The command given man in innocence was suited to his strength and power. God gave him not any command but what he had ability to observe: and since we want not power to forbear an apple in our corrupted and impotent state, he wanted not strength in his state of integrity. The wisdom of God commanded nothing but what was very easy to be observed by him, and inferior to his natural ability. It had been both unjust and unwise to have commanded him to fly up to the sun, when he had not wings; or stop the course of the sea, when he had not strength.

(2.) It is suited to the happiness and benefit of man. God's laws are not an act of mere authority respecting his own glory, but of wisdom and goodness respecting man's benefit. They are perfective of man's nature, conferring a wisdom upon him, "rejoicing his heart, enlightening his eyes" (Psalm 19:7, 8), affording him both a knowledge of God and of himself. To be without a law, is for men to be as beasts, without justice and without religion: other things are for the good of the body, but the laws of God for the good of the soul; the more perfect the law, the greater the benefit. The laws given to the Jews were the honor and excellency of that nation (Deut. 1:8); "What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous?" They were made statesmen in the judicial law, ecclesiastics in the ceremonial, honest men in the second table, and divine in the first. All his laws are suited to the true satisfaction of man, and the good of human society. Had God framed a law only for one nation, there would have been the characters of a particular wisdom; but now an universal wisdom appears, in accommodating his law, not only to this or that particular society or corporation of men, but to the benefit of all mankind, in the variety of climates and countries wherein they live; everything that is disturbing to human society is provided against; nothing is enjoined but what is sweet, rational, and useful: it orders us not to attempt anything against the life of our neighbor, the honor of his bed, propriety in his goods, and the clearness of his reputation; and, if well observed, would alter the face of the world, and make it look with another hue. The world would be altered from a brutish to a human world; it would change lions and wolves, men of lionlike and wolfish disposition, into reason and sweetness. And because the whole law is summed up in love, it obligeth us to endeavor the preservation of one another's beings, the favoring of one another's interests, and increasing the goods, as much as justice will permit, and keeping up one another's credits, because love, which is the soul of the law, is not shown by a cessation from action, but signifies an ardor, upon all occasions, in doing good. I say, were this law well observed, the world would be another thing than it is: it would become a religious fraternity; the voice of enmity, and the noise of groans and cursings, would not be heard in our streets; peace would be in all borders; plenty of charity in the midst of cities and countries; joy and

singing would sound in all habitations. Man's advantage was designed in God's laws, and doth naturally result from the observance of them. God so ordered them, by his wisdom, that the obedience of man should draw forth his goodness, and prevent those smarting judgments which were necessary to reduce the creature to order that would not voluntarily continue in the order God had appointed. The laws of men are often unjust, oppressive, cruel, sometimes against the law of nature; but an universal wisdom and righteousness glitters in the Divine law; there is nothing in it but is worthy of God, and useful for the creature; so that we may well say, with Job, "Who teaches like God?" (Job 36:22) or as some render it, "Who is a lawgiver like God?" Who can say to him, Thou hast wrought iniquity or folly among men? His precepts were framed for the preservation of man in that rectitude wherein he was created, in that likeness to God wherein he was first made, that there might be a correspondence between the integrity of the creature and the goodness of his Creator, by the obedience of man; that man might exercise his faculties in operation worthy of him, and beneficial to the world.

(3.) The wisdom of God is seen in suiting his laws to the consciences as well as the interests of all mankind (Rom. 2:14); "The Gentiles do, by nature, the things contained in the law;" so great an affinity there is between the wise law and the reason of man. There is a natural beauty emerging from them, and darting upon the reasons and consciences of men, which dictates to them that this law is worthy to be observed in itself. The two main principles of the law, the love and worship of God, and doing as we would be done by, have an indelible impression in the consciences of all men in regard of the principle, though they are not suitably expressed in the practice. Where there no law outwardly published, yet every man's conscience would dictate to him that God. Was to be acknowledged, worshipped, loved, as naturally as his reason would acquaint him that there was such a being as God. This suitableness of them to the consciences of men is manifest, in that the laws of the best governed nations among the heathen have had an agreement with them. Nothing can be more exactly composed, according to the rules of right and exact reason, than this; no man but approves of something in it, yea, of the whole, when he exerciseth that dim reason which he hath. Suppose any man, not an absolute atheist, he cannot but acknowledge the reasonableness of worshipping God. Grant him to be a spirit, and it will presently appear absurd to represent him by any corporeal image, and derogate from his excellency by so mean a resemblance; with the same easiness he will grant a reverence due to the name of God; that we must not serve our turn of him, by calling him to witness to a lie in a solemn oath; that as worship is due to him, so is some stated time a circumstance necessary to the performance of that worship. And as to the second table, will any man, in his right reason, quarrel with that command that engageth his inferiors to honor him, that secures his being from a violent murder, and his goods from unjust rapine? and though, by the fury of his lusts, he break the laws of wedlock himself, yet he cannot but approve of that law, as it prohibits every man from doing him the like injury and disgrace. The suitableness of the law to the consciences of men is further evidenced by those furious reflections, and strong alarms of conscience, upon a transgression of it, and that in all parts of the world, more or less, in all men; so exactly hath Divine wisdom fitted the law to the reason and consciences of men, as one tally to another: indeed, without such an agreement, no man's conscience could have any ground for a hue and cry; nor need any man be startled with the records of it. This manifests the wisdom of God in framing his laws so that the reasons and consciences of all men do, one time or other, subscribe to it. What governor in the world is able to make any law distinct from this revealed by God, that shall reach all places, all persons, all hearts? We may add to this the extent of his commands, in ordering goodness at the root, not only in action, but affection; not only in the motion of the members, but the disposition of the soul; which suiting a law to the inward frame of man, is quite out of the compass of the wisdom of any creature.

(4.) His wisdom is seen in the encouragements he gives for the studying and observing his will (Psalm 19:11); "In keeping thy commandments there is great reward." The variety of them; there is not any particular genius in man but may find something suitable to win upon him in the revealed will of God.

There is a strain of reason to satisfy the rational; of eloquence, to gratify the fanciful; of interest, to allure the selfish; of terror, to startle the obstinate. As a skilful angler stores himself with baits, according to the appetites of the sorts of fish he intends to catch, so in the word of God there are varieties of baits, according to the varieties of the inclinations of men; threatenings to work upon fear; promises to work upon love; examples of holy men set out for imitation; and those plainly; neither his threatenings nor his promises are dark, as the heathen oracles; but peremptory, as becomes a sovereign lawgiver; and plain, as was necessary for the understanding of a creature. As he deals graciously with men in exhorting and encouraging them, so he deals wisely herein, by taking away all excuse from them if they ruin the interest of their souls, by denying obedience to their Sovereign. Again, the rewards God proposeth are accommodated, not to the brutish parts of man, his carnal sense and fleshly appetite, but to the capacity of a spiritual soul, which admits only of spiritual gratifications; and cannot, in its own nature, without a sordid subjection to the humors of the body, be moved by sensual proposals. God backs his precepts with that which the nature of man longed for, and with spiritual delights, which can only satisfy a rational appetite; and thereby did as well gratify the noblest desires in man, as oblige him to the noblest service and work. Indeed, virtue and holiness being perfectly amiable, ought chiefly to affect our understandings, and by them draw our wills to the esteem and pursuit of them. But since the desire of happiness is inseparable from the nature of man, as impossible to be disjoined as an inclination to descend to be severed from heavy bodies, or an instinct to ascend from light and airy substances; God serves himself of the inclination of our natures to bappiness, to enjender in us an esteem and affection to the holiness he doth require. He proposeth the enjoyment of a supernatural good and everlasting glory, as a bait to that insatiable longing our natures have for happiness, to receive the impression of holiness into our souls. And, besides, he doth proportion rewards according the degrees of men's industry, labor, and zeal for him; and weighs out a recompense, not only suited to, but above the service. He that improves five talents, is to be ruler over five cities; that is, a greater proportion of honor and glory than another (Luke 19:17, 18); as a wise father excites the affection of his children to things worthy of praise, by varieties of recompenses according to their several actions. And it was the wisdom of the steward, in the judgment of our Saviour, to give every one the "portion that belonged to him" (Luke 12:42). There is no part of the word wherein we meet not with the will and wisdom of God, varieties of duties, and varieties of encouragement, mingled together.

(5.) The wisdom of God is seen in fitting the revelations of his will to aftertimes, and for the preventing of the foreseen corruptions of men. The whole revelation of the mind of God is stored with wisdom in the words, connexion, sense; it looks backwards to past, and forwards to ages to come: a hidden wisdom lies in the bowels of it, like gold in a mine. The Old Testament was so composed, as to fortify the New, when God should bring it to light. The foundations of the gospel were laid in the law: the predictions of the Prophets, and figures of the law, were so wisely framed, and laid down in such clear expressions, as to be proofs of the authority of the New Testament, and convictions of Jesus' being the Messiah (Luke 24:14). Things concerning Christ were written in Moses, the Prophets, and Psalms; and do, to this day, stare the Jews so in the face, that they are fain to invent absurd and nonsensical interpretations to

excuse their unbelief, and continue themselves in their obstinate blindness. And in pursuance of the efficacy of those predictions, it was a part of the wisdom of God to bring forth the translation of the Old Testament, (by the means of Ptolomy, king of Egypt, some hundreds of years before the coming of Christ) into the Greek language, the tongue then most known in the world; and why? to prepare the Gentiles, by the reading of it, for that gracious call he intended them, and for the entertainment of the gospel, which some few years after was to be published among them; that, by reading the predictions so long before made, they might more readily receive the accomplishment of them in their due time. The Scripture is written in such a manner, as to obviate errors foreseen by God to enter into the church. It may be wondered, why the universal particle should be inserted by Christ, in the giving the cup in the supper, which was not in the distributing the bread (Matt. 24:27): "Drink ye all of it;" not at the distributing the bread, "Eat you all of it;" and Mark, in his relation, tells us, "They all drank of it" (Mark 11:23). The church of Rome hath been the occasion of discovering to us the wisdom of our Saviour, in inserting that particle all, since they were so bold to exclude the communicants from the cup by a trick of concomitancy. Christ foresaw the error, and therefore put in a little word to obviate a great invasion: and the Spirit of God hath particularly left upon record that particle, as we may reasonably suppose to such a purpose. And so, in the description of the "blessed Virgin" (Luke 1:27), there is nothing of her holiness mentioned, which is with much diligence recorded of Elizabeth (ver. 6): "Righteous, walking in all the commandments of God, blameless;" probably to prevent the superstition which God foresaw would arise in the world. And we do not find more undervaluing speeches uttered by Christ to any of his disciples, in the exercise of his office, than to her, except to Peter. As when she acquainted him with the want of wine at the marriage in Cana, she receives a slighting answer: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (John 2:4) And when one was admiring the blessedness of her that bare him, he turns the discourse another way, to pronounce a blessedness rather belonging to them that "hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:27, 28); in a mighty wisdom to antidote his people against any conceit of the prevalency of the Virgin over him in heaven, in the exercise of his mediatory office.

2. As his wisdom appears in his government by his laws, so it appears in the various inclinations and conditions of men. As there is a distinction of several creatures, and several qualities in them, for the common good of the world, so among men there are several inclinations and several abilities, as donatives from God, for the common advantage of human society; as several channels cut out from the same river run several ways, and refresh several soils, one man is qualified for one employment, another marked out by God for a different work, yet all of them fruitful to bring in a revenue of glory to God, and a harvest of profit to the rest of mankind. How unuseful would the body be, if it had but "one member" (1 Cor. 12:19)! How unprovided would a house be, if it had not vessels of dishonor as well as of honor! The corporation of mankind would be as much a chaos, as the matter of the heavens and the earth was, before it was distinguished by several forms breathed into it at the creation. Some are inspired with a particular genius for one art, some for another; every man hath a distinct talent. If all were husbandmen, where would be the instruments to plough and reap? If all were artificers, where would they have corn to nourish themselves? All men are like vessels, and parts in the body, designed for distinct offices and functions for the good of the whole, and mutually return an advantage to one another. As the variety of gifts in the church is a fruit of the wisdom of God, for the preservation and increase of the church, so the variety of inclinations and employments in the world is a fruit of the wisdom of God, for the preservation and subsistence of the world by mutual commerce. What the apostle largely discourseth of the former, in 1 Cor. 12 may be applied to the other. The various conditions of men is also a fruit of Divine wisdom. Some are rich, and some poor; the rich have as much need of the poor, as the poor have of the rich; if the poor depend upon the rich for their livelihood, the rich depend upon the poor for their conveniences. Many arts would not be learned by men, if poverty did not oblige them to it; and many would faint in the learning of them, if they were not thereunto encouraged by the rich. The poor labor for the rich, as the earth sends vapors into the vaster and fuller air; and the rich return advantages again to the poor, as the clouds do the vapors in rain upon the earth. As meat would not afford a flourishing juice without bread, and bread without other food would immoderately fill the stomach, and not be well digested, so the rich would be unprofitable in the commonwealth without the poor, and the poor would be burdensome to a commonwealth without the rich. The poor could not be easily governed without the rich, nor the rich sufficiently and conveniently provided for without the poor. If all were rich, there would be no objects for the exercise of a noble part of charity: if all were poor, there were no matter for the exercise of it. Thus the Divine wisdom planted various inclinations, and diversified the conditions of men for the public advantages of the world.

2dly. God's wisdom appears, in the government of men, as fallen and sinful; or, in the government of sin. After the law of God was broke, and sin invaded and conquered the world, divine wisdom had another scene to act in, and other methods of government were necessary. The wisdom of God is then seen in ordering those jarring discords, drawing good out of evil, and honour to himself out of that which in its own nature tended to the supplanting of his glory. God being a sovereign good, would not suffer so great an evil to enter, but to serve himself of it for some greater end, for all his thoughts are full of goodness and wisdom. Now, though the permission of sin be an act of his sovereignty, and the punishment of sin be an act of his justice, yet the ordination of sin to good, is an act of his wisdom, whereby he doth dispose the evil, overrules the malice, and orders the events of it to his own purposes.

Sin in itself is a disorder, and therefore God doth not permit sin for itself; for in its own nature it hath nothing of amiableness, but he wills it for some righteous end, which belongs to the manifestation of his glory, which is his aim in all the acts of his will; he wills it not as sin, but as his wisdom can order it to some greater good than was before in the world, and make it contribute to the beauty of the order he intends. As a dark shadow is not delightful and pleasant in itself, nor is drawn by a painter for any amiableness there is in the shadow itself, but as it serves to set forth that beauty which is the main design of his art, so the glorious effects which arise from the entrance of sin into the world, are not from the creatures evil, but the depths of divine wisdom. Particularly,

1. God's wisdom is seen in the bounding of sin; as it is said of the wrath of man, it shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath God doth restrain (Psalm 76:10). He sets limits to the boiling corruption of the heart, as he doth to the boisterous waves of the sea; "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further." As God is the rector of the world, he doth so restrain sin, so temper and direct it, as that human society is preserved, which else would be overflown with a deluge of wickedness, and ruin would be brought upon all communities. The world would be a shambles, a brothel-house, if God, by his wisdom and goodness, did not set bars to that wickedness which is in the hearts of men: the whole earth would be as bad as hell. Since the heart of man is a hell of corruption, by that the souls of all men would be excited to the acting the worst villainies; since "every thought of the heart of man is only evil, and that continually" Gen. 6:5). If the wisdom of God did not stop these floodgates of evil in the hearts of men, it would overflow the world, and frustrate all the gracious designs he carries on among the sons of men. Were it not for this wisdom, every house would be filled with violence, as well as every nature is with sin. What harm would not strong and furious beasts do, did not the skill of man tame and bridle them? How often hath Divine wisdom restrained the viciousness of human nature, and let it run, not to that point

they designed, but to the end he purposed! Laban's fury, and Esau's enmity against Jacob, were pent in within bounds for Jacob's safety, and their hearts overruled from an intended destruction of the good man, to a perfect amity (Gen. 31:29, and Gen. 31:32.)

2. God's wisdom is seen in the bringing glory to himself out of sin.

(1.) Out of sin itself. God erects the trophies of honor upon that which is a natural means to hinder and deface it. His glorious attributes are drawn out to our view, upon the occasion of sin, which otherwise had lain hid in his own Being. Sin is altogether black and abominable; but by the admirable wisdom of God, he hath drawn out of the dreadful darkness of sin the saving beams of his mercy, and displayed his grace in the incarnation and passion of his Son for the atonement of sin. Thus he permitted Adam's fall, and wisely ordered it, for a fuller discovery of his own nature, and a higher elevation of man's good, that "as sin reigned to death, so might grace reign through righteousness to eternal life, by Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:21). The unbounded goodness of God could not have appeared without it. His goodness in rewarding innocent obedience would have been manifested; but not his mercy, in pardoning rebellious crimes. An innocent creature is the object of the rewards of grace, as the standing angels are under the beams of grace; but not under the beams of mercy, because they were never sinful, and, consequently, never miserable. Without sin the creature had not been miserable: had man remained innocent, he had not been the subject of punishment; and without the creature's misery, God's mercy in sending his Son to save his enemies, could not have appeared. The abundance of sin is a passive occasion for God to manifest the abundance of his grace. The power of God in the changing the heart of a rebellious creature, had not appeared, had not sin infected our nature. We had not clearly known the vindictive justice of God, had no crime been committed; for that is the proper object of Divine wrath. The goodness of God could never have permitted justice to exercise itself upon an innocent creature, that was not guilty either personally or by imputation (Psalm 11:7), "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth uphold the upright." Wisdom is illustrious hereby. God suffered man to fall into a mortal disease, to shew the virtue of his own restoratives to cure sin, which in itself is incurable by the art of any creature. And otherwise this perfection, whereby God draws good out of evil, had been utterly useless, and would have been destitute of an object wherein to discover itself. Again, wisdom, in ordering a rebellious head-strong world to its own ends, is greater than the ordering an innocent world, exactly observant of his precepts, and complying with the end of the creation. Now, without the entrance of sin, this wisdom had wanted a stage to act upon. Thus God raised the honor of this wisdom, while man ruined the integrity of his nature; and made use of the creature's breach of his divine law, to establish the honor of it in a more signal and stable manner, by the active and passive obedience of the Son of his bosom. Nothing serves God so much, as an occasion of glorifying himself, as the entrance of sin into the world; by this occasion God communicates to us the knowledge of those perfections of his nature, which had else been folded up from us in an eternal night; his justice had lain in the dark, as having nothing to punish; his mercy had been obscure, as having none to pardon; a great part of his wisdom had been silent, as having no such object to order.

(2.) His wisdom appears, in making use of sinful instruments. He uses the malice and enmity of the devil to bring about his own purposes, and makes the sworn enemy of his honor contribute to the illustrating of it against his will. This great craftsman he took in his own net, and defeated the devil by the devil's malice; by turning the contrivances he had hatched and accomplished against man, against himself. He used him as a tempter, to grapple with our Saviour in the wilderness, whereby to make him fit to succor us; and as the god of this world, to conspire the wicked Jews to crucify him, whereby to render him actually the Redeemer of the world, and so make him an ignorant instrument of that divine glory he designed to ruin. It is more skill to make a curious piece of workmanship with ill-conditioned tools, than with instruments naturally fitted for the work: it is no such great wonder for a limner to draw an exact piece with a fit pencil and suitable colors, as to begin and perfect a beautiful work with a straw and water, things improper for such a design. This wisdom of God is more admirable and astonishing than if a man were able to rear a vast palace by fire, whose nature is to consume combustible matter not to erect a building. To make things serviceable contrary to their own nature, is a wisdom peculiar to the Creator of Nature. God's making use of devils, for the glory of his name, and the good of his people, is a more amazing piece of wisdom than his goodness in employing the blessed angels in his work. To promise, that the world, (which includes the god of the world, and death, and things present, let them be as evil as they will, should be ours, that is, for our good, and for his glory, is an act of goodness; but to make them serviceable to the honor of Christ, and the good of his people, is a wisdom that may well raise our highest admirations: they are for believers, as they are for the glory of Christ, and as Christ is for the glory of God (1 Cor. 3:22). To chain up Satan wholly, and frustrate his wiles, would be an argument of Divine goodness; but to suffer him to run his risk, and then improve all his contrivances for his own glorious and gracious ends and purposes, manifests, besides his power and goodness, his wisdom also. He uses the sins of evil instruments for the glory of his justice (Isa. 10:5-7). Thus he served himself of the ambition and covetousness of the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Romans, for the correction of his people, and punishment of his rebels, just as the Roman magistrates used the fury of lions and other wild beasts, in their theatres, for the punishment of criminals: the lions acted their natural temper in tearing those that were exposed to them for a prey; but the intent of the magistrates was to punish their crimes. The magistrate inspired not the lions with their rage, that they had from their natures; but served themselves of that natural rage to execute justice.

(3.) God's wisdom is seen in bringing good to the creature out of sin. He hath ordered sin to such an end as man never dreamt of, the devil never imagined, and sin in its own nature could never attain. Sin in its own nature tends to no good, but that of punishment, whereby the creature is brought into order. It hath no relation to the creature's good in itself, but to the creature's mischief: but God, by an act of infinite wisdom, brings good out of it to the creature, as well as glory to his name, contrary to the nature of the crime, the intention of the criminal, and the design of the tempter. God willed sin, that is, he willed to permit it, that he might communicate himself to the creature in the most excellent manner. He willed the permission of sin, as an occasion to bring forth the mystery of the incarnation and passion of our Saviour; as he permitted the sin of Joseph's brethren, that he might use their evil to a good end. He never, because of his holiness, wills sin as an end; but in regard of his wisdom he wills to permit it as a means and occasion; and thus, to draw good out of those things which are in their own nature most contrary to good, is the highest pitch of wisdom.

[1.] The redemption of man in so excellent a way, was drawn from the occasion of sin. The greatest blessing that ever the world was blessed with, was ushered in by contraries, by the lust and irregular affection of man; the first promise of the Redeemer by the fall of Adam (Gen. 3:15), and the bruising the heel of that promised Seed, by the blackest tragedy acted by wicked rebels, the treachery of Judas, and the rage of the Jews; the highest good hath been brought forth by the greatest wickedness. As God out of the chaos of rude and indigested matter framed the first creation; so from the sins of men, and malice of Satan, he hath erected the everlasting scheme of honor in a new creation of all things by Jesus Christ. The devil inspired man, to content his own fury in the death of Christ; and God ordered it to accomplish his own design of redemption in the passion of the Redeemer; the devil had his diabolical ends, and God

overpowers his actions to serve his own divine ends. The person that betrayed him was admitted to be a spectator of the most private actions of our Saviour, that his innocence might be justified; to shew, that he was not afraid to have his enemies judges of his most retired privacies. While they all thought to do their own wills, Divine wisdom orders them to do God's will (Acts 2:23): "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And wherein the crucifiers of Christ sinned, in shedding the richest blood, upon their repentance they found the expiation of their crimes, and the discovery of a superabundant mercy. Nothing but the blood was aimed at by them: the best blood was shed by them; but infinite Wisdom makes the cross the scene of his own righteousness, and the womb of man's recovery. By the occasion of man's lapsed state, there was a way open to raise man to a more excellent condition than that whereinto he was put by creation: and the depriving man of the happiness of an earthly paradise, in a way of justice, was an occasion of advancing him to a heavenly felicity, in a way of grace. The violation of the old covenant occasionally introduced a better the loss of the first integrity ushered in a more stable righteousness, an everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24). And the falling of the first head was succeeded by one whose standing could not but be eternal. The fall of the devil was ordered by infinite Wisdom, for the good of that body from which he fell. It is supposed by some, that the devil was the chief angel in heaven, the head of all the rest; and that he falling, the angels were left as a body without a head; and after he had politically beheaded the angels, he endeavored to destroy man, and rout him out of paradise; but God takes the opportunity to set up his Son, as the head of angels and men. And thus whilst the devil endeavored to spoil the corporation of angels, and make them a body contrary to God, God makes angels and men one body under one head, for his service. The angels in losing a defectible head, attained a more excellent and glorious Head in another nature, which they had not before; though of a lower nature in his humanity, yet of a more glorious nature in his divinity: from whence many suppose they derive their confirming grace, and the stability of their standing. "All things in heaven and earth are gathered together in Christ" (Eph 1:10), *ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι*, all united in him, and reduced under one head: that though our Saviour be not properly their Redeemer, for redemption supposeth captivity, yet in some sense he is their Head and Mediator: so that now the inhabitants of heaven and earth are but one family (Eph. 3:15.) And the innumerable company of angels are parts of that heavenly and triumphant Jerusalem, and that general assembly, whereof Jesus Christ is Mediator (Heb. 12:22, 29.)

[2.] The good of a nation often, by the skill of Divine wisdom, is promoted by the sins of some men. The patriarchs' selling Joseph to the Midianites (Gen. 37:28), was without question a sin, and a breach of natural affection; yet, by God's wise ordination, it proved the safety of the whole church of God in the world, as well as the Egyptian nation (Gen. 45:5, 8; 50:20.) The Jews' unbelief was a step whereby the Gentiles arose to the knowledge of the gospel; as the setting of the sun in one place is the rising of it in another (Matt. 22:9.) He uses the corruptions of men instrumentally to propagate his gospel: he built up the true church by the preaching of some out of envy (Phil. 1:15), as he blessed Israel out of the mouth of a false prophet (Num. 23.) How often have the heresies of men been the occasion of clearing up the truth of God, and fixing the more lively impressions of it on the hearts of believers! Neither Judah nor Tamar, in their lust, dreamt of a stock for the Redeemer; yet God gave a son from that unlawful bed, whereof "Christ came according to the flesh" (Gen. 38:29, compared with Matt. 1:3). Jonah's sin was probably the first and remote occasion of the Ninevites giving credit to his prophecy; his sin was the cause of his punishment, and his being flung into the sea might facilitate the reception of his message, and excite the Ninevites' repentance, whereby a cloud of severe judgment was blown away from them. It is thought by some, that when Jonah passed through the streets of Nineveh, with his proclamation of destruction, he might be known by some of the mariners of that ship, from whence he was cast overboard into the sea, and might, after their voyage, be occasionally in that city, the metropolis of the nation, and the place of some of their births; and might acquaint the people, that this was the same person they had cast into the sea, by his own consent, for his acknowledged running from the presence of the Lord: for that he had told them (Jonah 1:10); and the mariner's prayer (ver. 14) evidenced it; whereupon they might conclude his message worthy of belief, since they knew from such evidences, that he had sunk into the bowels of the waters, and now saw him safe in their streets, by a deliverance unknown to them; and that therefore that power that delivered him, could easily verify his word in the threatened judgment. Had Jonah gone at first, without committing that sin, and receiving that punishment, his message had not been judged a divine prediction, but a fruit of some enthusiastic madness; his sin upon this account was the first occasion of averting a judgment from so great a city.

[3.] The good of the sinner himself is sometimes promoted by Divine wisdom ordering the sin. As God had not permitted sin to enter upon the world, unless to bring glory to himself by it; so he would not let sin remain in the little world of a believers heart, if he did not intend to order it for his good. What is done by man, to his damage and disparagement, is directed by Divine wisdom to his advantage; not that it is the intent of the sin, or the sinner; but it is the event of the sin, by the ordination of Divine wisdom and grace. As without the wisdom of God permitting sin to enter into the world, some attributes of God had not been experimentally known, so some graces could not have been exercised; for where had there been an object for that noble zeal, in vindicating the glory of God, had it not been invaded by an enemy? The intenseness of love to him could not have been so strong, had we not an enemy to hate for his sake. Where had there been any place for that noble part of charity in holy admonitions and compassion to the souls of our neighbors, and endeavors to reduce them out of a destructive, to a happy path? Humility would not have had so many grounds for its growth and exercise, and holy sorrow had no fuel. And as without the appearance of sin there had been no exercise of the patience of God, so without afflictions, the fruits of sin, there had been no ground for the exercise of the patience of a christian, one of the noblest parts of valor. Now sin being evil, and such as cannot but be evil, hath no respect in itself to any good, and cannot work a gracious end, or anything profitable to the creature; nay it is a hindrance to any good, and, therefore, what good comes from it, is accidental; occasioned, indeed, by sin, but efficiently caused by the over-ruling wisdom of God, taking occasion thereby to display itself and the Divine goodness.

1. The sins and corruptions remaining in the heart of man, God orders for good; and there are good effects by the direction of his wisdom and grace, as the soul respects God.

(1.) God often brings forth a sensibleness of the necessity of dependence on him. The nurse often lets the child slip, that it may the better know who supports it, and may not be too venturous and confident of its own strength. Peter would trust in habitual grace, and God suffers him to fall, that he might trust more in assisting grace (Matt. 26:35: "Though I should die with thee, yet I will not deny thee." God leaves sometimes the brightest souls in eclipse, to manifest that their holiness, and the preservation of it, depend upon the darting out his beams upon them. As the falls of men are the effects of their coldness and remissness in acts of faith and repentance, so the fruit of these falls is often a running to him for refuge, and a deeper sensibleness where their security lies. It makes us lower our swelling sails, and come under the lee and protection of Divine grace. When the pleasures of sin answer not the expectations of a

revolted creature, he reflects upon his former state, and sticks more close to God, when before God had little of his company (Hos.2:7): "I will return to my first husband, for then it was better with me t an now." As God makes the sins of men sometimes an occasion of their conversion, so he sometimes makes them an occasion of a further conversion. Onesimus run from Philemon, and was met with by Paul, who proved an instrument of his conversion (Philem. 10): "My son, Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds." His flight from his master was the occasion of his regeneration by Paul, a prisoner. The falls of believers God orders to their further stability; he that is fallen for want of using his staff, will lean more upon it to preserve himself from the like disaster. God, by permitting the lapses of men, doth often make them despair of their own strength to subdue their enemies, and rely upon the strength of Christ, wherein God hath laid up power for us, and so becomes stronger in that strength which God hath ordained for them. We are very apt to trust in ourselves, and have confidence in our own worth and strength; and God lets loose corruptions to abate this swelling humor. This was the reason of the apostle Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7); whether it were a temptation, or corruption, or sickness, that he might be sensible of his own inability, and where the sufficiency of grace for him was placed. He that is in danger of drowning, and hath the waves come over his head, will, with all the might he hath, lay hold upon anything near him, which is capable to save him. God lets his people sometimes sink into such a condition, that they may lay the faster hold on him who is near to all that call upon him.

(2.) God hereby raiseth higher estimations of the value and virtue of the blood of Christ. As the great reason why God permitted sin to enter into the world, was to honor himself in the Redeemer, so the continuance of sin, and the conquests it sometimes makes in renewed men, are to honor the infinite value and virtue of the Redeemer's merit, which God, from the beginning, intended to magnify the value of it, in taking off so much successive guilt; and the virtue of it, in washing away so much daily filth. The wisdom of God hereby keeps up the credit of imputed righteousness, and manifests the immense treasure of the Redeemer's merit to pay such daily debts. Were we perfectly sanctified, we should stand upon our own bottom, and imagine no need of the continual and repeated imputation of the righteousness of Christ for our justification: we should confide in inherent righteousness, and slight imputed. If God should take off all remainders of sin, as well as the guilt of it, we should be apt to forget that we are fallen creatures, and that we had a Redeemer; but the relics of sin in us mind us of the necessity of some higher strength to set us right: they mind us both of our own misery, and the Redeemer's perpetual benefit. God, by this, keeps up the dignity and honor of our Saviour's blood to the height, and therefore sometimes lets us see, to our own cost, what filth yet remains in us for the employment of that blood, which we should else but little think of, and less admire. Our gratitude is so small to God as well as man, that the first obligations are soon forgot if we stand not in need of fresh ones successively to second them; we should lose our thankful remembrance of the first virtue of Christ's blood in washing us, if our infirmities did not mind us of fresh reiterations and applications of it. Our Saviour's office of advocacy was erected especially for sins committed after a justified and renewed state (1 John 2:1). We should scarce remember we had an Advocate, and scarce make use of him without some sensible necessity; but our remainders of sin discover our impotency, and an impossibility for us either to expiate our sin, or conform to the law, which necessitates us to have recourse to that person whom God hath appointed to make up the breaches between God and us. So the apostle wraps up himself in the covenant of grace and his interest in Christ, after his conflict with sin (Rom. 7. *ult.*), "I thank God, through Jesus Christ." Now, after such a body of death, a principle within me that sends up daily steams, yet as long as I serve God with my mind, as long as I keep the main condition of the covenant, "there is no condemnation" (Rom. 8:1): Christ takes my part, procures my acceptance, and holds the band of salvation firm in his hands. The brightness of Christ's grace is set off by the darkness of our sin. We should not understand the sovereignty of his medicines, if there were no relics of sin for him to exercise his skill upon: the physician's art is most experimented, and therefore most valued in relapses, as dangerous as the former disease. As the wisdom of God brought our Saviour into temptation, that he might have compassion to us, so it permits us to be overcome by temptation, that we might have due valuations of him.

(3.) God hereby often engageth the soul to a greater industry for his gory. The highest persecutors, when they have become converts have been the greatest champions for that cause they both hated and oppressed. The apostle Paul is such an instance of this, that it needs no enlargement. By how much they have failed of answering the end of their creation in glorifying God, by so much the more they summon up all their force for such an end, after their conversion; to restore as much as they can of that glory to God, which they, by their sin, had robbed him of. Their sins, by the order of Divine wisdom, prove whetstones to sharpen the edge of their spirits for God. Paul never remembered his persecuting fury, but he doubled his industry for the service of God, which before he trampled under his feet. The further we go back, the greater leap many times we take forward. Our Saviour, after his resurrection, put Peter upon the exercise of that love to him, which had so lately shrunk his head out of suffering (John 21:15-17); and no doubt, but the consideration of his base denial, together with a reflection upon a gracious pardon, engaged his ingenuous soul to stronger and fiercer flames of affection. A believer's courage for God is more sharpened oftentimes by the shame of his fall: lie endeavors to repair the faults of his ingratitude and his disingenuity by larger and stronger steps of obedience; as a man in a fight, having been foiled by his enemy, reassumes new courage by his fall, and is many times obliged to his foil, both for his spirit and his victory. A gracious heart will, upon the very motions to sin, double its vigor, as well as by good ones: it is usually more quickened, both in its motion to God and for God, by the temptations and motions to sin which run upon it. This is another good the wisdom of God brings forth from sin.

(4.) Again, humility towards God is another good Divine wisdom brings forth from the occasion of sin. By this God beats down all good opinion of ourselves. Hezekiah was more humbled by his fall into pride, than by all the distress he had been in by Sennacherib's army (2 Chron. 32:26). Peter's confidence before his fall, gave way to an humble modesty after it; you see his confidence (Mark 14:24). "Though all should be offended in thee, yet will not I;" and you have the mark of his modesty (John 21:17). It is not then, Lord, I will love thee to the death, I will not start from thee; but, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;" I cannot assure myself of anything after this miscarriage; but, Lord, thou knowest there is a principle of love in me to thy name. He was ashamed, that himself who appeared such a pillar, should bend as meanly as a shrub to a temptation. The reflection upon sin lays a man as low as hell in his humiliation, as the commission of sin did in the merit. When David comes to exercise repentance for his sin, he begins it from the well-head of sin (Psalm 51:5), his original corruption, and draws down the streams of it to the last commission; perhaps he did not so seriously, humble himself for the sin of his nature all his days, so much as at that time; at least, we have not such evidences of it. And Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart; not only for the pride of his act (2 Chron. 32:26), but for the pride in the heart, which was the spring of that pride in act, in showing his treasures to the Babylonish ambassadors. God lets sin continue in the hearts of the best in this world, and sometimes gives the reins to Satan, and a man's own corruption, to keep up a sense of the ancient sale we made of ourselves to both.

2. In regard of ourselves. Herein is the wonder of Divine wisdom, that God many times makes a sin, which meritoriously fits us for

hell, a providential occasion to fit us for heaven; when it is an occasion of a more humble faith and believing humility, and an occasion of a thorough sanctification and growth in grace, which prepares us for a state of glory.

(1.) He makes use of one sin's breaking out to discover more; and so brings us to a self-aborrancy and indignation against sin, the first step towards heaven. Perhaps David, before his gross fall, thought he had no hypocrisy in him. We often find him appealing to God for his integrity, and desiring God to try him, if any guile could be found in his heart, as if he could find none himself; but his lapse into that great wickedness makes him discern much falseness in his soul, when he desires God to renew a right spirit within him, and speaks of truth in the inward parts (Psalm 51:6, 10). The stirring of corruption makes all the mud at the bottom appear, which before a soul did not suspect. No man would think there were so great a cloud of smoke contained in a little stick of wood, were it not for the powerful operation of the fire, that both discovers and separates it. Job, that cursed the day of his birth, and uttered many impatient expressions against God upon the account of his own integrity; upon his recovery from his affliction, and God's close application of himself, was wrought to a greater abhorrancy of himself than ever we read he was exercised in before (Job 42:6). The hostile acts of sin increase the soul's hatred of it; and the deeper our humiliations are for it, the stronger impressions of abhorrancy are made upon us.

(2.) He often orders it, to make conscience more tender, and the soul more watchful. He that finds by his calamity his enemy to have more strength against him than he suspected, will double his guards, and quicken his diligence against him. A being overtaken by some sin, is, by the wisdom of God, disposed to make us more fearful of cherishing any occasion to inflame it, and watchful against every motion and start of it. By a fall, the soul hath more experience of the deceitfulness of the heart; and by observing its methods, is rendered better able to watch against them. It is our ignorance of the devices of Satan, and our own hearts, that makes us obnoxious to their surprises. A fall into one sin is often a prevention of more which lay in wait for us; as the fall of a small body into an ambush prevents the design of the enemy upon a greater: as God suffers heresies in the church, to try our faith, so he suffers sins to remain, and sometimes to break out, to try our watchfulness. This advantage he brings from them, to steel our resolutions against the same sins, and quicken our circumspection for the future against new surprises by a temptation. David's sin was ever before him (Psalm 51:3), and made his conscience cry, Blood, blood! upon every occasion: he refused the water of the well of Bethlehem (2 Sam. 23:16, 17), because it was gained with the hazard of lives: he could endure nothing that had the taste of blood in it. Our fear of a thing depends much upon a trial of it: a child will not fear too near approaches to the fire till he feels the smart of it. Mortification doth not wholly suppress the motions of sin, though it doth the resolutions to commit it; but that there will be a proneness in the relics of it, to entice a man into those faults, which, upon sight of their blemishes, cost him so many tears; as great sicknesses, after the cure, are more watched, and the body humored, that a man might not fall from the craziness they have left in him, which he is apt to do if relapses are not provided against. A man becomes more careful of anything that may contribute to the resurrection of an expired disease.

(3.) God makes it an occasion of the mortification of that sin which was the matter of the fall. The liveliness of one sin, in a renewed man, many times is the occasion of the death of it. A wild beast, while kept close in a den, is secure in its life, but when it breaks out to rapine, it makes the master resolve to prevent any further mischief by the death of it. The impetuous stirring of a humor, in a disease, is sometimes critical, and a prognostic of the strength of nature against it, whereby the disease loses its strength, by its struggling, and makes room for health to take place by degrees. One sin is used by God for the destruction both of itself and others, as the flesh of a scorpion cures the biting of it. It sometimes, by wounding us, loseth its sting, and, like the bee, renders itself incapable of a second revenge. Peter, after his gross denial, never denied his Master afterwards. The sin that lay undiscovered, is, by a fall, become visible, and so more obvious to a mortifying stroke. The soul lays the faster hold on Christ and the promise, and goes out against that enemy, in the name of that Lord of Hosts, of which he was too negligent before; and, therefore, as he proves more strong, so more successful: he hath more strength, because he hath less confidence in himself, and more in God, the prime strength of his soul. As it was with Christ, so it is with us; while the devil was bruising his heel, he was bruising his head; and while the devil is bruising our heel, the God of peace and wisdom is sometimes bruising his head, both in us and for us, so that the strugglings of sin are often as the faint groans or bitings of a beast that is ready to expire. It is just with a man, sometimes, as with a running fountain that hath mud at the bottom, when it is stirred the mud tinctures and defiles it all over; yet some of that mud hath a vent with the streams which run from it, so that, when it is re-settled at the bottom, it is not so much in quantity as it was before. God, by his wisdom, weakens the sin by permitting it to stir and defile.

(4.) Sometimes Divine wisdom makes it an occasion to promote a sanctification in all parts of the soul. As the working of one ill-humor in the body is an occasion of cashiering, not only that, but the rest, by a sound purge; as a man, that is a little cold, doth not think of the fire, but if he slips with one foot into an icy puddle, he hastens to the fire, whereby not only that part, but all the rest receive a warmth and strength upon that occasion; or, as if a person fall into the mire, his clothes are washed, and by that means cleansed, not only from the filth at present contracted, but from the former spots that were before unregarded. God, by his wisdom, brings secret sins to a discovery, and thereby cleanseth the soul of them.

David's fall might be ordered as an answer to his former petition (Psalm 19:12): "Cleanse thou me from my secret sins;" and as he did earnestly pray after his fall, so no doubt but he endeavored a thorough sanctification (Psalm 51:7); "Purge me, wash me;" and that he meant not only a sanctification from that single sin, but from all, root and branch, is evident by that complaint of the flaw in his nature (ver. 5): the dross and chaff which lies in the heart is hereby discovered, and an opportunity administered of throwing it out, and searching all the corners of the heart to discover where it lay. As God sometimes takes occasion from one sin to reckon with men, in a way of justice, for others, so he sometimes takes occasion, from the commission of one sin, to bring out all the actions against the sinner, to make him, in a way of gracious wisdom, set more cordially upon the work of sanctification. A great fall sometimes hath been the occasion of a man's conversion. The fall of mankind occasioned a more blessed restoration; and the falls of particular believers oftentimes occasion a more extensive sanctification. Thus the only wise God makes poisons in nature to become medicines in a way of grace and wisdom.

(5.) Hereby the growth in grace is furthered. It is a wonder of Divine wisdom, to subtract sometimes grace from a person, and let him fall into sin, thereby to occasion the increase of habitual grace in him, and to augment it by those ways that seemed to depress it. By making sins an occasion of a more vigorous acting, the contrary grace, the wisdom of God, makes our corruptions, in their own nature destructive, to become profitable to us. Grace often breaks out more strongly afterwards, as the sun doth with its heat, after it hath been masked and interrupted with a mist: they often, through the mighty working of the Spirit, make us more humble, and

“humility fits us to receive more grace from God” (James 4:6). How doth faith, that sunk under the waves, lift up its head again, and carry the soul out with a greater liveliness! What ardors of love, what floods of repenting tears, what severity of revenge, what horrors at the remembrance of the sin, what tremblings at the appearance of a second temptation! so that grace seems to be awakened to a new and more vigorous life (2 Cor. 7:11). The broken joint is many times stronger in the rupture than it was before. The luxuriancy of the branches of corruption is an occasion of purging, and purging is with a design to make grace more fruitful (John 15:2); “He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” Thus Divine wisdom doth both sharpen and brighten us by the dust of sin, and ripen and mellow the fruits of grace by the dung of corruption. Grace grows the stronger by opposition, as the fire burns hottest and clearest when it is most surrounded by a cold air; and our natural heat reassumes a new strength by the coldness of the winter. The foil under a diamond, though an imperfection in itself, increaseth the beauty and lustre of the stone. The enmity of man was a commendation of the grace of God: it occasioned the breaking out of the grace of God upon us; and is an occasion, by the wisdom and grace of God, of the increase of grace many times in us. How should the consideration of God’s incomprehensible wisdom, in the management of evil, swallow us up in admiration who brings forth such beauty, such eminent discoveries of himself, such excellent good to the creature, out of the bowels of the greatest contrarieties, making dark shadows serve to display and beautify, to our apprehensions, the Divine glory! If evil were not in the world, men would not know what good is; they would not behold the lustre of Divine wisdom, as without night we could not understand the beauty of the day. Though God is not the author of sin, because of his holiness, yet he is the administrator of sin by his wisdom, and accomplisheth his own purposes, by the iniquities of his enemies, and the lapses and infirmities of his friends. Thus much for the Second, the government of man in his lapsed state, and the government of sin, wherein the wisdom of God doth wonderfully appear.

3dly. The wisdom of God appears in the government of man in his conversion and return to him. If there be a counsel in framing the lowest creature, and in the minutest passages of providence, there must needs be a higher wisdom in the government of the creature to a supernatural end, and framing the soul to be a monument of his glory. The wisdom of God is seen with more admirations, and in more varieties, by the angels, in the church than in the creation (Eph. 3:10); that is, in forming a church out of the rubbish of the world, out of contrarieties and contradictions to him, which is greater than the framing a celestial and elementary world out of a rude chaos. The most glorious bodies in the world, even those of the sun, moon, and stars, have not such stamps of Divine skill upon them as the soul of man; nor is there so much of wisdom in the fabric and faculties of that, as in the reduction of a blind, wilful, rebellious soul, to its own happiness, and God’s glory (Eph. 1:11, 12); “He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, that we should be for the praise of his glory.” If all things, then this, which is none of the least of his works; to the praise of the glory of his goodness in his work, and to the praise of the rule of his work, his counsel, in both the act of his will, and the act of his wisdom. The restoring of the beauty of the soul, and its fitness for its true end, speaks no less wisdom than the first draught of it in creation: and the application of redemption, and bringing forth the fruits of it, is as well an act of his prudence, as the contrivance was of his counsel. Divine wisdom appears,

1. In the subjects of conversion. His goodness reigns in the very dust, and he erects the walls and ornaments of his temple from the clay and mud of the world. He passes over the wise, and noble, and mighty, that may retend some grounds of boasting in their own natural or acquire endowments; and pitches upon the most contemptible materials, wherewith to build a spiritual tabernacle for himself (1 Cor. 1:26, 27), “the foolish, and weak things of the world;” those that are naturally most unfit for it, and most refractory to it. Herein lies the skill of an architect, to render the most knotty, crooked, and inform pieces, by his art, subservient to his main purpose and design. Thus God hath ordered, from the beginning of the world, contrary tempers, various humors, diverse nations, as stones of several natures. to be a building for himself, fitly framed together, and to be his own family (1 Cor. 3:9). Who will question the skill that alters a black jet into a clear crystal, a glow-worm into a star, a lion into a lamb, and a swine into a dove? The more intricate and knotty any business is, the more eminent is any man’s ability and prudence, in untying the knots and bringing it to a good issue. The more desperate the disease, the more admirable is the physician’s skill in the cure. He pitches upon men for his service, who have natural dispositions to serve him in such ways as he disposeth of them, after their conversion: so Paul was naturally a conscientious man; what he did against Christ was from the dictates of an erroneous conscience, soaked in the Pharisaical interpretations of the Jewish law: he had a strain of zeal to prosecute what his depraved reason and conscience did inform him in. God pitches upon this man, and works him in the fire for his service. He alters not his natural disposition, to make him of a constitution and temper contrary to what he was before; but directs it to another object, claps in another bias into the bowl, and makes his ill-governed dispositions move in a new way of his own appointment, and guides that natural heat to the service of that interest which he was before ambitious to extirpate; as a high-mettled horse, when left to himself, creates both disturbance and danger, but under the conduct of a wise rider, moves regularly; not by a change of his natural fierceness, but a skilful management of the beast to the rider’s purpose.

2. In the means of conversion. The prudence of man consists in the timing the executions of his counsels; and no less doth the wisdom of God consist in this. As he is a God of judgment or wisdom, he waits to introduce his grace into the soul in the fittest season. This attribute, Paul, in the story of his own conversion, puts a particular remark upon, which he doth not upon any other; in that catalogue he reckons up (1 Tim. 1:17), “Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.” A most solemn doxology, wherein wisdom sits upon the throne above all the rest, with a special Amen to the glory of it, which refers to the timing of his mercy so to Paul, as made most for the glory of his grace, and the encouragement of others from him as the pattern. God took him at a time when he was upon the brink of hell; when he was ready to devour the new-born infant church at Damascus; when he was armed with all the authority from without, and fired with all the zeal from within, for the prosecution of his design: then God seizeth upon him, and runs him in a channel for his own honor, and his creatures’ happiness. It is observable how God set his eye upon Paul all along in his furious course, and lets him have the reins, without putting out his hand to bridle him; yet no motion he could take, but the eye of God runs along with him: he suffered him to kick against the pricks of miracles, and the convincing discourse of Stephen at his martyrdom. There were many that voted for Stephen’s death, as the witnesses that flung the stones first at him; but they are not named, only Saul, who testified his approbation as well as the rest, and that by watching the witnesses’ clothes while they were about that bloody work (Acts 7:58); “the witnesses laid their clothes at a young man’s feet, named Saul.” Again, though multitudes were consenting to his death, yet (Acts 8:1) Saul only is mentioned. God’s eye is upon him, yet he would not at that time stop his fury. He goes on further, and makes “havoc of the church” (Acts 8:3.) He had surely many more complices, but none are named (as if none regarded with any design of grace but Saul: yet God would not reach out his hand to change him, but eyes him, waiting for a fitter opportunity, which in his wisdom he did foresee. And, therefore (Acts 9:1) the Spirit of God adds a *yet*: “Saul yet breathing out threatenings.” It was not God’s time yet, but it would be shortly. But, when Saul was putting

in execution his design against the church of Damascus, when the devil was at the top of his hopes, and Saul in the height of his fury, and the Christians sunk into the depth of their fears, the wisdom of God lays hold of the opportunity, and by Paul's conversion at this season, defeats the devil, disappoints the high priests, shields his people, discharges their fears, by pulling Saul out of the devil's hands, and forming Satan's instruments to a holy activity against him.

3. The wisdom of God appears in the manner of conversion. So great a change God makes, not by a destruction, but with a preservation of, and suitableness to nature. As the devil tempts us, not by offering violence to our natures, but by proposing things convenient to our corrupt natures, so doth God solicit us to a return by proposals suited to our faculties. As he doth in nature convey nourishment to men, by means of the fruits of the earth, and produceth the fruits of the earth by the influences of heaven; the influences of heaven do not force the earth, but excite that natural virtue and strength which is in it. So God produceth grace in the soul by the means of the word, fitted to the capacity of man, as man, and proportioned to his rational faculties, as rational. It would be contrary to the wisdom of God to move man like a stone, to invert the order and privilege of that nature which he settled in creation; for then God would in vain have given man understanding and will: because, without moving man according to those faculties, they would remain unprofitable and unuseful in man. God doth not reduce us to himself, as logs, by a mere force, or as slaves forced by a cudgel, to go forth to that place, and do that work which they have no stomach to: but he doth accommodate himself to those foundations he hath laid in our nature, and guides us in a way agreeable thereunto, by an action as sweet as powerful; clearing our understandings of dark principles, whereby we may see his truth, our own misery, and the seat of our happiness; and bending our wills according to this light, to desire and move conveniently to this end of our calling; efficaciously, yet agreeably; powerfully, yet without imposing on our natural faculties; sweetly, without violence, in ordering the means; but effectually, without failing, in accomplishing the end. And therefore the Scripture calleth it, teaching (John 6:45), alluring (Hos. 2:15), calling us to seek the Lord (Psalm 27:8). Teaching is an act of wisdom; alluring, an act of love; calling, an act of authority: but none of them argue a violent constraint. The principle that moves the will is supernatural; but the will, as a natural faculty, concurs in the act or motion. God doth not act in this in a way of absolute power, without an infinite wisdom, suiting himself to the nature of the things he acts upon: he doth not change the physical nature, though he doth the moral. As in the government of the world, he doth not make heavy things ascend, nor light things descend, ordinarily, but guides their motions according to their natural qualities: so God doth not strain the faculties beyond their due pitch. He lets the nature of the faculty remain, but changes the principle in it: the understanding remains understanding, and the will remains will. But where there was before folly in the understanding, he puts in a spirit of wisdom; and where there was before a stoutness in the will, he forms it to a pliability to his offers. He hath a key to fit every ward in the lock, and opens the will without injuring the nature of the will. He doth not change the soul by an alteration of the faculties, but by an alteration of something in them: not by an inroad upon them, or by mere power, or a blind instinct, but by proposing to the understanding something to be known, and informing it of the reasonableness of his precepts, and the innate goodness and excellency of his offers, and by inclining the will to love and embrace what is proposed. And things are proposed under those notions, which usually move our wills and affections. We are moved by things as they are good, pleasant, profitable; we entertain things as they make for us, and detest things as they are contrary to us. Nothing affects us but under such qualities, and God suits his encouragements to these natural affections which are in us: his power and wisdom go hand in hand together; his power to act what his wisdom orders, and his wisdom to conduct what his power executes. He brings men to him in ways suited to their natural dispositions. The stubborn he tears like a lion, the gentle he wins like a turtle, by sweetness; he hath a hammer to break the stout, and a cord of love to draw the more pliable tempers: he works upon the more rational in a way of gospel reason; upon the more ingenuous in a way of kindness, and draws them by the cords of love. The wise men were led to Christ by a star, and means suited to the knowledge and study that those eastern nations used, which was much in astronomy: he worketh upon others by miracles accommodated to every one's sense, and so proportions the means according to the nature of the subjects he works upon.

4. The wisdom of God is apparent in his discipline and penal evils. The wisdom of human governments is seen in the matter of their laws, and in the penalties of their laws, and in the proportion of the punishment to the offence, and in the good that redounds from the punishment either to the offender, or to the community. The wisdom of God is seen in the penalty of death upon the transgression of his law; both in that it was the greatest evil that man might fear, and so was a convenient means to keep him in his due bound, and also in the proportion of it to the transgression. Nothing less could be in a wise justice inflicted upon an offender for a crime against the highest Being and the Supreme Excellency: but this hath been spoken of before in the wisdom of his laws. I shall only mention some few; it would be too tedious to run into all.

(1.) His wisdom appears in judgments, in the suiting them to the qualities of persons, and nature of sins. He deviseth evil (Jer. 18:11); his judgments are fruits of counsel. "He also is wise, and will bring evil" (Isa. 31:2),—evil suitable to the person offending, and evil suitable to the offence committed: as the husbandman doth his threshing instruments to the grain: he hath a rod for the cummin, a tenderer seed, and a flail for the harder; so hath God greater judgments for the obdurate sinner, and lighter for those that have something of tenderness in their wickedness (Isa. 28:27, 29): "Because he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working;" so some understand the place, "With the froward, he will show himself froward." He proportions punishment to the sin, and writes the cause of the judgment in the forehead of the judgment itself. Sodom burned in lust, and was consumed by fire from heaven. The Jews sold Christ for thirty pence; and at the taking of Jerusalem, thirty of them were sold for a penny. So Adoni-bezek cut off the thumbs and great toes of others, and he is served in the same kind (Judges 1:7). The Babel builders designed an indissoluble union, and God brings upon them an unintelligible confusion. And in Exod. 9:9, the ashes of the furnace where the Israelites burnt the Egyptian bricks, sprinkled towards heaven, brought boils upon the Egyptian bodies, that they might feel in their own, what pain they had caused in the Israelites' flesh; and find, by the smart of the inflamed scab, what they had made the Israelites endure.

The waters of the river Nilus are turned into blood, wherein they had stifled the breath of the Israelites' infants: and at last the prince, and the flower of their nobility, are drowned in the Red Sea. It is part of the wisdom of justice to proportion punishment to the crime, and the degrees of wrath to the degrees of malice in the sin. Afflictions also are wisely proportioned: God, as a wise physician, considers the nature of the humor and strength of the patient, and suits his medicines both to the one and the other (1 Cor. 10:13).

(2.) In the seasons of punishments and afflictions. He stays till sin be ripe, that his justice may appear more equitable, and the offender more inexcusable (Dan. 9:14); he watches upon the evil to bring it upon men; to bring it in the just season and order for his righteous and gracious purpose; his righteous purpose on the enemies, and his gracious purpose on his people. Jerusalem's calamity came upon them, when the city was full of people at the solemnity of the passover, that he might mow down his enemies at once, and time their destruction to such a moment wherein they had timed the crucifixion of his Son. He watched over the clouds of his

judgments, and kept them from pouring down, till his people, the Christians, were provided for, and had departed out of the city to the chambers and retiring places God had provided for them. He made not Jerusalem the shambles of his enemies, till he had made Pella, and other places, the arks of his friends. As Pliny tells us, "The evidence of God holds the sea in a calm for fifteen days, that the halcyons, little birds that frequent the shore, may build their nests, and hatch up their young." The judgment upon Sodom was suspended for some hours, till Lot was secured. God suffered not the church to be invaded by violent persecutions, till she was established in the faith: he would not expose her to so great combats, while she was weak and feeble, but gave her time to fortify herself, to be rendered more capable of bearing up under them. He stifled all the motions of passion the idolaters might have for their superstition, till religion was in such a condition, as rather to be increased and purified, than extinguished by opposition. Paul was secured from Nero's chains, and the nets of his enemies, till he had broke off the chain of the devil from many cities of the Gentiles, and caught them by the net of the gospel out of the sea of the world. Thus the wisdom of God is seen in the seasons of judgments and afflictions.

(3.) It is apparent in the gracious issue of afflictions and penal evils. It is a part of wisdom to bring good out of evil of punishment, as well as to bring good out of sin. The church never was so like to heaven, as when it was most persecuted by hell: the storms often cleansed it and the lance often made it more healthful. Job's integrity had not been so clear, nor his patience so illustrious, had not the devil been permitted to afflict him. God, by his wisdom, outwits Satan; when he by his temptations intends to pollute us and buffet us, God orders it to purify us; he often brings the clearest light out of the thickest darkness, makes poisons to become medicines. Death itself, the greatest punishment in this life, and the entrance into hell in its own nature, he hath by his wise contrivance, made to his people the gate of heaven, and the passage into immortality. Penal evils in a nation often end in a public advantage troubles and wars among a people are many times not destroying, but medicinal, and cure them of that degeneracy, luxury, and effeminateness, they contracted by a long peace.

(4.) This wisdom is evident in the various ends which God brings about by afflictions. The attainment of various ends by one and the same means, is the fruit of the agent's prudence. By the same affliction, the wise God corrects sometimes for some base affection, excites some sleepy grace, drives out some lurking corruption, refines the soul, and ruins the lust; discovers the greatness of a crime, the vanity of the creature, and the sufficiency in himself. The Jews bind Paul, and by the judge he is sent to Rome; while his mouth is stopped in Judea, it is opened in one of the greatest cities of the world, and his enemies unwittingly contribute to the increase of the knowledge of Christ by those chains, in that city (Acts 28:31) that triumphed over the earth. And his afflictive bonds added courage and resolution to others (Phil. 1:14): "Many waxing confident by my bonds;" which could not in their own nature produce such an effect, but by the order and contrivance of Divine wisdom: in their own nature, they would rather make them disgust the doctrine he suffered for, and cool their zeal in the propagating of it, for fear of the same disgrace and hardship they saw him suffer. But the wisdom of God changed the nature of these fetters, and conducted them to the glory of his name, the encouragement of others, the increase of the gospel, and the comfort of the apostle himself (Phil. 1:12, 13, 18). The sufferings of Paul at Rome confirmed the Philippians, a people at a distance from thence, in the doctrine they had already received at his hands. Thus God makes sufferings sometimes, which appear like judgments, to be like the viper on Paul's hand (Acts 28:6), a means to clear up innocence, and procure favor to the doctrine among those barbarians.

How often hath he multiplied the church by death and massacres, and increased it by those means used to annihilate it!

(5.) The Divine wisdom is apparent in the deliverances he affords to other parts of the world, as well as to his church. There are delicate composes, curious threads in his webs, and he works them like an artificer: a goodness wrought for them, curiously wrought (Psalm 31:19), [1.] In making the creatures subservient in their natural order to his gracious ends and purposes. He orders things in such a manner, as not to be necessitated to put forth an extraordinary power in things, which some part of the creation might accomplish. Miraculous productions would speak his power; but the ordering the natural course of things, to occasion such effects they were never intended for, is one part of the glory of his wisdom. And that his wisdom may be seen in the course of nature, he conducts the motions of creatures, and acts them in their own strength; and doth that by various windings and turnings of them, which he might do in an instant by his power, in a supernatural way. Indeed, sometimes he hath made invasions on nature, and suspended the order of their natural laws for a season, to show himself the absolute Lord and Governor of nature: yet if frequent alterations of this nature were made, they would impede the knowledge of the nature of things, and be some bar to the discovery and glory of his wisdom, which is best seen by moving the wheels of inferior creatures in an exact regularity to his own ends. He might, when his little church in Jacob's family was like to starve in Canaan, have, for their preservation, turned the stones of the country into bread; but he sends them down to Egypt to procure corn, that a way might be opened for their removal into that country; the truth of his prediction in their captivity accomplished, and a way made after the declaration of his great name, Jehovah, both in the fidelity of his word and the greatness of his power, in their deliverance from that furnace of affliction. He might have struck Goliath, the captain of the Philistine's army, with a thunderbolt from heaven, when he blasphemed his name, and scared his people; but he useth the natural strength of a stone, and the artificial motion of a sling, by the arm of David, to confront the giant, and thereby to free Judea from the ravage of a potent enemy. He might have delivered the Jews from Babylon by as strange miracles as he used in their deliverance from Egypt: he might have plagued their enemies, gathered his people into a body, and protected them by the bulwark of a cloud and a pillar of fire, against the assaults of their enemies. But he uses the differences between the Persians and those of Babylon, to accomplish his ends. How sometimes hath the veering about of the wind on a sudden been the loss of a navy, when it hath been put upon the point of victory, and driven back the destruction upon those which intended it for others! and the accidental stumbling, or the natural fierceness of a horse, flung down a general in the midst of a battle, where he hath lost his life by the throng, and his death hath brought a defeat to his army, and deliverance to the other party, that were upon the brink of ruin! Thus doth the wisdom of God link things together according to natural order, to work out his intended preservation of a people. [2.] In the season of deliverance. The timing of affairs is a part of the wisdom of man, and an eminent part of the wisdom of God. It is in due season he sends the former and the latter rain, when the earth is in the greatest indigence, and when his influences may most contribute to the bringing forth and ripening the fruit. The dumb creatures have their meat from him in due season (Psalm 104:27): and in his due season have his darling people their deliverance. When Paul was upon his journey to Damascus with a persecuting commission, he is struck down for the security of the church in that city. The nature of the lion is changed in due season, for the preservation of the lambs from worrying. The Israelites are miraculously rescued from Egypt, when their wits were at a loss, when their danger to human understanding was unavoidable; when earth and sea refused protection, then the wisdom and power of heaven stepped in to effect that which was past the skill of the conductors of that multitude. And when the lives of the Jews lay at the stake, and their necks

were upon the block at the mercy of their enemies' swords by an order from Shushan, not only a reprieve, but a triumph, arrives to the Jews, by the wisdom of God guiding the affair, whereby of persons designed to execution, they are made conquerors, and have opportunity to exercise their revenge instead of their atience, proving triumphers where they expected to be sufferers (Esth. 8:9). How strangely doth God, by secret ways, bow the hearts of men and the nature of things to the execution of that which he designs, notwithstanding all the resistance of that which would traverse the security of his people! How often doth he trap the wicked in the work of their own bands, make their confidence to become their ruin, and ensnare them in those nets they wrought and laid for others (Psalm 9:16)! "The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. He scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts" (Luke 1:51), in the height of their hopes, when their designs have been laid so deep in the foundation, and knit and cemented so close in their superstructure, that no human power or wisdom could rase them down: he hath then disappointed their projects, and befooled their craft. How often hath he kept back the fire, when it hath been ready to devour; broke the arrows when they have been prepared in the bow; turned the spear into the bowels of the bearera, and wounded them at the very instant they were ready to wound Others! [3.] In suiting instruments to his purpose. He either finds them fit, or makes them on a sudden fit for his gracious ends. If he hath a tabernacle to build, he will fit a Bezaleel and an Aholiab with the spirit of wisdom and understanding in all cunning workmanship (Exod. 31:3, 6). If he finds them crooked pieces, he can, like a wise architect, make them straight beams for the rearing his house, and for the honor of his name. He sometimes picks out men according to their natural tempers, and employs them in his work. Jehu, a man of a furious temper, and ambitious spirit, is called out for the destruction of Ahab's house. Moses, a man furnished with all Egyptian wisdom, fitted by a generous education, prepared also by the affliction he met with in his flight, and one who had had the benefit of conversation with Jethro, a man of more than an ordinary wisdom and goodness, as appears by his prudent and religious counsel; this man is called out to be the head and captain of an oppressed people, and to rescue them from their bondage, and settle the first national church in the world. So Elijah, a high- spirited man, of a hot and angry temper, one that slighted the frowns, and undervalued the favor of princes, is set up to stem the torrent of Israelitish idolatry. So Luther, a man of the same temper, is drawn out by the same wisdom to encounter the corruptions in the church, against such opposition, which a milder temper would have sunk under. The earth, in Rev. 12:16, is made an instrument to help the woman: when the grandees of that age transferred the imperial power upon Constantine, who became afterwards a protecting and nursing father to the church, an end which many of his favorers never designed, nor ever dreamt of: but God, by his infinite wisdom, made these several designs, like several arrows shot at rovers, meet in one mark to which he directed them, viz., in bringing forth an instrument to render peace to the world and security and increase to his church.

III. The wisdom of God doth wonderfully appear in redemption. His wisdom in creature ravisheth the eye and understanding; his wisdom in government doth no less affect a curious observer of the links and concatenation of the means; but his wisdom in redemption mounts the mind to a greater astonishment. The works of creation are the footsteps of his wisdom; the wrpk of redemption is the face of his wisdom.

A man is better known by the features of his face, than by the prints of his feet. We, with "open face," or a revealed face, "beholding the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Face, there, refers to God, not to us; the glory of God's wisdom is now open, and no longer covered and veiled by the shadows of the law. As we behold the light glorious as scattered in the air before the appearance of the sun, but more gloriously in the face of the sun when it begins its race in our horizon. All the wisdom of God in creation, and government in his variety of laws, was like the light the three first days of the creation, dispersed about the world; but the fourth day it was more glorious, when all gathered into the body of the sun (Gen. 1:4, 16). So the light of Divine wisdom and glory was scattered about the world, and so more obscure, till the fourth divine day of the world, about the four thousandth year, it was gathered into one body, the Sun of Righteousness, and so shone out more gloriously to men and angels. All things are weaker the thinner they are extended, but stronger the more they are united and compacted in one body and appearance. In Christ, in the dispensation by him, as well as his person, were "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). Some doles of wisdom were given out in creation, but the treasures of it opened in redemption, the highest degrees of it that ever God did exert in the world. Christ is therefore called the "wisdom of God," as well as the "power of God" (1 Cor. 1:24); and the gospel is called the "wisdom of God." Christ is the wisdom of God principally, and the gospel instrumentally, as it is the power of God instrumentally to subdue the heart to himself. This is wrapped up in the appointing Christ as Redeemer, and opened to us in the revelation of it by the gospel.

1. It is a hidden wisdom. In this regard God is said, in the text, to be only wise: and it is said to be a "hidden wisdom" (1 Tim. 1:17), and "wisdom in a mystery" (1 Cor. 2:7), incomprehensible to the ordinary capacity of an angel, more than the obstruse qualities of the creatures are to the understanding of man. No wisdom of men or angels is able to search the veins of this mine, to tell all the threads of this web, or to understand all the lustre of it; they are as far from an ability fully to comprehend it, as they were at first to contrive it. That wisdom that invented it can only comprehend it. In the uncreated understanding only there is a clearness of light without any shadow of darkness. We come as short of full apprehensions of it, as a child doth of the counsel of the wisest prince. It is so hidden from us, that, without revelation, we could not have the least imagination of it; and though it be revealed to us, yet, without the help of an infiniteness of understanding, we cannot fully fathom it: it is such a tractate of divine wisdom, that the angels never before had seen the edition of it, till it was published to the world (Eph. 3:10): "to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Now made known to them, not before; and now made known to them "in the heavenly places." They had not the knowledge of all heavenly mysteries, though they had the possession of heavenly glory: they knew the prophecies of it in the word, but attained not a clear interpretation of those prophecies till the things that were prophesied of came upon the stage.

2. Manifold wisdom: so it is called. As manifold as mysterious: variety in the mystery, and mystery in every part of the variety. It was not one single act, but a variety of counsels met in it; a conjunction of excellent ends and excellent means. The glory of God, the salvation of man, the defeat of the apostate angels, the discovery of the blessed Trinity in their nature, operations, their combined and distinct acts and expressions of goodness. The means are the conjunction of two natures, infinitely distinct from one another; the union of eternity and time, of mortality and immortality: death is made the way to life, and shame the path to glory. The weakness of the cross is the reparation of man, and the creature is made wise by the "foolishness of preaching;" fallen man grows rich by the poverty of the Redeemer, and man is filled by the emptiness of God; the heir of hell made a son of God, by God's taking upon him the "form of a servant;" the son of man advanced to the highest degree of honor, by the Son of God becoming of "no reputation." It is called (Eph. 1:8) "abundance of wisdom and prudence." Wisdom, in the eternal counsel, contriving a way; prudence, in the temporary revelation, ordering all affairs and occurrences in the world for the attaining the end of his counsel. Wisdom refers to the mystery;

prudence, to the manifestation of it in fit ways and convenient seasons. Wisdom, to the contrivance and order; prudence, to the execution and accomplishment. In all things God acted as became him, as a wise and just Governor of the world (Heb. 2:10). Whether the wisdom of God might not have found out some other way, or whether he were, in regard of the necessity and naturalness of his justice, limited to this, is not the question; but that it is the best and wisest way for the manifestation of his glory, is out of question.

This wisdom will appear in the different interests reconciled by it: in the subject, the second person in the Trinity, wherein they were reconciled: in the two natures, wherein he accomplished it; whereby God is made known to man in his glory, sin eternally condemned, and the repenting and believing sinner eternally rescued the honor and righteousness of the law vindicated both in the precept and penalty: the devil's empire overthrown by the same nature he had overturned, and the subtlety of hell defeated by that nature he had spoiled: the creature engaged in the very act to the highest obedience and humility, that, as God appears as a God upon his throne, the creature might appear in the lowest posture of a creature, in the depths of resignation and dependence: the publication of this made in the gospel, by ways congruous to the wisdom which appeared in the execution of his counsel, and the conditions of enjoying the fruit of it, most wise and reasonable.

1. The greatest different interests are reconciled, justice in punishing, and mercy in pardoning. For man had broken the law, and plunged himself into a gulf of misery: the sword of vengeance was unsheathed by justice, for the punishment of the criminal; the bowels of compassion were stirred by mercy, for the rescue of the miserable. Justice severely beholds the sin, and mercy compassionately reflects upon the misery. Two different claims are entered by those concerned attributes: justice votes for destruction, and mercy votes for salvation. Justice would draw the sword, and drench it in the blood of the offender; mercy would stop the sword, and turn it from the breast of the sinner. Justice would edge it, and mercy would blunt it. The arguments are strong on both sides.

(1.) Justice pleads. I arraign, before thy tribunal, a rebel, who was the glorious work of thy hands, the centre of thy rich goodness, and a counterpart of thy own image; be is indeed miserable, whereby to excite thy compassion; but he is not miserable, without being criminal. Thou didst create him in a state, and with ability to be otherwise: the riches of thy bounty aggravate the blackness of his crime. He is a rebel, not by necessity, but will. What constraint was there upon him to listen to the counsels of the enemy of God?

What force could there be upon him, since it is without the compass of any creature to work upon, or constrain the will? Nothing of ignorance can excuse him; the law was not ambiguously expressed, but in plain words, both as to precept and penalty; it was writ in his nature in legible characters: had he received any disgust from thee after his creation, it would not excuse his apostasy, since, as a Sovereign, thou wert not obliged to thy creature. Thou hadst provided all things richly for him; he was crowned with glory and honor: thy infinite power had bestowed upon him an habitation richly furnished, and varieties of servants to attend him. Whatever he viewed without, and whatever he viewed within himself, were several marks of thy Divine bounty, to engage him to obedience: had there been some reason of any disgust, it could not have balanced that kindness which had so much reason to oblige him: however, he had received no courtesy from the fallen angel, to oblige him to turn into his camp. Was it not enough, that one of thy creatures would have stripped thee of the glory of heaven, but this also must deprive thee of thy glory upon earth, which was due from him to thee as his Creator? Can he charge the difficulty of the command? No: it was rather below, than above his strength. He might rather complain that it was no higher, whereby his obedience and gratitude might have a larger scope, and a more spacious field to move in than a precept so light; so easy, as to abstain from one fruit in the garden. What excuse can he have, that would prefer the liquorishness of his sense before the dictates of his reason, and the obligations of his creation? The law thou didst set him was righteous and reasonable; and shall righteousness and reason be rejected by the supreme and infallible reason, because the rebellious creature hath trampled upon it? What! must God abrogate his holy law, because the creature hath slighted it? What reflection will this be upon the wisdom that enacted it, and upon the equity of the command and sanction of it? Either man must suffer, or the holy law be expunged, and forever out of date. And is it not better man should eternally smart under his crime, than any dishonorable reflections of unrighteousness be cast upon the law, and of folly, and want of foresight upon the Lawgiver? Not to punish, would be to approve the devil's lie, and justify the creature's revolt. It would be a condemnation of thy own law as unrighteous, and a sentencing thy own wisdom as imprudent. Better man should forever bear the punishment of his offence, than God bear the dishonor of his attributes: better man should be miserable than God should be unrighteous, unwise, false, and tamely bear the denial of his sovereignty. But what advantage would it be to gratify mercy by pardoning the malefactor? Besides the irreparable dishonor to the law, the falsifying thy veracity in not executing the denounced threatenings, he would receive encouragement by such a grace to spurn more at thy sovereignty, and oppose thy holiness by running on in a course of sin with hopes of impunity. If the creature be restored, it cannot be expected that he that hath fared so well, after the breach of it, should be very careful of a future observance: his easy readmission would abet him in the repetition of his offence, and thou shalt soon find him cast off all moral dependence on thee. Shall he be restored without any condition, or covenant? He is a creature not to be governed without a law, and a law is not to be enacted without a penalty. What future regard will he have to thy precept, or what fear will he have of thy threatening, if his crime be so lightly past over? Is it the stability of thy word? What reason will he have to give credit to that, which he hath found already disregarded by himself? Thy truth in future threatenings will be of no force with him, who hath experienced thy laying it aside in the former. It is necessary, therefore, that the rebellious creature should be punished for the preservation of the honor of the law, and the honor of the Lawgiver, with all those perfections that are united in the composure of it.

(2.) Mercy doth not want a plea. It is true, indeed, the sin of man wants not its aggravations: he hath slighted thy goodness, and accepted thy enemy as his counsellor, but it was not a pure act of his own, as the devil's revolt was: he had a tempter, and the devil had none: he had, I acknowledge, an understanding to know thy will, and a power to obey it; yet he was mutable, and had a capacity to fall. It was no difficult task that was set him, nor a hard yoke that was laid upon him; yet he had a brutish part, as well as a rational, and sense as well as soul; whereas the fallen angel was a pure intellectual spirit. Did God create the world to suffer an eternal dishonor, in letting himself be outwitted by Satan, and his work wrested out of his hands? Shall the work of eternal counsel presently sink into irreparable destruction, and the honor of an almighty and wise work be lost in the ruin of the creature? This would seem contrary to the nature of thy goodness, to make man only to render him miserable: to design him in his creation for the service of the devil, and not for the service of his Creator. What else could be the issue, if the chief work of thy hand, defaced presently after the erecting, should forever remain in this marred condition? What can be expected upon the continuance of his misery, but a perpetual hatred, and enmity of thy creature against thee? Did God in creation design his being hated, or his being loved by his creature? Shall God make a holy law, and have no obedience to that law from that creature whom it was made to govern? Shall the curious workmanship of God, and the excellent engravings of the law of nature in his heart, be so soon defaced, and remain in that blotted

condition forever? This fall thou couldst not but in the treasures of thy infinite knowledge foresee. Why hadst thou goodness then to create him in an integrity, if thou wouldst not have mercy to pity him in misery? Shall thy enemy forever trample upon the honor of thy work, and triumph over the glory of God, and applaud himself in the success of his subtilty? Shall thy creature only passively glorify thee as an avenger, and not actively as a compassionater? Am not I a perfection of thy nature as well as justice? Shall justice engross all, and I never come into view? It is resolved already, that the fallen angels shall be no subjects for me to exercise myself upon; and I have now less reason than before to plead for them: they fell with a full consent of will, without any motion from another; and not content with their own apostasy they envy thee, and thy glory upon earth, as well as in heaven, and have drawn into their party the best part of the creation below. Shall Satan lunge the whole creation in the same irreparable ruin with himself? If the creature be restored, will he contract a boldness in sin by impurity?

Hast thou not a grace to render him ingenuous in obedience, as well as a compassion to recover him from misery? What will hinder, but that such a grace, which hath established the standing angels, may establish this recovered creature? If I am utterly excluded from exercising myself on men, as I have been from devils, a whole species is lost; nay, I can never expect to appear upon the stage: if thou wilt quite ruin him by justice, and create another world, and another man, if he stand, thy bounty will be eminent, yet there is no room for mercy to act, unless by the commission of sin, he exposeth himself to misery; and if sin enter into another world, I have little hopes to be heard then, if I am rejected now. Worlds will be perpetually created by goodness, wisdom, and power; sin entering into these worlds, will be perpetually punished by justice; and mercy, which is a perfection of thy nature, will forever be commanded silence, and lie wrapt up in an eternal darkness. Take occasion now, therefore, to expose me to the knowledge of thy creature, since without misery, mercy can never set foot into the world. Mercy pleads, if man be ruined, the creation is in vain; justice pleads, if man be not sentenced, the law is in vain; truth backs justice, and grace abets mercy. What shall be done in this seeming contradiction? Mercy is not manifested, if man be not pardoned; justice will complain, if man be not punished.

(3.) An expedient is found out, by the wisdom of God, to answer these demands, and adjust the differences between them. The wisdom of God answers, I will satisfy your pleas. The pleas of justice shall be satisfied in punishing, and the pleas of mercy shall be received in pardoning. Justice shall not complain for want of punishment, nor mercy for want of compassion. I will have an infinite sacrifice to content justice; and the virtue and fruit of that sacrifice shall delight mercy. Here shall justice have punishment to accept, and mercy shall have pardon to bestow. The rights of both are preserved, and the demands of both amicably accorded in punishment and pardon, by transferring the punishment of our crimes upon a surety, exacting a recompense from his blood by justice, and conferring life and salvation upon us by mercy without the expense of one drop of our own. Thus is justice satisfied in its severities, and mercy in its indulgences. The riches of grace are twisted with the terrors of wrath. The bowels of mercy are wound about the flaming sword of justice, and the sword of justice protects and secures the bowels of mercy.

Thus is God righteous without being cruel, and merciful without being unjust; his righteousness inviolable, and the world recoverable. Thus is a resplendent mercy brought forth in the midst of all the curses, confusions, and wrath threatened to the offender. This is the admirable temperament found out by the wisdom of God: his justice is honored in the sufferings of man's surety; and his mercy is honored in the application of the propitiation to the offender (Rom. 3:24, 25): "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." Had we in our persons been sacrifices to justice, mercy had forever been unknown; had we been solely fostered by mercy, justice had forever been secluded; had we, being guilty, been absolved, mercy might have rejoiced, and justice might have complained; had we been solely punished, justice would have triumphed, and mercy grieved. But by this medium of redemption, neither hath ground of complaint; justice hath nothing to charge, when the punishment is inflicted; mercy hath whereof to boast when the surety is accepted. The debt of the sinner is transferred upon the surety, that the merit of the surety may be conferred upon the sinner; so that God now deals with our sins in a way of consuming justice, and with our persons in a way of relieving mercy. It is highly better, and more glorious, than if the claim of one had been granted, with the exclusion of the demand of the other; it had then been either an unrighteous mercy, or a merciless justice; it is now a righteous mercy, and a merciful justice.

2. The wisdom of God appears in the subject or person wherein these were accorded; the Second Person is the blessed Trinity. There was a congruity in the Son's undertaking and effecting it rather than any other person, according to the order of the persons, and the several functions of the persons, as represented in Scripture. The Father, after creation, is the lawgiver, and presents man with the image of his own holiness and the way to his creatures' happiness; but after the fall, man was too impotent to perform the law, and too polluted to enjoy a felicity. Redemption was then necessary; not that it was necessary for God to redeem man, but it was necessary for man's happiness that he should be recovered. To this the Second Person is appointed, that by communion with him, man might derive a happiness, and be brought again to God. But since man was blind in his understanding, and an enemy in his will to God, there must be the exerting of a virtue to enlighten his mind, and bend his will to understand, and accept of this redemption; and this work is assigned to the Third Person, the Holy Ghost.

(1.) It was not congruous that the Father should assume human nature, and suffer in it for the redemption of man. He was first in order; he was the lawgiver, and therefore to be the judge. As lawgiver, it was not convenient he should stand in the stead of the law-breaker; and as judge, it was as little convenient he should be reputed a malefactor. That he who had made a law against sin denounced a penalty upon the commission of sin, and whose part it was actually to punish the sinner, should become sin for the wilful transgressor of his law. He being the rector, how could he be an advocate and intercessor to himself? How could he be the judge and the sacrifice? a judge, and yet a mediator to himself? If he had been the sacrifice, there must be some person to examine the validity of it, and pronounce the sentence of acceptance. Was it agreeable that the Son should sit upon a throne of judgment, and the Father stand at the bar, and be responsible to the Son? That the Son should be in the place of a governor, and the Father in the place of the criminal? That the Father should be bruised (Isa. 53:10) by the Son, as the Son was by the Father (Zech. 13:70)? that the Son should awaken a sword against the Father, as the Father did against the Son? That the Father should be sent by the Son, as the Son was by the Father (Gal. 4:4)? The order of the persons in the blessed Trinity had been inverted and disturbed. Had the Father been sent, he had not been first in order; the sender is before the person sent: as the Father begets, and the son is begotten (John 1:14), so the Father sends, and the son is sent. He whose orders is to send, cannot properly send himself.

(2.) Nor was it congruous that the Spirit should be sent upon this affair. If the Holy Ghost had been sent to redeem us, and the Son to apply that redemption to us, the order of the Persons had also been inverted; the Spirit, then, who was third in order, had been second

in operation. The Son would then have received of the Spirit, as the Spirit doth now of Christ, "and shew it unto us" (John 1:15). As the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son, so the proper function and operation of it was in order after the operations of the Father and the Son. Had the Spirit been sent to redeem us, and the Son sent by the Father, and the Spirit to apply that redemption to us, the Son in his acts had proceeded from the Father and the Spirit; the Spirit, as sender, had been in order before the Son; whereas, the Spirit is called "the Spirit of Christ," as sent by Christ from the "Father" (Gal. 4:6; John 15:27). But as the order of the works, so the order of the Persons is preserved in their several operations. Creation, and a law to govern the creature, precedes redemption. Nothing, or that which hath no being, is not capable of a redeemed being. Redemption supposeth the existence and the misery of a person redeemed. As creation precedes redemption, so redemption precedes the application of it. As redemption supposeth the being of the creature, so application of redemption supposeth the efficacy of redemption. According to the order of these works, is the order of the operations of the Three Persons. Creation belongs to the Father, the first person; redemption, the second work, is the function of the Son, the second person; application, the third work, is the office of the Holy Ghost, the third person. The Father orders it, the Son acts it, the Holy Ghost applies it. He purifies our souls to understand, believe, and love these mysteries. He forms Christ in the womb of the soul, as he did the body of Christ in the womb of the Virgin. As the Spirit of God moved upon the waters, to garnish and adorn the world, after the matter of it was formed (Gen. 1:2), so he moves upon the heart, to supple it to a compliance with Christ, and draws the lineaments of the new creation in the soul, after the foundation is laid. The Son pays the price that was due from us to God, and the Spirit is the earnest of the promises of life and glory purchased by the merit of that death. It is to be observed, that the Father, under the dispensation of the law, proposed the commands, with the promises and threatenings, to the understandings of men; and Christ, under the dispensation of grace, when he was upon the earth, proposeth the gospel as the means of salvation, exhorts to faith as the condition of salvation; but it was neither the functions of the one or the other to display such an efficacy in the understanding and will to make men believe and obey; and, therefore, there were such few conversions in the time of Christ, by his miracles. But this work was reserved for the fuller and brighter appearance of the Spirit, whose office it was to convince the world of the necessity of a Redeemer, because of their lost condition; of the person of the Redeemer, the Son of God; of the sufficiency and efficacy of redemption, because of his righteousness and acceptance by the Father. The wisdom of God is seen in preparing and presenting the objects, and then in making impression of them upon the subject he intends. And thus is the order of the Three Persons preserved.

(3.) The Second Person had the greatest congruity, in this work. He by whom God created the world was most conveniently employed in restoring the defaced world (John 1:4): who more fit to recover it from its lapsed state than he that had erected it in its primitive state (Heb. 1:2)? He was the light of men in creation, and therefore it was most reasonable he should be the light of men in redemption. Who fitter to reform the Divine image than he that first formed it? Who fitter to speak for us to God than he who was the Word (John 1:1)? Who could better intercede with the Father than he who was the only begotten and beloved Son? Who so fit to redeem the forfeited inheritance as the Heir of all things? Who fitter and better to prevail for us to have the right of children than he that possessed it by nature? We fell from being the sons of God, and who fitter to introduce us into an adopted state than the Son of God? Herein was an expression of the richer grace, because the first sin was immediately against the wisdom of God, by an ambitious affectation of a wisdom equal to God, that that person, who was the wisdom of God, should be made a sacrifice for the expiation of the sin against wisdom.

3. The wisdom of God is seen in the two natures of Christ, whereby this redemption was accomplished. The union of the two natures was the foundation of the union of God and the fallen creature.

1st. The union itself is admirable: "The Word is made flesh" (John 1:14), one "equal with God in the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7). When the apostle speaks of "God manifested in the flesh," he speaks "the wisdom of God in a mystery" (1 Tim. 3:16); that which is incomprehensible to the angels, which they never imagined before it was revealed, which perhaps they never knew till they beheld it. I am sure, under the law, the figures of the cherubims were placed in the sanctuary, with their "faces looking towards the propitiatory," in a perpetual posture of contemplation and admiration (Exod. 37:9), to which the apostle alludes (1 Pet. 1:12). Mysterious is the wisdom of God to unite finite and infinite, almightiness and weakness, immortality and mortality, immutability, with a thing subject to change; to have a nature from eternity, and yet a nature subject to the revolutions of time; a nature to make a law, and a nature to be subjected to the law; to be God blessed forever, in the bosom of his Father, and an infant exposed to calamities from the womb of his mother: terms seeming most distant from union, most incapable of conjunction, to shake hands together, to be most intimately conjoined; glory and vileness, fulness and emptiness, heaven and earth; the creature with the Creator; he that made all things, in one person with a nature that is made; Immanuel, God, and man in one; that which is most spiritual to partake of that which is carnal flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14); one with the Father in his Godhead, one with us in his manhood; the Godhead to be in him in the fullest perfection, and the manhood in the greatest purity; the creature one with the Creator, and the Creator one with the creature. Thus is the incomprehensible wisdom of God declared in the "Word being made flesh."

2d. In the manner of this union. A union of two natures, yet no natural union. It transcends all the unions visible among creatures: it is not like the union of stones in a building, or two pieces of timber fastened together, which touch one another only in their superficies and outside, without any intimacy with one another. By such a kind of union God would not be a man: the Word could not so be made flesh. Nor is it a union of parts to the whole, as the members and the body; the members are parts, the body is the whole; for the whole results from the parts, and depends upon the parts: but Christ, being God, is independent upon anything. The parts are in order of nature before the whole, but nothing can be in order of nature before God. Nor is it as the union of two liquors, as when wine and water are mixed together, for they are so incorporated as not to be distinguished from one another; no man can tell which particle is wine, and which is water. But the properties of the Divine nature are distinguishable from the properties of the human. Nor is it as the union of the soul and body, so as that the Deity is the form of the humanity, as the soul is the form of the body: for as the soul is but a part of the man, so the Divinity would be then but a part of the humanity; and as a form, or the soul, is in a state of imperfection, without that which it is to inform, so the Divinity of Christ would have been imperfect till it had assumed the humanity, and so the perfection of an eternal Deity would have depended on a creature of time. This union of two natures in Christ is incomprehensible: and it is a mystery we cannot arrive to the top of, how the Divine nature, which is the same with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost, should be united to the human nature, without its being said that the Father and the Holy Ghost were united to the flesh; but the Scripture doth not encourage any such notion; it speaks only of the Word, the person of the Word being made flesh, and in his being made flesh, distinguisheth him from the Father, as "the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14). The person of the Son was the term of this union.

(1.) This union doth not confound the properties of the Deity and those of the humanity. They remain distinct and entire in each

other. The Deity is not changed into flesh, nor the flesh transformed into God: they are distinct, and yet united; they are conjoined, and yet unmixed: the dues of either nature are preserved. It is impossible that the majesty of the Divinity can receive an alteration. It is as impossible that the meanness of the humanity can receive the impressions of the Deity, so as to be changed into it, and a creature be metamorphosed into the Creator, and temporary flesh become eternal, and finite mount up into infinity: as the soul and body are united, and make one person, yet the soul is not changed into the effects of the body, nor the body into the perfections of the soul. There is a change made in the humanity, by being advanced to a more excellent union, but not in the Deity, as a change is made in the air, when it is enlightened by the sun, not in the sun, which communicates that brightness to the air. Athanasius makes the burning bush to be a type of Christ's incarnation (Exod. 3:2): the fire signifying the Divine nature, and the bush the human. The bush is a branch springing up from the earth, and the fire descends from heaven; as the bush was united to the fire, yet was not hurt by the flame, nor converted into fire, there remained a difference between the bush and the fire, yet the properties of the fire shined in the bush, so that the whole bush seemed to be on fire. So in the incarnation of Christ, the human nature is not swallowed up by the Divine, nor changed into it, nor confounded with it, but so united, that the properties of both remain firm: two are so become one, that they remain two still: one person in two natures, containing the glorious perfections of the Divine, and the weaknesses of the human. The "fulness of the Deity dwells bodily in Christ" (Col. 2:9).

(2.) The Divine nature is united to every part of the humanity. The whole Divinity to the whole humanity; so that no part but may be said to be the member of God, as well as the blood is said to be the "blood of God" (Acts 20:28). By the same reason, it may be said, the hand of God, the eye of God, the arm of God. As God is infinitely present everywhere, so as to be excluded from no place, so is the Deity hypostatically everywhere in the humanity. not excluded from any part of it; as the light of the sun in every part of the air; as a sparkling splendor in every part of the diamond. Therefore, it is concluded, by all that acknowledge the Deity of Christ, that when his soul was separated from the body, the Deity remained united both to soul and body, as light doth in every part of a broken crystal.

(3.) Therefore, perpetually united (Col. 2:9). The "fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily." It dwells in him, not lodges in him, as a traveller in an inn: it resides in him as a fixed habitation. As God describes the perpetuity of his presence in the ark by his habitation or dwelling in it (Exod. 29:44), so doth the apostle the inseparable duration of the Deity in the humanity, and the indissoluble union of the humanity with the Deity. It was united on earth; it remains united in heaven. It was not an image or an apparition, as the tongues wherein the Spirit came upon the apostles, were a temporary representation, not a thing united perpetually to the person of the Holy Ghost.

(4.) It was a personal union. It was not an union of persons, though it was a personal union; so Davenant expounds (Col. 2:9), Christ did not take the person of man, but the nature of man into subsistence with himself. The body and soul of Christ were not united in themselves, had no subsistence in themselves, till they were united to the person of the Son of God. If the person of a man were united to him, the human nature would have been the nature of the person so united to him, and not the nature of the Son of God (Heb.2:14, 16), "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, be also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He took flesh and blood to be his own nature, perpetually to subsist in the person of the *Aóyos*, which must be by a personal union, or no way the Deity united to the humanity, and both natures to be one person. This is the mysterious and manifold wisdom of God.

3d. The end of this union.

(1.) He was hereby fitted to be a Mediator. He hath something like to man, and something like to God. If he were in all things only like to man, he would be at a distance from God: if he were in all things only like to God, he would be at a distance from man. He is a true Mediator between mortal sinners and the immortal righteous One. He was near to us by the infirmities of our nature, and near to God by the perfections of the Divine; as near to God in his nature, as to us in ours; as near to us in our nature, as he is to God in the Divine. Nothing that belongs to the Deity, but he possesses; nothing that belongs to the human nature, but he is clothed with. He had both the nature which had offended, and that nature which was offended: a nature to please God, and a nature to pleasure us: a nature, whereby he experimentally knew the excellency of God, which was injured, and understood the glory due to him, and consequently the greatness of the offence, which was to be measured by the dignity of his person: and a nature whereby he might be sensible of the miseries contracted by, and endure the calamities due to the offender, that he might both have compassion on him, and make due satisfaction for him. He had two distinct natures capable of the affections and sentiments of the two persons he was to accord; he was a just judge of the rights of the one, and the demerit of the other. He could not have this full and perfect understanding if he did not possess the perfections of the one, and the qualities of the other; the one fitted him for "things appertaining to God" (Heb. 5:1), and the other furnished him with a sense of the "infirmities of man" (Heb. 4:15).

(2.) He was hereby fitted for the working out the happiness of man. A Divine nature to communicate to man, and a human nature to carry up to God. [1.] He had a nature whereby to suffer for us, and a nature whereby to be meritorious in those sufferings. A nature to make him capable to bear the penalty, and a nature to make his sufferings sufficient for all that embraced him. A nature, capable to be exposed to the flames of Divine wrath, and another nature, incapable to be crushed by the weight, or consumed by the heat of it: a human nature to suffer, and stand a sacrifice in the stead of man; a Divine nature to sanctify these sufferings, and fill the nostrils of God with a sweet savor, and thereby atone his wrath: the one to bear the stroke due to us, and the other to add merit to his sufferings for us. Had he not been man, he could not have filled our place in suffering; and could he otherwise have suffered, his sufferings had not been applicable to us; and had he not been God, his sufferings had not been meritoriously and fruitfully applicable. Had not his blood been the blood of God, it had been of as little advantage as the blood of an ordinary man, or the blood of the legal sacrifices (Heb. 9:12). Nothing less than God could have satisfied God for the injury done by man. Nothing less than God could have countervailed the torments due to the offending creature. Nothing less than God could have rescued us out of the hands of the jailor, too powerful for us. [2.] He had, therefore, a nature to be compassionate to us, and victorious for us. A nature sensibly to compassionate us, and another nature, to render those compassions effectual for our relief; he had the compassions of our nature to pity us, and the patience of the Divine nature to bear with us. He hath the affections of a man to us, and the power of a God for us: a nature to disarm the devil for us, and another nature to be insensible of the working of the devil in us, and against us. If he had been only God, he would not have had an experimental sense of our misery; and if he had been only man, he could not have vanquished our enemies; had he been only God, he could not have died; and had he been only man, he could not have conquered death. [3.] A nature efficaciously to instruct us. As man, he was to instruct us sensibly; as God, he was to instruct us infallibly. A nature, whereby

he might converse with us, and a nature, whereby he might influence us in those converses. A human mouth to minister instruction to man, and a Divine power to imprint it with efficacy. [4.] A nature to be a pattern to us. A pattern of grace as man, as Adam was to have been to his posterity: a Divine nature shining in the human, the image of the invisible God in the lass of our flesh, that he might be a perfect copy for our imitation (Col. 1:15), "The image of the invisible God, and the first-born of every creature" in conjunction. The virtues of the Deity are sweetened and tempered by the union with the humanity, as the beams of the sun are by shining through a colored glass, which condescends more to the weakness of our eye. Thus the perfections of the invisible God, breaking through the first-born of every creature, glittering in Christ's created state, became more sensible for contemplation by our mind, and more imitable for conformity in our practice. [5.] A nature to be a ground of confidence in our approach to God. A nature wherein we may behold him, and wherein we may approach to him. A nature for our comfort, and a nature for our confidence. Had he been only man, he had been too feeble to assure us; and had he been only God, he had been too high to attract us: but now we are allured by his human nature, and assured by his Divine, in our drawing near to heaven. Communion with God was desired by us, but our guilt stifled our hopes, and the infinite excellency of the Divine nature would have damped our hopes of speeding; but since these two natures, so far distant, are met in a marriage-knot, we have a ground of hope, nay, an earnest, that the Creator and believing creature shall meet and converse together. And since our sins are expiated by the death of the human nature in conjunction with the Divine, our guilt, upon believing, shall not hinder us from this comfortable approach. Had he been only man, he could not have assured us an approach to God: had he been only God, his justice would not have admitted us to approach to him; he had been too terrible for guilty persons, and too holy for polluted persons to come near to him: but by being made man, his justice is tempered, and by his being God and man, his mercy is ensured. A human nature he had, one with us, that we might be related to God, as one with him. [6.] A nature to derive all good to us. Had he not been man, we had had no share or part in him: a satisfaction by him had not been imputed to us. If he were not God, he could not communicate to us divine graces and eternal happiness; he could not have had power to convey so great a good to us, had he been only man; and he could not have done it, according to the rule of inflexible righteousness, had he been only God. As man, he is the way of conveyance; as God, he is the spring of conveyance. From this grace of union, and the grace of unction, we find rivers of waters flowing to make glad the city of God. Believers are his branches, and draw sap from him, as he is their root in his human nature, and have an endless duration of it from his Divine. Had he not been man, he had not been in a state to obey the law; had he not been God as well as man, his obedience could not have been valuable to be imputed to us. How should this mystery be studied by us, which would afford us both admiration and content! Admiration, in the incomprehensibility of it; contentment, in the fitness of the Mediator. By this wisdom of God we receive the props of our faith, and the fruits of joy and peace.

Wisdom consists in choosing fit means, and conducting them in such a method, as may reach with good success the variety of marks which are aimed at. Thus hath the wisdom of God set forth a Mediator, suited to our wants, fitted for our supplies, and ordered so the whole affair by the union of these two natures in the person of the Redeemer, that there could be no disappointment, by all the bustle and hellish instruments could raise against it.

4. The wisdom of God is seen in this way of redemption, in vindicating the honor and righteousness of the law, both as to precept and penalty. The first and irreversible design of the law was obedience. The penalty of the law had only entrance upon transgression. Obedience was the design, and the penalty was added to enforce the observance of the precept (Gen. 2:17): "Thou shalt not eat;" there is the precept: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die;" there is the penalty. Obedience was our debt to the law, as creatures; punishment was due from the law to us, as sinners: we are bound to endure the penalty for our first transgression, but the penalty did not cancel the bond of future obedience; the penalty had not been incurred without transgressing the precept; yet the precept was not abrogated by enduring the penalty. Since man so soon revolted, and by this revolt fell under the threatening, the justice of the law had been honored by man's sufferings, but the holiness and equity of the law had been honored by man's obedience. The wisdom of God finds out a medium to satisfy both: the justice of the law is preserved in the execution of the penalty; and the holiness of the law is honored in the observance of the precept. The life of our Saviour is a conformity to the precept, and his death is a conformity to the penalty; the precepts are exactly performed, and the curse punctually executed, by a voluntary observing the one, and a voluntary undergoing the other. It is obeyed, as if it had not been transgressed, and executed as if it had not been obeyed. It became the wisdom, justice, and holiness of God, as the Rector of the world, to exact it (Heb. 2:10), and it became the holiness of the Mediator to "fulfil all the righteousness of the law" (Rom. 8:3; Matt. 3:15). And thus the honor of the law was vindicated in all the parts of it. The transgression of the law was condemned in the flesh of the Redeemer, and the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in his person: and both these acts of obedience, being counted as one righteousness, and imputed to the believing sinner, render him a subject to the law, both in its perceptive and minatory part. By Adam's sinful acting we were made sinners, and by Christ's righteous acting we are made righteous (Rom. 5:19): "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The law was obeyed by him, that the righteousness of it might be fulfilled in us (Rom. 8:4). It is not fulfilled in us, or in our actions, by inherency, but fulfilled in us by imputation of that righteousness which was exactly fulfilled by another. As he died for us, and rose again for us, so he lived for us. The commands of the law were as well observed for us, as the threatenings of the law were endured for us. This justification of a sinner, with the preservation of the holiness of the law in truth, in the inward parts, in sincerity of intention, as well as conformity in action, is the wisdom of God, the gospel wisdom which David desires to know (Psalm 51:6): "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom;" or, as some render it, "the hidden things of wisdom." Not an inherent wisdom in the acknowledgments of his sin, which he had confessed before, but the wisdom of God in providing a medicine, so as to keep up the holiness of the law in the observance of it in truth, and the averting the judgment due to the sinner. In and by this way methodized by the wisdom of God, all doubts and troubles are discharged. Naturally, if we take a view of the law to behold its holiness and justice, and then of our hearts, to see the contrariety in them to the command, and the pollution repugnant to its holiness; and after this, cast our eyes upward, and beholding a flaming sword, edged with curses and wrath; is there any matter, but that of terror, afforded by any of these? But when we behold, in the life of Christ, a conformity to the mandatory part of the law, and in the cross of Christ, a sustaining the minatory part of the law, this wisdom of God gives a well-grounded and rational dismissal to all the horrors that can seize upon us.

5. The wisdom of God in redemption is visible in manifesting two contrary affections at the same time, and in one act: the greatest hatred of sin, and the greatest love to the sinner. In this way he punishes the sin without ruining the sinner, and repairs the ruins of the sinner without indulging the sin. Here is eternal love and eternal hatred; a condemning the sin to what it merited, and an advancing the sinner to what he could not expect. Herein is the choicest love and the deepest hatred manifested: an implacableness against the sin, and a placableness to the sinner. His hatred of sin hath been discovered in other ways: in punishing the devil without remedy; sentencing man to an expulsion from paradise, though seduced by another; in accursing the serpent, an irrational creature,

though but a misguided instrument. The whole tenor of his threatenings declare his loathing of sin, and the sprinklings of his judgments in the world, and the horrible expectations of terrified consciences confirm it. But what are all these testimonies to the highest evidence that can possibly be given in the sheathing the sword of his wrath in the heart of his Son? If a father should order his son to take a mean garb below his dignity, order him to be dragged to prison, seem to throw off all affection of a father for the severity of a judge, condemn his son to a horrible death, be a spectator of his bleeding condition, withhold his hand from assuaging his misery, regard it rather with joy than sorrow, give him a bitter cup to drink, and stand by to see him drink it off to the bottom, dregs and all, and flash frowns in his face all the while; and this not for any fault of his own, but the rebellion of some subjects he undertook for, and that the offenders might have a pardon sealed by the blood of the son, the sufferer: all this would evidence his detestation of the rebellion, and his affection to the rebels in his hatred to their crime, and his love to their welfare. This did God do. He “delivered Christ up for our offences” (Rom. 8:32); the Father gave him the cup (John 18:18); the Lord bruised him with pleasure (Isa. 53:10), and that for sin. He transferred upon the shoulders of his Son the pain we had merited, that the criminal might be restored to the place he had forfeited. He hates the sin so as to condemn it forever, and wrap it up in the curse he had threatened; and loves the sinner, believing and repenting, so as to mount him to an expectation of a happiness exceeding the first estate, both in glory and perpetuity. Instead of an earthly paradise, lays the foundation of an heavenly mansion, brings forth a weight of glory from a weight of misery, separates the comfortable light of the sun from the scorching heat we had deserved at his hands. Thus hath God’s hatred of sin been manifested. He is at eternal defiance with sin, yet nearer in alliance with the sinner than he was before the revolt; as if man’s miserable fall had endeared him to the Judge. This is the wisdom and prudence of “grace wherein God hath abounded” (Eph. 1:9) a wisdom in twisting the happy restoration of the broken amity, with an everlasting curse upon that which made the breach, both upon sin the cause, and upon Satan the seducer to it. Thus is hatred and love, in their highest glory, manifested together: hatred to sin, in the death of Christ, more than if the torments of hell had been undergone by the sinner; and love to the sinner, more than if he had, by an absolute and simple bounty, bestowed upon him the possession of heaven; because the gift of his Son, for such an end, is a greater token of his boundless affections, than a reinstating man in paradise. Thus is the wisdom of God seen in redemption, consuming the sin, and recovering the sinner.

6. The wisdom of God is evident in overturning the devil’s empire by the nature he had vanquished, and by ways quite contrary to what that malicious spirit could imagine. The devil, indeed, read his own doom in the first promise, and found his ruin resolved upon, by the means of the “Seed of the woman;” but by what seed was not so easily known to him. And the methods whereby it was to be brought about was a mystery kept secret from the malicious devils, since it was not discovered to the obedient angels. He might know, from Isa. 53, that the Redeemer was assured to divide the spoil with the strong, and rescue a part of the lost creation out of his hands; and that this was to be effected by making his soul an offering for sin: but could he imagine which way his soul was to be made such an offering? He shrewdly suspected Christ, just after his inauguration into his office by baptism, to be the Son of God but did he ever dream that the Messiah, by dying as a reputed malefactor, should be a sacrifice for the expiation of the sin the devil had introduced by his subtilty? Did he ever imagine a cross should dispossess him of his crown, and that dying groans should wrest the victory out of his hands? He was conquered by that nature he had cast headlong into ruin: a woman, by his subtilty, was the occasion of our death; and a woman, by the conduct of the only wise God, brings forth the Author of our life, and the Conqueror of our enemies. The flesh of the old Adam had infected us, and the flesh of the new Adam cures us (1 Cor. 15:21): “By man came death; by man also came the resurrection from the dead.” We are killed by the old Adam, and raised by the new; as among the Israelites, a fiery serpent gave the wound, and a brazen serpent administers the cure. The nature that was deceived bruises the deceiver, and raises up the foundations of his kingdom. Satan is defeated by the counsels he took to secure his possession, and loses the victory by the same means whereby he thought to preserve it. His tempting the Jews to the sin of crucifying the Son of God, had a contrary success to his tempting Adam to eat of the tree. The first death he brought upon Adam, ruined us, and the death he brought by his instruments upon the second Adam, restored us. By a tree, if one may so say, he had triumphed over the world, and by the fruit of a tree, one hanging upon a tree, he is discharged of his power over us (Heb. 2:14): “Through death he destroyed Him that had the power of death.” And thus the devil ruins his own kingdom while he thinks to confirm and enlarge it; and is defeated by his own policy, whereby he thought to continue the world under his chains, and deprive the Creator of the world of his purposed honor. What deeper counsel could he resolve upon for his own security, than to be instrumental in the death of him, who was God, the terror of the devil himself, and to bring the Redeemer of the world to expire with disgrace in the sight of a multitude of men? Thus did the wisdom of God shine forth in restoring us by methods seemingly repugnant to the end he aimed at, and above the suspicion of a subtle devil, whom he intended to baffle. Could he imagine that we should be healed by stripes, quickened by death, purified by blood, crowned by a cross, advanced to the highest honor by the lowest humility, comforted by sorrows, glorified by disgrace, absolved by condemnation, and made rich by poverty? That the sweetest honey should at once spring out of the belly of a dead lion, the lion of the tribe of Judah, and out of the bosom of the living God? How wonderful is this wisdom of God! that the Seed of the woman, born of a mean virgin, brought forth in a stable, spending his days in affliction, misery, and poverty, without any pomp and splendor, passing some time in a carpenters shop, with carpenter’s tools (Mark 6:6), and afterwards exposed to a horrible and disgraceful death, should, by this way, pull down the gates of hell, subvert the kingdom of the devil, and be the hammer to break in pieces that power, which he had so long exercised over the world! Thus became he the author of our life, by being bound for a while in the chains of death, and arrived to a principality over the most malicious powers, by being a prisoner for us, and the anvil of their rage and fury.

7. The wisdom of God appears, in giving us this way the surest ground of comfort, and the strongest incentive to obedience. The rebel is reconciled, and the rebellion shamed; God is propitiated, and the sinner sanctified, by the same blood. What can more contribute to our comfort and confidence, than God’s richest gift to us? What can more enflame our love to him, than our recovery from death by the oblation of his Son to misery and death for us? It doth as much engage our duty as secure our happiness. It presents God glorious and gracious, and therefore every way fit to be trusted in regard of the interest of his own glory in it, and in regard of the effusions of his grace by it. It renders the creature obliged in the highest manner, and so awakens his industry to the strictest and noblest obedience. Nothing so effectual as a crucified Christ to wean us from sin, and stifle all motions of despair; a means, in regard of the justice signalized in it, to make man to hate the sin which had ruined him; and a means, in regard of the love expressed to make him delight in that law he had violated (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). The love of Christ, and therefore the love of God expressed in it, constrains us no longer to live to ourselves.

(1.) It is a ground of the highest comfort and confidence in God. Since he hath given such an evidence of his impartial truth to his threatening for the honor of his justice, we need not question but he will be as punctual to his promise for the honor of his mercy. It is a ground of confidence in God, since he hath redeemed us in such a way as glorifies the steadiness of his veracity, as well as the

severity of his justice; we may well trust him for the performance of his promise, since we have experience of the execution of his threatening; his merciful truth will as much engage him to accomplish the one, as his just truth did to inflict the other. The goodness which shone forth in weaker rays in the creation, breaks out with stronger beams in redemption. And the mercy which before the appearance of Christ was manifested in some small rivulets, diffuseth itself like a boundless ocean. That God, that was our Creator, is our Redeemer, the repairer of our breaches, and the restorer of our paths to dwell in. And the plenteous redemption from all iniquity, manifested in the incarnation and passion of the Son of God, is much more a ground of hope in the Lord than it was in past ages, when it could not be said, "The Lord hath, but the Lord shall, redeem Israel from all his iniquities" (Psalm 130:8). It is a full warrant to cast ourselves into his arms.

(2.) An incentive to obedience.

[1.] The commands of the gospel require the obedience of the creature. There is not one precept in the gospel which interferes with any rule in the law, but strengthens it, and represents it in its true exactness: the heat to scorch us is allayed, but the light to direct us is not extinguished. Not the least allowance to any sin is granted; not the least affection to any sin is indulged. The law is tempered by the gospel, but not nulled and cast out of doors by it: it enacts that none but those that are sanctified, shall be glorified; that there must be grace here, if we expect glory hereafter; that we must not presume to expect an admittance to the vision of God's face unless our souls be clothed with a robe of holiness (Heb. 12:14). It requires an obedience to the whole law in our intention and purpose, and an endeavor to observe it in our actions; it promotes the honor of God, and ordains a universal charity among men; it reveals the whole counsel of God, and furnisheth men with the holiest laws.

[2.] It presents to us the exactest pattern for our obedience. The redeeming person is not only a propitiation for the sin, but a pattern to the sinner (1 Pet. 2:21). The conscience of man, after the fall of Adam, approved of the reason of the law, but by the corruption of nature man had no strength to perform the law. The possibility of keeping the law, by human nature, is evidenced by the appearance and life of the Redeemer, and an assurance given that it shall be advanced to such a state as to be able to observe it: we aspire to it in this life, and have hopes to attain it in a future; and, while we are here, the actor of our redemption is the copy for our imitation. The pattern to imitate is greater than the law to be ruled by.

What a lustre did his virtues cast about the world! How attractive are his graces! With what high examples for all duties has he furnished us out of the copy of his life!

[3.] It presents us with the strongest motives to obedience (Tit. 2:11, 12): "The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness." What chains bind us faster and closer than love? Here is love to our nature in his incarnation; love to us, though enemies, in his death and passion; encouragements to obedience by the proffers of pardon for former rebellions. By the disobedience of man, God introduceth his redeeming grace, and engageth his creature to more ingenuous and excellent returns than his innocent state could oblige him to. In his created state he had goodness to move him, he hath the same goodness now to oblige him as a creature, and a greater love and mercy to oblige him as a repaired creature; and the terror of justice is taken off, which might envenom his heart as a criminal. In his revolted state he had misery to discourage him; in his redeemed state he hath love to attract him. Without such a way, black despair had seized upon the creature exposed to a remediless misery, and God would have had no returns of love from the best of his earthly works; but if any sparks of ingenuity be left, they will be excited by the efficacy of this argument. The willingness of God to receive returning sinners, is manifested in the highest degree; and the willingness of a sinner to return to him in duty hath the strongest engagements. He hath done as much to encourage our obedience, as to illustrate his glory. We cannot conceive what could be done greater for the salvation of our souls, and consequently what could have been done, more to enforce our observance. We have a Redeemer, as man, to copy it to us, and as God, to perfect us in it. It would make the heart of any to tremble to wound him that hath provided such a salve for our sores, and to make grace a warrant for rebellion—motives capable to form rocks into a flexibility. Thus is the wisdom of God seen in giving us a ground to the surest confidence, and furnishing us with incentives to the greatest obedience, by the horrors of wrath, death and sufferings of our Saviour.

8. The wisdom of God is apparent in the condition he hath settled for the enjoying the fruits of redemption: and this is faith, a wise and reasonable condition and the concomitants of it—

(1.) In that it is suited to man's lapsed state and God's glory. Innocence is not required here; that had been a condition impossible in its own nature after the fall. The rejecting of mercy is now only condemning, where mercy is proposed. Had the condition of perfection in works been required, it had rather been a condemnation than redemption. Works are not demanded, whereby the creature might ascribe anything to himself, but a condition, which continues in man a sense of his apostasy, abates all aspiring pride, and makes the reward of grace, not of debt; a condition, whereby mercy is owned, and the creature emptied; flesh silenced in the dust, and God set upon his throne of grace and authority; the creature brought to the lowest debasement, and Divine glory raised to the highest pitch. the creature is brought to acknowledge mercy, and seal to justice; to own the holiness of God, in the hatred of sin; the justice of God, in the punishment of sin; and the mercy of God, in the pardoning of sin: a condition that despoils nature of all its pretended excellency; beats down the glory of man at the foot of God (1 Cor. 1:29, 31). It subjects the reason and will of man to the wisdom and authority of God; it brings the creature to an unreserved submission and entire resignation. God is made the sovereign cause of all; the creature continued in his emptiness, and reduced to a greater dependence upon God than by a creation; depending upon him for a constant influx, for an entire happiness: a condition that renders God glorious in the creature, and the fallen creature happy in God; God glorious in his condescension to man, and man happy in his emptiness before God. Faith is made the condition of man's recovery, that "the lofty looks of man might be humbled, and the haughtiness of man be pulled down" (Isa. 2:11); that every towering imagination might be levelled (2 Cor. 10:5). Man must have all from without doors; he must not live upon himself, but upon another's allowance. He must stand to the provision of God, and be a perpetual suitor at his gates.

(2.) A condition opposite to that which was the cause of the fall. We fell from God by an unbelief of the threatening; he recovers us by a belief of the promise; by unbelief we laid the foundation of God's dishonor; by faith, therefore, God exalts the glory of his free grace. We lost ourselves by a desire of self-dependence, and our return is ordered by way of self-emptiness. It is reasonable we should be restored in a way contrary to that whereby we fell; we sinned by a refusal of cleaving to God; it is a part of divine wisdom to restore us in a denial of our own righteousness and strength. Man having sinned by pride, the wisdom of God humbles him (saith one) at the very root of the tree of knowledge, and makes him deny his own understanding, and submit to faith, or else, forever to lose his desired felicity.

(3.) It is a condition suited to the common sentiment and custom of the world. There is more of belief than reason in the world. All instructors and masters in sciences and arts, require, first a belief in their disciples, and a resignation of their understandings and wills to them. And it is the wisdom of God to require that of man, which his own reason makes him submit to another which is his fellow-creature. He, therefore, that quarrels with the condition of faith, must quarrel with all the world, since belief is the beginning of all knowledge; yea, and most of the knowledge in the world, may rather come under the title of belief, than of knowledge; for what we think we know this day, we may find from others such arguments as may stagger our knowledge, and make us doubt of that we thought ourselves certain of before: nay, sometimes we change our opinions ourselves without any instructor, and see a reason to entertain an opinion quite contrary to what we had before. And if we found a general judgment of others to vote against what we think we know, it would make us give the less credit to ourselves and our own sentiments. All knowledge in the world is only a belief, depending upon the testimony or arguings of others; for, indeed, it may be said of all men, as in Job (8:9), "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing." Since, therefore, belief is so universal a thing in the world, the wisdom of God requires that of us which every man must count reasonable, or render himself utterly ignorant of anything. It is a condition that is common to all religions. All religions are founded upon a belief: unless men did believe future things, they would not hope nor fear. A belief and resignation was required in all the idolatries in the world; so that God requires nothing but what a universal custom of the world gives its suffrage to the reasonableness of: indeed, justifying faith is not suited to the sentiments of men; but that faith which must precede justifying, a belief of the doctrine, though not comprehended by reason, is common to the custom of the world. It is no less madness not to submit our reason to faith, than not to regulate our fancies by reason.

(4.) This condition of faith and repentance is suited to the conscience of men. The law of nature teaches us, that we are bound to believe every revelation from God, when it is made known to us and not only to assent to it as true, but embrace it as good. This nature dictates, that we are as much obliged to believe God, because of his truth, as to love him, because of his goodness. Every man's reason tells him, he cannot obey a precept, nor depend upon a promise, unless he believes both the one and the other. No man's conscience but will inform him, upon hearing the revelation of God concerning his excellent contrivance of redemption, and the way to enjoy it, that it is very reasonable he should strip off all affections to sin, lie down in sorrow, and bewail what he hath done amiss against so tender a God. Can you expect that any man that promises you a great honor or a rich donative, should demand less of you than to trust his word, bear an affection to him, and return him kindness? Can any less be expected by a prince than obedience from a pardoned subject, and a redeemed captive? If you have injured any man in his body, estate, reputation, would you not count it a reasonable condition for the partaking of his clemency and forgiveness, to express a hearty sorrow for it, and a resolution not to fall into the like crime again? Such are the conditions of the gospel, suited to the consciences of men.

(5.) The wisdom of God appears, in that this condition was only likely to attain the end. There are but two common heads appointed by God,—Adam and Christ: by one we are made a living soul, by the other a quickening spirit: by the one we are made sinners, by the other we are made righteous. Adam fell as a head, and all his members, his whole issue and posterity, fell with him, because they proceeded from him by natural generation. But since the second Adam cannot be our head by natural generation, there must be some other way of engrafting us in him, and uniting us to him as our Head, which must be moral and spiritual; this cannot rationally be conceived to be by any other way than what is suitable to a reasonable creature, and, therefore, must be by an act of the will, consent and acceptance, and owning the terms settled for an admission to that union. And this is that we properly call faith, and, therefore, called a receiving of him (John 1:12).

[1.] Now this condition of enjoying the fruits of redemption could not be a bare knowledge; for that is but only an act of the understanding, and doth not in itself include the act of the will, and so would have united only one faculty to him, not the whole soul: but faith is an act both of the understanding and will too; and principally of the will, which doth presuppose an act of the understanding for there cannot be a persuasion in the will, without a proposition from the understanding. The understanding must be convinced of the truth and goodness of a thing, before the will can be persuaded to make any motion towards it; and, therefore, all the promises, invitations, and proffers, are suited to the understanding and will; to the understanding in regard of knowledge, to the will in regard of appetite; to the understanding as true, to the will as good; to the understanding as practical, and influencing the will.

[2.] Nor could it be an entire obedience. That, as was said before, would have made the creature have some matter of boasting, and this was not suitable to the condition he was sunk into by the fall. Besides, man's nature being corrupted, was rendered incapable to obey, and unable to have one thought of a due obedience (2 Cor. 3:5). When man turned from God, and upon that was turned out of paradise, his return was impossible by any strength of his own; his nature was as much corrupted as his re-entrance into paradise was prohibited. That covenant, whereby he stood in the garden, required a perfection of action and intention in the observance of all the commands of God: but his fall had cracked his ability to recover happiness by the terms and condition of an entire obedience; yet man being a person governable by a law, and capable of happiness by a covenant, if God would restore him, and enter into a covenant with him, we must suppose it to have some condition, as all covenants have. That condition could not be works, because man's nature was polluted. Indeed, had God reduced man's body to the dust, and his soul to nothing, and framed another man, he might have governed him by a covenant of works: but that had not been the same man that had revolted, and upon his revolt was stained and disabled. But suppose God had, by any transcendent grace, wholly purified him from the stain of his former transgression, and restored to him the strength and ability he had lost, might he not as easily have rebelled again? And so the condition would never have been accomplished, the covenant never have been performed, and happiness never have been enjoyed. There must be some other condition then in the covenant God would make for man's security. Now faith is the most proper for receiving the promise of pardon of sin belief of those promises is the first natural reflection that a malefactor can make upon a pardon offered him, and acceptance of it is the first consequent from that belief. Hence is faith entitled a persuasion of, and embracing the promises (Heb. 11:13, and a receiving the atonement (Rom. 5:11). Thus the wisdom of God is apparent in annexing such a condition to the covenant, whereby man is restored, as answers the end of God for his glory, the state, conscience, and necessity of man, and had the greatest congruity to his recovery.

9. This wisdom of God is manifest in the manner of the publishing and propagating this doctrine of redemption.

(1.) In the gradual discoveries of it. Flashing a great light in the face of a sudden is amazing; should the sun glare in our eye in all its brightness on a sudden, after we have been in a thick darkness, it would blind us, instead of comforting us: so great a work as this must have several digestions. God first reveals of what seed the Redeeming Person should be, "the Seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15);

then of what nation (Gen. 26:4); then of what tribe (Gen. 49:12),—of the tribe of Judah; then of what family,—the family of David; then what works he was to do, what sufferings to undergo. The first predictions of our Saviour were obscure. Adam could not well see the redemption in the promise for the punishment of death which succeeded in the threatening; the promise exercised his faith, and the obscurity and bodily death, his humility. The promise made to Abraham was clearer than the revelations made before, yet he could not tell how to reconcile his redemption with his exile. God supported his faith by the promise, and exercised his humility by making him a pilgrim, and keeping him in a perpetual dependence upon him in all his motions. The declarations to Moses are brighter than those to Abraham: the delineations of Christ by David, in the Psalms, more illustrious than the former: and all those exceeded by the revelations made to the prophet Isaiah, and the other prophets, according as the age did approach wherein the Redeemer was to enter into his office. God wrapped up this gospel in a multitude of types and ceremonies fitted to the infant state of the church (Gal. 4:8). An infant state is usually affected with sensible things; yet all those ceremonies were fitted to that great end of the gospel, which he would bring forth in time to the world. And the wisdom of God in them would be amazing, if we could understand the analogy between every ceremony in the law and the thing signified by it: as it cannot but affect a diligent reader to observe that little account of them we have by the apostle Paul, sprinkled in his epistles, and more largely in that to the Hebrews. As the political laws of the Jews flowed from the depth of the moral law, so their ceremonial did from the depth of evangelical counsels, and all of them had a special relation to the honor of God, and the debasing the creature. Though God formed the mass and matter of the world at the first creation at once, yet his wisdom took six days time for the disposing and adorning it. The more illustrious truths of God are not to be comprehended on a sudden by the weakness of men. Christ did not declare all truths to his disciples in the time of his life, because they were not able at that resent to bear them (John 16:12): “Ye cannot bear them now;” some were reserved for his resurrection, others for the coming of the Spirit, and the full discovery of all kept back for another world. This doctrine God figured out in the law, oracled by the prophets, and unveiled by Christ and his apostles.

(2.) The wisdom of God appeared in using all proper means to render the belief of it easy.

[1.] The most minute things that were to be transacted were predicted in the ancient foregoing age, long before the coming of the Redeemer. The vinegar and gall offered to him upon the cross, the parting his garments, the not breaking of his bones, the piercing of his hands and feet, the betraying of him, the slighting of hire by the multitude, all were exactly painted and represented in variety of figures. There was light enough to good men not to mistake him, and yet not so plain as to hinder bad men from being serviceable to the counsels of God in the crucifying of him when he came.

[2.] The translation of the Old Testament from the private language of the Jews, into the most public language of the world; that translation which we call Septuagint, from Hebrew into Greek, some years before the coming of Christ, that tongue being most diffused at that time, by reason of the Macedonian empire, raised by Alexander, and the university of Athens, to which other nations resorted for learning and education. This was a preparation for the sons of Japhet to “dwell in the tents of Shem.” By this was the entertainment of the gospel facilitated; when they compared the prophesies of the Old Testament with the declarations of the New, and found things so long predicted before they were transacted in the public view.

[3.] By ordering concurrent testimonies, as to matter of fact, that the matter of fact was not deniable. That there was such a person as Christ, that his miracles were stupendous, that his doctrine did not incline to sedition, that he affected not worldly applause, that he did suffer at Jerusalem, was acknowledged by all; not a man among the greatest enemies of Christians was found that denied the matter of fact. And this great truth, that Christ is the Messiah and Redeemer, hath been with universal consent owned by all the professors of Christianity throughout the world: whatever bickerings there have been among them about some particular doctrines, they all centred in that truth of Christ’s being the Redeemer. The first publication of this doctrine was sealed by a thousand miracles, and so illustrious, that he was an utter stranger to the world that was ignorant of them.

[4.] In keeping up some principles and opinions in the world to facilitate the belief of this, or render men inexcusable for rejecting of it. The incarnation of the son of God could not be so strange to the world, if we consider the general belief of the appearances of their gods among them; that the Epicureans and others, that denied any such appearances, were counted atheists. And Pythagoras was esteemed to be one, not of the inferior genii and lunar demons, but one of the higher gods, who appeared in a human body, for the curing and rectifying mortal life; and himself tells Abaris, the Scythian, that he was *ἀνθρώπιμορφος*, that he “took the flesh of man,” that men might not be astonished at him, and in a fright fly from his instructions. It was not therefore accounted an irrational thing among them, that God should be incarnate: but, indeed, the great stumbling-block was a crucified God. But had they known the holy and righteous nature of God, the malice of sin, the universal corruption of human nature, the first threatening, and the necessity of vindicating the honor of the law, and clearing the justice of God, the notion of his crucifixion would not have appeared so incredible, since they believed the possibility of an incarnation.

Another principle was that universal one of sacrifices for expiation, and rendering God propitious to man, and was practised among all nations. I remember not any wherein this custom did not prevail; for it did even among those people where the Jews, as being no trading nation, had not any commerce; and also in America, found out in these latter ages. It was not a law of nature; no man can find any such thing written in his own heart, but a tradition from Adam. Now that among the loss of so many other doctrines that were handed down from Adam to his immediate posterity, as, in particular, that of the “Seed of the woman,” which one would think a necessary appendix to that of sacrificing, this latter should be preserved as a fragment of an ancient tradition, seems to be an act of Divine wisdom, to prepare men for the entertainment of the doctrine of the great Sacrifice for the expiation of the sin of the world. And as the apostle forms his argument from the Jewish sacrifices, in the epistle to the Hebrews, for the convincing them of the end of the death of Christ, so did the ancient fathers make use of this practice of the heathen to convince them of the same doctrine.

[5.] The wisdom of God appeared in the time and circumstances of the first solemn publication of the gospel by the apostles at Jerusalem. The relation you may read in Acts 2:1–12. The Spirit was given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost; a time wherein there were multitudes of Jews from all nations, not only near, but remote, that heard the great things of God spoken in the several languages of those nations where their habitations were fixed, and that by twelve illiterate men, that two or three hours before knew no language but that of their native country. It was the custom of the Jews, that dwelt among other nations, at a distance from Jerusalem, to assemble together at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost: and God pitched upon this season, that there might be witnesses of this miracle in many parts of the world: there were some of every nation under heaven (ver 5); that is, of that known part of the world, so saith the text. Fourteen several nations are mentioned; and proselytes as well as Jews by birth. They are

called "devout men," men of conscience, whose testimony would carry weight with it among their neighbors at their return, because of their reputation by their religious carriage. Again, this was not heard and seen by some of them at one time, and some at another, by some one hour, by others the next successively, but altogether, in a solemn assembly, that the testimony of so many witnesses at a time, might be more valid, and the truth of the doctrine appear more illustrious and undeniable. And it must needs be astonishing to them, to hear that person magnified in so miraculous a manner, who had so lately been condemned by their countrymen as a malefactor. Wisdom consists in the timing of things. And in this circumstance doth the wisdom of God appear, in furnishing the apostles with the Spirit at such a time, and bringing forth such a miracle, as the gift of tongues, on a sudden, that every nation might hear in their own language the wonder of redemption, and as witnesses at their returns into their own countries, report it to others; that the credit they had, in their several places, might facilitate the belief and entertainment of the gospel, when the apostles, or others, should arrive to those several charges and dioceses appointed for them to preach the gospel in. Had this miracle been wrought in the presence only of the inhabitants of Judea, that understood only their own language, or one or two of the neighboring tongues, it had been counted by them rather a madness than a miracle. Or had they understood all the tongues which they spoke, the news of it had spread no further than the limits of their own habitations, and had been confined within the narrow bounds of the land of Judea. But now it is carried to several remote nations, where any of those auditors then assembled had their residence. As God chose the time of the Passover for the death of Christ, that there might be the greatest number of the inhabitants of the country, as witnesses of the matter of fact, the innocence and sufferings of Christ, so he chose the time of Pentecost for the first publishing the value and end of this blood to the world. Thus the evangelical law was given in a confluence of people from all parts and nations, because it was a covenant with all nations: and the variety of languages spoken by a company of poor Galileans, bred up at the lake of Tiberias, and in poor corners of Canaan, without the instructions of men for so great a skill, might well evidence to the hearers, that God that brought the confusion of languages first at Babel, did only work that cure of them, and combine all together at Jerusalem.

(3.) The wisdom of God is seen in the instruments he employed in the publishing the gospel. He did not employ philosophers, but fishermen; used not acquired arts, but infused wisdom and courage. This treasure was put into, and preserved in earthen vessels, that the wisdom, as well as the power of God, might be magnified. The weaker the means are which attain the end, the greater is the skill of the conductor of them. Wise princes choose men of most credit, interest, wisdom, and ability, to be ministers of their affairs, and ambassadors to others. But what were these that God chose for so great a work, as the publishing a new doctrine to the world? What was their quality but mean, what was their authority without interest? What was their ability, without eminent parts for so great a work, but what Divine grace in a special manner endowed them with? Nay, what was their disposition to it? as dull and unwieldy.

Witness the frequent rebukes for their slow-heartedness, from their Master, when he conversed in the flesh with them. And one of the greatest of them, so fond of the Jewish ceremonies and Pharisaeal principles, wherein he had been more than ordinarily principled, that he hated the Christian religion to extirpation, and the professors of it to death; by those ways which were out of the road of human wisdom, and would be accounted the greatest absurdity to be practised by men that have a repute for discretion, did God advance his wisdom (1 Cor. 1:25): "The foolishness of God is wiser than man." By this means it was indisputably evidenced to unbiassed minds, that the doctrine was divine. It could not rationally be imagined, that instruments destitute of all human advantages, should be able to vanquish the world, confound Judaism, overturn heathenism, chase away the devils, strip them of their temples, alienate the minds of men from their several religions, which had been rooted in them by education, and established by a long succession. It could not, I say, reasonably be imagined to be without a supernatural assistance, an heavenly and efficacious working: whereas, had God taken a course agreeable to the prudence of man, and used those that had been furnished with learning, tipped with eloquence, and armed with human authority, the doctrines would have been thought to have been of a human invention, and to be some subtle contrivance for some unworthy and ambitious end: the nothingness and weakness of the instruments manifest them to be conducted by a Divine power, and declare the doctrine itself to be from heaven. When we see such feeble instruments proclaiming a doctrine repugnant to flesh and blood, sounding forth a crucified Christ to be believed in, and trusted on, and declaiming against the religion and worship under which the Roman empire had long flourished; exhorting them to the contempt of the world, preparation for afflictions, denying themselves, and their own honors, by the hopes of an unseen reward, things so repugnant to flesh and blood; and these instruments concurring in the same story, with an admirable harmony in all parts, and sealing this doctrine with their blood; can we upon all this, ascribe this doctrine to a human contrivance, or fix any lower author of it than the wisdom of heaven? It is the wisdom of God that carries on his own designs in methods most suitable to his own greatness, and different from the customs and modes of men, that less of humanity, and more of divinity might appear.

(4.) The wisdom of God appears in the ways and manner, as well as in the instruments of its propagation, by ways seemingly contrary. You know how God had sent the Jews into captivity in Babylon, and though he struck off their chains, and restored them to their country, yet many of them had no mind to leave a country wherein they had been born and bred. The distance from the place of the original of their ancestors, and their affection to the country wherein they were born, might have occasioned their embracing the idolatrous worship of the place. Afterwards the persecutions of Antiochus scattered many of the Jews for their security into other nations; yet a great part, and perhaps the greatest, preserved their religion, and by that were obliged to come every year to Jerusalem to offer, and so were present at the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and were witnesses of the miraculous effects of it. Had they not been dispersed by persecution, had they not resided in several countries, and been acquainted with their languages, the gospel had not so easily been diffused into several countries of the world. The first persecutions also raised against the church, propagated the gospel; the scattering of the disciples enflamed their courage, and dispersed the doctrine (Acts 8:3), according to the prophecy of Daniel (12:4): "Many should run to and fro, and knowledge should be increased." The flights and hurrying of men should enlarge the territories of the gospel. There was not a tribunal, but the primitive Christians were cited to; not a horrible punishment, but was inflicted upon them. Treated they were, as the dregs and offals of mankind, as the common enemies of the world; yet the flames of the martyrs brightened the doctrine, and the captivity of its professors made way for the throne of its empire. The imprisonment of the ark was the downfall of Dagon. Religion grew stronger by sufferings, and Christianity taller by injuries. What can this be ascribed to, but the conduct of a wisdom superior to that of men and devils, defeating the methods of human and hellish policy; thereby making the "wisdom of this world foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3:19)?

V. The Use, 1. Of Information. If wisdom be an excellency of the Divine nature; then,

1. Christ's Deity may hence be asserted. Wisdom is the emphatical title of Christ in Scripture (Prov. 8:12, 13, 31), where wisdom is brought in speaking as a distinct person; ascribing counsel, and understanding, and the knowledge of witty inventions to itself. He is called also the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24). And the ancients generally understood that place (Col. 2:3), "In

him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” as an assertion of the Godhead of Christ, in regard of the infiniteness of his knowledge; referring wisdom to his knowledge of divine things; and knowledge to his understanding of all human things. But the natural sense of the place seems to be this, that all wisdom and knowledge is displayed by Christ in the gospel; and the words, *ἐν αὐτῶν*, refer either to Christ, or the mystery of God spoken of, (ver. 2). But the Deity of Christ, in regard of infinite wisdom, may be deduced from his creation of things, and his government of things; both which are ascribed to him in Scripture. The first ascribed to him (John 1:3): “All things were made by him;” and without him was not any thing made, that was made.” The second (John 5:22): “The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son;” and both put together (Col. 2:16, 17). Now since he hath the government of the world, he hath the perfections necessary to so great a work. As the creation of the world, which is ascribed to him, requires an infinite power, so the government of the world requires an infinite wisdom. That he hath the knowledge of the hearts of men, was proved in handling the omniscience of God. That knowledge would be to little purpose without wisdom to order the motions of men’s hearts, and conduct all the qualities and actions of creatures, to such an end as is answerable to a wise government; we cannot think so great an employment can be without an ability necessary for it. The government of men and angels is a great part of the glory of God; and if God should entrust the greatest part of his glory in hands unfit for so great a trust, it would be an argument of weakness in God, as it is in men, to pitch upon unfit instruments for particular charges; since God hath therefore committed to him his greatest glory, the conduct of all things for the highest end, he hath a wisdom requisite for so great an end, which can be no less than infinite. If then Christ were a finite person, he would not be capable of an infinite communication; he could not be a subject wherein infinite wisdom could be lodged; for the terms finite and infinite are so distant, that they cannot commence one another; finite can never be changed into infinite, no more than infinite can into finite.

2. Hence we may assert the right and fitness of God for the government of the world, as he is the wisest Being. Among men, those who are excellent in judgment, are accounted fittest to preside over, and give orders to others; the wisest in a city are most capable to govern a city; or at least, though ignorant men may bear the title, yet the advice of the soundest and skilfullest heads should prevail in all public affairs: we see in nature, that the eye guides the body, and the mind directs the eye. Power and wisdom are the two arms of authority; wisdom knows the end, and directs the means; power executes the means designed for such an end. The more splendid and strong those are in any, the more authority results from thence, for the conduct of others that are of an inferior orb; now God being infinitely excellent in both, his ability and right to the management of the world cannot be suspected; the whole world is but one commonwealth, whereof God is the monarch. Did the government of the world depend upon the election of men and angels, where could they itch, or where would they find perfections capable of so great a work but in the Supreme Wisdom? His wisdom hath already been apparent in those laws, whereby he formed the world into a civil society, and the Israelites into a commonwealth. The one suited to the consciences and reasons of all his subjects, and the other suited to the genius of that particular nation, drawn out of the righteousness of the moral law, and applicable to all cases that might arise among them in their government; so that Moses asserts, that the wisdom apparent in their laws enacted by God, as their chief magistrate, would render them famous among other nations, in regard of their wisdom, as well as their righteousness (Deut. 4:6, 7, 9). Also, this perfection doth evidence, that God doth actually govern the world. It would not be a commendable thing for a man to make a curious piece of clock-work, and take no care for the orderly motion of it. Would God display so much of his skill in framing the heaven and earth, and none in actual guidance of them to their particular and universal ends? Did he lay the foundation in order, and fit every stone in the building, make all things in weight and measure, to let them afterwards run at hap-hazard? Would he bring forth his power to view in the creation, and let a more glorious perfection lie idle, when it had so large a field to move in? Infinite wisdom is inconsistent with inactivity. All prudence doth illustrate itself in untying the hardest knots, and disposing the most difficult affairs to a happy and successful issue. All those various arts and inventions among men which lend their assisting hand to one another, and those various employments their several geniuses lead them to, whereby they support one another’s welfare, are beams and instincts of Divine wisdom in the government of the world. He that “made all things in wisdom” (Psalm 104:24), would not leave his works to act and move only according to their own folly, and idly behold them jumble together, and run counter to that end he designed them for; we must not fancy Divine wisdom to be destitute of activity.

3. Here we may see a ground of God’s patience. The most impotent persons are the most impatient, when unforeseen emergencies arise; or at events expected by them, when their feeble prudence was not a sufficient match to contest with them, or prevent them, But the wiser any man is, the more he bears with those things which seem to cross his intentions, because he knows he grasps the whole affair, and is sure of attaining the end he proposeth to himself; yet, as a finite wisdom can have but a finite patience, so an infinite wisdom possesses an infinite patience. The wise God intends to bring glory to himself, and good to some of his creatures, out of the greatest evils that can happen in the world, he beholds no exorbitant afflictions and monstrous actions, but what he can dispose to a good and glorious end, even to “work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28); and, therefore, doth not presently fall foul upon the actors, till he hath wrought out that temporary glory to himself, and good to his people which he designs. The times of ignorance God winked at, till he had brought his Son into the world, and manifested his wisdom in redemption, and when this was done he presseth men to a “speedy repentance” (Acts 17:30); that, as he forbore punishing their crimes, in order to the displaying his wisdom in the designed redemption; so when he had effected it, they must forbear any longer abusing his patience.

4. Hence appears the immutability of God in his decrees. He is not destitute of a power and strength to change his own purposes, but his infinite perfection of wisdom is a bar to his laying aside his eternal resolves and forming new ones (Isa. 46:10); he resolves the end from the beginning, and his counsel stands; stands immovable, because it is his counsel. It is an impotent counsel, that is subject to a daily thwarting itself. Inconstant persons are accounted, by men, destitute of a due measure of prudence. If God change his mind it is either for the better or the worse; if for the better, he was not wise in his former purpose; if for the worse, he is not wise in his present resolve. No alteration can be without a reflection of weakness upon the former or present determination. God must either cease to be as wise as he was before, or begin to be wiser than he was before the change, which to think or imagine is to deny a Deity. If any man change his resolution, he is apprehensive of a flaw in his former purpose, and finds an inconvenience in it, which moves him to such a change, which must be either for want of foresight in himself, or want of a due consideration of the object of his counsel, neither of which can be imagined of God without a denial of the Deity. No, there are no blots and blemishes in his purposes and promises. Repentance, indeed, is an act of wisdom in the creature, but it presupposeth folly in his former actions, which is inconsistent with infinite perfection. Men are often too rash in promising; and, therefore, what they promise in haste, they perform at leisure, or not at all: they consider not before they vow, and make after-inquiries, whether they had best stand to it. The only wise God needs not any after-game: as he is sovereignly wise, he sees no cause of reversing anything, and wants not expedients for his own purpose; and as he is infinitely powerful, he hath no superior to hinder him from executing his will, and making his people enjoy the

effects of his wisdom. If he had a recollection of thoughts, as man hath, and saw a necessity to mend them, he were not infinitely wise in his first decrees: as in creation he looked back upon the several pieces of that goodly frame he had erected, and saw them so exact that he did not take up his pencil again to mend any particle of the first draught, so his promises are made with such infinite wisdom and judgment, that what he writes is irreversible and forever, as the decrees of the Medes and Persians. All the words of God are eternal because they are the births of righteousness and judgment (Hos. 2:19); "I will betroth thee to me forever, in righteousness and judgment." He is not of a wavering and flitting discretion: if he threatens, he wisely considers what he threatens; if he promises, he wisely considers what he promises; and therefore is immutable in both.

5. Hence it follows that God is a fit object for our trust and confidence: for God being infinitely wise, when he promises anything, he sees everything which may hinder, and everything which may promote the execution of it, so that he cannot discover anything afterwards that may move him to take up after-thoughts: he hath more wisdom than to promise anything hand over head, or anything which he knows he cannot accomplish. Though God, as true, be the object of our trust, yet God, as wise, is the foundation of our trust. We trust him in his promise; the promise was made by mercy, and it is performed by truth; but wisdom conducts all means to the accomplishment of it. There are many men, whose honesty we can confide in, but whose discretion we are diffident of: but there is no defect, either of the one or the other, which may scare us from depending upon God in our concerns. The words of man's wisdom the apostle entitles "enticing" (1 Cor. 2:4), in opposition to the words of God's wisdom, which are firm, stable, and undeniable demonstrations. As the power of God is an encouragement of trust, because he is able to effect, so the wisdom of God comes into the rank of those attributes which support our faith. To put a confidence in him, we must be persuaded, not only that he is ignorant of nothing in the world, but that he is wise to manage the whole course of nature, and dispose of all his creatures, for the bringing his purposes and his promises to their designed perfection.

6. Hence appears the necessity of a public review of the management of the world, and of a day of judgment. As a day of judgment may be inferred from many attributes of God, as his sovereignty, justice, omniscience, &c., so, among the rest, from this of wisdom. How much of this perfection will lie unveiled and obscure, if the sins of men be not brought to view, whereby the ordering the unrighteous actions of men, by his directing and over-ruling hand of providence, in subserviency to his own purposes and his people's good, may appear in all its glory! Without such a public review, this part of wisdom will not be clearly visible; how those actions, which had a vile foundation in the hearts and designs of men, and were formed there to gratify some base lust, ambition, and covetousness, &c. were, by a secret wisdom presiding over them, conducted to amazing ends. It is a part of Divine wisdom to right itself, and convince men of the reasonableness of its laws, and the unreasonableness of their contradictions to it. The execution of the sentence is an act of justice, but the conviction of the reasonableness of the sentence is an act of wisdom, clearing up the righteousness of the proceeding; and this precedes, and the other follows (Jude 15); "To convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds." that wisdom which contrived satisfaction, as well as that justice which required it, is concerned in righting the law which was enacted by it. The wisdom of a sovereign Lawgiver is engaged not to see his law vilified and trampled on, and exposed to the lusts and affronts of men, without being concerned in vindicating the honor of it. It would appear a folly to enact and publish it, if there were not a resolution to right and execute it. The wisdom of God can no more associate iniquity and happiness together, than the justice of God can separate iniquity from punishment. It would be defective, if it did always tamely bear the insolences of offenders, without a time of remark of their crimes, and a justification of the precept, rebelliously spurned at. He would be unwise, if he were unjust; unrighteousness hath no better a title in Scripture than that of folly. It is no part of Wisdom to give birth to those laws which he will always behold ineffectual, and neither vindicate his law by a due execution of the penalty, nor right his own authority, contemned in the violation of his law, by a just revenge: besides, what wisdom would it be for the Sovereign Judge to lodge such a spokesman for himself as conscience in the soul of man, if it should be always found speaking, and at length be found false in all that it speaks? There is, therefore, an apparent prospect of the day of account, from the consideration of this perfection of the Divine nature.

7. Hence we have a ground for a mighty reverence and veneration of the Divine Majesty. Who can contemplate the sparklings of this perfection in the variety of the works of his hands, and the exact government of all his creatures, without a raised admiration of the excellency of his Being, and a falling flat before him, in a posture of reverence to so great a Being? Can we behold so great a mass of matter, digested into several forms, so exact a harmony and temperament in all the creatures, the proportions of numbers and measures, and one creature answering the ends and designs of another, the distinct beauties of all, the perpetual motion of all things without checking one another; the variety of the nature of things, and all acting according to their nature with an admirable agreement, and all together, like different strings upon an instrument, emitting divers sounds, but all reduced to order in one delightful lesson;—I say, can we behold all this without admiring and adoring the Divine wisdom, which appears in all? And from the consideration of this, let us pass to the consideration of his wisdom in redemption, in reconciling divided interests, untying hard knots, drawing one contrary out of another; and we must needs acknowledge that the wisdom of all the men on earth, and angels in heaven, is worse than nothing and vanity in comparison of this vast Ocean. And as we have a greater esteem for those that invent some excellent artificial engines, what reverence ought we to have for him that hath stamped an unimitable wisdom upon all his works! Nature orders us to give honor to our superiors in knowledge, and confide in their counsels; but none ought to be revered as much as God, since none equals him in wisdom.

8. If God be infinitely wise, it shows us the necessity of our address to him, and invocation of his Name. We are subject to mistakes, and often overseen; we are not able rightly to counsel ourselves. In some cases, all creatures are too short-sighted to apprehend them, and too ignorant to give advice proper for them, and to contrive remedies for their ease; but with the Lord there is counsel (Jer. 32:19), "He is great in counsel, and mighty in working;" great in counsel to advise us, mighty in working to assist us. We know not how to effect a design, or prevent an expected evil. We have an infinite Wisdom to go to, that is every way skilful to manage any business we desire, to avert any evil we fear, to accomplish anything we commit into his hands. When we know not what to resolve, he hath a counsel to "guide us" (Psalm 73:24). He is not more powerful to effect what is needful, than wise to direct what is fitting. All men stand in need of the help of God, as one man stands in need of the assistance of other men, and will not do anything without advice; and he that takes advice, deserves the title of a wise man, as well as he that gives advice. But no man needs so much the advice of another man, as all men need the counsel and assistance of God: neither is any man's wit and wisdom so far inferior to the prudence and ability of an angel, as the wisdom of the wisest man and the most sharp-sighted angel, is inferior to the infinite wisdom of God. We see, therefore, that it is best for us to go to the fountain, and not content ourselves with the streams; to beg advice from a wisdom that is infinite and infallible, rather than from that which is finite and fallible.

Use 2. If wisdom be the perfection of the Divine Majesty, how prodigious is the contempt of it in the world? In general, all sin strikes

at this attribute, and is in one part or other a degrading of it: the first sin directed its venom against this. As the devils endeavored to equal their Creator in power, so man endeavored to equal him in wisdom: both indeed scorned to be ruled by his order; but man evidently exalted himself against the wisdom of God, and aspired to be a sharer with him in his infinite knowledge; would not let him be the only wise God, but cherished an ambition to be his partner. Just as if a beam were able to imagine it might be as right as the sun; or a spark fancy it could be as full fraught with heat as the whole element of fire. Man would not submit to the infinite wisdom of God in the prohibition of one single fruit in the garden, when by the right of his sovereign authority, he might have granted him only the use of one. All presumptuous sins are of this nature; they are, therefore, called reproaches of God (Num. 15:30), "the soul that doth ought presumptuously, reproacheth the Lord." All reproaches are either for natural, moral, or intellectual defects. All reproaches of God must imply either a weakness or unrighteousness in God: if unrighteousness, his holiness is denied; if weakness, his wisdom is blemished. In general, all sin strikes at this perfection two ways.

1. As it defaceth the wise workmanship of God. Every sin is a deforming and blemishing our own souls, which, as they are the prime creatures in the lower world, so they have greater characters of Divine wisdom in the fabric of them: but this image of God is ruined and broken by sin. Though the spoiling of it be a scorn of his holiness, it is also an affront to his wisdom; for though his power was the cause of the production of so fair a piece, yet his wisdom was the guide of his power, and his holiness the pattern whereby he wrought it. His power effected it, and his holiness was exemplified in it; but his wisdom contrived it. If a man had a curious clock or watch, which had cost him many years pains and the strength of his skill to frame it; for another, after he had seen and considered it, to trample upon it, and crush it in pieces, would argue a contempt of the artificer's skill. God hath shown infinite art in the creation of man; but sin unbeautifies man, and ravisheth his excellency. It cuts and slasheth the image of God stamped by divine wisdom, as though it were an object only of scorn and contempt. The sinner in every sin acts, as if he intended to put himself in a better posture, and in a fairer dress, than the wisdom of God hath put him in by creation.

2. In the slighting his laws. The laws of God are highly rational; they are drawn from the depths of the Divine understanding, wherein there is no unclearness, and no defect. As his understanding apprehends all things in their true reason, so his will enjoins all things for worthy and wise ends. His laws are contrived by his wisdom for the happiness of man, whose happiness, and the methods to it, he understands better than men or angels can do. His laws being the orders of the wisest understanding, every breach of his law is a flying in the face of his wisdom. All human laws, though they are enforced by sovereign authority, yet they are, or ought to be, in the composing of them, founded upon reason, and should be particular applications of the law of nature to this or that particular emergency. The laws of God, then, who is *summa ratio*, are the birth of the truest reason; though the reason of every one of them may not be so clear to us. Every law, though it consists in an act of the will, yet doth presuppose an act of the understanding. The act of the Divine understanding in framing the law, must be supposed to precede the act of his will in commanding the observance of that law. So every sin against the law, is not only against the will of God commanding, but the reason of God contriving, and a cleaving to our own reason, rather than the understanding or mind of God: as if God had mistaken in making his law, and we had more understanding to frame a better, and more conducing to our happiness: as if God were not wise enough to govern us, and prescribe what we should do, and what we should avoid; as if he designed not our welfare but our misfortune. Whereas, the precepts of God are not tyrannical edicts, or acts of mere will, but the fruits of counsel; and, therefore, every breach of them is a real declamation against his discretion and judgment, and preferring our own imaginations, or the suggestions of the devil, as our rule, before the results of Divine counsel.

While we acknowledge him wise in our opinion, we speak him foolish by our practice; when, instead of being guided by him, we will guide ourselves. No man will question, but it is a controlling Divine wisdom, to make alterations in his precepts; dogmatically, either to add some of their own, or expunge any of his: and is it not a crime of the like reflection to alter them practically? When we will observe one part of the law, and not another part; but pick and choose where we please ourselves, as our humors and carnal interest prompt us; it is to charge that part of the law with folly, which we refuse to conform unto. The more cunning any man is in sin, the more his sin is against Divine wisdom, as if he thought to outwit God. He that receives the promises of God, and the "testimony of Christ, sets to his seal, that God is true" (John 3:33). By the like strength of argument, it will undeniably follow, that he that refuseth obedience to his precepts, sets to his seal that God is foolish. Were they not rational, God would not enjoin them; and if they are rational, we are enemies to infinite wisdom, by not complying with them. If infinite prudence hath made the law, why is not every part of it observed; if it were not made with the best wisdom, why is any part of it observed? If the defacing of his image be any sin, as being a defaming his wisdom in creation, the breaking his law is no less a sin, as being a disgracing his wisdom in his administration. 'Tis upon this account, likely, that the Scripture so often counts sinners fools, since it is certainly inexcusable folly to contradict undeniable and infallible Wisdom; yet this is done in the least sin: and as he that breaks one tittle of the law, is deservedly accounted guilty of the breach of the whole (James 2:10), so he that despiseth the least stamp of wisdom in the minutest part of the law, is deservedly counted as a contemner of it, in the frame of the whole statute-book. But, in particular, the wisdom of God is affronted and invaded.

1. By introducing new rules and modes of worship, different from Divine institutions. Is not this a manifest reflection on this perfection of God, as though he had not been wise enough to provide for his own honor, and model his own service, but stood in need of our directions, and the *caprichios* of our brains? Some have observed, that it is a greater sin in worship to do that we should not, than to omit what we should perform. The one seems to be out of weakness, because of the high exactness of the law; and the other out of impudence, accusing the wisdom of God of imperfection, and controlling it in its institutions. At best, it seems to be an imputation of human bashfulness to the Supreme Sovereign; as if he had been ashamed to prescribe all that was necessary to his own honor, but had left something to the ingenuity and gratitude of men. Man has, ever since the foolish conceit of his old ancestor Adam, presumed he could be as wise as God; and if he who was created upright entertained such conceits, much more doth man now, under a mass of corruption, so capable to foment them. This hath been the continual practice of men; not so much to reject what once they had received as Divine, but add something of their own inventions to it. The heathens renounced not the sacrificing of beasts for the expiation of their offences (which the old world had received by tradition from Adam, and the new world, after the deluge, from Noah). But they had blended that tradition with rites of their own, and offered creatures unclean in themselves, and not fit to be offered to an infinitely pure Being; for the distinction of clean and unclean was as ancient as Noah (Gen. 8:20), yea, before (Gen. 7:2). So the Jews did not discard what they had received from God, as circumcision, the Passover, and sacrifices; but they would mix a heap of heathenish rites with the ceremonies of Divine ordination, and practise things which he had not commanded, as well as things which he had enjoined them. And, therefore, it is observable, that when God taxeth them with sin, he doth not say, they brought in

those things which he had forbidden into his worship; but those things which he had not commanded, and had given no order for, to intimate, that they were not to move a step without his rule (Jer. 7:31): "They have built the high palaces of Tophet, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart;" and (Lev. 10:1); Nadab's and Abihu's strange fire was not commanded; so charging them with impudence and rashness in adding something of their own, after he had revealed to them the manner of his service, as if they were as wise as God. So loth is man to acknowledge the supremacy of Divine understanding, and be sensible of his own ignorance. So after the divulging of the gospel, the corruptors of religion did not fling off, but preserved the institutions of God, but painted and patched them up with pagan ceremonies; imposed their own dreams with as much force as the revelations of God. Thus hath the papacy turned the simplicity of the gospel into pagan pomp, and religion into politics; and revived the ceremonial law, and raked some limbs of it out of the grave, after the wisdom of God had rung her knell, and honorably interred her; and sheltered the heathenish superstitions in christian temples, after the power of the gospel had chased the devils, with all their trumpery, from their ancient habitations. Whence should this proceed, but from a partial atheism, and a mean deceit of the Divine wisdom? As though God had not understanding enough to prescribe the form of his own worship; and not wisdom enough to support it, without the crutches of human prudence. Human prudence is too low to parallel Divine wisdom; it is an incompetent judge of what is fit for an infinite Majesty. It is sufficiently seen in the ridiculous and senseless rights among the heathens; and the cruel and devilish ones fetched from them by the Jews. What work will human wisdom make with divine worship, when it will presume to be the director of it, as a mate with the wisdom of God! Whence will it take its measures, but from sense, humor and fancy? as though what is grateful and comely to a depraved reason, were as beautiful to an unspotted and Infinite Mind. Do not such tell the world, that they were of God's cabinet council, since they will take upon them to judge, as well as God, what is well-pleasing to him?

Where will it have the humility to stop, if it hath the presumption to add any one thing to revealed modes of worship? How did God tax the Israelites with making idols "according to their own understanding" (Hos. 13:2)! imagining their own understandings to be of a finer make, and a perfecter mould than their Creator's; and that they had fetched more light from the chaos of their own brains, than God had from eternity in his own nature. How slight will the excuse be, God hath not forbidden this, or that, when God shall silence men with the question, Where, or when did I command this, or that? There was no addition to be made under the law to the meanest instrument God had appointed in his service. The sacred perfume was not to have one ingredient more put into it, than what God had prescribed in the composition; nor was any man upon pain of death to imitate it; nor would God endure that sacrifices should be consumed with any other fire than that which came down from heaven. So tender is God of any invasions of his wisdom and authority. In all things of this nature, whatsoever voluntary humility and respect to God they may be disguised with, there is a swelling of the fleshly mind against infinite understanding, which the apostle nauseates (Col. 2:18). Such mixtures have not been blessed by God: as God never prospered the mixtures of several kinds of creatures, to form and multiply a new species, as being a dissatisfaction with his wisdom as Creator; so he doth not prosper mixtures in worship, as being a conspiracy against his wisdom as a Lawgiver. The destruction of the Jews was judged by some of their doctors to be, for preferring human traditions before the written word; which they ground on (Isaiah 29:33): "Their fear for me was taught by the precepts of men." The injunctions of men were the rule of their worship, and not the prescripts of my law. To conclude, such as make alterations in religion, different from the first institution, are intolerable busy bodies, that will not let God alone with his own affairs. Vain man would be wiser than his Maker, and be dabbling in that which is His sole prerogative.

2. In neglecting means instituted by God. When men have risings of heart against God's ordinances, "they reject the counsel of the Lord against themselves," or, in themselves (Luke 7:30), *ἠθέτησαν*. They disannulled the wisdom of God, the spring of his ordinances. All neglects are disregards of Divine prescriptions, as impertinent and unavailable to that end for which they were appointed, as not being suited to the common dictates of reason; sometimes out of a voluntary humility, such as Peter's was, when he denied Christ's condescension to wash his feet (John 13:8), and thereby judged of the comeliness of his Master's intention and action. Such as continually neglect the great institution of the Lord's supper, out of a sense of unworthiness, are in the same rank with Peter, and do, as well as he, fall under the blame and reproof of Christ. Men would be saved, and use the means, but either means of their own appointment, or not at all the means of God's ordering. They would have God's wisdom and will condescend to theirs, and not theirs conformed to God's; as if our blind judgments were fittest to make the election of the paths to happiness.

Like Naaman, who, when he was ordered by the prophet, for the cure of his leprosy, to "wash seven times in Jordan," would be the prophet's director, and have him touch him with his hand; as if a patient, sick of a desperate disease, should prescribe to his skillful physician what remedies he should order for his cure, and make his own infirm reason, or his gust and palate, the rule, rather than the physician's skill.

Men's inquiries are, "Who will show us any good?" They rather fasten upon any means than that which God hath ordained. We invert the order Divine wisdom hath established, when we would have God save us in our own way, not in his. It is the same thing as if we would have God nourish us without bread, and cure our disease without medicines, and increase our wealth without our industry, and cherish our souls without his word and ordinances. It is to demand of him an alteration of his methods, and a separation of that which he hath by his eternal judgment joined together. Therefore for a man to pray to God to save him when he will not use the means he hath appointed for salvation, when he slights the word, which is the instrument of salvation, is a contempt of the wisdom of Divine institutions. Also in omissions of prayer. When we consult not with God upon emergent occasions, we trust more to our own wisdom than God's, and imply that we stand not in need of his conduct, but have ability to direct ourselves, and accomplish our ends without his guidance. Not seeking God is, by the prophet, taxed to be a reflection upon this perfection of God (Isa. 31:1, 2): "They look not to the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord" &c. And the like charge he brings against them (Hos. 8:9): "They are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself, not consulting God."

3. In censuring God's revelations and actions, if they be not according to our schemes: when we will not submit to his plain will without penetrating into the unrevealed reason of it, nor adore his counsels without controlling them, as if we could correct both law and gospel, and frame a better method of redemption than that of God's contriving. Thus men slighted the wisdom of God in the gospel, because it did not agree with that philosophical wisdom and reason they had sucked in by education from their masters (1 Cor. 1:21, 22), contrary to their practice in their superstitious worship, where the oracles they thought divine were entertained with reverence, not with dispute, and though ambiguous, were not counted ridiculous by the worshipper. How foolish is man in this wherein he would be accounted wise! Adam, in innocence, was unfit to control the doctrine of God when the eye of his reason was clear; and much more are we, since the depravation of our natures. The revelations of God tower above reason in its purity, much more above reason in its mud and earthiness. The rays of Divine wisdom are too bright for our human understandings, much more

for our sinful understandings. It is base to set up reason, a finite principle, against an infinite wisdom; much baser to set up a depraved and purblind reason against an all-seeing and holy wisdom. If we would have a reason for all that God speaks, and all that God acts, our wisdom must become infinite as his, or his wisdom become finite as ours. All the censures of God's revelations arise from some prejudicate opinions, or traditional maxims, that have enthroned themselves in our minds, which are made the standard whereby to judge the things of God, and receive or reject them as they agree with, or dissent from, those principles (Col. 2:8). Hence it was that the philosophers, in the primitive times, were the greatest enemies to the gospel: and the contempt of Divine wisdom, in making reason the supreme judge of Divine revelation, was the fruitful mother of the heresies in all ages springing up in the church, and especially of that Socinianism, that daily insinuates itself into the minds of men.

This is a wrong to the wisdom of God. He that censures the words or actions of another, implies that he is, in his censure, wiser than the person censured by him. It is as insupportable to determine the truth of God's plain dictates by our reason, as it is to measure the suitableness or unsuitableness of his actions by the humor of our will. We may sooner think to span the sun, or grasp a star, or see a gnat swallow a Leviathan, than fully understand the debates of eternity. To this we may refer too curious inquiries into Divine methods, and "intruding into those things which are not revealed" (Col. 2:18). It is to affect a wisdom equal with God, and an ambition to be of his cabinet council. We are not content to be creatures, that is, to be every way below God; below him in wisdom, as well as power.

4. In prescribing God's method of acting. When we pray for a thing without a due submission to God's will; as if we were his counsellors, yea his tutors, and not his subjects, and God were bound to follow our humors, and be swayed according to the judgment of our ignorance; when we would have such a mercy which God thinks not fit to give, or have it in this method, which God designs to convey through another channel. Thus we would have the only wise God take his measures from our passions; such a controlling of God was Jonah's anger about a gourd (chap. 4:1): "It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." We would direct Him how to dispose of us; as though he, that had infinite wisdom to contrive and rear the excellent fabric of the world, had not wisdom enough, without our discretions, to place us in a sphere proper for his own ends, and the use he intends us in the universe. All the speeches of men (would I had been in such an office, had such a charge; would I had such a mercy, in such a method, or by such instruments,) are entrenchments upon God's wise disposal of affairs. This imposing upon God is a hellish disposition, and in hell we find it. The rich man in hell, that pretends some charity for his brethren on earth, would direct God a way to prevent their ruin, by sending one from the dead to school them, as a more effectual means than "Moses and the prophets" (Luke 16:29, 30). It is a temper also to be found on earth; what else was the language of Saul's saving the Amalekites' cattle against the plain command of God (1 Sam. 15:15)? As if God in his fury had overshot himself and overlooked his altar, in depriving it of so great a booty for its service; as if it were an unwise thing in God, to lose the prey of so many stately cattle, that might make the altar smoke with their entrails, and serve to expiate the sins of the people; and therefore he would rectify that which he thought to be an oversight in God, and so magnifies his own prudence and discretion above the Divine. We will not let God act as he thinks fit, but will be directing him, and "teaching him knowledge" (Job 21:22.) As if God were a statue, an idol, that had eyes and saw not, hands, but acted not; and could be turned as an image may be, to what quarter of the heaven we please ourselves. The wisdom of God is unbiassed; he orders nothing but what is fittest for his end, and we would have our shallow brains the bias of God's acting. And will not God resent such an indignity, as a reflection upon his wisdom as well as authority, when we intimate that we have better heads than he, and that he comes short of us in understanding?

5. In murmuring and impatience. One demands a reason, why he hath this or that cross? Why he hath been deprived of such a comfort, lost such a venture, languisheth under such a sickness, is tormented with such pains, oppressed by tyrannical neighbors, is unsuccessful in such designs? In these, and such like, the wisdom of God is questioned and defamed. All impatience is a suspicion, if not a condemnation of the prudence of God's methods, and would make human feebleness and folly the rule of God's dealing with his creatures. This is a presuming to instruct God, and a reproving him for unreasonableness in his proceedings, when his dealings with us do not exactly answer our fancies and wishes; as if God, who made the world in wisdom, wanted skill for the management of his creatures in it (Job 40:2): "Shall he that contends with the Almighty, instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it." We that are not wise enough to know ourselves, and what is needful for us; presume to have wit enough to guide God in his dealing with us. The wisdom of God rendered Job more useful to the world by his afflictions, in making him a pattern of patience, than if he had continued him in a confluence of all worldly comforts, wherein he had been beneficial only in communicating his morsels to his poor neighbors. All murmuring is a fastening error upon unerring Wisdom.

6. In pride and haughtiness of spirit. No proud man, but sets his heart "as the heart of God" (Ezek. 27:2, 3). The wisdom of God hath given to men divers offices, set them its divers places; some have more honorable charges, some meaner. Not to give that respect their offices and places call for, is to quarrel with the wisdom of God, and overturn the rank and order wherein he hath placed things. It is unfit we should affront God in the disposal of his creatures, and intimate to him by our carriage, that he had done more wisely in placing another, and that he hath done foolishly in placing this or that man in such a charge. Sometimes men are unworthy the place they fill; they may be set there in judgment to themselves and others: but the wisdom of God in his management of things, is to be honored and regarded. It is an infringing the wisdom of God, when we have a vain opinion of ourselves, and are blind to others. When we think ourselves monarchs, and treat others as worms or flies in comparison of us. He who would reduce all things to his own honor, perverts the order of the world, and would constitute another order than what the wisdom of God hath established; and move them to an end contrary to the intention of God, and charges God with want of discretion and skill.

7. Distrust of God's promise is an impeachment of his wisdom.

A secret reviling of it, as if he had not taken due consideration before he past his word; or a suspicion of his power, as if he could not accomplish his word. We trust the physician's skill with our bodies, and the lawyer's counsel with our estates; but are loath to rely upon God for the concerns of our lives. If he be wise to dispose of us, why do we distrust him? If we distrust him; why do we embrace an opinion of wisdom? Unbelief also is a contradiction to the wisdom of God in the gospel, &c., but that I have already handled in a discourse of the nature of unbelief.

Use 3. Of comfort. God hath an infinite wisdom, to conduct us in our affairs, rectify us in our mistakes, and assist us in our straits. It is an inestimable privilege to have a God in covenant with us; so wise, to communicate all good, to prevent all evil; who hath infinite ways to bring to pass his gracious intentions towards us. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Rom.

11:33)! His judgments or decrees are incomprehensibly wise, and the ways of effecting them are as wise as his resolves effected by them. We can as little search into his methods of acting, as we can into his wisdom of resolving; both his judgments and ways are unsearchable.

1. Comfort in all straits and afflictions. There is a wisdom in inflicting them, and a wisdom in removing them. He is wise to suit his medicines to the humor of our disease, though he doth not to the humor of our wills: he cannot mistake the nature of our distemper, or the virtue of his own physic. Like a skilful physician, he sometimes prescribes bitter potions, and sometimes cheering cordials, according to the strength of the malady, and necessity of the patient, to reduce him to health. As nothing comes from him, but what is for our good, so nothing is acted by him in a rash and temerarious way. His wisdom is as infinite as his goodness; and as exact in managing, as his goodness is plentiful in streaming out to us. He understands our griefs, weighs our necessities, and no remedies are beyond the reach of his contrivance. When our feeble wits are bewildered in a maze, and at the end of their line for a rescue, the remedies unknown to us are not unknown to God. When we know not how to prevent a danger, the wise God hath a thousand blocks to lay in the way; when we know not how to free ourselves from an oppressive evil, he hath a thousand ways of relief. He knows how to time our crosses, and his own blessings. The heart of a wise God, as well as the heart of a wise man, discerns both time and judgment (Eccles. 8:5). There is as much judgment in sending them, as judgment in removing them. How comfortable is it to think, that our distresses, as well as our deliverances, are the fruits of infinite wisdom! Nothing is done by him too soon or too slow; but in the true point of time, with all its due circumstances, most conveniently for his glory and our good. How wise is God to bring the glory of our salvation out of the depths of a seeming ruin, and make the evils of affliction subservient to the good of the afflicted.

2. In temptations, his wisdom is no less employed in permitting them, than in bringing them to a good issue. His wisdom in leading our Saviour to be tempted of the devil, was to fit him for our succor; and his wisdom in suffering us to be tempted, is to fit us for his own service, and our salvation. He makes a thorn in the flesh to be an occasion of a refreshing grace to the spirit, and brings forth cordial grapes from those pricking brambles, and magnifies his grace by his wisdom, from the deepest subtilties of hell. Let Satan's intentions be what they will, he can be for him at every turn, to outwit him in his stratagems, to baffle him in his enterprises; to make him instrumental for our good, where he designs nothing but our hurt. The Lord hath his methods of deliverance from him (2 Pet. 2:9). "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

3. In denials, or delays of answers of prayer. He is gracious to hear; but he is wise to answer in an acceptable time, and succor us in a day proper for our salvation (2 Cor. 6:2). We have partial affections to ourselves, ignorance is natural to us (Rom. 8:26). We ask we know not what, because we ask out of ignorance. God grants what he knows, what is fit for him to do, and fit for us to receive; and the exact season wherein it is fittest for him to bestow a mercy. As God would have us bring forth our fruit in season, so he will send forth his mercies in season. He is wise to suit his remedy to our condition, to time it so, as that we shall have an evident prospect of his wisdom in it; that more of Divine skill, and less of human, may appear in the issue. He is ready at our call; but he will not answer, till he see the season fit to reach out his hand. He is wise to prove our faith, to humble us under the sense of our own unworthiness, to wet our affections, to set a better estimate on the blessings prayed for, and that he may double the blessing, as we do our devotion: but when his wisdom sees us fit to receive his goodness, he grants what we stand in need of. He is wise to choose the fittest time, and faithful to give the best covenant mercy.

4. In all evils threatened to the church by her enemies. He hath knowledge to foresee them, and wisdom to disappoint them (Job 5:13); "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong." The church hath the wisdom of God, to enter the lists with the policy of hell.

He defeated the serpent in the first net he laid, and brought a glorious salvation out of hell's rubbish, and is yet as skilful to disappoint the after-game of the surpentine brood. The policy of hell, and the subtilty of the world, are no better than folly with God (1 Cor. 3:19). All creatures are fools, as creatures, in comparison with the Creator. The angels he chargeth with folly, much more us sinners. Depraved understandings are not fit mates for a pure and unblemished. mind. Pharaoh, with his wisdom, finds a grave in the sea; and Ahitophel's plots are finished in his own murder. He breaks the enemies by his power, and orders them by his skill to be a feast to his people (Psalm 74:14); "Thou breakest the head of the leviathan, and gavest him to be meat to the people in the wilderness." The spoils of the Egyptians' carcasses, cast upon the shore, served the Israelites' necessities (or were as meat to them); as being a deliverance the church might. feed upon in all ages, in a wilderness condition, to maintain their faith, the vital principle of the soul. There is a wisdom superior to the subtilties of men, which laughs at their follies, and "hath them in derision" (Psalm 2:4). "There is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord" (Prov. 21:30). You never question the wisdom of an artist to use his file, when he takes it into his hand. Wicked instruments are God's axes and files; let him alone, he hath skill enough to manage them: God hath too much affection to destroy his people, and wisdom enough to beautify them by the worst tools he uses. He can make all things conspire to a perfect harmony for his own ends, and his people's good, when they see no way to escape a danger feared, or attain a blessing wanted.

Use 4. For Exhortation. I. Meditate on the wisdom of God in creation and government. How little do we think of God when we behold his works! Our sense dwells upon the surface of plants and animals, beholds the variety of their colors, and the progress in their motion; our reason studies the qualities of them; our spirits seldom take a flight to the Divine wisdom which framed them. Our senses engross our minds from God, that we scarce have a thought free to bestow upon the Maker of them, but only on the by. The constancy of seeing things that are common stifles our admiration of God, due upon the sight of them. How seldom do we raise our souls as far as heaven, in our views of the order of the world, the revolutions of the seasons, the nature of the creatures that are common among us, and the mutual assistance they give to each other! Since God hath manifested himself in them, to neglect the consideration of them is to neglect the manifestation of God, and the way whereby he hath transmitted something of his perfections to our understanding. It renders men inexcusably guilty of not glorifying of God (Rom. 1:19, 20). We can never neglect the meditation of the creatures, without a blemish cast upon the Creator's wisdom. As every river can conduct us to the sea, so every creature points us to an ocean of infinite wisdom. Not the minutest of them, but rich tracts of this may be observed in them, and a due sense of God result from them. They are exposed to our view, that something of God may be lodged in our minds; that, as our bodies extract their quintessence for our nourishment, so our minds may extract a quintessence for the Maker's praise. Though God is principally to be praised, in and for Christ, yet, as grace doth not rase out the law of nature, so the operations of grace put not the dictates of nature to silence, nor suspend the homage due to God upon our inspection of his works. God hath given full testimonies of this perfection in the heavenly bodies, dispersing their light, and distributing their influences to every part of the world; in framing men into societies, giving them various dispositions for the preservation of governments; making some wise for counsel, others

martial for action; changing old empires, and raising new. Which way soever we cast our eyes, we shall find frequent occasions to cry out, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom. 11:33)! To this purpose, we must not only look upon the bulk and outside of his works, but consider from what principles they were raised, in what order disposed, and the exact symmetry and proportion of their parts. When a man comes into a city or temple, and only considers the surface of the buildings, they will amaze his sense, but not better his understanding, unless he considers the methods of the work, and the art whereby it was erected.

(1.) This was an end for which they were created. God did not make the world for man's use only, but chiefly for his own glory; for man's use to enjoy his creatures, and for his own glory to be acknowledged in his creatures, that we may consider his art in framing them, and his skill in disposing them, and not only gaze upon the glass without considering the image it represents, and acquainting ourselves whose image it is. The creatures were not made for themselves, but for the service of the Creator, and the service of man. Man was not made for himself, but for the service of the Lord that created him. He is to consider the beauty of the creation, that he may thereby glorify the Creator. He knows in art their excellency; the creatures themselves, do not. If, therefore, man be idle and unobservant of them, he deprives God of the glory of his wisdom, which he should have by his creatures. The inferior creatures themselves cannot observe it. If man regard it not, what becomes of it? His glory can only be handed to him by man. The other creatures cannot be active instruments of his glory, because they know not themselves, and therefore cannot render him an active praise. Man is, therefore, bound to praise God for himself, and for all his creatures, because he only knows himself, and the perfections of the creatures, and the Author both of himself and them. God created such variety, to make a report of himself to us; we are to receive the report, and to reflect it back to him. To what purpose did he make so many things, not necessary, for the support and pleasure of our lives, but that we should behold him in them, as well as in the other? We cannot behold the wisdom of God in his own essence, and eternal ideas, but by the reflection of it in the creatures: as we cannot steadily behold the sun with our eye, but either through a glass, or by reflection of the image of it in the water. God would have us meditate on his perfections; he therefore chose the same day wherein he reviewed his work and rested from it, to be celebrated by man for the contemplation of him (Gen. 2:2, 3), that we should follow his example, and rejoice, as himself did, in the frequent reviews of his wisdom and goodness in them. In vain would the creatures afford matter for this study, if they were wholly neglected. God offers something to our consideration in every creature. Shall the beams of God shine round about us, and strike our eyes, and not affect our minds? Shall we be like ignorant children, that view the pictures, or point to the letters in a book, without any sense and meaning? How shall God have the homage due to him from his works, if man hath no care to observe them? The 148th Psalm is an exhortation to this. The view of them should often extract from us a wonder of the like nature of that of David's (Psalm 104:24): "O Lord, how wonderful are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all!" The world was not created to be forgotten, nor man created to be unobservant of it.

(2.) If we observe not the wisdom of God in the views of the creatures, we do no more than brutes. To look upon the works of God in the world, is no higher an act than mere animals perform. The glories of heaven, and beauties of the earth, are visible to the sense of beasts and birds. A brute beholds the motion of a man, as it may see the wheels of a clock, but understands not the inward springs of motion; the end for which we move, or the soul that acts us in our motion; much less that Invisible Power which presides over the creatures, and conducts their motion. If a man do no more than this, he goes not a step beyond a brutish nature, and may very well acknowledge himself with Asaph, a foolish and ignorant beast before God (Psalm 73:22). The world is viewed by beasts, but the Author of it to be contemplated by man. Since we are in a higher rank than beasts, we owe a greater debt than beasts; not only to enjoy the creatures, as they do, but behold God in the creatures, which they cannot do. The contemplation of the reason of God in his works, is a noble and suitable employment for a rational creature: we have not only sense to perceive them, but souls to mind them. The soul is not to be without its operation: where the operation of sense ends, the work of the soul ought to begin. We travel over them by our senses, as brutes; but we must pierce further by our understandings, as men, and perceive and praise Him that lies invisible in his visible manufactures. Our senses are given us as servants to the soul, and our souls bestowed upon us for the knowledge and praise of their and our common Creator.

(3.) This would be a means to increase our humility. We should then flag our wings, and vail our sails, and acknowledge our own wisdom to be as a drop to the ocean, and a shadow to the sun. We should have mean thoughts of the nothingness of our reason, when we consider the sublimity of the Divine wisdom.

Who can seriously consider the sparks of infinite skill in the creature, without falling down at the feet of the Divine Majesty, and acknowledge himself a dark and foolish creature (Psalm 8:4, 5)? When the Psalmist considered the heavens, the moon, and stars, and God's ordination and disposal of them, the use that results from it is, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" We should no more think to mate him in prudence, or set up the spark of our reason to vie with the sun. Our reason would more willingly submit to the revelation, when the characters of Divine wisdom are stamped upon it, when we find his wisdom in creation incomprehensible to us.

(4.) It would help us in our acknowledgments of God, for his goodness to us. When we behold the wisdom of God in creatures below us, and how ignorant they are of what they possess, it will cause us to reflect upon the deeper impressions of wisdom in the frame of our own bodies and souls, an excellency far superior to theirs; this would make us admire the magnificence of his wisdom and goodness, sound forth his praise for advancing us in dignity above other works of his hands, and stamping on us, by infinite art, a nobler image of himself. And by such a comparison of ourselves with the creatures below us, we should be induced to act excellently, according to the nature of our souls; not brutishly, according to the nature of the creatures God hath put under our feet.

(5.) By the contemplation of the creatures, we may receive some assistance in clearing our knowledge in the wisdom of redemption. Though they cannot of themselves inform us of it, yet since God hath revealed his redeeming grace, they can illustrate some particulars of it to us. Hence the Scripture makes use of the creatures, to set forth things of a higher orb to us: our Saviour is called a Sun, a Vine, and a Lion; the Spirit likened to a dove, fire, and water. The union of Christ and his church, is set forth by the marriage union of Adam and Eve. God hath placed in corporeal things the images of spiritual, and wrapped up in his creating wisdom the representations of his redeeming grace: whence some call the creatures, natural types of what was to be transacted in a new formation of the world, and allusions to what God intended in and by Christ.

(6.) The meditation of God's wisdom in the creatures is, in part, a beginning of heaven upon earth. No doubt but there will be a perfect opening of the model of Divine wisdom. Heaven is for clearing what is now obscure, and a full discovering of what seems at present intricate (Psalm 36:9.): In his light shall we see light: all the light in creation, government, and redemption. The wisdom of God in the

new heavens, and the new earth, would be to little purpose, if that also were not to be regarded by the inhabitants of them. As the saints are to be restored to the state of Adam, and higher; so they are to be restored to the employment of Adam, and higher: but his employment was, to behold God in the creatures. The world was so soon depraved, that God had but little joy in, and man but little knowledge of his works. And since the wisdom of God in creation is so little seen by our ignorance here, would not God lose much of the glory of it, if the glorified souls should lose the understanding of it above? When their darkness shall be expelled, and their advantages improved; when the eye that Adam lost shall be fully restored, and with a greater clearness; when the creature shall be restored to its true end, and reason to its true perfection (Rom. 8:21, 22); when the fountains of the depths of nature and government shall be opened, knowledge shall increase, and according to the increase of our knowledge, shall the admiration of Divine wisdom increase also. The wisdom of God in creation was not surely intended to lie wholly unobserved in the greatest part of it; but since there was so little time for the full observation of it, there will be a time wherein the wisdom of God shall enjoy a resurrection, and be fully contemplated by his understanding and glorified creature.

Exhort. 2. Study and admire the wisdom of God in redemption. This is the duty of all Christians. We are not called to understand the great depth of philosophy; we are not called to a skill in the intricacies of civil government, or understand all the methods of physic; but we are called to be Christians, that is, studiers of Divine evangelical wisdom. There are first principles to be learned; but not those principles to be rested in without a further progress (Heb. 6:1): "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection." Duties must be practised, but knowledge is not to be neglected. The study of Gospel mysteries, the harmony of Divine truths, the sparkling of Divine wisdom, in their mutual combination to the great ends of God's glory and man's salvation, is an incentive to duty, a spur to worship, and particularly to the greatest and highest part of worship, that part which shall remain in heaven; the admiration and praise of God, and delight in him. If we acquaint not ourselves with the impressions of the glory of Divine wisdom in it, we shall not much regard it as worthy our observance in regard of that duty. The gospel is a mystery; and, as a mystery, hath something great and magnificent in it worthy of our daily inspection; we shall find fresh springs of new wonders, which we shall be invited to adore with a religious astonishment. It will both raise and satisfy our longings. Who can come to the depths of "God manifested in the flesh?" How amazing is it, and unworthy of a slight thought, that the death of the Son of God should purchase the happy immortality of a sinful creature, and the glory of a rebel be wrought by the ignominy of so great a person! that our Mediator should have a nature whereby to covenant with his Father, and a nature whereby to be a Surety for the creature! How admirable is it, that the fallen creature should receive an advantage by the forfeiture of his happiness! How mysterious is it, that the Son of God should bow down to death upon a cross for the satisfaction of justice; and rise triumphantly out of the grave, as a declaration, that justice was contented and satisfied! that he should be exalted to heaven to intercede for us; and at last return into the world to receive us, and invest us with a glory forever with himself! Are these things worthy of a careless regard, or a blockish amazement? What understanding can pierce into the depths of the divine doctrine of the incarnation and birth of Christ; the indissoluble union of the two natures? What capacity is able to measure the miracles of that wisdom, found in the whole draught and scheme of the gospel? Doth it not merit, then, to be the object of our daily meditation? How comes it to pass, then, that we are so little curious to concern our thoughts in those wonders, that we scarce taste or sip of these delicacies? that we busy ourselves in trifles, and consider what we shall eat, and in what fashion we shall be dressed; please ourselves with the ingeniousness of a lace or feather; admire a moth-eaten manuscript, or some half-worn piece of antiquity, and think our time ill-spent in the contemplating and celebrating that wherein God hath busied himself, and eternity is designed for the perpetual expressions of? How inquisitive are the blessed angels! with what vigor do they renew their daily contemplations of it, and receive a fresh contentment from it; still learning, and still inquiring (1 Pet. 1:12)! Their eye is never off the mercy-seat; they strive to see the bottom of it, and employ all the understanding they have to conceive the wonders of it. Shall the angels be ravished with it and bend themselves down to study it, who have but little interest in it in comparison of us, for whom it was both contrived and dispensed;—and shall not our pains be greater for this hidden treasure? Is not that worthy the study of a rational creature, that is worthy the study of the angelical? There must indeed be pains; it is expressed by "digging" (Prov. 2:4). A lazy arm will not sink to the depth of a mine. The neglect of meditating on it is inexcusable, since it hath the title and character of the wisdom of God. The ancient prophets searched into it, when it was folded up in shadows, when they saw only the fringes of Wisdom's garment (1 Pet. 1:10); and shall not we, since the sun hath mounted up in our horizon, and sensibly scattered the light of the knowledge of this and the other perfections of God? As the Jewish sabbath was appointed to celebrate the perfections of God, discovered in creation, so is the Christian sabbath appointed to meditate on, and bless God, for the discovery of his perfections in redemption. Let us, therefore, receive it according to its worth: let it be our only rule to walk by. It is worthy to be valued above all other counsels; and we should never think of it without the doxology of the apostle, "To the only wise God be glory through Jesus Christ, for ever!" that our speculations may end in affectionate admirations, and thanksgivings, for that which is so full of wonders. What a little prospect should we have had of God, and the happiness of man, had not his wisdom and goodness revealed these things to us! The gospel is a marvellous light, and should not be regarded with a stupid ignorance, and pursued with a duller practice.

Exhort. 3. Let none of us be proud of, or trust in our own wisdom. Man, by affecting wisdom out of the way of God, got a crack in his head, which hath continued five thousand years and upwards, and ever since our own wisdom and "knowledge hath perverted us" (Isa. 47:10). To be guided by this, is to be under the conduct of a blind leader, and follow a traitor and enemy to God and ourselves. Man's prudence often proves hurtful to him: he often accomplisheth his ruin, while he designs his establishment; and finds his fall, where he thought to settle his fortune: such bad eyes hath human wisdom often in its own affairs. Those that have been heightened with a conceit of their own cunning, have at last proved the greatest fools. God delights to make "foolish the wisdom of this world" (1 Cor. 1:20). Thus God writ folly upon the crafty brains of Ahithophel, and simplicity upon the subtle projects of Herod against our Saviour; and the devil, the prince of carnal wisdom, was befooled into a furthering our redemption by his own projects to hinder it. Carnal policy, against the prescripts of Divine wisdom, never prospers: it is like an *ignis fatuus*, which leads men out of the way of duty, and out of the way of security, and perverts them into the mire and dangerous precipices. When Jeroboam would coin a religion to serve his interest of state, he tore up the foundations both of his kingdom and family. The way the Jews took to prevent a fresh invasion of the Romans, by the crucifying Christ, brought the judgment more swift upon them (John 11:48). There is no man ruined here, or damned hereafter, but by his own wisdom and will. (Prov. 3:5, 7), "The fear of the Lord, and departure from evil, are inconsistent with an overweening conceit of our own wisdom;" and leaning to our own understanding, is inconsistent with a trusting in the Lord with all our hearts. It is as much a deifying ourselves, to trust to our own wit, as it is a deifying the creature to affect or confide in it, superior to God or equally with him. The true way to wisdom is to be sensible of our own folly (1 Cor. 3:18), "If any man be wise, let him become a fool." He that distrusts his own guidance, will more securely and successfully follow the counsel of another in whom he confides. The more water, or any other liquor, is poured out of a vessel, the more air enters. The more we distrust our

own wisdom, the more capable we are of the conduct of God's. Had Jehoshaphat relied upon his own policy, he might have found a defeat when he met with a deliverance; but he disowned his own skill and strength in telling God, "We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon thee" (2 Chron. 20:12). Let us, therefore, with Agur, disesteem our own understanding to esteem Divine. Human prudence is like a spider's web, easily blown away, and swept down by the besom of some unexpected revolution. God, by his infinite wisdom, can cross the wisdom of man, and make a man's own prudence hang in his own light. (Isa. 29:14), "The understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

Exhort. 4. Seek to God for wisdom. The wisdom we have by nature, is like the weeds the earth brings forth without tillage. Our wisdom since the fall, is the wisdom of the serpent, without the innocence of the dove: it flows from self-love, runs into self-interest. It is the wisdom of the flesh, and a prudence to manage means for the contending our lusts. Our best wisdom is imperfect, a mere nothing and vanity, in comparison of the Divine, as our beings are in comparison of his essence. We must go to God for a holy and innocent wisdom, and fill our cisterns from a pure fountain. The wisdom that was the glory of Solomon, was the donation of the Most High. (James 1:5), "If any man want wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." The faculty of understanding is from God by nature; but a heavenly light to direct the understanding is from God by grace. Children have an understanding, but stand in need of wise masters to rectify it, and form judicious notions in it. "There is a spirit in man, but the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding" (Job 32:8). We must beg of God, wisdom. The gospel is the wisdom of God; the concerns of it great and mysterious, not to be known without a "new understanding" (1 John 5:20). A new understanding is not to be had but from the Creator of the first. The Spirit of God is the "searcher of the deep things of God;" the revealer of them to us, and the enlightener of our minds to apprehend them; and, therefore, called a "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" (Eph. 1:17). Christ is made wisdom to us, as well as righteousness; not only by imputation, but effusion. Seek to God, therefore, for that wisdom which is like the sun, and not that worldly wisdom which is like a shadow: for that wisdom whose effects are not so outwardly glorious, but inwardly sweet, seek it from him, and seek it in his word, that is, the transcript of Divine wisdom; "through his precepts understanding is to be had" (Psalm 119:104). As the wisdom of men appears in their laws, so doth the wisdom of God in his statutes. By this means we arrive to a heavenly sagacity. If these be rejected, what wisdom can there be in us? a dream and conceit only (Jer. 8.): "They have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" Who knows how to order any concerns as he ought, or any one faculty of his soul? Therefore, desire God's direction in outward concerns, in personal, family, in private and public. He hath not only a wisdom for our salvation, but for our outward direction. He doth not only guide us in the one, and leave Satan to manage us in the other. Those that go with Saul to a witch of Endor, go to hell for craft, and prefer the wisdom of the hostile serpent before the holy counsel of a faithful Creator. If you want health in your body, you advise with a physician; if direction for your estate, you resort to a lawyer; if passage for a voyage, you address to a pilot; why not much more yourselves, your all, to a wise God? As Pliny said, concerning a wise man, "O, Sir, how many Catos are there in that wise person!" how much more wisdom than men or angels possess, is infinitely centered in the wise God!

Exhort. 5. Submit to the wisdom of God in all cases. What else was inculcated in the first precept, forbidding man to eat of the fruit of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil," but that he should take heed of the swelling of his mind against the wisdom of God? It is a wisdom incomprehensible to flesh and blood; we should adore it in our minds, and resign up ourselves to it in our practice. How unreasonable are repinings against God, whereby a creature's ignorance indicts and judges a Creator's prudence! Were God weak in wisdom, and only mighty in power, we might suspect his conduct. Power without wisdom and goodness is an unruly and ruinous thing in the world. But God being infinite in one, as well as the other, we have no reason to be jealous of him, and repine against his methods; why should we quarrel with him that we are not as high, or as wealthy as others; that we have not presently the mercy we want? If he be wise, we ought to stay his time, and wait his leisure, because "he is a God of judgment" (Isa. 30:18). Presume not to shorten the time which his discretion hath fixed; it is a folly to think to do it. By impatience we cannot hasten relief; we alienate him from us by debasing him to stand at our bar, disturb ourselves, lose the comfort of our lives, and the sweetness of his mercy. Submission to God we are in no case exempted from, because there is no case wherein God doth not direct all the acts of his will by counsel. Whatsoever is drawn by a straight rule must be right and straight; the rule that is right in itself, is the measure of the straightness of everything else; whatsoever is wrought in the world by God, must be wise, good, righteous; because God is essentially wisdom, goodness, and righteousness.

(1.) Submit to God, in his revelations. 1. Measure them not by reason: the truths of the gospel must be received with a self-emptiness and annihilation of the creature. If our reason seems to lift up itself against revelation, because it finds no testimony for it in its own light, consider how crazy it is in natural and obvious things, and therefore sure it is not strong enough to enter into the depths of Divine wisdom: the wisdom of God in the gospel is too great an ocean to be contained or laved out by a cockleshell. It were not infinite, if it were not beyond our finite reach; our reason must as well stoop to his wisdom, as our wills to his sovereignty. How great a vanity is it for a glow-worm to boast that it is as full of light as the sun in the firmament! for reason to leave its proper sphere, is to fall into confusion, and thicken its own darkness. We should settle ourselves in the belief of the Scripture, and confirm ourselves by a meditation on those many undeniable arguments for its Divine authority,—the fulfilling of its predictions, the antiquity of the writing, the holiness of the precepts, the heavenliness of the doctrine, the glorious effects it hath produced, and doth yet produce, different from human methods of success; and submit our reason to the voice of so high a majesty. 2. Not to be too curiously inquisitive into what is not revealed. There is something hid in whatsoever is revealed. We know the Son of God was begotten from eternity, but how he was begotten, we are ignorant. We know there is a union of the Divine nature with the human, and that the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily; but the manner of its inhabitation we are in a great part ignorant of. We know that God hath chosen some and refused others, and that he did it with counsel; but the reason why he chose this man and not that, we know not; we can refer it to nothing but God's sovereign pleasure. It is revealed that there will be a day wherein God shall judge the world; but the particular time is not revealed. We know that God created the world in time; but why he did not create the world millions of years before, we are, ignorant of, and our reasons would be bewildered in their too much curiosity. If we ask why he did not create it before, we may as well ask why he did create it then?

And may not the same question be asked, if the world had been created millions of years before it was? That he created it in six days, and not in an instant, is revealed; but why he did not do it in a moment, since we are sure he was able to do it, is not revealed. Are the reasons of a wise man's proceedings hid from us? and shall we presume to dive into the reason of the proceedings of an only wise God, which he hath judged not expedient to discover to us? Some sparks of his wisdom he hath caused to issue out, to exercise and delight our minds; others he keeps within the centre of his own breast; we must not go about to unlock his cabinet. As we cannot reach to the

utmost lines of his power, so we cannot grasp the intimate reasons of his wisdom. We must still remember, that which is finite can never be able to comprehend the reasons, motives, and methods of that which is infinite. It doth not become us to be resty, because God hath not admitted us into the debates of eternity. We are as little to be curious at what God hath hid, as to be careless of what God hath manifested. Too great an inquisitiveness beyond our line, is as much a provoking arrogance, as a blockish negligence of what is revealed, is a slighting ingratitude.

(2.) Submit to God in his precepts and methods. Since they are the results of infinite wisdom, disputes against them are not tolerable; what orders are given out by infallible Wisdom are to be entertained with respect and reverence, though the reason of them be not visible to our purblind minds. Shall God have less respect from us than earthly princes, whose laws we observe without being able to pierce into the exact reason of them all? Since we know he hath not a will without an understanding, our observance of him must be without repining; we must not think to mend our Creator's laws, and presume to judge and condemn his righteous statutes. If the flesh rise up in opposition, we must cross its motions, and silence its murmurings; his will should be an acceptable will to us, because it is a wise will in itself. God hath no need to impose upon us and deceive us; he hath just and righteous ways to attain his glory and his creatures's good. To deceive us, would be to dishonor himself, and contradict his own nature. He cannot impose false injurious precepts, or unavailable to his subjects' happiness; not false, because of his truth; not injurious, because of his goodness; not vain, because of his wisdom. Submit, therefore, to him in his precepts, and in his methods too. The honor of his wisdom, and the interest of our happiness, call for it. Had Noah disputed with God about building an ark, and listened to the scoffs of the senseless world, he had perished under the same fate, and lost the honor of a preacher and worker of righteousness. Had not the Israelites been their own enemies, if they had been permitted to be their own guides, and returned to the Egyptian bondage and furnaces, instead of a liberty and earthly felicity in Canaan? Had our Saviour gratified the Jews by descending from the cross, and freeing himself from the power of his adversaries, he might have had that faith from them which they promised him; but it had been a faith to no purpose, because without ground; they might have believed him to be the Son of God, but he could not have been the Saviour of the world. His death, the great ground and object of faith, had been unaccomplished; they had believed a God pardoning without a consent to his justice, and such a faith could not have rescued them from falling into eternal misery. The precepts and methods of Divine wisdom must be submitted to.

(3.) Submit to God in all crosses and revolutions. Infinite Wisdom cannot err in any of his paths, or step the least hair's breadth from the way of righteousness: there is the understanding of God in every motion; an eye in every wheel, the wheel that goes over us and crusheth us. We are led by fancy more than reason: we know no more what we ask, or what is fit for us, than the mother of Zebedee's children did, when she petitioned Christ for her sons' advancement, when he came into his temporal kingdom (Matt. 20:22): the things we desire might please our fancy or appetite, but impair our health: one man complains for want of children, but knows not whether they may prove comforts or crosses: another for want of health, but knows not whether the health of his body may not prove the disease of his soul. We might lose in heavenly things, if we possess in earthly things what we long for. God, in regard of his infinite wisdom, is fitter to carve out a condition than we ourselves; our shallow reason and self-love, would wish for those things that are injurious to God, to ourselves, to the world; but God always chooses what is best for his glory, and what is best for his creatures, either in regard to themselves, or as they stand in relation to hire, or to others, as parts of the world.

We are in danger from our self-love, in no danger in complying with God's wisdom: when Rachel would die, if she had no children, she had children, but death with one of them (Gen. 30:1). Good men may conclude, that whatsoever is done by God in them, or with them, is best and fittest for them; because by the covenant which makes over God to them, as their God, the conduct of his wisdom is assured to them as well as any other attribute: and, therefore, as God in every transaction appears as their God, so he appears as their wise Director, and by this wisdom he extracts good out of evil, makes the affliction which destroys our outward comforts consume our inward defilements; and the waves which threatened to swallow up the vessel, to cast it upon the shore: and when he hath occasion to manifest his anger against his people, his wisdom directs his wrath. In judgment he hath "a work to do upon Zion;" and when that work is done, he punishes the fruit of the "stout heart of the king of Assyria" (Isa. 10:12); as in the answers of prayer he doth give oftentimes "above what we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20), so in outward concerns he doth above what we can expect, or by our short-sightedness, conclude will be done. Let us, therefore, in all things, frame our minds to the Divine Wisdom, and say with the Psalmist (Psalm 47:4): "The Lord shall choose our inheritance and condition for us."

Exhort. 6. Censure not God in any of his ways. Can we understand the full scope of Divine wisdom in creation, which is perfected before our eyes? Can we, by a rational knowledge, walk over the whole surface of the earth, and wade through the sea? Can we understand the nature of the heavens? Are all, or most, or the thousandth part of the particles of Divine skill, known by us, yea, or any of them thoroughly known? How can we, then, understand his deeper methods in things that are but of yesterday, that we have not had a time to view? We should not be too quick, or too rash, in our judgments of him: the best that we attain to, is but feeble conjectures at the designs of God. As there is something bid in what soever is revealed in his word, so there is something inaccessible to us in his works, as well as in his nature and Majesty. In our Saviour's act in washing his disciples' feet, he checked Peter's contradiction (John 13:7): "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." God were not infinitely wise if the reason of all his acts were obvious to our shallowness. He is no profound statesman, whose inward intention can be sounded by vulgar heads at the first act he starts in his designed method. The wise God is, in this, like wise men, that have not breasts like glasses of crystal, to discover all that they intend.

There are "secrets of wisdom above our reach" (Job 11:6); nay, when we see all his acts, we cannot see all the draughts of his skill in them. An unskilful hearer of a musical lesson may receive the melody with his ear, and understand not the rarities of the composition as it was wrought by the musician's mind. Under the Old Testament there was more of Divine power, and less of his wisdom apparent in his acts: as his laws, so his acts, were more fitted to their sense. Under the New Testament there is more of wisdom, and less of power; as his laws, so his acts, are more fitted to a spiritual mind; wisdom is less discernible than power. Our wisdom, therefore, in this case, as it doth other things, consists in silence and expectation of the end and event of a work. We owe that honor to God that we do to men wiser than ourselves, to imagine he hath reason to do what he doth, though our shallowness cannot comprehend it. We must suffer God to be wiser than ourselves, and acknowledge that there is something sovereign in his ways not to be measured by the feeble reed of our weak understandings. And, therefore, we should acquiesce in his proceedings; take heed we be not found slanderers of God, but be adorers instead of censurers; and lift up our heads in admiration of him and his ways, instead of citing him to answer it at our bar. Many things in the first appearance may seem to be rash and unjust, which, in the issue, appear comely and regular. If it had been plainly spoke before that the Son of God should die, that a most holy person should be crucified, it would have seemed cruel

to expose a son to misery; unjust to inflict punishment upon one that was no criminal; to join together exact goodness and physical evil; that the sovereign should die for the malefactor, and the observer of the law for the violators of it. But when the whole design is unravelled, what an admirable connexion is there of justice and mercy, love and wisdom, which before would have appeared absurd to the muddled reason of man! We see the gardener pulling up some delightful flowers by the roots, digging up the earth, overwhelming it with dung; an ignorant person would imagine him wild, out of his wits, and charge him with spoiling his garden: but when the spring is arrived, the spectator will acknowledge his skill in his former operations. The truth is, the whole design and methods of God are not to be judged by us in this world; the full declaration of the whole contexture is reserved for the other world, to make up a part of good men's happiness in the amazing views of Divine wisdom, as well as the other perfections of his nature. We can no more perfectly understand his wisdom than we can his mercy and justice, till we see the last lines of all drawn, and the full expressions of them; we should therefore be sober and modest in the consideration of God's ways; "his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." The riches of his wisdom are past our counting, his depths not to be fathomed, yet they are depths of righteousness and equity; though the full manifestation of that equity, the grounds and methods of his proceedings are unknown to us. As we are too short fully to know God, so we are too ignorant fully to comprehend the acts of God: since he is a God of judgment, we should wait till we see the issue of his works (Isa. 30:18). And in the meantime, with the apostle in the text, give him the glory of all, in the same expressions, "To the only wise God be glory, through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."