

LECTURE XVII.*



Matt. v. 48.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

NEXT to the doctrine of the Trinity, comes (according to proper theological order) that of the Divine Attributes or Perfections, most fitly to be considered. After the discourse of the Trinity which we have showed you subsists in the Godhead, we have chosen this text, both as it serves to confirm, and as it serves to regulate, that foregoing doctrine.

First, As it serves to confirm it. For when we are so plainly told that “there are three that bear record in heaven;” and that the great Object of our religion, and whereto we are most solemnly to be devoted, is represented to us as three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; supposing such a triad as you see in the Godhead, you can suppose it under no other notion than that of a very great and high perfection belonging thereunto. And that, therefore, it must greatly intrench upon the perfection of the Godhead, and unspeakably diminish it, if there should be any attempt or offer made to diminish and detract from that sacred number. It could not but be a horrid maim to the very Object of our religion: and against any such disposition thereunto, or to do any thing, or to admit of any thought into our minds that may have that tendency, it would fortify us greatly, to have the belief well fixed in our minds of the perfection of the Godhead. And,

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Secondly, It serves to regulate that doctrine of the Trinity too: that is, to direct us to understand it so as may consist with the other perfections of the Godhead; where we are sure it is impossible there can be any war, or that there should not be the highest and most perfect agreement. We must so conceive of the Trinity in the Godhead, and the perfections that we are here and elsewhere taught to ascribe unto it, as that these may manifestly accord with one another. And for that purpose, we must conceive of the divine perfections as the Scripture doth direct us, according as God himself speaks of them; allowing his word to be our measure, in making our estimate and judgment concerning them. They that take another course, and pretend to discover to us the incomprehensible nature of God, by methods and measures of theirs' secluding this, and opposing it in any kind, truly we have a great deal more reason to be astonished at their confidence than we have to admire their knowledge; as if they could make a better discovery and a clearer representation of God to us than he himself. But if we do understand the divine perfections according to those plain and express measures which he hath given us in his word, or which he enables us to collect, as we are reasonable creatures, from what he hath said in his word concerning himself and them, it would then withhold us from any such exorbitant conceptions concerning the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, as shall not be easily reconcileable with the doctrine of his perfections, according as he hath represented and stated it himself.

And upon that account, shall we apply ourselves to consider so much concerning the perfections of the Godhead, as this scripture will give us a general ground for. Indeed to speak of the several perfections and attributes that do belong to the Divine Nature, distinctly and at large, would be the work of a life's time; and very little agree with what I have designed, the expounding and opening to you the principles of religion, in as short a time as I can. Therefore, I have pitched upon this text, designing to sum up all under it, which I think requisite to say concerning the excellencies and perfections of the Divine Being, which we commonly speak of under the name, his attributes. You may take the ground of discourse thus,

That all the excellencies which are requisite to make up the most absolute perfection, belong as attributes to the nature of God; or as so many attributes to be ascribed to God. This, some may possibly apprehend will be but to do what hath been done already, and to do it over again. That is, when in proving to you the existence of the Deity, we shewed that we are

to conceive of him under the notion of a Being absolutely perfect. It is true, it was impossible to demonstrate his existence without forelaying that notion of God. And that is suitable to what the laws of method do require, in treating of any subject whatsoever. That is, if there be occasion to put the question *an sit*, whether such a thing be or not and to prove the existence of it, first, and before we come to that inquiry, to inquire *quid sit*, and what it is. To open the nature of such a thing, there must be first some general notion assigned and laid down of that whose existence we would prove, and about which the first inquiry was made *an sit*, whether it be yea or nay. Otherwise, in attempting to prove that, we may as well prove any thing else, if we do not give such a notion of it as will distinguish it from another thing.

But now after we have done so, it comes properly of course then, to proceed to a more narrow inspection into the nature of such a thing. And so the order of tractation did require it should be in this present case. That is, when we were to inquire concerning the existence of the Deity, first to put you in mind, what you and all must be supposed to apprehend concerning the thing we inquired about, that is, a Being of absolute perfection in the general: and we can have no other notion of God but as a Being absolutely perfect. That being done, and it having been evinced to you that there is such a Fountain-Being from whence whatsoever perfections we do behold, and come under our notice among the creatures, must have descended and been derived, inasmuch as whatsoever we behold, and take notice of, that comes under any notion of perfection with us at all, is not nothing, and therefore could not come from nothing, and therefore must be first in a fountain from whence it came. When by this means, I say, we have plainly evinced, that there is one Being which hath all perfection originally in itself; and thereupon shewn that Being to be a fit Object for religion, and to be worshipped by us, and to whom duties and exercises of religion ought to be performed, and that this can be done acceptably no way but agreeable to his own will; thereupon we were put upon an inquiry, how that will of his might be understood and known: and having found that it was discovered (with that design and to that purpose that he might be duly and acceptably worshipped) in that word that bears his name, thence we come regularly and of course, to speak of things particularly and more expressly concerning him (whereof we have had some general notions before) which are contained in this Book, and which this word will help us to a more distinct knowledge of. And therefore now, in speaking to

the proposition laid down, we are to consider the subject of it: "your heavenly Father," and then we are to consider the thing affirmed concerning this subject: He "is perfect."

I. For the former, the subject of this affirmation, we must consider in what sense (as there will be occasion to take notice of by and by) he can be spoken of under the name of a subject. Scholars know how to distinguish between a subject of predication, and a subject of inhæasion. He can be no subject of inhæasion, as you will see presently. But a subject concerning which, this or that may be affirmed or spoken, that is the only thing which we can truly and properly mean when we speak of God under that name or term. But whereas he is here mentioned as our "Father which is in heaven," (as our Saviour directs he should be prayed unto, in that comprehensive system of petitions that he himself was pleased to give his disciples, "Our Father which art in heaven,") we must distinguish between Christ's calling him Father himself and his teaching us to call him so, or his speaking of him as our Father. When Christ himself calls him "Our Father," he calls him so as he was: and so he doth speak himself, when he speaks of his having come from, his having descended from the Father. He could mean by the term "Father," nothing else but the first person in the Trinity. But when he speaks of him as our Father and directs us so to speak of him, or to speak to him, we do not need so to limit that term "Father," in reference to us, for we may fitly enough consider the whole God in the paternal relation to ourselves. Concerning the Father there is no doubt, for so our Saviour hath taught us to conceive and speak, "I go to my Father and your Father, My God and your God," John 20. 17. And even the Son is spoken of as our "everlasting Father." Isaiah 9. 6. And all the children of God are said to be born of his Spirit, and to be begotten thereby. John 3. 1. And suppose we should look upon Father, here, strictly as a personal name or title, yet so we must consider the Divine Nature as subsisting *fontaliter*, or as in a *fountain* in that person: and it is that person as having that nature eminently and originally and firstly in him; even that same nature that is common to each of the persons. And so it is not the person as the person, but as having the Divine Nature in it, which is the subject here spoken of. "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The Godhead or the nature of God subsisting as in the Fountain, in the Father: and that same nature which is also common with him to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. But then,

II. For that which is affirmed or spoken of this subject, He "is perfect." How are we at a loss when we come to speak of

this divine perfection ! “I have seen an end” (saith the Psalmist) “of all perfection, but thy commandments are, or thy commandment is exceedingly broad.” Even so much of divine perfection as is expressed that one way (in the divine word) is of so exceeding vast a latitude as to represent itself as the matter of the highest wonder to a very enlarged and comprehensive mind, that had exceeded the bounds of all other perfection and already gone beyond them all. I have seen an end of all perfection, but how vast a perfection beyond all that do I perceive in thy divine word, wherein there are yet but some sunbeams, some glimmerings of the perfection of the Divine Nature ! Indeed when we go about to speak of such a subject as this, or to think of it, we may even fear to meet with such a rebuke as that, Job 38. 2. “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” Can we think, by searching to find out God? Can we find out the Almighty unto perfection? Job 11. 7. Somewhat, the case requires should be said, of what we can say and conceive but little of. Something, the exigency of our case doth require ; that we labour, all of us, to be informed concerning one with whom we have so much to do, and in whose hands all our great concerns do lie.

For the word that is used here, “*perfect*,” and the words in the learned languages that we are referred to by these penmen, they do (as all words must do) fall most inconceivably short of the thing. Words cannot but be poor, and labour under a penury when they are expressive of any thing of God. Alas ! They can go but a little way in it.

The words that we have here to do with more immediately, do carry in them a kind of diminishing and lessening intimation of coming to a state, or having come to a state that is higher and more excellent, from a state that was meaner and lower ; in which the subject spoken of is (as it were) supposed to have been before, according to the general and indefinite use of such words. As the Greek word *τελειος* that is here used, refers to a word that signifies *an end*, and so carries an intimation with it, as one had but then attained an end which he was aiming at, and tending towards before, which implies such a diminution as can by no means be admitted concerning God. As when any one doth then suppose himself to have arrived at an eternal sort of perfection, when he hath compassed an end that he was about. “I work this day, and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfect ;” finish a work I was engaged in, which is but an external sort of perfection. The word (for want of being more expressive) is borrowed and employed here, in a case of very transcendent height above that. And so for the Latin word

perfectio, or *perfectus*, it carries an intimation with it as if the thing spoken of were, now at length, thoroughly made that which before it was not. Such expressions do (through the natural poverty of speech and language) lessen and diminish greatly the thing that should be represented and set forth by them.

But to consider the thing itself, (as we may be capable to open to you somewhat of the divine perfections) there are two things to be done in reference hereto. We shall note to you, some things more generally that do concern the divine perfections indefinitely considered: and then shall (though briefly) come to consider some of the particular perfections themselves, which we are more specially concerned to take notice of, that are comprehended under those generals.

1. There are some things more generally to be laid down concerning the divine perfections, or excellencies, or attributes; you may call them which of these you will, fitly enough. And,

(1.) There is this to be considered concerning them, that there are of these divine excellencies or perfections, which we are taught to attribute to God, some that are altogether incommunicable ones. There are some that are incommunicable; that is, that have not so much as a name common to him, and to us, by which they are to be signified and spoken of. As there is his Self-subsistence, his All-sufficiency, his Eternity and his Immensity. These are attributes, or perfections of the Divine Nature that are not so much as common in name to him and to us; so appropriate to him, that there is nothing known by the same name that can be said of us. And there are some of his attributes and perfections that are communicable, that is, which under one and the same name, may be spoken of him and of us, of him and of the creature. As his wisdom; there is also such a thing among men: and his power; they have some power: and his goodness; they have some goodness: and so his justice, his holiness, and his truth: these are divine perfections that are spoken of under one and the same name, concerning him and concerning some of his creatures. That is one thing that you have in general to note; as concerning the incommunicable attributes of God, they have not so much as the same name with him and with us: for there is nothing in us, to which such names do agree: All-sufficiency, immensity, eternity, omnipotency, self-existence and the like. But the other (as was said) are signified by words applicable to somewhat in us, as to be wise, to be good, to be just, to be powerful and the like. And,

(2.) In the next place, you must note, that for those divine attributes and perfections which are communicable, it is only the name that is common to that thing in him, and that thing in us, which is expressed thereby. It is true that there is the same name but not the same nature. There is a likeness, a similitude, but not an identity, or a sameness. Take heed of apprehending, or imagining any such thing between the divine wisdom, or the divine power, or the divine goodness, that are uncreated, and that which is created; and so of his holiness, his justice and the like. We are not to think there is a sameness of nature, though there be the same names used in such perfections as these, as they are found to be in God, and as they are found to be in us, or in the creature: for it is impossible that the nature which is infinite, and the natures which are finite can be the same. An infinite nature and a finite nature must needs differ infinitely, and therefore can by no means be the same nature. Wherefore, all that is said in this case, in reference to us, when God is pleased to derive and communicate from himself unto those whom he regenerates, that which is called the Divine Nature; it is only said of it,—that it is his image, and his likeness, that is conveyed or communicated: it is only somewhat like God or the image of God that is impressed upon, and wrought into the soul. We must take heed of thinking that it is the same nature, as they have thought and blasphemously spoken, who have talked of being godded in God; as if the very nature of God was under such a name as this, transmitted into the creature. And again,

(3.) We must understand these perfections, or excellencies of the Divine Nature to be his very nature itself, and not to be any accidental thing superadded thereunto. We must not conceive that such divine perfections as wisdom and power and goodness and the like, are additions to the nature of God: but they are his very nature itself. There can be no such thing as an accidental supervention to the Divine Nature; but every thing that is in God must be conceived to be God. He is essential wisdom and goodness and truth, and is not these things by accident, as men may be, so as to have those things separable from their nature; no, nor can his nature, indeed, be so much as conceived without them. We are not to look upon them as accidents, either as separable or inseparable from his nature, but as being essentially included in it. And this is most evident, upon the account we have showed you; and the thing speaks itself in demonstrating to you the existence of the Godhead, that that Being whose existence we were to demon-

strate, is self-existent, existing always by and from itself without depending, without being beholden to any thing from whence it was. Now what is so self-existent is existent necessarily; that is, it owes its own existence to that peculiar excellency of its own nature, to which it is repugnant, and impossible not to exist. Now, whatsoever doth exist necessarily, so that its non-existence should be altogether impossible (which is the peculiar manner of the Divine existence) that must needs be unalterable. What is necessary, must be eternally or invariably necessary, and without any mutation: and nothing can be superadded to another but must infer a mutation: any addition would make an alteration. Therefore, none of these perfections are additions to God; for then they would make a change; but that which is necessarily what it is, never admits of any change, neither by addition nor subtraction any ways.

(4.) You must take this general note farther, that it is hence consequential, that the excellencies and perfections of the Divine Nature are in him, in perfect simplicity. That is, if none of them do differ from the Divine Nature, then it is impossible they should differ from one another; they cannot really differ one from another in themselves. It is true, indeed, that by our imperfect way of conceiving things, through the narrowness and incomprehensiveness of our minds, which cannot take in all things at once, we are fain to admit distinct notions which are wont to be called inadequate notions, concerning the Deity. We can conceive of such and such excellencies but by parts, but by little and little. It is but a small portion we can take up of him in the whole, and but very little after all. And therefore, all we are fain (looking upon the glorious and ever blessed Deity) to conceive, is an unknown wisdom in him, and an unknown goodness, and an unknown holiness and the like. Not as if these things did more really differ in him than one and the same face, (as one aptly expresseth it) doth really differ in itself because a great many glasses are placed against it, that do themselves differ from one another, and are variously figured and cut, do seem to represent divers faces. There is, I say, no more of real difference in these perfections from one another, as they are in God, than there would be in that case of so many real things that are reflected by so many glasses, where the difference of the reflected image doth proceed from the glasses, and not from the original which is one and the same to them all. And that we may preserve the notion entire of the Divine Simplicity, it is easy to be demonstrated to them that shall consider—that if there be not a most perfect simplicity in the Divine Nature, so as that the several ex-

cellencies belonging thereto be really in him, one and the same thing, then these excellencies could not meet there but by composition; they would make a composition in the Divine Nature if they were there with real difference. But such a composition in the Divine Nature is altogether impossible, upon these two accounts. First, If there were such a composition there must be supposed a causation: if the Divine Nature were compounded, it would be inferred it were caused; and so God were not the first Cause of the first being: and, Secondly, (though one would think that nothing should need to be added after that, it being plain, nothing can be prior to God.) If there were a composition there would also be a limitation, and so these perfections of the Divine Being would not be infinite, and consequently they must be perfections altogether disagreeable, no way agreeing to the Divine Nature. It cannot but be that he must be infinitely wise, infinitely good, infinitely powerful, and the like. But he should not be so, if these things did really differ in him from one another; for whatsoever doth really differ from one another, doth limit that other from which it differs. If there be an infiniteness in goodness, or an infiniteness in power, or an infiniteness in knowledge, we cannot suppose many infinites; there cannot be more infinites than one; and therefore it is but one and the same thing that is all these. Whatsoever you do design to the one, you must detract from the other. And if you should suppose two infinites, you do thereby suppose neither to be infinite, but both to be finite. That therefore, you must fixedly retain, as a general rule, that the several excellencies and perfections of the Divine Nature, are in him, in most perfect simplicity, and so do not differ in him, as one thing differs from another. Only the Divine Nature and Being itself, as it hath all excellency and perfection in it doth, when it comes to cast an aspect upon us and upon our minds, appear as various, though in itself it is most simply one. And again,

(5.) You must further note this, that the negative attributes of the Divine Being do always imply somewhat positive. There are some things ascribed to God in negative terms, which must be understood to have a positive sense and meaning, under those terms. As when it is said of God, he is immortal, which is a negative term, it implies the most infinite and undecaying fulness of life. And so when it is said of God, that he is invisible, though that be a negative term, such a being as cannot be seen, the meaning is, that his being is of that high and glorious excellency as not to be liable and subject to so mean a thing as the sight of our eye; it is too fine, too bright

and glorious for so mean and low a faculty to reach unto. And,

(6.) You must note this, that any particular excellency that men attribute or ascribe to God, it must always be understood to be ascribed to him in the highest pitch of perfection, and not with that diminution wherewith we behold the shadow of such things to be accompanied in the creature. And therefore, we must take heed of debasing the excellencies of the Divine Nature, by confining, concerning them, to that which only gives some faint representation of them among us. We speak of several things that are real excellencies among the creatures; as quickness of sense, to be able presently to feel whatsoever is noxious and hurtful: this sense of pain, is in the creature a perfection; but we are not to conceive any such thing in God: but we are to conceive that which is transcendent in him, that comprehends in itself the power of giving such and such perfections to the creature; so as that those things are eminently, constantly, only in him which, speaking of this and that particular perfection, is in a distinct, formal notion in the creature. We must not say, that this or that we behold in the creature is in him, but some transcendent excellency that doth virtually and eminently comprehend it; as when the Psalmist tells us, "He that planted the eye, doth he not see? and he that formed the ear doth not he hear? and he that teacheth man knowledge doth not he know?" we are not to think that there is such seeing, or such hearing with God, or any kind of sensation as is with us: but there is that transcendent excellency in him, that doth eminently contain all these in a far more glorious manner than we can conceive. These things, it is fit we should note generally, concerning the divine attributes, or perfections, as a ground for somewhat more distinctly, though very briefly, concerning these attributes, or perfections of God, particularly considered.

But before we pass from this discourse, of what is of more general import concerning them, give me leave to suggest somewhat to you that may be of present use, and that may influence practice, and tend to better the hearts and spirits of us, who are now called to hear about such a subject; "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect." So our Lord, who was a Teacher come forth from God, on one of his great errands, doth direct us to conceive concerning him. I pray let our thoughts stay here a little, and meditate, and pause awhile; both on this Subject here spoken of, and that which is affirmed concerning this Subject.

[1.] The Subject spoken of, "Your Father which is in heaven," This NAME, "Your Father," should carry a very attrac-

tive sound with it to every ear, and to every heart among us. It is very unfit that we should, any of us, sleep and slumber under the mention of this name, this title given to God, "your Father." Let us bethink ourselves: Can we call God Father? It is a thing to be thought on—with much caution, and then, if that hath produced any effect, and reached any good issue with us, it ought to be thought on—with high consolation.

First. With great caution. "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect:" when we find that some are addressed by our blessed Lord, with the supposed capacity of bespeaking God as their Father, would it not strike cold to any man's heart, that should have cause to think, "Am not I excluded? Am not I one of them that may not dare to take such a name into my mouth and apply it to him, to call him my Father? Doth not my own heart smite me, that I assume so much to myself as to say, God is my Father?" There were those that briskly and boldly pretended to it in our Lord's time. "We are not born of fornication, we have all one Father, even God," say some of these petulant hearers. John 8. 41. It ought to be seriously considered, "What Godlike thing have I in me to bespeak me his child, or that may give me the confidence to call him my Father? What childlike dispositions do I find in me towards him? Is there that trust that becomes a child, that love, that dutifulness, that study to please him?" Let us consider whether we can call him Father, and our hearts not smite us, and tell us inwardly, this is a title that belongs not to thee to give. But if we can find it doth, it is a thing to be considered as with great caution.

Secondly. With high consolation afterwards. Can I indeed say, that he is my Father? What then can I have to complain of? what have I to fear? what have I to desire? what have I to crave beyond what this contains, and carries in it? And pray take heed of diminishing so great a thing to yourselves. Have you, upon a strict inquiry, reason to look upon yourselves as one of that regenerate seed which is peculiar and appropriate to God? carries his signature, his stamp, his image? It is then a very unworthy thing to your Father, to let your spirits sink. It should greaten your minds, it should make you to say within yourselves, "Then am I to live far above the world, it is base, for the children of such a Father to live mean, and lie low, and to grovel in the dust; and to let his own heart despond and sink within him, upon the less grateful aspect and appearances of things from this world. For alas! what is this world to me, if God be my Father?" And, "Your Father, which is in heaven is perfect." You must consider how this our Father is in heaven; not as confined there, not as if heaven did confine him,

whom the "heaven of heavens cannot contain." And we should thereupon consider, that truly if heaven do not confine him, this earth ought not to confine me. If he be my Father, there should be no exclusive limits between him and me. If he be my Father, so in heaven as that though he hath his throne, the theatre of his glory, his court, and his retinue there above, yet he doth also diffuse a vital and essential presence throughout the creation, so as that this earth itself is not excluded, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there; If I traverse the seas, wherever I come, there thou art." Psalm 139. 7. I say, if heaven doth not contain him, but that he reacheth this earth too, I should thereupon think this earth should not so confine me, but I will reach him, and apply myself to him, and converse and lead my life with him. And since heaven is represented as the seat of his most glorious residence, we should always think ourselves to have concerns lying there above. I am not to be limited then to this base low earth, if I have a Father in heaven. It is intolerable hereupon, that we should live here upon earth, if we had renounced and quitted all claim to heaven, never looking up thither. What! Do we forget that our Father is there? There he dwells in glory, there he beholds the dwellers upon earth, and looks into the very inmost motions of our thoughts, and workings of our spirits, from day to day, and from moment to moment; if he see a mind carried after vanity all the day long, will he not say, "What! Is such a one, one of the offspring of heaven, but hath no business there, who never minds any thing but this base earth?" Shall he have cause to observe this concerning us, and thus to judge and censure us from day to day? "These are the children of the earth, sons of the earth, they have nothing to do in heaven, they never look up thither." Such words standing here in the Bible, "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" methinks they should make strange impressions upon our spirits when we come to look on them and seriously consider them.

[2.] And then what is affirmed concerning this Subject, (though I must not spend time upon that now,) he is perfect, every way perfect. We may yet, by the way, see what ground of reproof there is here for us, that we so little adore, and so little imitate this perfection. That God is not greater in our eyes when we are beholding him, and considering, that whatsoever our minds can conceive of excellency, we find it in him in the highest perfection, and yet we adore him not, we take no notice of that glorious One, how sad is the case when even this itself is a continual increase of guilt upon us, that we know so much of God, that a poor creature should have cause to say, "I should have been

far more innocent if I had known less, and been less capable of knowing God. I might have been an innocent creature, in comparison, if I had not known so much.” To know him to be so perfectly holy and not to imitate him, to know him to be so good and not to trust him, to love him, to depend upon him and to seek union with him; to know him to be so perfect, and content myself with my own imperfection, when according to this rule of our Lord we should be “perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

LECTURE XVIII.*

2. But I come now to give, in the second place, some more distinct account of some, at least, of the more eminent of the attributes of God. And I shall begin with that which must be understood as comprehensive of all the rest, and that is, of the **DIVINE ALL-SUFFICIENCY**. This is the summary perfection of God; his All-sufficiency. And as the verse where the text lies, saith “Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect,” so elsewhere, is the Divine All-sufficiency represented to us as the ground and pattern of that perfection which is required in us. Gen. 17. 1. “I am God All-sufficient: walk before me and be thou perfect.” The word there used is, in some translations, rendered All-mighty, in others, All-sufficient, *El-Shaddai*. They indeed seem to me, to give the more congruous account of the etymology of that word that do read it All-sufficient, deriving it not from *Shadda* that signifies to destroy, to lay waste, which yet, is comprehended no doubt (that is the power of doing so) in the notion of Almighty, but rather deriving it from a word that signifies sufficiency with the pronominal particle he: He that is sufficient, God that is sufficient, *El-Shaddai* or that is self-sufficient. And he is so self-sufficient either understanding it to be a sufficiency arising from himself or a sufficiency serving for himself. Either way he is self-sufficient; by a sufficiency that speaks him to be All to himself, a sufficiency arising and springing up within himself, or a sufficiency to himself, as having enough in himself to enjoy without being beholden, without depending upon any thing without himself. And such All-sufficiency spoken of God must needs mean, He that is of himself, sufficient for himself, must needs be sufficient for all the creation besides.

* Preached May 15, 1691.

If of himself there be a sufficiency in him for all his own perfections, there must be a sufficiency for all that communication that the creature can any way stand in need of. This is that attribute, that comprehensive one, that we shall in the first place say somewhat to.

And I shall say the more of this, because it is so vastly comprehensive as hath been said, and as the matter is plain in itself that it is. It is the same thing that is meant by that fulness that we find again and again, in Scripture, attributed to God, that *πληρωμα του Θεου*, "That you may be filled with all the fulness of God." Ephes. 3. 19. Not that there needs any great fulness to fill us. A very little thing will do it; and it signifies nothing to the vastness of the plenitude of the ocean, that a nut shell or a minute vessel may be filled; but it is the greatness of the expression that I here note, "the fulness of God;" how vast, how immense, how profound an abyss must that be! In Ephes. 1. 23. we read of the "fulness of him that filleth all in all;" that filling fulness: it is another fulness that is meant there in that form of expression where, most condescendingly, the church of Christ in this world is spoken of as his fulness. But whose fulness is it? The "fulness of him that filleth all in all." Even he, notwithstanding his vast and boundless self-fulness doth yet vouchsafe to be filled in respect of that union that he is pleased to take a people out of this world into, with his own blessed Self. We read (Col. 2. 9.) of "all the fulness of the Godhead" dwelling in flesh, as it were, embodied in flesh, which we must understand still is the same fulness when it is deposited, when it is, as it were, so disposed for communication. It is not another fulness from the original Divine Fulness, but the same under a new relation wherewith it now comes to be clothed. As when also, in that Col. 1. 19. it is said, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," fulness and all fulness, that it should dwell in him. It did dwell indeed in him originally and naturally in the person of the Son, but now it dwells in the Mediator, that being so lodged and settled, (as it were) it now lies ready for communication to indigent creatures, necessitous creatures, empty creatures; such as we are, empty of every thing that is good, and of the desert of every thing that is so; and only designed and fitted by natural designation as so many "vessels of wrath" to be filled with wrath. Now all the fulness of God comes to be posited and clothed with that relation, to put on that aspect, with reference to us, that according to our need, measure and capacity it is all for us. "It pleased

the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," with such a design that he might fill the sacrifice first, that was offered up, as you find the context speaks,—(Col. 1. 19, 21.) "that he might make peace by the blood of his cross and reconcile all things to himself:" and then, that he might fill the souls which that sacrifice had been accepted for, in the virtue of it, opening its own way to flow in to us. And another expression you have of this same perfection, (the All-sufficiency and plenitude of the Godhead) to wit, that of his being "All in all." A most Godlike phrase, wherein God doth in his own word speak so of himself, speaks like himself, at the rate of a God, with divine greatness and majestic sense. It is used with reference to the divine operations, 1 Cor. 12. 5. "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." But it is also spoken of the Divine Being with reference to his existence; He is All in all; or as in the mentioned place, (Ephes. 1. 23) "fillet all in all." In the final state when all the great designs of God are compassed and brought about, then is he more entirely, fully and immediately to be All in all. He will be more conspicuously so then: he is now so indeed, as it hath not escaped the notice of heathens themselves, who tell us, that whatsoever we see is Jupiter, and whatsoever we are moved by, is Jupiter: that one universal mind doth work through all the universe and mingles itself with the vast body of the creation. So is Christ, in whom is all the fulness of God, (as was told before) he is said to be "All in all." Here is an All in an all, a comprehending all and comprehended all; that is, an uncreated All, and a created: the latter, contained in the former, the former, containing the latter, in-wrapping it, infolding it, diffusing itself any where throughout it, and in all, and over all, and through all. And indeed, that created all, is a little, most contemptible little all, in comparison of the all-comprehending, uncreated fulness, that involves the other in as great a disproportion as you may suppose an atom, a little mote or particle of dust comprehended in the whole earth, or a minute drop in the vast ocean, that swallows it up and runs through it and through it; so is the all of this creation (as great as it may appear to our little narrow minds and thoughts) swallowed up in the uncreated All, so as that in comparison of that, it is nothing. All nations come under this notion, but "as the drop of a bucket, and the small dust of the balance, and lighter than nothing," as confessing it impossible to speak diminishingly enough of the littleness of the creature, in comparison of the Divine All, "less than nothing." In-

deed, simple nothing cannot vie with all fulness, with the immense plenitude of substantial beings. But that, that seems to be newly stepped forth out of nothing, that, it may be, will pretend to vie, and therefore that is so much the more despicable, even more despicable than mere nothing: mere nothing hath no competition with it to that vast plenitude and fulness of Being. But there may seem somewhat of competition in that which is just stepped forth out of nothing: and therefore, that is despised as less than nothing; for mere nothing is not so despicable as that which is just risen out of nothing when it is brought into any kind of compare with the infinite, immense All.

But to speak yet a little more particularly and distinctly concerning this most perfect All-sufficiency and fulness of God, (as it can be possible to us to speak and hear of so great a thing) I shall speak somewhat to the nature of it, what sort of fulness or plenitude this All-sufficient, perfect fulness is. And then—speak somewhat of the purposes which it answers and is most apt to answer.

1. Somewhat of the nature of it. And for that, our best way of opening and unfolding it will be to consider these two things, namely, what it contains, and—after what peculiar it doth contain what it must be understood to carry in it: that is, the contents and the properties of this fulness: what it contains and with what peculiar and distinguishing characters it doth contain it.

(1.) For the contents of this most absolute and perfect fulness of God, All-sufficient fulness; it contains all that we can think, and indeed all that we cannot think. It contains all being, and all life, all motive and active power, all knowledge and all wisdom, and all goodness; every thing that is excellent, valuable and desirable in all the kinds, and in all the degrees of perfection conceivable, in reference thereunto. I shall not speak more distinctly now, in reference to that head, because under other heads that we are afterwards to speak a little (though but a little) particularly to, there will be more occasion to discourse of these severally. But we come,

(2.) To consider of the characters of this fulness, the properties of it, whereunto it must be understood to contain what it doth contain. And so,

[1.] It is a self-original fulness, a fulness that ariseth from itself. It is the highest fountain itself, and not fed from any higher, which is the signification of that title, or that name by which God was pleased to make himself known to Moses, “I Am,” and a little more largely “I Am that I Am.” A name so expressive of this plenitude and fulness of being and all-per-

fection of God; so aptly and naturally expressive thereof, that it hath obtained naturally, easily in the pagan world, as that inscription testifies in the temple, which I formerly named, "I am that which I was, and that which is, and that which shall be, and let any man at his peril disclose my veil." And we are told by some of the ancients in the Christian church, that the notions which Plato doth so abound with, he learnt in Egypt, and came by them, it is most probable, and as they think, as having been communicated from some of the Israelites to some of the Egyptian priests with whom he afterwards conversed, that is, with those of them to whom those traditions came some centuries of years afterwards. And that this fulness is self-original, or self-originate, they must always apprehend, who do apprehend that any such thing as Deity could only be of itself, from itself. A Being of that sort and kind, as unto which not to be, was always repugnant; and so that it owes whatsoever it is, or whatsoever it hath in itself, to that peculiar excellency of its own nature, which was always necessary to it, to be what it is; can receive nothing *aliunde*, from without, and can lose nothing, or suffer no detraction of what it is, or hath already belonging to it. This is "I AM," the stable and permanent Being that is by itself what it is. That then, is the character under which we are to conceive of this divine fulness, of this perfect All-sufficiency; that it is self-originate: he being the perpetual, everlasting Spring and Fountain of it to himself. "With thee is the fountain of life." Psal. 36. 9. There, being is in its first Fountain, and life is in its first Fountain. To that, all things else that be and live, and that have any thing of motive and active power, they participate all from hence; "In him we live and move and have our being," as the apostle expresseth it, Acts 17. 28. For which he there quotes a pagan poet; and likewise for that in the adjoining words, "we are all his offspring."

[2.] We are to conceive concerning this Divine Fulness, that it is immense as well as self-originate. He is infinite, unbounded: and that it must needs be for the same reason, because it is self-originate: for causation speaks limitation, whatsoever causeth another, limits it: and that which is uncaused must be unlimited, *omnis limitatis est causata*; that which doth impart and communicate to another doth measure and bound its own communication: and from whence any thing hath that which it doth derive from another, thence it hath the bounds and limits of that which is derived. The limits of the derivation proceed from the original. Therefore it is plain whatever is uncaused must be unlimited, and so this

fulness of God being self-originate without any superior cause, must needs be immense and infinite without bounds and limits. There is nothing to bound and limit, but he existing necessarily, when all things else do exist contingently, and by dependance upon his will and pleasure, it could not be but that he must engross all being, all life, and all perfection in himself, because there was nothing else existing besides or before that which did exist necessarily, that is himself, by which what was in him could not be any way limited. Therefore, so we are to conceive of the Divine Fulness—that it is immense. It is then a perfection here spoken of God, which is not particular of this or that special kind, but which is most properly absolute and universal, to wit, of all kinds taken together, with all the several degrees that can come within the compass of each several kind. So metaphysicians are wont to distinguish of perfection, into that which is simple or absolute, and that which *sui generis*, of its own particular kind, that which hath all that belongs to that kind in it, may be said to be perfect in its own kind. That which hath the essence and properties of gold may be said to be perfect gold, and especially if it be pure from dross and doth exclude every thing that is alien from it, if it be pure. That is the notion of pure: *purum est quod est plenum sui, that is pure that is full of itself*, and hath no admixture of any thing alien from it. So may a thing be said to be perfect in its own particular kind, when it is full of itself and when it is free from admixture of any thing else. But the Divine Nature (as is evident) is infinite and immense; is not perfect of this or that particular kind, but of all kinds whatsoever; that is, of all that is excellent and valuable; yea, every thing of all being, being included and comprehended in it. Not formally, for that would make God and the creature all one, but eminently and transcendently, that is, it being in the divine power to determine whether any thing besides should be extant, or not extant. And so he is the Root of being to every thing that is, and the Spring of life to every thing that lives, and the Fountain of all excellency to every thing that can partake of it. And therefore, his perfections or fulness is not of this or that particular kind; if it were so, it were a limited fulness, a bounded fulness: but it is a fulness that comprehends all kinds together eminently, and transcendently in itself. As the root of the tree doth comprehend all the branches, that is, virtually, it comprehends that virtue in it, and transmits that which extends to all the branches, and as the very seed did virtually contain the whole tree once in itself; so all

the creation was contained in God, before it, by his appointment and command, stood forth into actual being. And,

[3.] It is hereupon an immutable Fulness. This divine fulness admits of no alteration, either by augmentation or diminution. It can neither be made more nor less than it is: either, would make a change, and no change can have place in that Being which is necessary. The Divine Being and all that plenitude and fulness that belongs to it, being self-original, it must be necessary; it could spring from no other, therefore, it must be of itself what it is: and no other imaginable reason can be assigned why such a Being doth exist, but only that peculiar excellency of its own nature, to which it was repugnant not to exist. Hereupon therefore, this is the only necessary Being, and that which is necessarily what it is, can never be other than what it is, can never vary, and therefore that "Father of lights (as the blessed God is mentioned under that name, James 1. 17.) is without variableness or shadow of turning." Without so much as the umbrage of a change, there is not the shadow of variation with him. But before the creation was he was the same, and through all the successions of time when that creation is in being, he is still the same: and if the creation should drop back again into nothing he were the same. Unto that which is necessarily what it was first, nothing can supervene, because it hath its whole being necessarily, so that there can be no addition to it: and then there can be no detraction from it, no diminution, because it hath what it hath necessarily: it is essential to be what it is. And therefore,

[4.] This plenitude of God, must be everlasting, this All-sufficiency, this perfection, must be eternal. For if there can be no variation in any, the least degree, much less is it conceivable there should be a cessation of the whole Being. A variation in any, the least degree, is altogether impossible to that which is necessarily what it is: and thereupon the eternal permanency of it in the same state must needs be consequent. Hence those amazing expressions about the Divine Being, "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." Psalm 90. 2. Set yourselves to contemplate God; you must needs yield yourselves to be lost and swallowed up in your minds upon the contemplations of that which is "from everlasting to everlasting." And so that most emphatical expression, of his inhabiting eternity; "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, I dwell in the high and holy place." Isaiah 57. 15. But before that, he was his own place, and indeed all the creation is rather vested in him, than he in any thing. Be-

fore time was, or any creature was, he had nothing to inhabit but his own eternity, that is, his own eternal Self: for eternity and the eternal One are the same thing.

Thus you have some account of the nature of the all-sufficient, perfect fulness of God, both from the contents and properties or perfections thereof; what it contains, to wit, all being, all life, all motive power, all wisdom, all knowledge, and whatsoever excellency besides you can conceive, or all that is conceivable, and indeed, all that is unconceivable by any created mind. And then, under what characters, as it is a self-originate fulness, an immense fulness, an unalterable fulness, incapable of any augmentation or diminution, and as it is an everlasting fulness.

2. The next thing is to shew you what purposes this perfect, All-sufficient fulness of God may answer. And indeed, it answers all that is any way desirable should be answered, or that it were to be wished should be answered. For,

(1.) It answers the corresponding purpose of its own felicity, to be an everlasting felicity to himself, where there is the only correspondency, that it is any way possible it should otherwise be; should any way be found between the fruitive faculty and the object. Here is an immense and boundless object for an immense fruitive faculty: nothing could satisfy God but God: there is a capacity not otherwise to be filled up. It was to be answered by nothing but himself, and therefore we must not suppose that there are any additions any way to that felicity from any thing without himself. He only enjoys himself and takes pleasure in his own designs. When he hath designs upon such poor creatures as we, he only pleaseth himself in himself, in his bountifulness, the benignity and the kindness of his own design. When he did, (he must be supposed to have done) even in the days and ages of eternity always retain with himself a design, "I will raise up such and such creatures;" such in particular as any of us; "I will in their proper time and season raise them up out of nothing, on purpose to take them into a communion and participation with me in my own felicity, my own blessedness." What is it he was pleased with? was it that he loved us or delighted in us? He was self-pleased with the kindness and benignity of his own design: not that any thing in us could draw his eye, his love, or his delight, but his kindness and goodness therein was its own reason. He sheweth mercy because he will shew mercy. It was not that one was better than another, but from that goodness of his that is invariable, and can never be better than himself, the complacency that it was always apt to take in its own designments.

From hence it is, that he hath any such thing as delectation in a creature, only as he hath freely placed a design and made it terminate upon such a one, and so is pleased in that kindness and goodness which he hath in himself, and not in any delectableness that was previously in the object. For as to that, there was no more in one than another, and if it were for that reason as such, then it must have followed that all would have a like participation in the felicity of the Divine Being. But this is the eminent, great purpose that the divine All-sufficient fulness serves for, even for his own eternal and invariable felicity. Whence he hath so frequently the title and name of “the ever-blessed God;” his own blessedness being his very essence, or essential to himself; so that he was never to be known under another name, or conceived of under another notion, than as the blessed One, the Fountain of all blessedness; “The glorious gospel of the blessed God,” saith the apostle, 1 Tim. 1. 11. And “the blessed and only Potentate.” 1 Tim. 6. 15. And “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore.” 2 Cor. 11. 31. And so of Christ as he is God, he is said to be “over all, God blessed for ever.” Rom. 9. 5. “Blessed for ever,” that is, only in himself as the only correspondent and adequate object of his own fruition. And,

(2.) His most perfect Divine Fulness, appears to have been sufficient for the creation of this world: and (which is but doing the same thing continually) preserving it ever since it was created, even until now; not only bringing it into being, a rude mass of being; but settling and conserving of order in it, and that variety and distinction of creatures, which we behold and which indeed we must suppose to be the only effect of the All-sufficient perfection of a God. The very being of such a world speaks his power; but the order that is in it and the variety of creatures wherewith it is replenished, and the continued preservation of those distinct kinds and species through so many successive ages; so that what this or that plant is, or at least was, so many thousand years ago, it continues to be the same, a thing of the same kind; in the same rank or class of being still as it was. All this is by the All-sufficient, perfect fulness of a Deity that could answer such a purpose as this, to make such a mass of created beings exist and arise out of nothing; and that so much of order and distinction of kinds should obtain and be preserved even in this natural world, through so many successive ages unto this day. It was this that the perfect All-sufficiency of God did, and doth continually serve for. And,

(3.) For the government of the intelligent world ; so that wheresoever he hath intelligent creatures he can, by bare touches upon the mind, steer them and act them this way and that at his own pleasure : make great numbers of people at once to agree in one and the same design, all of them ; as God did touch their minds in making Saul, king. And that is one instance that shews what is done throughout all the world, and all other ages, where all minds lie under the agency and influence of one supreme, universal Mind. And otherwise, how were it possible that all should conspire and agree to serve the same purpose and do the same thing. And again,

(4.) This perfect, All-sufficient Fulness serves for the defeating of the designs of his enemies ; so that he can with the greatest facility and ease, consume adversaries with a fire not blown, and make them “perish like their own dung :” and blow upon them with the breath of his nostrils and make every thing of opposition vanish when he will. And thereupon, as being perfectly Master of his own designs and having every thing in his own power with the times and seasons and ways of doing them, he lets enemies run on, foreseeing still at a distance their day that is coming. He knows their day is coming, and in the mean time sits in heaven and laughs at them, “the Most High hath them in derision :” them who say “Come, let us break their bands asunder and let us cast away their cords from us :” as it is in the 2nd Psalm.

(5.) It answers the purpose of sustaining and preserving his own, the people that he hath collected and chosen out of this world to be peculiar to himself, the whole community of them and every particular soul belonging to that community so as to lose none of them. He bears them up and carries them through all the temptations and conflicts and trials and exercises that they meet with here, in a sojourning state and in a warfaring state, so as that they are kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. And then,

(6.) And lastly, this perfect and All-sufficient Fulness serves for their final satisfaction and blessedness, when they shall be brought into that region, into his “presence, where there is fulness of joy, and to his right hand where there are pleasures for evermore.” Psalm 16. 11. And that which is felicity enough for himself, will surely be enough for them too.

LECTURE XIX.*

But now in the next place I shall speak further to you of some of the most eminent and noted of those attributes and perfections of God which are comprehended in this general one, and concerning the order of speaking to them, I shall not be much solicitous. Some distinguish them into negative and positive. But that distinction I reckon less material; because that those they call negative ones are so only verbally, there being somewhat most really positive, that is comprehended under such negative terms, as infinite and immortal and immense and the like. They are usually distinguished into communicable and incommunicable, as hath been occasionally told you already; the former whereof, being those attributes of God of which there is some image and resemblance under the same name among the creatures.

The INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES are those whereof there is no direct resemblance among the creatures, nor the very name thereof justly or properly to be given to any among them or to any thing that is to be found among them. And for this distinction of the divine attributes, they speak very properly and congruous to the nature of the thing, who tell us, that in the description of God, the former sort of these attributes (the communicable ones) do serve to express his nature more generally, or serve to supply the room of a *generus* in a definition. And that the incommunicable attributes serve to supply the place of a *difference* in a definition restraining (as it is the business of a difference to do) that general nature, that is presupposed.

And others again distinguish these several ways, that is, some do call every thing a divine attribute, which may be any way affirmed concerning God. When some others of them do only mean by a divine attribute, that which is affirmed concerning him, (as the logicians are wont to speak) "*Loquiter quid*," not "*in quo*;" as when it is said, "God is a Spirit," that they do not reckon a divine attribute which is only to answer the question, What he is? But those things only are to be called attributes, or divine perfections, that do speak more distinguishably concerning his nature, to shew what a one he is, or what a peculiar sort or kind of being he is. And so for one class of divine attributes some reckon his natural properties which do some way specify his nature.

* Preached June 12, 1691.

And then for the second kind, the faculties which, (according to our way of conceiving things) we must attribute to him. And then for a third sort, the exercises that do reside in those several faculties, and for a fourth, those that do imitate the affections that are in us belonging to the rational nature, as it is to be found with us, such as love, anger, desire, delight or the like.

I do not think fit indeed that we should tie ourselves to any such distribution. What I mentioned before, of communicable attributes and incommunicable, carries its own evident reason with it, and its own light to every one that observes things. There are some divine excellencies whereof there is an image and resemblance in the creatures fitly mentioned, under the same name in him and in them, though they do not signify the same thing in them as they do in him, but only the image or resemblance of such a thing. And then there are those that are *incommunicable*, and which neither in name nor in likeness can agree to the creature. This is a very plain distinction, obvious to any one that considers.

For his *incommunicable attributes* they are such as these, and I shall but only mention them. As,

1. His **SIMPLICITY**, absolute uncompoundedness, all excellencies and perfections meeting, and being united in him, in the absolute unity of his own Nature without division, without composition and without mixture.

2. His **IMMUTABILITY**, by which he is always invariably, eternally what he is. "I Am what I Am," without "shadow of turning," (as the apostle James's emphatical expression is) there being not so much as the shew of a change.

3. His **SELF-EXISTENCE**, or (which is all one) his necessary existence, or the necessity of his existence. That perfection of the Divine Nature, by which he is so, as that it is simply impossible for him not to be, or ever not to have been, his essence involving existence in it, so as it is not with any thing besides; for as to any created being, it may be, or it may not be; it may exist or not exist. But it is peculiar to the Divine Being to exist necessarily, so as that it cannot but exist: that is the same thing with self-existence, not existing from another, but existing only from himself. And,

4. His **INFINITENESS**, which comprehends divers things in it; for the infinity of the Divine Being, it is either extrinsical or intrinsical: extrinsical as it imparts some kind of relation to somewhat *ad extra*, or without, and so the extrinsical infiniteness of God is two fold: that which respects time and that which respects space. That which respects time is eternity,

and that infinitely exceeds all the measures of time. Consider God's duration in reference to time, and his duration is eternal, which is founded in his self-existence, or his necessary existence, was told you before. His being, is of that peculiar kind or hath that peculiar excellency belonging to it that could never not be; and therefore must exist from eternity, and must be to eternity. This is his extrinsical infiniteness in reference to time. And there is his infiniteness in reference to space, which is extrinsical too. It is somewhat supposed without, or besides himself; though but supposed or but imagined. All that space which the Divine Being doth occupy and possess: and this is his immensity. In reference to time, his infiniteness speaks eternity, in reference to space his infiniteness speaks immensity, that which some understand to be his omnipresence. And indeed, it is mostly so, but not wholly, for omnipresence even as presence is a relative term, and refers to somewhat with which it may be said to be present, and so the divine presence can refer to nothing besides himself, without the compass of the created universe, for there is nothing without that, that he can be present to. But his immensity hath an infinitely further reference, that is, to all the boundless, imaginable space (only imaginable) through which the Divine Being diffuseth itself. For not only is it truly said concerning him. He fills heaven and earth, "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Jer. 23, 24. But also, "the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him," as it is said in that seraphical prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple "Will God indeed dwell with men on the earth, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain?" And so his infiniteness in reference to space, it doth, without any limits, go beyond and transcend this vast created universe, be that as vast as it can be supposed to be: and it must be supposed to be very vast indeed, by all that do set themselves to consider what is by human indication or inquiry to be found most considerable, and who allow themselves the liberty ever to think of that vast extent of created being, in comparison whereof not only our earth is but a point, but even that vortex that covers this part of the world to which the earth belongs, is but a mere point, that which contains our sun, and the other planets; all that is but a mere point in comparison of the rest of the universe. Consider that, and the vast extent thereof, and you must yet consider, all this is but a mere point in comparison of the vast amplitude of the Divine Being, concerning which we are to conceive there is not any point of conceivable space any where, but there the Divine Being is, and still infinitely beyond it. And indeed, it is fit we should give great

scope to our thoughts, that we may as far as possible conceive in this respect worthily and greatly concerning that God whom we serve and whose name we bear, and to whom we profess to be devoted ones.

But then there is his intrinsical infiniteness besides, that is, his infiniteness considered not with reference to any thing without him, but in reference to what he is in himself. And so it signifies the unfathomable profundity and depth of his essence, including all being itself, in all the kinds, in all the degrees, and in all the perfections thereof; so as that there is no being of any kind, or of any sort, which his being doth not some way or other comprehend, virtually at least: his, being the radical Being from which all other beings spring.

Concerning these Incommunicable Attributes, or perfections of the Divine Being, I shall say no more to you than only to give you this summary and short account that I have given, because in our demonstrating the existence a God it was impossible not to speak to these things: that was a thing not to be done without mentioning such things as these, even somewhat too in a way of demonstration, that demonstrating of them we might give some account of the Being whose existence we are to demonstrate. But now there are sundry other divine attributes that I shall speak a little more distinctly to, and which lie under that other head of

Communicable Attributes, and which therefore are more familiar, and ought to be so to ourselves, as having some image, some resemblance of them, under the same names, in us; all, either have, or ought to have; some indeed have and cannot but have a resemblance in every intelligent creature, yea (and further than so) in every animate creature. And for those that fall under a moral consideration, they are such as ought to be in us, though they be not. These perfections of God are distinguished into natural, intellectual, and moral; or of his nature, mind, and will.

First. I shall consider his natural perfections: and,

1. I shall begin with that perfection of the Divine Nature whereof there is in us some kind (and ought to be in other kinds) a resemblance or image under the same name. And that is, the DIVINE LIFE, the life of God. I do not mean it now in that sense wherein it is a thing either derived to us, or prescribed to us. As in the one or the other, or both of these senses, that expression must be used and understood, (Eph. 4. 18.) "being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, and because of the blindness of their hearts," speaking of the Gentile world, and those

Ephesians themselves, while as yet they were in a state of genti-
lism. I do not, I say, speak of that life now which God re-
quires us to live, and which he makes his own children to
live. But I speak of that life which he lives himself; and
in respect whereof he is so frequently in Scripture called “the
Living God,” that excellency of his Being, which he many
times attests, to add weight and solemnity and emphasis
unto his protestations to men, to assure them that this is
so, or not so, or that this or that he doth, or doth not, or will
do, or will not do. “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no plea-
sure in the death of the wicked.” And so, upon sundry like
occasions, that form of protestation is used by him: “As I live
I will do so or so, or it is so and so;” which intimates this, to
be a most glorious excellency of the Divine Being, and that
which he lays a mighty stress upon himself, and would have
us to do so too. It is that which should highly raise our
thoughts and apprehensions of the Divine Being, to consider
him as the living God: and therefore the properties of that life
by which he lives, (after the general conception of life itself,)
would be worth our while a little to stay upon. We can have
no other general conception of life, but that it is a self-active
principle. It speaks a sort of self-activeness in the subject
wherein it is: and so, being spoken of God, it attributes that
to him in the highest perfection that can be thought, and in-
deed doth suppose it to be in him, in a perfection infinitely
beyond what we can conceive: that is, that he is by the excel-
lency of his own Being, a perpetual fountain of life to himself.
It is that which is included in the notion of a spirit, though it
is not expressive of all that is signified by that notion. It is
but an inadequate conception of what is carried in the notion of
a spirit. A spirit, it is, as such, (though that be not all) a self-
active being, a being of self-actuating vigour, that can move
itself within itself. And that is the most full and distinct con-
ception that we have of life. But taking that for the general
conception, there are peculiar excellencies of the Divine Life,
that distinguish it from life any where else. As,

(1.) His is absolutely self-originate. No other life is so;
but his is absolutely self-originate. All other life is derived,
participated, even such creatures to which life is essential, yet
their life is but participated; for admit, life is essential, (as it
is to all created spirits as such) yet inasmuch as their being
is participated and derived, so is their life too; and their being,
being a spiritual being, (though a created being) life is so es-
sential to it, for if it ceaseth to live it ceaseth to be, and so its
life and being are not separable things. It is not so with that
life which our bodies do partake of; even in ourselves, our

bodies and our souls have two very distinct sorts of life, our bodies have but a borrowed life, a united life which they borrow from the soul that is within them, and unto which they are united. That soul may retire and part, and then the body dies, and yet it is the same body that it was before: so that if it cease to live, it doth not thereby cease to be. These bodies of ours may cease to live, though not cease to be, because their life is a borrowed life from another: they have it from the soul. But the soul, that hath life in itself, essential to it; so that it cannot cease to live, but it must cease to be. But though it be so, yet its essence and life are but derived from that great Original Life, and from that great Original Being whose life we now speak of. He is the well-spring of life, (psalm 36. 9.) "With thee is the fountain of life." It is equally impossible, as was said before, for him either to cease to live, or cease to be; whereas to us this impossibility is only supposed, it is only a suppositive impossibility. If we should cease to live, we should cease to be too, in reference to these souls of ours. But it is positive as to God, that he can neither cease to live nor cease to be. His is therefore an absolute self-original Life. He hath life in himself, or by himself, as that expression is, John 5. 26. "As the Father, (who we are told is our Father) which is in heaven is perfect," perfect in this respect, hath life in himself, a perpetual spring of life within himself, so hath the Son life in himself, as he is God, and as he is God-man; life to communicate and derive from himself to quicken whom he will, as it is in that context. And then,

(2.) This life of God, as it is a self-original, so it is a self-communicative life; it is a self-communicating life. Not in the same kind, but it doth contain in itself eminently that life which it makes others to live, which it imparts unto creatures. Indeed they cannot live that same life, for life being essential unto him in whom it originally is, to communicate his life were to communicate his essence, and so we make the creature, God which is impossible. But he contains eminently in himself that life by which, formally, he makes the creature live. And so in that respect, the Divine Life, is self-communicative, causal, efficient, making those to live to whom he doth impart it. With him is the well-spring of life. Now these two things are carried in the notion of a fountain: 1st. That there be a perpetual spring in it, and 2nd. that there be a communication and efflux, a deriving of streams from that spring. These two things are carried in the very notion of a fountain. And so as he is the well-spring of life it imports,

[1.] That life that is in him to be self-original, he is the perpetual Spring of it, in himself and to himself. And then,

[2.] Self-communicative, continually deriving streams issuing and flowing out to the creatures, so as to quicken whom he will, as it is said, “the Son doth, in that,” John 5. 20. And

[3.] This life of God is an indeficient life; a life that cannot decay, a life that cannot fail, a life that cannot languish, life always in the highest perfection, every thing in God being God, and therefore no more capable of diminution or decay, than the being of God is, which, as you have heard, is a necessary being, and therefore can never be otherwise than as he is, never more perfect, nor ever less perfect. And,

[4.] It is universal life. The life which belongs to the Divine Being, is universal; that is, it carries all kind of life eminently in it, not formally but eminently. You know that there is a great variety of the kinds of life among the creatures; but all comes from one Fountain, and therefore that life which doth belong to the blessed God himself, it must be a universal sort of life, a universality of life, all kinds of life are summed up there, not formally but eminently, there being no kind of life that is lived by any creature, from the most excellent to the most mean and abject, but the power of giving it, the power of imparting it, being in himself who is the Original of life: he bath it within his own power to make that creature live this or that sort of life suitable to the capacity of its own nature, and it is observable to this purpose, that in that passage, Psalm 42. 8. where the psalmist saith, “my prayer shall be to the God of my life;” in the Hebrew it is plural, to the God of my lives. And you know, a man (and more may be said in this kind concerning a holy man, a saint) lives several sorts of lives, as he lives a vegetative life, first the life of a plant, and then the sensitive life; the life of an animal, and then the rational life; the life of a man, and then, if he be a saint, as you know the Psalmist was, a holy life. Now all these lives are comprehended together in this one Fountain. “My prayer shall be to the God of my lives.” It is he that makes me live all these several ways that I do live. As I live the life of a plant, I have it from him: as I live the life of an animal, I partake that life from him: as I live the life of a man, a rational creature, I still partake that life from him; and as I live the life of a saint, a holy man, I partake that life from him too, which carries the nearest resemblance with it of his own life.

And thus we are to conceive of our Father which is in heaven, to be perfect in respect of this high and glorious excellency of life; self-original life, self-communicative life, indefi-

cient life and universal life, that contains all sorts and kinds of life eminently in itself.

And now to make some *Use* of this subject of the *life of God*, how highly should this raise our thoughts concerning that God whose name we bear, concerning our Father that is in heaven. It must highly serve to recommend him to us,

1. As the Object of our worship. What a glorious object of worship have we! How may our souls solace themselves every time we go to worship in the contemplation of this, "I am going to worship the living God!" So he is pleased to distinguish himself from the false gods, by this same epithet of the living One. Therefore, we have living and true, put together distinctly concerning him. 1 Thes. 1. 9. "To serve the living and true God." And it is with reference to the consideration of him as the glorious Object of our worship, that the apostle speaks of him, in Acts 14. 15. when those ignorant barbarians, among whom he was, would have done worship unto him and Barnabas, he runs in among them and saith "Sirs, why do you these things? We also are men of like passions with yourselves, and preach to you that you should turn from these vanities to the living God, who made heaven and earth and all things therein. "Our business is to bespeak you to be worshippers of the living God alone." Thus doth the word magnify him above the inanimate, senseless deities of the pagan world, who were wont to worship stocks and stones and the works of their own hands; and bow down and pray to a god that could not save. And how should we magnify to ourselves the Object of our worship, under this notion, and admire and bless God that he hath revealed himself to us, so as we are not left altogether ignorant whom we are to worship, that we do not worship altogether we know not what. We know the Object of our worship carries in it the reason of its own being worshipped, which renders it a rational worship. He is the living and so the true God whom we worship.

2. How highly should it recommend him to us as the Object of our trust. "Therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe. 1 Tim. 4. 10. and chap. 6. 17 "Charge them which be rich in this world that they trust not in uncertain riches but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." How heart satisfying an Object of trust have we in this respect, considering God as the living God, the Fountain of an indeficient, never failing self-original and universal life, in all the excellencies and perfections of life.

3. What an Object of fear have we even in this conception of God, or from this divine attribute. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb. 10. 31. A man may be angry with me, and he dies and then his anger dies with him; but it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands who never dies, the hands of the everlasting God. Who would not value his favour as that wherein stands life? It should mightily raise our apprehensions concerning God to conceive of him so. And,

4. It highly recommends him to us as the Object of our imitation. For this is one of the divine excellencies or perfections, whereof there is a *mimesis*, a resemblance under the same name in us. We do all of us live (as was said) several sorts of lives wherein we do resemble God. But we should most of all resemble him in a holy life, such of us who are raised from death to life, or shall be so. And herein it is the duty of every believer to resemble him. This is matter of precept, a thing capable of being put into a command. It is no matter of duty to us to imitate him in the other kinds of life, but in this kind of life it is matter of duty to imitate him in it, that is, in the perfection of that life which is therefore called the life of God, because it is prescribed us by God, enjoined us by God and it is that wherein we are to imitate God. And therefore, it is called, even as it is in us, "the life of God." Ephes. 4. 18. Others not yet reconciled to God, not brought home, but remain in their natural, unconverted state, they are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their hearts." We are to consider God, the living God, as the Object of our imitation: and therefore, should reflect with just severity upon ourselves; "Do we pretend a relation with the living God, and say he is our God? O! then what mean our dead prayers, our dead duties, our dead hearts! that we let them be dead, and do not strive and wrestle and contend with them, to get them up to this raised perfection of life wherein we are to resemble God, and to express a visible conformity to him!" It is a severe rebuke which is put upon the Sardian church. "Thou hast a name to live and art dead." It is plain, he doth not speak of a total death, or as if there was nothing of spiritual life among them, for in the next words he saith, "be watchful and strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die." There were great degrees of deadness, but strengthen (saith he) the remains of life, "the things that remain that are ready to die," and see how it is enforced, "for I have not seen thy works perfect before God." Your heavenly Father is in this

respect perfect, as he is the living God, as life is in him in the highest pitch of perfection and excellency: "but I have not found your works perfect before me, as your heavenly Father is perfect;" therefore, "strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die;" that your life may shine in lustre and glory more suitably and conformably unto the divine life, unto the life of God himself. But now,

LECTURE XX.*

2. In the next place I shall go on to speak somewhat concerning the power of God which is another natural perfection in him, and is next of kin to the life of God. Once have I heard this, twice hath it been spoken, that power belongeth unto God, as in that 62 Psalm 1, verse. It is in him as in its native seat and subject. It belongs unto him. Nothing is more appropriate, more peculiar to God than power: and it so belongs to him as it can to no other. If we speak of strength, lo, he is strong: (as the expression is in Job) implying all created power is not to be spoken of in comparison with him. All other power is not to be named power, not worthy to bear that name. "Your heavenly Father is perfect" in this, as well as other respects: power is with him in perfection; the perfection of power belongs to him.

And here, concerning the power of God, I shall give you some instances and some properties of it.

(1.) Some instances of it. As,

[1.] That it hath been the sole, productive cause of this great creation. Consider all this vast creation as resolved back again into nothing: and then consider it all springing up out of nothing (as it were) at once. How vast a power is this! Whatsoever in all the whole universe of created things you see or hear of, or can think of; all this is raised up out of nothing by the divine power. To bring any thing out of nothing, how vast a power would it require! how far surpassing any human, any created power! If you could but suppose all the powers in all the world, if the whole creation were to be combined and united together only for this one single purpose, to make one single atom, the least that can be thought to be raised out of nothing, you would easily apprehend it would never be. If all the world were assembled to contrive and unite their power to make a grain of dust out of nothing, they must all confess it

* Preached June 26, 1691.

infinitely above them. Then to have so vast a creation as this made to arise out of nothing, at once from nothing come to being, how should it overwhelm us to think of it; all that we now behold in being, and so far beyond, so inconceivably beyond what we can behold it to be. This earth of ours, as spacious as it is, is but a mere point, compared with our own vortex; but a part, but a little corner of the creation, and that but a mere point in comparison with the rest of the universe; and all this spoken out of nothing into being by the great Creator: the word of Divine Power but saying, "Let it be," and it was. Lift up your eyes on high, as the prophet's direction is, Isaiah 49. 18. and think who hath created all this: when you behold the sun, and moon, and stars, the vast expanse of the heavens, and all the ornature thereof. And again,

[2.] There is the continual sustentation of this world, once created and made, which is the same momently expense of power; for all created being, if not continually sustained must, by its own natural mutability, every moment be dropping into nothing. So that here is the same power put forth as if a new world were created every moment. And then,

[3.] That all the motion that is any where to be found, throughout the whole universe continually proceeds so from it, that the divine power is the continual spring of it. A wonderful thing to think of! We are apt to have our thoughts soon excited and awakened concerning the divine power when we see some wonderful instance of it fall out, besides the ordinary course. When we behold the effects of some violent wind and impetuous tempest; if we see trees torn up by the roots, houses shattered down, all to pieces, mountains torn asunder, the bowels of the earth ript open, we straightway think these to be great instances of a mighty power. But the power is incomparably greater that works continually and every moment in all the motion that is any where through the universe, in the most still, and silent, and steady and composed way. The power that continually, but silently turns about the mighty orbs of heaven, and the great luminaries that are in it, and, as some think, this very earth itself, in that still, unobserved way that we can take no notice of, which if it be, is incomparably less than that the so inconceivably greater body of the sun should be moved in so inconceivably greater a space, so much larger in circuit, so vastly large, with that celerity that must answer what we expect and see every day. What must that power be that goes forth in this? Such motion of the heavenly bodies that we find move the sun, and moon, and other planets, besides all the innumerable stars, multitudes whereof are so un-

speakingly greater than the body of the sun, and that so vastly greater than this earth of ours: and all these continually turned about by a motive power: which because it is steady and constant we are therefore so stupid as not to take notice of it, or adore what is doing by it every moment, without failure, without stop, even for one moment. We are to blame that we do not more use our thoughts this way, to aggrandize to ourselves the greatness of him that made all things, and us little inconsiderable parts of them all. And again,

[4.] That this power doth work constantly and steadily with nature in a natural way, and extraordinarily, whensoever he will to whom it belongs, against nature. Here is what doth demonstrate it to be the exceeding greatness of his power, it is vastly great, as it co-operates with nature, as it works with nature. And how vastly great doth it appear as it counterworks nature in several respects, and at his pleasure whose power it is. It was great power that could make such a thing as fire to burn, to seize and prey upon other matter, and devour and consume it. But how much greater power doth it require to make fire not to burn, to bind up the natural tendency of it, as in the instance of the three children. It was a great power to make that great element of water to flow along every where as he hath assigned its receptacles and channels; and greater again when he pleaseth to make it not to flow, to congeal, as it were, and to stand up the mighty waves on a heap. And again,

[5.] If we look a little into another sort of species, what a weighty instance of this power was it to support the manhood of Christ under those sufferings of his, which he, as to satisfaction for the sins of men, and in which capacity only he was capable of suffering; to wit, as he was man, for he could not suffer as he was God. That that man should be able to bear the weight and load of all that guilt, which he undertook to expiate by his blood, which blood was necessary to expiate it, and to lay a foundation for the preaching of the gospel, which saith, "who-soever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life:" that he did not sink under that weight and load of guilt, and under the power of divine wrath, when all our iniquities did meet on him: that he, one single man should be sustained and borne up, when so vast a load and weight of guilt lay upon him: here was the power of the Godhead sustaining that one man. It was because he was Immanuel, "God with us," God in our nature. That that nature did not fail, did not sink under that mighty load: that that man should stand as the fellow of God, when the sword was drawn to strike that man his fellow: that he should stand against him and not be de-

troyed, and not be overcome, is a great power. And again hereupon,

[6.] What an instance of the divine power was the resurrection of that man? Smitten he was, and smitten down unto death, into the grave. And yet out from thence he springs up anew, by a divine power, “and was declared to be the Son of God, with power by the Spirit of holiness, by which he was raised from the dead.” It was an exceeding greatness of power, as you read, Ephes. 1. 19. which he wrought in him, or exerted, or put forth in him, when he raised him from the dead. And again,

[7.] What an instance is it of the power of God, when he changes the heart of a sinner, when he reneweth and reduceth a lapsed, fallen, apostate, degenerate creature; that is, especially when he changeth his will, the primary, main seat of that mighty change. “Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power.” Here is the perfection of divine power to be seen in this: for most plain it is, as I said before about creation, that if all the power of all this world were combined together for this one effect, to alter the will of one single man, it could never be done; you know how to crush, how to tear him into a thousand pieces, but no man knows which way to change the will of a man, not in any instance whatsoever, unless God change it himself. In instances of common concernment, nobody hath power over another man’s will; all the power of all this earth is not able to change my will if I have set it this way or that. But his people shall be a willing people in the day of his power: your heavenly Father is perfect, perfect in power in that he knows without doing violence to his creature, without offering any thing that shall be unsuitable or repugnant to its nature, to change its will. He knows how to govern his creatures according to their natures: though he knows how to rule and govern them, yea, to over-rule them contrary to their nature when he will, yet he chooses to govern his rational, intelligent creatures according to their nature, and so agreeably changes the hearts of men, according to that natural way wherein the human faculties are wont to work; a thing that all the powers of the whole world could never do besides. And again,

[8.] What an instance is it of his power to uphold the life of a regenerate soul, during its course through this world! A great instance this is, that their heavenly Father is perfect in power. For most certain it is, as soon as any one production of this kind appears, if there be a child born, a son of God born from above, all the powers of hell and darkness are presently at

work, if it might be, to destroy this new, this divine production. But it is enabled to overcome. "He that is born of God keepeth himself, that the evil one toucheth him not:" and "he that is born of God overcometh the world." This is by a divine power annexing itself to, and working in, and with, this new creature. The apostle speaking of one weak in the faith, (Rom. 14. 1.) weary in the faith, as the original signifies, shews that such a one might be received, but not to doubtful disputations: for God (saith he) is able to make him stand. This poor weakling, one that is weak in the faith, receive him (saith he) for God (as despicable a thing as he appears) is able to make him stand. Every new-born child is weak, and we must conceive so concerning every regenerate soul: he is at first weak, and they are always too weak, (God knows) as long as they remain here in this world. They have distempers, weakening distempers always about them. But concerning such a weakling, that it should be said, "God is able to make him stand," makes it to be an instance of a divine, enabling power that ever he should be made to stand. And it is the like case where such are spoken of under the notion of bruised reeds, to make a bruised reed stand against all the shocks of hell, when all the infernal powers are engaged to overthrow it: God shews that he is able to make it stand. And thus it is with such a poor creature all the time of his abode upon earth, hell is engaged in a continual conflict against his precious life, and purposely and with a design to destroy that. But God is able to make it stand, it lives as a spark amidst the raging ocean, and is never extinct but always lives. What an instance of the divine power is this! And again,

[9.] Restraining the wrath of man combined with the power of hell against his church in this world. He hath built this church upon a Rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. The design hath been always driven, and the attempt continually renewed from age to age. One age hath been industriously at it to root religion out of the world, to extinguish the divine seed, but they could make nothing of it: another age rises up after them, "Come (say they) let us handle the matter far more wisely and take better methods and carry it more secretly, that we may do our business more securely, and see what we can do to extinguish and root out religion:" and so the age after that, and then the next after that, and so from age to age until this age, and yet the thing is not done: yet this church remains, and is still in being, and is yet propagating itself. This is owing to the perfection of divine power. Their Father which is in heaven is perfect, perfect in this pow-

er of his, by which he conquers all the powers which are engaged against his poor church in this world, he triumphs over the feeble and impotent attempts of men and devils. “He that sits in the heavens laughs, the Most High has them in derision.” The wrath of man shall praise him and the remainder thereof will he restrain. Psalm 76. 10. The wrath of man he turns to his praise; he makes matter of praise and triumph to himself that the wrath of man goes forth; pleasing himself with this, “How shall these wretched creatures see themselves foiled and baffled within a little while!” He raiseth trophies and triumphs to the greatness of his power, from all the wrath of man that goes forth. And that which shall not belong to his praise, all that he will restrain. He can let it go forth as he pleaseth, and restrain the remainder thereof as he pleaseth. What he lets go forth, creates to himself a name upon its going forth, and he suppresseth the rest. And though I might thus multiply instances, I shall add but this one more: and that is,

[10.] The power he shews in forbearing and sparing a sinful world, and (upon his own prescribed terms) here and there, as he pleaseth, pardoning and forgiving particular sinners. This is a power which in some respects surmounts all the rest, or an instance of power that surpasseth all other instances. In other instances, his power shews itself in mastering of a creature, or outdoing all created power, but herein he useth a certain sort of power over himself, restraining his own great wrath, omnipotent wrath, that it break not forth to consume a world, and turn it into flames, as it righteously might have done many ages ago. “Let the power of my Lord be great according as thou hast said. The Lord is gracious and merciful, and of great forbearance, forgiving iniquities, transgression and sin.” Let the power of my Lord be great. O! how great is his power over this world! But how much greater is his power over himself, when he withholds his anger, and lets not his fury go forth to consume and make an end of sinners, as he easily could in a moment. But,

(2.) I shall in the next place, after these instances, give you some properties of this divine power. It is,

[1.] Original, as must be said of all divine attributes. All other power is derived, secondary, borrowed, participated from another; but the divine power, God is beholden to none for; it is self-sprung, self-original. “This have I heard,” saith the Psalmist, “once and again, that power belongeth unto God.” It is in him, as in its native subject. His is the first power, the very beginning of power. It is in him as in the root and foun-

tain: and so he is of himself, the mighty One. "If we speak of strength, he is strong." Job 9. 19. As if it had been said, All other strength is not worth the speaking of. If we speak of strength, meaning a strength fit to be spoken of, or mentioned under that name, that is divine strength. The divine is self-originate, it is in him as in its first original. And again,

[2.] It is irresistible, or invincible, not to be resisted if he pleaseth, and not to be overcome however. He will work and none shall let it. His work shall go on, of whatsoever kind it be; if he have designed it once, resolved it once, it shall be done through all, whatsoever opposition. Saith that man of God Moses, that great man, (Deut. 32. 3. designing there to give an account of God) "Because I will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe ye greatness unto our God: He is the rock, his work is perfect." It is spoken concerning him and his work as a stated, settled character, that whatsoever work he resolves upon, he will make thorough work of it; and so his work shall bear the heavenly image upon it. Your heavenly Father is perfect, and his work is perfect, carried on irresistibly, whatsoever it is, upon which he sets his great heart, against all opposition. And again,

[3.] He is a self-moderating power; a power that can moderate itself. Indeed, the power of all intelligent beings is more or less so. It belongs only to brute agents to act, *ad ultimum*. Intelligent ones can govern their own power. But such is the divine power in perfection, a self-governing power that doth not go forth *ad ultimum*. He can temper it as he pleaseth, and there is a most observable indication of the peculiar excellency of his power in this respect continually, though men observe it not, though men take no notice of it, that it is self-moderating, as was said before, there could be no such thing as motion any where throughout this great creation of God; but through a motive power from him, even his own motive power, he being the first mover; no hand turns, no creature moves but by a participation of a power from him, the great Fountain of all power. But now supposing without the creation, apart from the creation, so vast a power (as the divine appears to be) to go forth without moderation, without restraint, if once there were such a consistent thing and this world, by any means formed and connected together, I say by any means formed and connected together, that divine power, not self-moderated power, must needs shatter this consistent world all in pieces in a moment. If that power were not self-moderated, so that things are guided and moved in a steady, orderly course, it must be so. How easily doth a great wind throw down a

house ! Then so vast a power going forth from the Creator of this world, supposing it compacted, congested, brought to a consistent thing already, must needs shatter it all in pieces if that power were not self-moderated that goes forth upon it. And again,

[4.] An infinite power; that is a further property of it. How often is the great God, our God, our heavenly Father celebrated as the Almighty. "I know that thou canst do all things," saith humbled, convinced Job, when God puzzled him with so often repeated, "Canst thou? Canst thou do this? and canst thou do that thou seest done? and where wast thou when I did so and so? when I laid the foundations of the earth? where wast thou when the morning stars sang together? who ever thought of thee in that age?" When God had thus argued with him and brought him down to the dust, (chap. 42.) he saith, "I know thou canst do all things and that no thought can be withheld from thee." That is, "Whatsoever thou thinkest to do, nothing can withhold thy thought from proceeding to execution, from coming into fact, if thou wilt do it. Thou hast an unbounded power without limits." But this must be duly understood. It is to be noted here,

First. Concerning the infiniteness of the divine power, its omnipotency, its almightiness, that it can never exemplify itself by an infinite effect. As it doth not follow, because divine power is infinite therefore the world created by that power is, or could be infinite: or, that it was possible for God to make an infinite one; you would think that strange perhaps. Cannot an infinite power produce an infinite effect? Can it produce an effect contrary to itself? No, but yet the other is impossible: and the reason is so plain, that I think when you consider it, every one will understand it. That is, if you should suppose the infinite power of God to have made an infinite effect, this infinite effect can be made no better, no greater than it is; for nothing can be added to what is infinite; and if so, then that infinite power could do nothing more. So that it is a contradiction for an infinite cause to produce an infinite effect, for an infinite cause, would be exhausted by producing an infinite effect: but an infinite cause can never be exhausted, therefore an infinite effect can never be produced by it. That is, it can never be said concerning an infinite cause, that it can do no more. But if it should have produced an infinite effect it could do no more, for nothing can be added to what is infinite. And,

Secondly. This is to be further noted, that this infinite power, omnipotence, almightiness, it cannot do impossible

things, neither things naturally impossible, nor things morally impossible.

i. Not things naturally impossible. It can give being to nothing that carries self-repugnance in it, that should imply a contradiction if such a thing should be. Whatsoever implies a contradiction is no object of omnipotency. As for instance, to make that not to be; that is, while it is, to make a thing to be and not to be at the same time; or to make a thing that hath been, not to have been. This implies a contradiction, this is naturally impossible and so, by consequence, is not an object of almightiness. And,

ii. Any thing that carries in it a moral impossibility is no object of divine power. To do an unjust thing, to lie, is impossible with God, impossible to his nature; and therefore, when we speak of the infiniteness of divine power, the perfection, the absolute perfection of it, we are to consider this as it is conjoined with other divine perfections, and so we are not to measure our notion, or conception of the divine power, by what it, abstractly considered, can do, but as it is the power of a Being in all other respects absolutely perfect. It is one thing therefore to inquire and determine what almighty power, considered apart by itself, can do, and another thing to consider what almighty power in conjunction with all other divine perfections can do, as it is in conjunction with holiness, justice, mercy, and wisdom. And it can never work but as it is in conjunction with these, as it is joined with all these together. Though God be almighty, omnipotent, he cannot do any unjust thing, an inept thing, a foolish thing. This were impotency, not omnipotency. It would speak him impotent, not omnipotent: it were an imperfection of power, not a perfection of it. We must consider him as perfect in power, and it would be an imperfection of power to suppose him enabled to do any thing that were unfit to be done. And then,

[5.] In the last place, his is eternal power. His eternal power and Godhead go together, "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." A perpetual, never failing spring, he is in this, as he is in all the attributes and excellencies of his being; "I Am that I Am. What I Am, I am without variableness, or without shadow of turning." That continual expense of power that hath been ever since the creation, first arose out of nothing, hath not made that power suffer any diminution, nor can it suffer any. He is still the same, without variableness, without mutation, without so much as the shadow of a turn, of a decay, of any failure.

Let us make some *Use* of this,

1. Labour deeply to apprehend this perfection of the Divine Being: fix the apprehension of it: let all our hearts say within us, “Lord we subscribe, we agree, we yield to the light and evidence of divine truth concerning thy divine power.” It is a lamentable case that the clearest notion of divine truth should be with us, as if we held the quite contrary, so as that with reference to effects, and impressions upon our spirits, it were all one to us, to believe that God were omnipotent, and had all power, infinite power, and to believe he had no power. It is a reproach to us, that our notions of truth, when they are never so plain, are so insignificant, so void of effect, and of their proper correspondent impression upon us.

2. Take heed of admitting disputations against the divine power. Let the foundation be once firmly laid with you, that power belongs to him in its highest perfection; and then admit no disputations against it. We are too prone to do so, to misimpute things, to impute things wrong that we take notice of, and that come under our observation, and make that a cause which is not a cause; we think that things do go in this world many times very irregularly, and so as we wish they might not, or they did not do, and secret atheism unobservedly slides in and insinuates itself. “If there be a perfect One, perfect in power as he is in all his other attributes, why are things thus? why do they go thus? why is not what is amiss redressed, and presently redressed?” But, as was said before, we are not to judge of what the divine power *can* do, but to consider it in conjunction with other attributes: consider it in conjunction with perfect wisdom, as we shall have occasion afterwards to speak, consider it in conjunction with perfect liberty and with absolute sovereignty. If we did consider things thus, “We are not to imagine that the divine power is to be exerted according to our will, but according to his will,” dispute would cease, the matter would drop: we should presently say, “I yield the cause, he knows better how to use his own power than I can direct him.” “Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, and who, being his counsellor, hath instructed him?” And,

3. That it may be so, let us labour to get our spirits into an adoring frame and disposition towards him under this notion, as our heavenly Father who is perfect in power, as the perfection of power is in him. Let him be always great and admirable in our eyes under that notion, and so considered. And further,

4. Let us glory in him upon that account: let our hearts exult in the thoughts that our heavenly Father is perfect in this respect. Walk accordingly in his name, glory in it, make your boast of him all the day long. This hath been the temper and

genius that hath governed among a people related to him heretofore. "Our God is in heaven and he hath done whatsoever pleased him." When all people are wont to walk each one in the name of his god, why should not we walk in the name of the Lord our God? Their gods that are no gods, they please themselves with and take a kind of pride in owning them. O how warrantable a matter of gloriation have we, to go with hearts lifted up in the name of our God! Our God is in the heavens, and doth whatsoever pleaseth him: and can with the greatest facility carry every cause that he is engaged in. He cannot fail, finally to own and right all that are brought to him, and adhere to him, whatsoever their present excuses for awhile may be. Learn hence again,

5. To value an interest in him, and covet it, and labour to make it sure and clear. Who can but think it the most desirable thing in all the world, to have him who is so infinitely perfect in this, as in all other respects, for their God? How secure would it make a man's heart, how quiet and rationally quiet to think, that power, all power, is in the hands of my Father! My Father can do whatsoever he will, he hath all power in his hand. And then,

6. When you have made it your business to secure an interest in him upon this account, and under this notion, then trust in him under the same notion. Exercise a daily, vital trust upon him. "Trust in the Lord for ever, for with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Isaiah 26. 4. See how things correspond there, "Trust in the Lord:" "Why," might the soul say, "I have need of a God, and a strong one to trust in." In the Lord Jehovah is strength; trust in him. "But I have need of strength for ever, being made to live for ever." In him is *everlasting* strength; so that you have as much reason to trust in him to day as you had yesterday, and will have to-morrow as you had to day: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength, strength that will never fail, and it is trust that must keep you from falling. "He gives power to the faint and to them that have no might he increaseth strength;" and "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." Isaiah 40. 29. 31. And,

7. Lastly, Dread to have him for an enemy. O! consider the fearful case of such as are engaged in a contest with him! Consider their folly, their madness, their misery; and labour to keep at the remotest distance from their state: fly from that sort of men as a dreadful spectacle; you fly from among them by ceasing to be of them. That is, by seeking reconciliation with God, and an interest in him, and striking a covenant with him, then you are delivered from being of them; but think in

the meanwhile with pity and compassion, what mad creatures they are, that are engaged in a contest against omnipotency, “Woe to him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth.” But what! shall a potsherd of the earth strive with all the powers of heaven? How unequal a match, how mad a choice is this! And from thence take your measure of what is like to become of all the contestations in this world against God, and against his interest. We are not to prescribe to him concerning the times and seasons and methods: but do you see a sort, a generation of men set against God and godliness? It is easy to judge the event; you may easily foresee the effects in the power of their productive cause.

And thus I have gone through those attributes which we call his natural perfections.

LECTURE XXI.*

Secondly. I shall now come to speak of those perfections of God that are to be considered under the head of *intellectual* ones, and there we have these two to consider and speak of, as more eminent perfections, the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, and his WISDOM. These are great perfections of the Divine Mind, wherein we must understand our heavenly Father to be perfect, as the text stiles him. I shall speak to these both together, they being congenerous, and of one sort and kind, though they are to be conceived of by us, with some distinction. And,

1. FOR HIS KNOWLEDGE: our heavenly Father is perfect in this respect; or his knowledge is most perfect knowledge. It appears to be so, both in respect of the peculiar nature of it, and in respect of its extent, with reference to the objects about which it is conversant.

(1.) In respect to the peculiarity of its nature: it is knowledge of such a kind as is appropriate to God only: that is, upon this account principally, that it is entirely intuitive not discursive. It is not such a sort of knowledge as that by which we proceed, as we do from the knowledge of plainer and more obvious things to the knowledge of those that are darker and more obscure. But his knowledge of all he knows is simultaneous, that is, he knows all things at once, all at one view. We come to know some things by the knowledge of others which we foreknew, and so are fain to lead on our minds from step to

* Preached October the 9th, 1691.

step, and from point to point. The case is not so with him. All things are at once naked and manifest to his view, so as that, though he doth see the connexion of things and knows them to be connected; yet he doth not know them or any of them because they are so connected; that is, because he knows such things, therefore knows such other things as are connected therewith, as it is with us, while we proceed by rotation from the knowledge of some things to the knowledge of more. His is in this respect most perfect knowledge. And,

(2.) It is so in respect of its extent, in reference to the objects known. And we must,

[1.] Suppose the extent of this knowledge so vast as to reach simply unto all things: that is, not only all things that do exist, but all things that are even possible to do so. In this respect, with reference to the objects of divine knowledge, it is aptly wont to be distinguished into that which they call *Simplicis intelligentia et puræ visionis*. It is no matter for opening to you those terms; but the thing intended to be signified by the one and the other is briefly this—that God doth not only know all those things that shall certainly be, but all those things that are possible to be. And so in that respect the object of his knowledge is equal to his power. There is nothing possible but what he can do, but what he can effect. Every thing is possible to him because he can make it to be. And so vast as that *ambitus, circle* of his omnipotence, so vast also is the object of his knowledge or omniscience; that is, he knows whatsoever he can do he knows the utmost extent of his own power though he never intends to do actually all he can. But then,

[2.] The perfection of this knowledge, in reference to the object of it, is most especially conspicuous in two things, namely,—that he knows all futurities and—that he knows all the most secret thoughts and purposes of men, or generally of his intelligent creatures.

First. That he knows all contingent futurities. It is needful you should understand me right here, not only bare futurities, that is, things that shall certainly come to pass. There are many men can certainly foretell many future things: that is, natural futurities and such as do depend upon certain and settled causes; as when it is morning, the night will come, when the sun is risen, that it will set, when the sea has ebbed, that it will flow, and the like; but contingent futurities mean quite another thing, that is, such futurities as do depend upon free causes, such as do depend upon the will and pleasure of such creatures as have a certain sort of liberty belonging to their nature. And thence comes that miracle of pro-

phesying; that God should be able to tell so distinctly and with such certainty, for many ages yet to come, that such and such things, men will do. Nor are we to think so debasingly of this knowledge of God as to suppose it depends only upon this his purpose to make a man do whatsoever he knows he will do; which indeed were to debase it into the very dirt, and to make him accessory to all the impurities and wickedness in the creation, by men or devils. And it is to narrow it as much as to debase it: that is, to suppose that he could not know that men would do so and so unless he would make them do the very things that he forbids them, in the very circumstances wherein he forbids them. And this indeed were to subvert the whole entire notion of divine forbearance and permissive providence. As when we are told (Rom. 3. 25) "That God set forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." To suppose that sin should be past, through the forbearance of God, that is, that he forbearing men, they sin, were a subverting the notion of forbearance, if he made them do (by a positive effective influence) all that they do in a way of sin, though the thing be never so apparently evil in itself most intrinsically evil, as the very act of hating himself. To suppose that he should only so know this or that, that he should be ignorant who should hate him and who should not, among the children of men, unless he should make them hate him, and determine to make them do so that he might know what they would do; this were not only to debase, but infinitely to narrow this knowledge of God. To suppose that he cannot know but upon such and such terms, or in the same way wherein the devil hath some certain foreknowledge of what he intends to his uttermost to make men do, must infinitely debase and narrow his knowledge. He is not an idle or unconcerned supervisor of the affairs of this world, and doth not only foreknow whatsoever one will do, but he knows too how to limit their actions and how to restrain and how to convert and turn to good, what they do with the most evil and mischievous intentions and designs, but upon this it is that he doth demonstrate his Godhead, that he is able to declare future things long before they come to pass, and did so; that he hath given such predictions of what should be, long before it was. In many places of the prophet Isaiah he doth, as it were, magnify his own Deity in opposition to the paganish gods, by this, that he hath declared the end from the beginning, even what shall be in all after-times. As in the 41. 44. and 48. chapters of that prophecy we have many passages of that import. And in that 41 chapter, verse 22, 23. he doth, (as it were) provoke and challenge the

heathen deities to demonstrate their Godhead this way. "Produce your cause," (saith he) "let them declare things to come, that we may know that they are gods:" as if he had said, "Let them never talk of being gods, or that there is any such thing as deity belonging to such despicable idols unless they can foretell things to come. And this is the true import of that great scripture: Rev. 19. 10. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy:" that is, that which should demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion or prove against all contradiction that Jesus was the Christ, was the spirit of prophecy so long before, that he should come at such a time and in such circumstances into the world as eventually he did. And,

Secondly. This perfection of divine knowledge is most eminently conspicuous in this too, his knowledge of the hearts of men; that he knows the most secret thoughts and purposes of men's hearts, and looks into them with an eye that injects fiery beams. He hath an eye as a flame of fire, that searcheth hearts and tries reins; so as that when there is (as it were) a challenge given to all this world; "Who can know the heart of man?" It "is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked who can know it?" (Jer. 17. 9.) here comes one, that answers the challenge, "I the Lord search the heart and try the reins." And this is one of the great things that both demonstrates and magnifies his Godhead. Amos 4. 13. "He that formed the mountains and created the wind, and that declares to man what is his thought, the Lord, the God of hosts is his name."

I shall not further insist on this, but pass on to the other intellectual perfection, in respect whereof we also ought to conceive our heavenly Father is perfect; that is,

2. HIS WISDOM. He is perfect in being perfectly wise, all-wise as well as all-knowing. I told you we were to speak of these perfections of the Divine Nature, and conceive of them, according to what analogy they have to such things as go under the same names with us, and so wisdom and knowledge are two distinct things. Many know much who are not wise: but so we are to conceive of the perfections of our heavenly Father, that he is not only most perfectly knowing, but most perfectly wise also. Wisdom, you know, is commonly distinguished into speculative and practical: sapience and prudence. Indeed, the former doth not greatly differ from knowledge but somewhat it doth. It is not needful for me to stay to explain to you the distinct notions of intelligence, sapience and science. The first whereof, is the knowledge of principles, the last of conclusions, and the middle comprehends both together.

But besides what hath been said concerning the knowledge of God, it will be of more concernment to us to consider his wisdom, as it corresponds to that which with men is called prudence, as the expression is Prov. 8. 12. for both are most conjunct with him. “I wisdom dwell with prudence.” And so this wisdom lies in always proposing to himself the best and most valuable end: and choosing the aptest and most suitable measures and means for computing it. According as any one doth more perfectly both these, he ought to be accounted more perfectly wise. Now his end is known to every one that knows any thing of God, he cannot but be his own end. As he is the Author so he must be the End of all things for himself. He hath made all things for himself, by the clearest and most indisputable right. There could never have been any thing but by him, and it is not to be supposed that he should make a creature to be his own end. It would not consist with the wisdom of a God, that he should do so: it were indeed to make a creature to be a God to itself, or that he should upon such terms make a creature to ungod himself. And whereas, the just display of his own glory is the means to his end, his doing that, is most conspicuous in such things as these, to wit, in the creation of the world, in his providential government of his creatures, in the mighty work of redemption, wherein he hath abounded in all wisdom and prudence; and in the conduct of his redeemed through all the difficulties of time to their eternal state.

These are the means; or his actual displaying or diffusing of the beams of his glory in all these ways, is that by which he doth effect his own glory, make it to shine as that he is thereupon the most worthy and becoming Object unto all eternity, of all the adoration and praise of his intelligent creatures; the most worthy and deserving Object, whatsoever is done, or not done by any of them. My limits will not allow me to insist, at least not largely, on these things.

(1.) The creation of the world. What a display of wisdom was there in that! If we take but the two great and comprehensive parts of it, heaven and earth, “He hath established the earth by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his understanding,” or discretion. Jer. 10. 12. And if you should look into the one or the other of these more comprehensive parts, it would not be conviction only, but transport and admiration that we ought to be put into every hour, or as often as we make any such reflection. But I must not go into particulars, as I might. And then,

(2.) For the providence by which he governs this created

world, and all the variety of creatures in it, so as that all things in their own particular places and stations do most directly subserve the purposes for which they were visibly made, they are sustained that they may do so: they are guided and governed and ordered in all their natural tendencies and motions that they may do so. And,

(3.) For that wonderful work of redemption, the apostle gives us this note about it, that he hath therein abounded in all wisdom and prudence. Ephes. 1. 7, 8. Herein did the perfection of wisdom and prudence shine forth, to reconcile the mighty, amazing difficulties, and seeming contrarieties, real contrarieties indeed, if he had not some way intervened to order the course of things, such as the conflict between justice and mercy; that the one must be satisfied in such a way as the other might be gratified; which could never have had its pleasing, grateful exercise without being reconciled to the former. And that this should be brought about by such an expedient, that there should be no complaint on the one hand nor on the other, herein hath the wisdom of a crucified Redeemer, that is, whereof the crucified Redeemer or Saviour was the effected Object, triumphed over all the imaginations of men, and all the contrivances, even of devils and hell itself; for they undoubtedly were so secure upon no account as this, that they saw our Lord die. Satan filled the heart of Judas to bring it about that he might die; animated the whole design: this was the devil's contrivance, "If he that is turning the world upside down, doing such wonders every where, all men running after him be but dead, if we can bring him to his end, we shall certainly make an end of his religion, we shall certainly make an end of his design." But even by that death of his, by which the devil contrived the last defeat, the complete destruction of the whole design of his coming into the world, even by that very means it is brought about so as to fill hell with horror, and heaven and earth with wonder. And then,

(4.) The conduct of the redeemed through this world, notwithstanding all the obstacles, discouragements, and difficulties that lie in their way, what a display, a glorious display of the divine wisdom is there in this! I shall not speak to particulars distinctly, but only give some general account. As,

[1.] That it hath never yet made any wrong step; that amidst all these wonderful varieties of actings and dispensations wherein it hath been engaged ever since there was a creation, there should never be any one wrong step made, nothing amiss done, nothing ever done out of time, or otherwise than it should. And,

[2.] That it is never at a stand, never puzzled, hath always its way open to it, every thing forelaid: “Known to God are all his works from the beginning,” as that sage speech is of the apostle James, at the famous council of Jerusalem. Acts 15. He can never meet with a difficulty that can put him to a stand; for his way is always plain and open before him. And,

[3.] That he never loses his design, never misseth any end that he proposes to himself: The counsel of the Lord always stands, and the thoughts of his heart take place through all generations. Psalm 33. 11. And,

[4.] That he doth so frequently disappoint and bring to nothing the designs of the wisest and most contriving men, turns their wiles upon their own heads, “takes the wise in their own craftiness,” drives their way headlong, precipitates their counsels into confusion and abortion: as the expressions are in that 5th Job 12, 13. and in the 33d psalm, 9, 10. And many more we have in Scripture, of the like import. And then,

[5.] That he frequently surpriseth the most apprehensive and sagacious among men; doth things that it was never thought he would do; wondrous things, terrible things that we looked not for. Isaiah 64. 3. Sometimes they are fearful surprises that he brings upon men, and sometimes grateful ones. Indeed, the same dispensation may be at the same time most terrible and most grateful, most terrible to one sort and most grateful to another, as they must be understood to be that are mentioned in Isaiah 64. 3. “Terrible things that we looked not for, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.” That is, the most mountainous oppositions, the loftiest and most aspiring spirits brought down and made to stoop: and all their pride laid in the dust; so it hath often been beyond all expectation, he still shewing his ways to be as much above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, as the heaven is high above the earth, and as the east is far removed from the west. So it hath been when he hath gone beyond any fear or foresight of his enemies, and above all the hopes and desires and prayers of his people, done beyond what they could ask or think. What wonderful conspicuous beamings forth of the divine wisdom, have there been in such ways as these!

I shall not discourse to you further doctrinally, concerning these things. Something I would say by way of *Use*, before I pass from them. Thus our heavenly Father is perfect. Why these are very clear notices of God, which we soon hear; we have heard them now within the compass of a little time; and we as soon assent to them as we hear them. But pray let us look into ourselves and consider, What impressions have they li-

therto made upon our hearts? Have our hearts been all this while leaping and springing within us, and saying, "This God is our God; our heavenly Father is thus perfect?" Hath that been the lively sense of our souls within us all this while? And consider, these notices of God are not new to us. Did we never hear before that the living and true God is all-knowing and all-wise? When were we without these apprehensions? Such a conception of God as this we have had ever since we had the use of our understanding, and heard or knew any thing of God at all. But pray consider, What suitable, permanent and abiding impression have we borne about the world with us hitherto? and what is he so far manifested and made known to us for? Is it not that our spirits might be formed by the discovery, and our minds thereby governed agreeably thereunto? How comes it to pass that such things as these should have had all this while no more influence to beget a correspondent heart and spirit in us towards God? Is it that these things are of little weight, that they sink no more into our hearts and souls? Or is it a matter of small concernment to us, what a one he is whom we take for our God, or profess to have so taken? Is that a matter of small concernment to us? Do we know what the name of God imports? To be a God to us, is to be our "All in all," to be such a one to us every way, in point of good to be enjoyed, in point of power and authority to be obeyed and submitted to. Can it be a little matter in our eyes, what a one our God is, he that we have to do with continually as our God? And by how much the more easily we assent to such things concerning him when we hear them, it argues that they are so much the plainer, and therefore that the guilt must be unspeakably the greater and unspeakably the heavier, if our hearts and spirits be not in some measure proportionably framed and steered and conducted according to the import and tendency of so plain things. These are not dark things that need much explication to us, nor doubtful things that need proof or demonstration. We are satisfied already, that he could not be God, who is not infinitely knowing, and infinitely wise, and perfectly both. So that we have nothing at all to do but to comport in the frame and temper of our spirits, and in the course of our walking with these most evident things. And by how much the greater they are, and the more sacred they are, (and things that we profess to believe and apprehend concerning God must be such, for a greater one could not be concerned than he,) the greater profaneness must it be to abuse such notices as these are, or not to use them, not to improve them to their proper purpose and end. We know such things con-

cerning God: and have we nothing to do with the things of God, but to trifle with them or to let them lie by as neglected, useless things, when they are to run through our lives and to have a continual influence upon us through our whole course from day to day? Are these things right in our minds and understandings, and our hearts in the mean time only as a *rasa tabula*, a mere blank? There are such notices in our minds, but look into our hearts and see what corresponds there. Alas! there is nothing, a mere vacuity: what a sad case is this! and yet the discovery of these things breathes no other design but only to form our hearts and spirits and that our lives may be proportionably governed. It is a dreadful thing to have the knowledge of God lie dead in our souls, as if that were to go for nothing. Here I might shew you what impressions this discovery of the divine perfections should make upon our hearts, and might thence proceed to shew you in many instances that it doth not make that impression which it should. But I must not take that course. I will briefly hint a little at the former, the latter you will recollect yourselves: *rectum est index sui et obliqui*: If it doth appear once what we should be and do, correspondently to the apprehension of the divine perfection in these respects, it will be easy to us to animadvert on ourselves and see wherein we are not what we should be, and do not what we should do correspondently hereunto. It is plain,

1. That such a discovery of God, in these perfections of his, should conduce greatly to the forming and composing of our spirits to adoration, to make adoration of him to be very much the business of our lives. How grateful should it be to us to think we have such an Object for worship and adoration, the all-knowing and the all-wise God! How vastly different in this respect is our case from theirs that worship stocks and stones for deities, senseless and inanimate things! That worship woods and trees and rivers and fountains and beasts and creeping things and the like. What hath God done for us that he hath made himself known to us in these great perfections, as the Object of our worship! that when we pray we know we pray to an intelligent Being that knows all things, and an all-wise God that judgeth what is best and most suitable to be done in reference to what we supplicate him about, and when and how to do all that he judgeth fit to be done. There ought not only to be an adoring frame in solemn worship hereupon, but an adoring frame we should carry about with us through this world, often looking up to him, and considering that we have always an eye to meet our eye, and are to apply mind to mind, (what a satisfaction is that!) understanding to understanding, our im-

perfect understanding to his perfect one. With what adoring souls should we go through this world every day upon this account! But do we do so? Consider how far short we come in so plain a case as this is. And again,

2. Should it not make us stand much in awe? The matter is plain: great knowledge and wisdom in a man, great prudence creates great reverence, especially if it be in conjunction with things that we know are in the highest conjunction here, if in conjunction with authority, power and dignity. But even apart they do much in this kind; when a man hath the repute of a wise man, of a knowing person, it would strike us with so much awe as not to trifle, not to play the fool in the presence of such a one. Is there any thing proportionable with us in our frame and deportment towards the all-knowing God? Our heavenly Father is perfectly knowing, perfectly wise; in what awe should we stand of him continually upon these accounts! And again,

3. It should fill us with shame to think what he knows by us. He is all eye as one said truly of him. With what confusion should it fill us to think he should know so much by us every day? Every vain thought, every light motion of our mind, all our fooleries, all our triflings, all our impurities that lodge and lurk in our hearts are known to him. This thought made a great impression upon a heathen; (Seneca, as he testifieth himself,) *omnia sic ago, tanguam in conspectie, I do every thing as in sight*, as having an eye that doth *rimari, pry* into my breast. O! what a shame is it that we should need a heathen instructor in such a matter as this! and how confounded should we be before the Lord to think what he knows by us continually, that we should be ashamed that men should know such things concerning us, as we are not ashamed he should know. The ingenuity of grace is wanting, it works not, shews not itself. It hath wrought like itself heretofore, "I blush, I am ashamed to lift up mine eyes to heaven," saith good Ezra, and that, when he speaks not so much neither concerning his own sins as the sins of the people.

4. How should it make us study to be sincere. Nothing in us so answers perfect wisdom and knowledge in God, as sincerity. Every thought of my heart thou hast known long before; and it follows in the same Psalm, 139. "Search me O Lord and try me, and shew me if there be any evil way" (any painful way as the hebrew admits to be read) "in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Again,

5. It should possess us with great complacency, (those that can reflect upon their own sincerity,) that they are continually in view to God. It should be a complacential thought, to think

that he who is so perfectly knowing, and so perfectly wise, knows their sincerity, and knows too, all their infirmities. That he knows their sincerity, “Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” John 21. 17. And that he knows their infirmities, and will consider them with indulgence and compassion. “He knows our frame and remembers that we are but dust.” Psalm 103. 14. And,

6. It ought to possess us with trust, habitual trust that should run through our lives. Is not such a one fit to be trusted? doth it not highly recommend him to us as the Object of our trust, that we know him to be perfectly knowing and perfectly wise? You can easily apprehend, an ignorant fool is not to be trusted. One that is ignorant and a fool is no fit object of trust. Is not he therefore that is perfectly knowing and perfectly wise, a fit Object? How cheerfully therefore should you trust him with all your concernments, how cheerfully should you intrust him with the concerns of this world, and your part and share therein? considering in what hand your affairs and all affairs do lie, even in his who will make, “all things work together for good.” So he hath engaged to do, and he is most knowing and most wise that hath so engaged. Impudent persons promise rashly what is not in their power, but he that is perfectly knowing and wise can never do so. Though I might mention divers other things I will shut up all with this,

7. It should make us study conformity to him in these respects. Have we this discovery of the perfections of our heavenly Father, that he is perfectly knowing and perfectly wise? It should make us endeavour after conformity to him in knowledge and wisdom: for these are some of his communicable excellencies; that is, his imitable ones. We should think with ourselves, “Is it for me to pretend to him as a child, to call him Father, to say, my Father which is in heaven is perfectly knowing and perfectly wise, when I am nothing else but an ignorant fool?” Wisdom expects to be justified of her children. Are we the children of wisdom, are we the children of him that is perfectly wise and perfectly knowing? Certainly it concerns us to be like our Father in these respects: this is a great part of his image, even of his image to be renewed in us. “Put on (saith the apostle) the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” Col. 3. 10. Is it for the glory of the all-wise and all-knowing God to have a company of fools for his children, ignorant creatures that know nothing, and labour not to know much of the things that most concerns them to know, in reference to him, and what lies between him and them? We should, upon these accounts,

labour to value and covet, most of all, mental excellencies such as these. But such is not the common guise of this world. And it is an amazing thing, to think so many intelligent creatures' minds and spirits (though lodged in flesh) should be so lost as to all apprehension of true excellency, or of what is truly valuable, as to value a little glitter, a little exterior pomp and splendour before these mental excellencies of knowledge and wisdom, that are most peculiar to God, and wherein we, if we are possessed of them shall most resemble him. What fools are the men of this world! They esteem men according as they have most of worldly pelf, as they have collected together most of thick clay, but they never think of valuing themselves or any one else by the mental excellencies of knowledge and wisdom in which they resemble God. What base erroneous thoughts must these be supposed to have of God! What do such make of God? As the apostle speaks to these Athenians, but speaks as knowing and understanding them and himself to be of a mind as to this, he argues with them from a principle and *ex concessis* "What! do you think the Godhead is like silver and gold or corruptible things?" As if he had said, "I cannot but know as well as if I were within you that you are of my mind perfectly in this matter, that is, that the Godhead is not like to silver or gold or corruptible things, but he is a Spirit, and you, as you are spiritual beings, or as you have such in you, are his offspring." Certainly it is to be governed by the judgment of a fool in my choice, in my desires, in my estimation of things, to think that earthly things are the most valuable things, that carnal things (as the apostle calls them) are the most honourable things. No, without doubt those are the most honourable and most valuable things that are most God-like, and by which I shall most resemble God. How was he taken with Solomon for his judgment and choice when he bids him ask what he would have! He was not such a fool as to go and ask riches, honour, long life, or the necks of his enemies, but begs for wisdom and understanding. This was most God-like: and you see how God was pleased with his choice, how high an approbation he gives of it in that 1 Kings 3. 10, 11. And we should labour to govern our own judgment in these matters accordingly.

And pray consider this with yourselves, and labour to feel the weight of it in your own spirits, if we do not covet and desire that God should create us according to his image and likeness, we shall certainly be apt to create to ourselves a god after our own image and likeness. That is, if we do not make it our business to have ourselves made like unto him, we shall be in-

dustrious to make him like to ourselves. As it is in the Psalmist, “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself.” A thing that will lead and plunge us into the deplorable estate of all sin and misery unavoidably.

LECTURE XXII.*

Thirdly. It remains now that we go on to the third head of the communicable perfections of God, to wit, those of the divine will, or which we may otherwise call his *moral perfections*, and the most principal of them which I shall (but briefly too) speak of, are these four, to wit, his holiness, his justice, his faithfulness and his goodness. And before I speak to them severally, I shall give you some general considerations concerning them, and which will also partly respect some of those that have been spoken to already under the former heads. As,

1. That when we distinguish the divine perfections into natural, intellectual and moral, the meaning is not as if those that were intellectual and moral were not also natural. But the first member in this distinction is larger and more comprehensive than the rest. All that are intellectual and moral are also natural perfections in the divine nature, but all that are natural are not intellectual and moral. And,

2. We are to consider this concerning them, that the divine perfections which are spoken of under the notion of attributes, they do suppose their subject to be such, as to which they can and they must agree: we speak now only of a subject of denomination not of a subject of inhætion in a proper sense. But they do all suppose their subject, that is of predication, to be a spiritual Being, or they do suppose God to be a Spirit, and might, all of them, be brought as proofs and demonstrations (if it were needful) that he is so. He could not be intelligent if he were not a spirit, nor righteous, nor holy, nor just, nor true, for all these do suppose such a subject of predication as to which such attributes or attributed perfections can and must agree. And therefore (as hath been intimated formerly) when we speak of the attributes and perfections of God, this doth not come among them, but is presupposed and necessarily presupposed. Those that are properly called attributes are spoken of in *quale quid*, not in *quid* as schoolmen do fitly enough say, though:

* Preached October the 16th. 1691.

I do not need to trouble you with the explication of those terms.

3. You are to note this concerning them, that as they do suppose their suitable subject, so several of them do suppose others of them. As wisdom doth suppose knowledge, and holiness doth suppose wisdom; and justice, holiness, and faithfulness, justice, and so on. And again,

4. We are to consider that our conception of God and his nature and the properties belonging thereunto, cannot possibly take up things otherwise than by parts: and so all our conceptions of him must be inadequate, and when we have taken up as much as is possible it is but a small portion that we have taken up, or can admit into our minds. And therefore, we are to conceive concerning all these perfections of God that though it be unavoidable to us to apprehend diversly, yet we must apprehend them as all falling into one most simple nature and being: whence it is not to be thought strange that we find a coincidence in very great part indiversive of these perfections, that do (as it were) fall and run into one another. As there will be more occasion to take notice in those particulars that are mentioned. And,

5. You are to consider further that our notices of God must needs be in a great measure by reflection on ourselves. He hath been pleased to let us know that he created man at first after his own image. That is, after his natural image with the addition of his moral or holy image. And that he doth again regenerate and renew men after his own image, that is, his holy image, supposing the natural one, that being still supposed remaining, as the subject both of the corruption and of the restitution. This being so, we have the advantage of discerning much concerning the excellencies and perfections of the Divine Nature by reflecting upon ourselves. What we see by that reflection, we see as in a glass darkly, and indeed, when we are the glass we are a very dark one. But some resemblance, some image there is to be found, even with all there is the natural image of God, and with the regenerate there is the holy image renewed, though very imperfectly renewed, whereupon when we are to conceive of holiness, faithfulness, justice and goodness in God, our conception is much to be helped by these notions that we cannot but have of such things among men, these being, (as you have heard) of his communicable attributes that have the same name in him and in men, and the image and likeness of the same things. And,

6. Though there be somewhat of the divine image or likeness in men, yet this similitude is not to be considered without very

great dissimilitude. It is true indeed, *omne simile est dissimile*, every like is also unlike, but there must be most of all when we are to compare things in God and in us. Though there be some similitude, the dissimilitude must be vastly great which we are to take along with us in speaking of each of those mentioned perfections of the divine will, and so we come to the particulars. And,

I. As to the HOLINESS OF GOD. That very term as it is applied to God, is of various significaney. And indeed, it is so as the term comes thence transferred unto creatures. Sometimes it signifies august, venerable, great, majestic. And the reason of the use of that phrase to such a purpose, that is, holy to signify august and venerable, is obvious: for as things that were holy were not to be violated, were not to be touched (as it were) by impure hands, not to be arrogated, not to be meddled with by any but those to whom they were appropriate, (in which respect, majesty hath been wont to be accounted a sacred thing that was not to be meddled with by any other, and the person a sacred person that was clothed therewith, not by any means in the world to be violated,) so with no very remote translation, holy or holiness being spoken of God doth signify the awfulness, the venerableness, of the Divine Nature. But yet, this is somewhat alien from holiness as it is a moral perfection: or as it is a perfection of the divine will. And therefore, as such we must consider it under its own proper and peculiar notion. It sometimes also, signifies firm, sure, unalterable. The *sure* mercies of David, (Isaiah 55,) the Septuagint renders it sacred, holy. But if we speak of holiness in the proper sense, as it is a perfection of the divine will, so it must needs, in the general notion, signify the rectitude of that will in all things, and so it must have two parts, a negative, and a positive part.

(1.) A negative; and so the divine holiness stands in purity, in being most perfectly free from any taint or defilement, from any thing of moral turpitude, in any kind or any degree. And that purity, the negative rectitude of the divine will which is carried in his holiness, comprehends two things, first, an enmity from all irrectitude, any taint, any turpitude: and secondly, an abhorrence and detestation thereof. Not only that the nature and will of God hath nothing impure, or that is not right adhering to it; but doth also detest and abhor to have. It signifies the aversion of the divine will, its perpetual, inflexible aversion from every thing that is evil, unworthy of it, unbecoming to it. And so whereas, holiness is spoken of in Scripture under the notion of light, that light is said to be without darkness, in the first place, (1 John 1. 5.) "God is light, and

with him is no darkness at all." This is made the matter of solemn message to the sons of men: "And this is the message that we have from him and which we declare to you:" God hath sent this message to the world, this account of himself, that he is light and without any darkness at all, without the least mixture of any thing that is impure, or foul or unworthy of him. But then, as it is said in that place, speaking of the divine holiness under the notion of light, that it is without darkness: so it is, secondly, elsewhere, represented under the same notion as expulsive of it, declining it, hating it, as having with it a most inflexible and eternal aversion from every thing that is signified under the notion of darkness, unholiness being there signified by it. "What communion hath light with darkness?" It is drawn down to signify that there can be no communion between God and unholiness, the temple of God and idols. 2 Cor. 6. 16. And,

(2.) This holiness hath also its positive part which must comprehend two, the like things that have been mentioned concerning the negative part. That is, first the actual, perpetual rectitude of all his volitions, and all the works and actions that are consequent hereupon; and, secondly, an eternal propension thereunto, a love thereof, by which it is altogether impossible to that will, that it should ever vary from itself in this, as it cannot in any other respect. That the determinations of that will are right in themselves, is out of question; and that, his word (and he best understands his own nature) testifies over and over. And then his propension, his eternal, unalterable propension of will to that which is right and good, that we find spoken of as a thing we must conceive too, as belonging to his holiness also; "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright." Psalm 11. 7. And so you have his hatred of all iniquity, and his love of universal rectitude, both mentioned together in one and the same breath, as it were; "Because thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity," (it is spoken of Christ it is true, but spoken of him as God, (Psalm 45. 7.) having said immediately before, "Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever") therefore God, even thy God hath anointed thee." He is the image of God, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person. But here it may be said, when we place (as we cannot but do) the notion of holiness generally in rectitude, every thing of rectitude must have some measure or another, or some rule to which it is to be referred, and which it is to be judged by. What is then the measure and will of divine rectitude wherein holiness stands?

This is the thing that hath been very variously discussed, and with a great deal more perplexity than there was cause for. These things you may take about it, that are all plain in themselves, and will be as much as will need to be, or can, in sum and substance, be said to it. As,

First. That the divine rectitude cannot be measured by any law, that refers to him properly so taken. A law properly taken, is the signification of the will of a superior concerning an inferior. But it is out of question, God can have no superior, and so nothing can in a proper sense be a law to him. And a measure, it is prior to the thing measured, must be before it, but there can be nothing prior to God. Yet,

Secondly. In the borrowed sense, very plain it is that God is a law to himself; and it is the only conception concerning this matter, that it can admit of: nor is that to be thought at all strange, when those parcels and fragments of right notion that are left in the ruined nature of man, do yet leave him a law to himself, where he hath no other law, no written law extant before him: much more, when the notions of rectitude are most perfect, they may supply the place of a rule or measure by which the divine rectitude is to be measured. But,

Thirdly. His mere will, abstractly considered, cannot be this measure, as if the divine will might have made that which is right to be wrong, or that which is wrong to be right: this is altogether unconceivable and impossible, that that will, abstractly considered, should be to him the measure of right or wrong, or of good and evil. That is, as if one could suppose that an act of the will might alter the obligation that is upon an intelligent creature to love the best good; or could make it lawful or a duty to hate the highest and most perfect pulchritude and beauty. This cannot be: as we are told, it is impossible for God to lie. He cannot lie, as it is impossible to him to be unholy, as it is to be untrue. And therefore, that there are eternal reasons of moral good and evil is a most indubitable thing; that that which is right could not in its own nature, in the greatest instances but be so; and that thereupon, that the distinction must be admitted necessarily, of things that are good because God wills them, and of things that he wills because they are good. And so natural laws and positive, they come to have their distinction and diverse consideration. And then in the last place,

Fourthly. That it is equally absurd to suppose, that the ideas of right and wrong, or of moral good and evil, as they are a measure to God should have place any where but in him; that is, in his will, not abstractly considered, but in his will as it is

everlastingly conformed to a wise mind. There cannot but be an everlasting conformity between the rectitude of the divine will and the divine word. And whatsoever he doth, he doth all things not because he will, but according to the counsel of his will. Ephes. 1. 11. And indeed, the contrary apprehension, were to resolve all the divine perfections into nothing but sovereignty. It is the divine will that is the measure of good and evil, yet not abstractly considered, but as it doth agree with most perfect wisdom, and that unalterably thereupon, it is as impossible to him ever to will that which is not wise, as it is impossible to him ever to speak that which is not true. And so far, having given some account of the divine holiness, wherein it lies, you may collect in great part from what hath been said, this double property of it, not to mention more :

i. That his holiness is primary, all other holiness is but derivative, imparted. This is the fountain-holiness, the primary holiness. And,

ii. His holiness is essential. It agrees to him, not primarily only, but essentially too, as being altogether inseparable from his nature. Holiness in any creature was always to it an extra-essential thing. We have had instances of it even in the higher orders of God's creatures. Man was created holy, but fell. Among the angels that were universally holy, many fell. So the holiness of the best of creatures is a thing in itself separable from its essence. But the divine holiness is most perfectly inseparable. I shall say no more upon this, (the course that I am upon did oblige me to great brevity in speaking to this head,) but only by way of *Use*.

1. To recommend it to you, that we may live in the adoration of God, considered under this notion: "Who is like thee among the gods, glorious in holiness?" Exod. 15. 11. "There is none holy as the Lord," as Hannah speaks in that admirable song of hers, 1 Sam. 2. 2. How should we rejoice in the thoughts of this, that we have such an Object of worship, so perfectly, unexceptionably holy. And,

2. We ought to study the imitation of him herein, as the adoration of him upon this account, understanding the text as saying that to you, "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" in holiness: "Be ye holy, for I am holy," 1 Pet. 1. 15, 16, referred (for so it is written, as the apostle speaks) to that Levit. 11. 41. and in divers other places.

3. Consider with what great gratitude the condescending goodness ought to be owned, that he should have a design to make such as we, like himself in this respect: we ought to acknowledge great kindness even in such a commandment, "Be

ye holy for I am holy. I would fain have you like myself." It speaks great love and good will to us, that he would have us imitate him. And,

4. It should make us willingly submit to any methods that he thinks fit to use, to bring us to that conformity to him in this respect; that we be gradually perfected herein, as he is most perfect. The state of our case requires that his methods should be sometimes rough and severe for this purpose. We have a great deal of dross about us. The fathers of our flesh, indeed, they correct (saith the apostle, Heb. 12. 9) "after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." A great word and work, (and which we ought to consider accordingly) that we might be partakers of his holiness! that is, that he might transform us into his image and likeness. What difficulties, what furnaces, what fires, what deaths would we not go through for this, that we might be made partakers of his holiness, to be in this respect, as he is, perfect.

2. The next that I have mentioned of these four perfections of the divine will, is his JUSTICE. And justice is wont to be distinguished into universal and particular. But then,

(1.) As universal righteousness or justice doth comprehend particular justice in it, so it superadds somewhat distinguishing, as you shall see by and by. Therefore,

(2.) For particular justice, that is twofold. It is either commutative or distributive; for commutative justice, with God it can have no place, because he hath no equal: or there are none of the same order with him, that can make exchanges with him or that can transfer rights to him for any rights transferred from him: he can be debtor to none of his creatures. "Who hath given him any thing, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" as Rom. 11. 35. It is a challenge to all the world. But it is that part of particular justice, which is wont to be called distributive justice that properly agrees to him, that is, rectoral justice, magistratical justice, the justice of a governor, ruler, of a superior towards an inferior. And that useth to be divided into these two parts, præmiative and puniative: præmiative, that confers rewards, and puniative, that dispenseth punishments. For the former of these, whatsoever rewards God dispenseth must be all of grace, not at all of debt. He cannot be antecedently a debtor to his creatures, otherwise than by promise, and so his justice runs into his faithfulness, as you will see by and by. And supposing him to have bound himself by promise, then it is a piece of justice with him to make good his promise, and thereupon, the notion of righteousness doth obtain and take place, even in conferring

benefits. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love." Heb. 6. 10. And "it is a righteous thing with God," not only to "recompense tribulation" to the troublers of his people, but also, those that are troubled rest with him. 2 Thess. 1. 6, 7. And "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." There is a piece of justice in it. It is, upon one account, the highest act of merey imaginable, considering with what liberty and freedom the course and method were settled, wherein sins come to be pardoned: and it is an act of justice also, inasmuch as it is the observation of a method to which he had tied himself, and from which afterwards therefore, he cannot depart, cannot vary.

And then for punitive justice, this is most distinguishing of the justice of God, from his holiness abstractly considered. By his holiness he hates sin, and by justice he punisheth it. The one makes him hate it, the other obligeth him to animadvert upon it in a way of punishment, or inclines him to do so. And this he doth as a debtor to himself. Justice among creatures is conversant about the rights of other men; but in God it must be conversant about his own rights; because he is himself the Fountain of all rights. And there could be no such thing as right throughout the whole universe, if it had not its first fountain in God himself: and therefore, his justice must be the faithful guardian of the rights of his sovereignty and government. And thereupon, this justice doth not only allow him but oblige him to award to every transgression a just recompense of reward, as the Scripture speaks.

But of this, I shall say no more, save only, this word or two by way of *Use*, that is,

1. Let us have our souls so possessed with this apprehension of the divine justice as to dread it, and stand in great awe of it, knowing that we have to do with a God that will not be mocked, or trifled with by any; and who never confers favours upon any, so as to forget his just right; nor doth so exercise his mercy towards any as to depress and lose his sovereignty; of which sovereignty of his, as hath been said, his justice must always be a faithful guardian, and therefore, those that are nearest to him must know that if they transgress, his justice must have an exercise about them, even as punitive. There is such a thing as economical, punitive, family justice, by which, even where God is pleased to be related as a Father, he animadverts upon, and chastises and punishes the faults and follies of his own children, even those that are of his own household. Though you must distinguish of punishments, between those that are corrective and those that are vindictive. Vindic-

tive punishments shall not have place there upon those that are, and have, a stated being in the family, that are of it and in it. But corrective punishment shall have place even there. And then,

2. Not only dread divine justice, but labour to engage it to be on your side. What a great blessing is that, to have even justice itself plead for us, and the state of our case brought to that pass that it may. If we confess our sins, that is, with a truly evangelical frame of spirit, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins: and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. But I pass on,

3. To say somewhat of his FAITHFULNESS. And that also doth in great part run into justice, as justice doth in some part run into holiness. But so far as to superadd somewhat peculiar and distinguishing. The faithfulness of God is his veracity or his truth as it relates to his word, the conformity that is between his word and his mind. And whereas, his word, as his faithfulness that refers to it is twofold, assertory and promissory; so accordingly, must his faithfulness be understood. It stands either in declaring to us truly how things are, or how they shall be. It relates to his *assertory* word; that is, that he doth make a true representation to us of all things that are to be received by us as doctrines. Whereas, he is in no possibility of being deceived himself herein, so neither can he deceive us; God cannot lie. It is impossible to God to lie. So much, the light of a pagan could discern of God, even Balaam; “God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.” All the declarations that he hath made to us by way of assertion of things that we are to conceive are so and so, we are to look upon his truth and faithfulness as engaged herein. That is, he doth make a representation to us of things just as they are, and no otherwise, in what he saith to us of himself, in what he saith to us of Christ, in what he saith to us of his Spirit, and in what he saith to us of the way and course of duty wherein we are to walk, and the like. And whereas, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Revealer, the first Revealer of God and his mind to men, he is thereupon, called the faithful witness, as representing and testifying things just to be as they are, and no otherwise. It comes in among his glorious titles, “Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the faithful witness:” that falls in among the rest. Rev. 1. 5. God’s name is in him, that is, the same nature is in him whereof the divine name is expressive. And therefore, in the whole gospel revelation we must conceive the highest faithfulness to be engaged. That which sums it up, “Jesus Christ came

into the world to save sinners," the apostle calls it "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," (1 Tim. 1. 15) most worthy to be received and believed. And then,

The word of God, to which this faithfulness hath reference is not only assertory but *promissory*; not only declaratory how things are, but how also they shall be. It is true, we may take in his threatenings too, unto which his faithfulness hath reference as well as his promises. But chiefly and principally, his faithfulness hath reference to his covenant. "He is the faithful God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for ever." Deut. 7. 9. And "he will not alter the covenant that is gone out of his mouth, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail." Psalm 89. 33. 34.

And therefore, concerning this also, take so much of present *Use*. Is God perfect in this respect, most perfectly true and faithful, true to his word, his mind always agreeing most accurately with it? Then,

1. Trust this faithfulness of his. The object of trust is faithfulness most properly, the most immediate object. That which answers to faithfulness is faith. If he be faithful, he is to be believed, trusted in, and relied upon. In that passage of the apostle's prayer that he might be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, for all men have not faith; the most probable meaning of that, is, that have not faithfulness, (faith being there taken objectively,) that are not fit to be trusted; wicked and unreasonable men, upon whom we can place no trust, that are not fit to be believed. But we are never to admit a thought so diminishing or debasing concerning him whom we have taken to be our God, as if he were not fit to be trusted, as if his faithfulness could fail any whit. Our heavenly Father is perfect in this respect; therefore trust him perfectly, without vacillation, without wavering or suspensful hearts. He cannot deny himself, he abides most faithful and therefore most securely to be relied upon by those that are, through his grace, enabled to give up themselves to him. He desires no more: give up yourselves to him, and you are safe on his part: rely upon him, for he is faithful; he will keep what you commit to him. And,

2. Imitate his faithfulness as well as trust it. Do you labour to be perfect herein? I pray let us all labour to be perfect in this as our heavenly Father is perfect, to wit, in faithfulness, both towards him and towards men.

(1.) Towards him, O! how can we think it tolerable to break with him who is never apt to break with us! His faithfulness can never fail, why should ours so often fail? When

we promise, when we engage, when we vow to live in his love, in his fear, in his communion; what shame should it cover our faces with, to be unfaithful towards him, who is constantly faithful towards us. And,

(2.) Towards men; imitate him there too: this would be the glory of our religion. It is the intolerable reproach of it, that there is so much falsehood among men, and even among them that profess the Christian name, among them who pretend to God as their God: saying he is their God who is the faithful God, most perfectly faithful. This makes a most deplorable state of things. "Help Lord" (saith the Psalmist) "for the faithful man faileth." Psalm 12. 1. It makes the state of things so very dismal that all who understand themselves, think they have reason to cry to heaven, "Help, help, in such a sad case as this." Help, Lord, the godly man fails, there is no faithfulness left in the world. We are undone in this case if God do not help, if we have not help from heaven. But what an ornament is it to the Christian name and profession, when the very words of such and such as do profess it, are reckoned stable as a pillar of brass. "I would no more distrust such a man's word, than I would fear the falling of the heavens over me, or the sinking of the earth under me:" this would be the glory of our religion. O! then let us labour to be perfect in this respect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

LECTURE XXIII.*

Having discoursed from this text, of many of the divine perfections, under the distinct heads of the perfections of the Divine Nature, of the Divine Mind, and of the Divine Will: and as for those of this last rank, having discoursed to you of several others, it remains to say something yet,

4. Of the **DIVINE GOODNESS**; where, by goodness I do not mean the goodness of being merely, or the goodness of this or that thing in its own particular kind; nor moral goodness in the utmost extent and latitude of it, for that would comprehend the several other perfections of the divine will, that have been spoken to already; but one branch thereof only, which commonly goes under the name of benignity; a benign inclination of will, which we are to consider, both with respect of what it excludes, and in respect of what it includes.

(1.) In respect of what it excludes: it excludes what is oppo-

* Preached November 20, 1691.

site to it, whether it be contrarily opposite, or contradictory. That which is contrarily opposite is an aptness to do hurt, a mischievous disposition to have a mind or will prone to the doing of mischief; which it most certainly excludes: and then, that which is contradictorily opposite is, not to be willing to do good, an unaptness to do good.

(2.) And so, accordingly, it doth include a general propensity to benefaction, to acts of beneficence, and so we are to consider the goodness of God analogically to what we can find of any like specimen among men; for indeed, much of our way of knowing God is by reflection, there being somewhat of God yet left and remaining in man, fragments, broken relics of that image first instamped upon the soul of man in his creation. And by them it is, that we form the general notion, even of those perfections which we do ascribe to God. We see the several features of that image, by reflection, as in a glass, on which we bestow such and such names. Though in the mean time we must know, (as hath been told you upon other occasions over and over,) that whatsoever there is that goes under the same name with God and with us, (as all his communicable attributes do,) yet the things must be infinitely diverse, as his being and ours cannot but be. It is but some shadow, some faint resemblance, of the divine perfections that are discernible in us. But upon those things we bestow these names, still apprehending, that under the same name somewhat infinitely more perfect hath its place and being in God.

And now, as to this perfection, (the divine benignity,) I purposely reserved that to the last place, because it is most in the eye and design of this text, as is very manifest if you look back but to the two more immediate paragraphs, which do more directly refer hither, the former of them more expressly signifying that vacaney that should be in us, (in conformity to the divine pattern and example,) of all inclination to do evil, and the latter, positively expressing and holding forth the inclination that should be in us, after the same example, to do good. Of the former of these paragraphs you may look downwards from ver. 38, and see how the design of that, runs against a mischievous temper and disposition of spirit, an aptness to do evil, yea, though provoked; that there must be no disposition to retaliate, to requite evil with evil, wrong with wrong, injury with injury: but rather than do so, suffer oneself to be injured more, as the several expressions in that paragraph do signify, which it is not needful here to consider.

And then for the latter paragraph, concerning the disposition to do good, the discourse of that, runs from ver. 43 to this con-

clusion and close of the chapter ; all under the name of love ; so extensive and large in reference to its object, as not to exclude enemies themselves ; those that do with the most bitter hate pursue and persecute us. “ You have heard it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy ; ” such undue limits have been wont to be put and assigned to your love ; that you acquit yourselves well enough if you do love them that love you, and if you do good turns to them that do such to you, if you carry it courteously and affably in your salutations to such as will salute you. But this is a mean and narrow spirit, unworthy of a christian, and unworthy of the name and design of Christianity, that being intended to restore man to man, to restore man to himself, to make man what he was, and what he should be. There are no such limitations as those to be made to our love ; it must reach enemies, enemies themselves. “ I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you : ” and all this, that you may be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect ; (for so he doth,) “ that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good, and sends his rain upon the just and upon the unjust ; ” animadverting upon it as a mean thing, and an argument of a base and narrow spirit, to have our love and kindness confined to those wonted limits, wherein men, otherwise taught by their own corrupt inclinations, are wont to confine theirs. This is, therefore, the main and more principal design of this text, as it refers to the context, to commend to us the divine benignity, to represent that, and to set it before us as a pattern to which we are to be conformed. Be in this respect perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

And indeed, it is the fittest to consider this divine perfection in the last place ; for it is (as it were) the perfecting perfection ; it crowns and consummates all the rest. All the excellencies of the Divine Being, they are to be considered not abstractly, each by itself, but as they refer to one another, and as all together they do make one admirable temperament ; as with reverence we may speak. Indeed, of those that are abstractly considered, that are wont to go under the notion with us of very great exercise, should be all separated from this, they lose themselves, lose their very name ; wisdom, apart from goodness, it were only an ability to contrive, power, apart from goodness were only an ability to execute ill purposes and designs. But divine wisdom, that is in conjunction with most perfect goodness : and divine power, that is in conjunction with the most perfect goodness : and so this is, (as I may say,) the perfecting perfec-

tion, consummating of all the rest. How admirable a thing is that wisdom that is continually prompted by goodness! and that power; that is continually set on work by goodness, in all the efforts and exertions of it!

And now, in speaking to this, the divine benignity and goodness, I shall briefly point out unto you the various diversifications of it, and then lay before you some of the more observable exemplifications of it. I shall shew you how it is diversified, and wherein it is exemplified.

[1.] How it is diversified. It admits, in sundry respects, (which I shall mention to you,) of sundry considerations and notions that may be put upon it, which yet do all run into this one thing, goodness. First, as it imports a propension unto any thing of suitableness, according as the estimate of divine wisdom and liberty doth determine it, and so it goes under the name of love. Love, is nothing else but a propension towards this or that object. The objects towards which divine goodness is propense, they are estimated by his wisdom and liberty, or sovereignty in conjunction, in respect of their capacities to receive these his propensions, or to be the passive subjects thereof: secondly, as it refers to offenders, guilty creatures, so this goodness is his clemency: thirdly, as it refers to repeated offences, so it is patience: fourthly, as it refers to long continued and often repeated provocations, so it is long suffering, forbearance: fifthly, as it refers to a miserable object, so it is pity and compassion: sixthly, as it refers to an amiable object, so it is complacency and delight: seventhly, as it refers to an indigent object, and speaks large benefactions towards it, so it is bounty: and lastly, as it refers to the principle of liberty and spontaneity from whence it proceeds, so it is called grace, *εὐδοκία*, the very expression that is used to signify the goodness of the will, when, without any kind of inducement, good is done for goodness' sake. "Thou art good and doest good." When there is nothing to oblige, nothing to requite, nothing to remunerate, nothing to invite, this is the graciousness of goodness. These are sundry diversifications, (as they may fitly enough be called) and one and the same excellency, divine goodness and benignity, raised according as such and such respects (as have been mentioned) do clothe it. But then,

[2.] We come to give you exemplifications of it, in instances and evidences that do recommend and shew it forth unto us. And,

First. The most obvious and most comprehensive one is, this very creation itself which we behold, and whereof we our-

selves are a little, inconsiderable part. What else can be supposed to have been the inducement to an infinite, self-sufficient, all-sufficient Being to make such a creation as this stand forth out of nothing, but an immense goodness, a benignity not to be prescribed unto, and was only its own reason to itself, of what it would design and do? The creation could add nothing to him; for it being produced out of nothing, it could have nothing in it, but what was of him and from him; and so there is nothing of being in it; nothing of excellency and perfection in it, but what was originally and eminently in himself before; for nothing could give that which it had not: and all that is in this world, is given out from God himself, and therefore, it is resolvable into nothing else but mere goodness that we are, or that any thing else besides is. As in Rev. 4. 11. "For thy pleasure all things are and were created." For thy pleasure; it was a pleasure to him to have that immense and boundless goodness of his, issue and flow forth in such a creation: and among the rest of creatures, in giving being to such as might be capable of knowing who made them, and of contemplating the glorious excellencies of their Maker, and of partaking a felicity in him, as well as a being from him. Indeed, that there should be so vast a creation, (though all that is nothing compared with him, vast as it is,) that is owing to his power; that there should so ornate and amiable and orderly a frame of things be created, that is owing to his wisdom. But that there should be any creation at all, that is owing to nothing else but his mere goodness. He would have creatures that should be capable of knowing and enjoying the excellencies and perfections that make up his being to himself, according to their measure and capacities; and he would have other creatures of inferior ranks and orders to minister unto them. And though this be an obvious thing, and we hear of it often, it is often in our minds, yet I am afraid it is not often enough in our hearts. It doth not sink and pierce deep into our souls, to think what we, by mere nature, are, by mere untainted uncorrupt nature; all that we are by divine benignity, that it did eternally depend upon his mere pleasure whether I should be something or nothing. And what a rebuke would this carry in it to a vain mind, if it might be seriously and often thought of! "Was I created to indulge and pursue vanity, to indulge a vain mind, and pursue vain things?" how great an awe would it hold our spirits under! It would teach us to fear the Lord and his goodness, to think, "I only am, and have a place in this world, because he thought it good, and he saw it good to have it so." But,

Secondly. The universal sustentation that he affords to all

created beings, generally considered: this is all nothing but mere goodness; for as he had no need of a creation at first, he hath still no need of it, and he that hath raised it up into being out of nothing one moment, might have suffered all to slip and lapse into nothing the next moment again, without injury to what he had made, or without loss to himself. His tender mercy is over all his works. He lets all this great variety of creatures that replenish this world, continually draw from him. The eyes of all things look towards him. Nature hath (as it were) set an eye in every thing that is made, only to look up with craving looks to the great Author of all things, and all are sustained suitably as their indigent states require, when all are still useless to him, and advantage him nothing. But,

Thirdly. His continual sparing offending creatures; how constant a testimony and evidence is this of the immense goodness of God! That when he hath those that offend him continually, in his power and at his mercy, and he may right himself for what hath been done, in a moment, or prevent doing any thing more to his displeasure, and to his dishonour, yet he spares: how admirable goodness is this! It is not oscitancy and neglect, as if he took no notice of what men did. On purpose to obviate such an expression, Moses useth that emphatical expression, (intereeding for offending Israel,) "Let the power of my God be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering and slow to anger." Let the power of my God be great. It is not from oscitancy but power, that guilty creatures are spared, that an offending world is not turned into flames and ashes long ago; that a vindictive fire hath not been preying on it, and vindicating the wrong done to the offended Maker and Lord of all. It is not oscitancy but power, that is, power over himself, the greatest of all powers. Creating power is less, the sustentative power, by which the world is borne up, is less. By the exertion of his power towards his creatures he can easily conquer them; but by this exercise of his power he doth, (as it were,) conquer himself; withholding himself from those more sudden eruptions of displeasure and wrath which would argue that these were a predominant thing with him. But he will let the world know it is not so. There is the power of goodness that doth predominate and is governing. It is admirable in itself, and ought to be so in our estimate, that this world which hath for so many thousand years been inhabited and possessed by rebels against the crown and throne and dignity of the Eternal King,

is yet spared, and they let propagate their kind, and transmit their nature, though they do, with it, transmit the poison and malignity of an inveterate hate and enmity against the Author of their being. How admirable is the divine goodness, that shews itself in this patience and long-suffering towards a guilty world! We are taught so to account; “Despisest thou the riches of his forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? Rom. 2. 4. And again,

Fourthly. We are to consider as a further instance and evidence of this immense goodness of God, that he is pleased to take such care of the children of men, in their several successive ages and generations, as we find he continually doth; not only sparing them but providing for them; which is a plain and most constantly positive instance and exemplification of this goodness whereof we speak. Two ways he doth more especially take care of the offending creatures that do possess and inhabit this earth of ours; partly by laws, and partly by providence.

i. By laws. How much of the goodness of God is seen by those very laws which he hath taken care shall have place in this world, and by which any thing of common order is preserved? How admirable is it that he should so concern himself for the tranquillity and peace and welfare of those that are in a confederacy and combination against him, and have been so from one generation to another! How wonderful is it! It is owing, partly, to the impressions he hath made and left upon the minds and nature of man, that there are any such laws as go under the name of the laws of nature, which have this tendency and design, to keep the world in a peaceful and quiet state; and do so, as far as they obtain and prevail. And indeed, there is none that do any thing to the disturbance and disquiet of the world, but they abandon the law of their nature in what they do, and offer violence to themselves. But any such law of nature we must understand to have proceeded from the Author of nature, and we must understand it to have been preserved and kept alive among men, by him that doth preserve the nature of man, and doth take care that there should be successions of such creatures in this world. Consider how tender he is of the life of man, that he hath provided, that there should be such a law, even in man's nature, against murder, of which the municipal laws of several countries are all transcripts, and all owing to the general Legislator. Whatsoever laws of this or that country do agree with the natural law, they are all

from the supreme Legislator, and are but discoveries of the care and concern that the common Ruler of this world hath to preserve such a creature as man on earth, from violence and wrong. And so likewise, the laws that do obtain anywhere for the preservation of property and for the preservation of chastity, and for the preservation of fame and reputation among men, and the like; that men may not be injured in such respects: they are all so many instances and exemplifications of the great and general benignity of the common Lord and Author of all things, towards his poor creatures in this world, though he beheld his nature poisoned with enmity and malignity against himself, and though that creature takes no notice of him in all this. And then,

ii. The case is seen, not only in the provision he hath made by laws, but which he continually makes by providence, for the sustentation of these, his offending creatures. So you see the text refers us to these very instances, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:" that you may represent and shew forth the Divine Nature in yourselves, that you may shew yourselves born of God, with such a nature as God hath; give some proofs and discoveries of the Divine Nature in you, because he doth thus; loves his enemies, doth good to them that hate him, feeds them with breath, with bread, with all the necessary supports of life, in a continual course from day to day. And again,

Fifthly. It doth further evidence and exemplify divine goodness, and how perfect he is therein, that there is any derivation hereof to be found any where among men, that there is any such thing among men as goodness towards one another, in any degree of it. Wheresoever there is to be found more or less of that which we call good nature, if there be any thing of humanity, of an aptness to do good to others, or an unaptness to do them hurt, or to take pleasure in their infelicities or miseries, these are so many specimens of goodness that are derived, and their very derivation speaks a fountain from whence they come. There can be no borrowed or participated goodness but must suppose, and imply, a first goodness whence it proceeds. If there be any, the least goodness in any creature, this refers us to God, prompts us to look towards him with adoring eyes. This is a little rivulet from an immense ocean, a beam, a ray from that Sun of love and goodness, from that Nature that is all goodness and all love itself, in the very essence of it. This we ought to consider, if we meet with any kindness in this world, if we see any efforts, any discoveries of

pity, of compassion and mercifulness in one towards another, this is all goodness from the First Goodness. All this, shews there is one Immense Goodness, whence all such little parcels of goodness do proceed and come. Even in this apostate and fallen world we see some such appearances of the divine image, (as was said) yet left. We see man hath love in his nature, something of goodness in his nature, a proneness to do acts of goodness and beneficence to some or other, as they come in his way : this should presently make us fall adoring the Supreme Goodness in all this. But then,

Sixthly. The design of recovering apostate, fallen man, is beyond all things, a most admirable discovery of divine goodness ; that ever he should have formed such a design. Here is such a creature, such an order of creatures, such a sort of creatures, fallen, sunk, lost, become miserable, and miserable by their own delinquency, by their own apostasy, that is, by their own choice : they have chosen the way that leads down to the chambers of death and eternal ruin. Now, that in this case he should form a design with himself, “I will yet settle a course wherein such creatures as these may be recovered and saved, even from a self-procured ruin.” If there were not, I say, a goodness whereof no other account could be given, but that it is divine, but that it is of itself, as the Deity is, as the Godhead is ; who would ever have imagined but that such creatures having offended, and by their offensive nature and course, put themselves into a way of perishing, must have been let perish. Nothing more was needful than to let them perish. Why should they not be let perish, when they chose it, when they loved it, and affected the way to it ? “They that hate me love death.” They that hated wisdom, the Supreme Wisdom, they loved death. And why might they not be left to their own choice, to take the things they love ? No, this was Godlike, this speaks the goodness of a God, that he will prevent the perishing of self-destroying creatures. “Their destruction is of themselves, but they shall find that in me is their help ;” as by the prophet he speaks his own mind and heart. Partly, the design itself, of saving and recovering such creatures, and partly, the strange and most surprising methods for bringing about such a design, may not only beget conviction, but the highest admiration also, of the goodness of God. We should not only acknowledge it, but fall a wondering, and even lose ourselves in wonder. How unaccountable a goodness was this, that rather than such creatures as we, should finally and remedilessly perish, God should put on man, become man : that man, a man

of sorrows; that man of sorrows, at last a sacrifice on a cross, to bring about a reconciliation between an offended Majesty and offending creatures? What manner of love was this! what a transporting discovery of divine goodness! "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3. 16. But then, if we add in the next place, to all this,

Seventhly. The various means that he useth to draw and gather in souls, to comply with the terms upon which pardon and reconciliation, and eternal salvation are offered to us. There are his ensigns displayed, there is a gospel published, there is an office set on foot, which is to last through all ages to the end of time, on purpose to draw and gather in souls; and all these to be looked upon still under the notion of enemies, they whose hearts were full of enmity and hate against him. For whom indeed he hath been doing good, in common kinds, long before: but they never thanked him for all the actings of his patience and sparing mercy. But such things are continually done towards the unthankful and the evil; yea, these he is so intent upon saving from a deserved ruin, and bringing them to partake, even in a blessedness with himself, to unite them with his Son, make them one with him, to possess them with his Spirit; and to one of the greatest wonders of the divine goodness that can be thought of. When he hath given his Son to be a sacrifice for poor sinners, then to give his Spirit to enter into them, and to inhabit and possess them, and dwell in them; that holy, pure Spirit, that Spirit of all goodness and purity, that Spirit of holiness, as he is called, that he should make his entrance into unholy souls, souls that are so many cells of impurity and filthiness, of every thing that is hateful and noisome and loathsome, how admirable a discovery is this of the divine goodness!

LECTURE XXIV.*

And having thus *demonstrated* the divine goodness, my design is to *vindicate* it. And that is, indeed, of so great importance, that I cannot think it fit to leave off from this subject without placing some endeavour that way. It is of the greatest consequence to us, in all the world, to have our souls habitually possessed with a believing, admiring sense of the goodness of God. We should therefore watch with greater jealousy over

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our souls, in no one point more than this, lest any thought should arise, or lest any injection should fix and have place in our souls, that should any way tend to infer with us a diminution of the goodness of God, that the glory of it should be sullied in our eyes, or that it should be obscured or darkened in any kind: for how much may a thought do of prejudice to that genuine, holy, spiritual affection that should be working back again in ourselves towards a good God? How may that affection be stifled by a thought, if it be not duly and seasonably obviated!

And indeed, there are but these two great objections that can, with any plausibleness, offer themselves against the goodness of God; partly, the eternal miseries that do befall the greater part of mankind; and partly, the temporal calamities that do befall the better part. These two ways, men may object to themselves against the divine goodness, wherein God is here represented as so perfect, that the most should miserably perish, and the best should undergo many hard and grievous things, even in this world. Both these, we shall take into consideration, that so, this most necessary part of the idea of the divine perfections may obtain, without any kind of obstruction or objection lying against it in our minds or hearts; so as we may yield ourselves to be entirely swallowed up of the divine goodness.

The former of these is more frequent. And to shew how little pretence there can be from thence, how little colour of objection against the divine goodness, I shall lay before you these many considerations:

1. That no such goodness can be as a perfection in God, that shall exclude or diminish any of his other perfections. No such goodness can belong to the nature of God, as any perfection due to it, that shall be exclusive or diminishing of any other perfection. You should not praise a man, but reproach him, if you should give this of him as his character, that he is so very goodnatured, as never to make any difference between civilities and affronts.

2. Punitive justice is most certainly a perfection belonging to the nature of God, both as he is a Being universally perfect, and as he is the Ruler of the world, to be exercised in such cases, wherein there is occasion it should have place. This is plain in itself, punitive justice to be exercised where it ought to have place, it is a perfection belonging to the nature of God as he is a Being of universal perfection, and the Ruler of the world: as indeed, the Original Being, the First of beings must include all perfection eminently in itself. For there is

no perfection that is not somewhat, and there is no something that can come from nothing, and therefore, the First Being must have all perfection in it. And if this be a perfection, (as every man's judgment will tell him it is,) that is, punitive justice, to be exercised upon proper occasions, it cannot but have place in the Divine Nature, as he is a Being of universal perfection, and as it necessarily belongs to him, supposing a world, to be the Governor of it. It could be from no other but him; and therefore, can be under no government but his.

3. There can be no place for the exercise of punitive justice, but in reference to creatures governable by a law. Punitive justice can never have place, but towards such creatures as do admit of being governed by a law. Punishment is, properly, nothing else but due animadversion upon an offender against the law to which he is obliged, and which he is put under. This also is plain in itself, and only leads to what I add further,

4. That no creature can be capable of government by a law, but such a one as is endowed with the natural faculties of an understanding and a will. There is no place for a legal government, and so nor, consequently, for the exercise of punitive justice, but toward a creature that is endowed with the natural faculties of an understanding and will, supposing that such a creature be guilty of violating the laws by which he ought to be governed.

5. It can be no reflection upon the nature of God to have made such a creature as man. For that which is the very first instance of divine goodness, it would be very strange that that should be a reflection upon it, cloud it, or obscure it. It evidenceth it most highly, that when it was in the choice of God, and a thing merely depending upon his pleasure, to make such a sort and order of creatures stand up out of nothing into being. This is, I say, the first evidence of his goodness, and speaks nothing to the disparagement of it: "for thy pleasure all things are and were created." And that which ought, from the very reason of the thing, to be matter of highest and most grateful acknowledgment and adoration, must thereupon, necessarily, be an instance of goodness in him to whom such grateful acknowledgments are due, and by whom they are claimed. And it is a saying that carries its own light and reason in it, of that ancient, that "If I were capable (saith he) of making an intelligent creature stand up out of nothing, with a present power of using and understanding, the first thing I should expect from him should be, that he fall down and worship me, and

make acknowledgment to me, for having been the author of being, and of such a being to him." And then, for the kind of this being which divine goodness hath allotted to it, it makes it a high instance of his goodness itself. So far is it from being a diminution to it, that is, that he hath given us such a sort of being that is merely imitative and resembling of his own, wherein could there have been a greater signification of kindness and goodness, than to form a creature after his own image, with a spiritual, intelligent nature like his own? And,

6. The things that render any creature capable of felicity, do also render it capable of government by a law: that is, reason and will, an intellective and elective faculty; these make a people capable of government by a law, and make them capable of felicity too. As hath been told you, if man had not had a nature endowed with an understanding and a will, he could have been no capable subject of being governed by a law: but then, if he had been destitute of such faculties as these, he could not have been capable of felicity neither. If he had not understanding to apprehend wherein it lies, and a will to unite with it, choose it, and take solace in it, he would be incapable of being a happy creature. And what! Can it be any argument against the divine goodness that he hath made man with such a nature as renders him capable of felicity? If he were not capable of government, he could not be capable of felicity; the same things making him capable of the one, and of the other.

7. It must have been a very great blemish upon the divine government, if creatures capable of government by law, should generally offend against the most righteous and equal ones, (as his laws cannot but be,) and there should be no course taken for the punishing of such transgressors. This must be a manifest blemish upon a government. Suppose we, in any government whatsoever that there should be any such edict and proclamation published, that let the subjects under such a government do what they please, no man shall be animadverted upon, all shall do what is good in their own eyes, and no one be ever called to any account; would this be a commendation of a government? Such a thing is altogether insupposable in the administration of the best and most excellent government that ever was, or ever can be. Consider it in the whole course of it, not the temporal administration abstractly, from the future state of things, but the course and the end of it altogether; and it must finally appear the best and most perfect and excellent government that ever was, or ever can be. But how insupposable is it, (I say) that the best and most perfect government,

should ever be liable to such a blemish as this, that let men be never so wicked, it shall fare as well with them as if they were never so dutiful and obedient. The thing speaks itself, and Scripture speaks it, but it speaks not as a notion which it suggests anew, but only that which it takes up and observes, as a thing common to men before. "Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?" And see, what immediately precedes, "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee; Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?" Gen. 18. 23, 25. Supposing this as a great fundamental, a principle that did always shine with its own light, and that did evidence itself, that it must belong to the Judge of all the earth to do right: and so put a difference between the righteous and the wicked, that they are not to fare all alike. And again,

8. The very nature of the law, that was original and natural to man, is itself a high evidence and instance of divine goodness. The law of nature, that law (I say) which was original and natural to man, and so inwrought into himself at first, that he was even constituted as a law to himself, because that that was enjoined in it summarily, did carry his own reason in it, had in itself, recommending evidence to that conscience wherewith he was created, that God did rule upon those terms that he was to rule himself upon; and so must judge him upon such terms, as upon which he must judge himself. For do but consider, how this law is afterwards summed up, all in one word, love. This was the fulfilling of the law, the loving of God above all: the most equal thing in all the world, that the highest and best love should be placed upon the highest and best good. This was that which his law required, that we should love the Lord our God, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. Our Saviour gives this, as the summary and principal part of the law that was natural and original to man: and then, the second part is like the former, loving our neighbour as ourselves. How greatly evidential was this divine goodness, that when he had made a creature capable of government by a law, he should give him such a law as this, and impress it upon his mind, so as it might be said, God was not more to govern him by it, than he was to govern himself: and so finally was to judge him by it, as he must needs judge himself! "He hath shewn thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6. 8. Walk in that dutiful subjection to God, which must be the necessary and easy product of supreme and sovereign love to him: and then, carry it justly and

mercifully towards men. And, certainly, that must needs be an instance and evidence of the greatest goodness in God, that should be the cause of the greatest good in man. Now, do but suppose the world conformed to this law of God, in these two most noble and constituent parts of it; that is, that all the inhabitants of this world did live in the continual love of God, adoring him most gratefully as the great Author of their being, and in a universal and mutual love to one another, each man seeking another's felicity as his own, and having no more design of hurt or mischief against another than he hath against his own life, his own heart; what a happy world were this! And that which tends to happiness, must be from goodness: nothing is plainer. Now, when so admirable a law as this, every part agreeing with the whole, no branch but what is naturally included in this summary, this compendium; I say, when such a law as this was given to men, it is most natural to add, that the same goodness that did enjoin upon man such a law, must also adjoin a penalty to it, a threatening or due punishment for the violation of it; otherwise, the divine government had been ludicrous, if there should have been such a law which is without annexing any penalty. And the better the law, and more unexceptionable, the more clearly righteous and equal is a very severe penalty to be annexed to it: and the annexing it thereunto, is not only what divine goodness must allow, and doth allow, but what it did require. This was a thing not only consistent with divine goodness, but the effect of it, that there should be such intermination added unto such a law. For, if the adding of that sanction to the law, was the aptest means to procure the continual obedience of it, and the law itself had a tendency to the good of the community for whom it was made, then the very addition of the sanction or threatening to the precept of the law, must not only consist with the goodness of it, but proceed from it. Any prince that doth really study the welfare of the governed community, must be understood to adjoin due and proper penalties to good laws, for the good of the people to be governed by them: that the awe of the adjoined threatening may procure obedience, and that obedience, felicity to them that are so governed; so as that such a law being once made, goodness did not only admit of it, but did require that there should be a penalty annexed to it, to enforce obedience. And again,

9. It was never to be expected, that when God made such a creature, he should create him in that which was to be his final state. It could never be looked for from the divine goodness, that making such a creature as man, he should settle him in

a final, good and happy estate the first day he made him. It can be no way inconsistent with the goodness of God, that having made such a creature as man, he should order him a state of trial, of probation, through which he was to pass into that state which was to be final, and perpetually felicitating. For a final state is a state of retribution, a state of reward. The Scripture so speaks of it, frequently, as you cannot but know. Now I beseech you, what was it to be the reward of? It must be the reward of a foregoing obedience. And therefore, it could never have been expected from the divine goodness, that when God first made man, he should have made it impossible for him ever to have offended: or when he made any intelligent creature that he should have made it so. Those two great orders of intelligent creatures, angels and men, it is plain enough God made neither of them incapable of offending. And it was not reasonable to expect that he should. But as to ourselves, (for we are more obliged to mind our own concernments,) this is the account we have given us, (Eccles. 7. 29.) "God made man upright; but he hath sought out many inventions." God made him upright, put him into a good state, if he would have liked it, but he must needs fall to his own inventions, to mend it, and try if he could not make to himself a better state than God had made for him. It was never to be expected from the divine goodness, that he should, by almighty, extraordinary power, have prevented this. For the creature that was designed to be rewarded with eternal felicity, for a present temporal obedience, he must be left to the trial of his ingenuity and dutifulness towards his bountiful Creator. Otherwise, there would have been no place, no room for reward. And if there had been no place for punishment, in case of disobedience, there could have been no place of reward, in case of obedience and duty. Therefore, I add hereupon,

10. That inasmuch as it was necessary there should be such a law, and the threatening annexed to it, or punishment proportionable to any offence committed against it, the execution, according to the tenour of the threatening, became accordingly and consequently necessary, supposing once the violation of such a law. I speak of that law which was natural and original to man; for that little instance of obedience wherein God did put man at first upon, there could not have been transgression in that, without it had been a violating of the most natural law, in the most noble and essential part of it. Now, if a threatening were necessary to be annexed to a law, the execution of it, in case of a violation of that law, was consequently necessary; yea, and if the threatening did immediately pro-

ceed from divine goodness, the execution of the threatening must immediately proceed from it; but not without the intervention of the divine veracity. The goodness of God did lead him to add a due and proportionable threatening to his law: and this law being violated and broken, so as that the threatened punishment became due, it must be executed. That which was ordained from the divine goodness, it comes to be the immediate effects of divine justice, which is not contrary to goodness: it is only in our conception diverse, but far from being contrary. If there had not been such a constitution, the divine goodness had not shone forth with that lustre and evidence that now it doth. And there being such a constitution, his truth and legal justice oblige him, in some way or other, to keep to it, either in kind or equivalency: he must do himself and his own law that right, as to preserve the honour, reputation and dignity of it, and of his own government concerned therein. Therefore, the execution of such a law, by inflicting the incurred penalty one way or other was necessarily and unavoidably consequent: so necessary, that one attribute could not in this case have had its sole exercise without injury to some other, which our first consideration was directed against. But then I yet further add,

11. That whatsoever penalty comes to be inflicted upon unreconcilable sinners, in the final and eternal estate, it must be acknowledged that much of divine goodness was exercised and demonstrated towards them before. Suppose an offending creature whose heart was implacable towards God, and so violently addicted to sensual lusts, that he had the authority of his Maker in continual contempt; and his whole life was a defiance to the authority of his justice and government, and the goodness and kindness of the offers he hath made to him; suppose (I say) such a creature incurs never so severe a penalty, he cannot but acknowledge that much of the divine goodness had its exercise and demonstration towards him before. For otherwise, what room or place were there for that expostulation of the apostle, even with them whom he supposeth finally to fall under wrath in the day of God's wrath, and revelation of his righteous judgment; "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and long-suffering, and forbearance? not knowing that the goodness of God should lead thee to repentance?" Despisest thou his goodness! This same despising had no object, if there had been no exercise of goodness towards such a one before: and it would suppose this expostulation to be a great impertinency. Despise goodness; it were to despise nothing, if there had been no goodness, and so there could have been

no such thing as despising: the thing the apostle chargeth upon such a one; for there can be no act where there is no object. There could be no goodness to be despised, if there had not been the exercise of goodness towards such a one in a former state. Therefore, I add,

12. That the general and special goodness of God are things no way inconsistent with one another. These two things do very fairly accord, God's general goodness towards all, and his special goodness towards some. And it argues a very great debility of mind, and shortness of discourse, when any do set these against one another, as if special goodness must destroy the notion of general goodness, or as if general goodness must destroy the notion of special. The matter would be more easily apprehensible, if we would bring it to a case relating to a human government, and suppose the best that is supposable in this world. Would you suppose that the clemency, kindness and goodness of the best prince that ever was (or of whom you can form any idea in your own minds) must oblige him to deal alike with all his subjects, that is, that all persons that are of equal parts, of equal understandings, must be equally preferred, equally dignified? Would the goodness of any prince oblige him to this, that if he find a necessity to have some persons of good parts and understanding to be of a privy council to him, that he must have all to be of that privy council that are of as good parts as they? And shall such a prince not be thought to be good, or his government not to be equal, unless it were so? The best idea that we can form of any government is, that things be equally carried towards all, and yet special favour be towards objects that are not altogether incompetent, at the choice of the ruler. This is the best idea we can form. Bring then the matter to the divine government; we must distinguish between matters of right and matters of favour. For matters of right, we are to expect from it, that God do right to all men universally without exception; but for matters of mere favour, in reference whereunto he is not so much as a debtor by promise; (and he can be a debtor to none by nature) he can owe nothing to his creature. It is possible for a subject in a human government to oblige his ruler, but no creature can oblige God. A subject in a human government may really deserve favour and kindness at the hands of his rulers, for he can benefit them, it is in his power to profit them, they can really be the better for him; but God can be the better for none of us; therefore, he can be a debtor to none but by promise; we are therefore only to expect from the divine goodness, that where he hath promised, there he will be as

good as his word; but for unpromised favour, to which the creature can have no title, that there he do dispense arbitrarily as seemeth good to him. And therefore, upon this ground his general goodness towards all, and special goodness towards some, are no inconsistencies one with another. And if he do generally shew that goodness in the course of his dispensations, to all his creatures, and especially to all the children of men, that every one that considers must acknowledge, then it is no detraction from the goodness that he doth shew to all, that he doth somewhat more of mere special favour for others, yea, though it be never so much, or though it be never so greatly more. There is no cause or pretence why any man's eye should be evil because his is good. For free and unpromised favours, (and all are unmerited, but such as are not only unmerited but unpromised too,) that he dispense out these arbitrarily, is certainly no repugnancy to the highest and most perfect goodness. I further add,

13. That instances of the general goodness of God towards men are most numerous and undeniable. For besides, that he hath given them being, (when it was in his choice and pleasure whether he would or no,) here he entertains them in a world, to the making whereof, none of them did ever contribute any thing; he watches over them by an indulgent providence, supplies them with breath every moment; keeps off, for an appointed time, destructive evils, affords them out of that common bounty of his, the good things that are necessary for the continuance and comfort of life. How rich is this earth in its productions for offending creatures! I cannot but think of it, many times, with wonder, that considering that this inferior part of God's creation so soon after it was made, fell under his just displeasure and righteous curse, there yet should be so great variety of productions, every where in this earth, for the entertainment of rebels, or those that for the most part never give thanks for what they enjoy, never look up, although they have a capacity and disposition in their nature (originally) so to do, to adore, to pay reverence to the first and eternal Being. That which some think to be more the difference of a man from a brute than reason is, a natural religion, which some take a great deal of pains with themselves to erase and tear by the roots out of their own souls. Let us consider that which the text refers to, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father, who doth good to the evil and the good, makes his sun to shine and his rain to fall on one and the other;" do so, that you may represent your Father;

herein lies his perfection. This whole earth that men fill with their wickedness, he fills with his goodness, "The whole earth is full of the goodness of the Lord," Psalm 33. 5. "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works." Psalm 145. 9. "He hath not left himself without witness, in that he doeth good, and gives fruitful seasons, and fills men's hearts with food and gladness." Acts 14. 17. And I further add,

14. That even those instances of divine goodness that are of an inferior kind, have a tendency and aptitude in them to make way for the exercise of his goodness to them, in a higher and nobler kind. The goodness which God exerciseth towards men in the concerns of this natural life of theirs, they have a tendency and aptitude to affect their minds, and to beget good impressions there, and to make them consider and bethink themselves, "Whence is all this? and how comes it to pass that such provision should be made for one, and for creatures generally, of that order to which I belong?" This is the tendency, even of external mercies. Whereupon, it is spoken of with such resentment, "They say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways—yet he filled their houses with good things: but the counsel of the wicked be far from me." Job 21. 14, 15. And the same, you have resumed afterwards, in the next chapter, implying that the tendency of things did run quite otherwise; that is, to allure and draw the minds and hearts of men towards God; and make them consider and bethink themselves, and say, Why should we not covet to know our great Benefactor, and him from whom all our good comes? But they say unto him "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:"—"though he filled their houses with good things;" and therefore, is there such a resentment afterwards expressed: "but the counsel of the wicked be far from me;" representing them as a monstrous sort of creatures, a sort of prodigies in the world, that there should be such a disaffection in rebellious and obdurate hearts against the Author of all goodness and kindness and mercy, that is in so continued a course exercised towards them. The counsel of the wicked be far from me; as if any serious and considering man must, and ought to be startled and affrighted at beholding such a spectacle as this, a reasonable, intelligent soul shunning and fleeing away from him who is daily loading it with his benefits, and seeking, by kindness and goodness, to insinuate himself into it, and so make room and place for himself, in the love and kindness of such a one. But that these dispensations have this tendency in them, the Scripture is full

of it; “Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” hath a leadingness thereto, in that mentioned Rom. 2. 4. “And count, (saith the apostle Peter in his 2 Epis. ch. 3. 15.) that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation:” (he would not have us make a false count, I hope :) reckon that he is aiming at the saving of your souls, while he is doing good to you in external respects. If he feed you with bread, if he feed you with breath day by day, and moment by moment, what is it for? Is it only to support such a despicable thing as this frail body of yours is, which must shortly become a carcass? Is that the utmost of his design? No, he is leading thee to repentance, and would have thee account that both his bounty and his patience towards thee have salvation in design. Count the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation, that is, it is the design of the thing; it is that which the thing itself doth naturally aim at, and lead unto. And hereupon, we are told, in that, Acts 14. 16, 17, 18. that God aimed at the turning men from the vanities that their hearts did doat on as the objects of their worship, to the living God; he did aim at this in giving them fruitful seasons, as you may see, if you take notice of the connexion between the 15 and 17 verses of that chapter. So, Acts 17, he gives them being, breath and all things, that they might seek after him who is not far from every one of us; in whom we live and move and have our being. And then,

15. Lastly; The terms upon which he offers peace and pardon and eternal life to offending creatures are the highest proofs and evidences imaginable, of the wonderful goodness of God, notwithstanding that so great multitudes do, finally, refuse them and perish. And to this purpose, it should be considered, that the apostle speaks of this as matter of transport more than doubt, and that it did need more to be admired than evinced. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3. 16. The silence that is there used is more speaking than any speech could be. He so loved the world, at so stupendous a rate. It is a very speaking silence that he doth not tell us how great that love is; he leaves us to understand it to be altogether inexpressible, that he should give his only Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish—and whereas, men have an impotency to the exercise of that faith that is requisite to their attaining salvation, what is that impotency? It stands only in an affected blindness and obduracy of will; that which they call moral impotency. Now moral impotency doth not excuse, but ag-

gravate the faultiness. No man takes moral impotency to be an excuse, but a high aggravation. As if a man is guilty of murder, and he bring this to excuse him,—“I could not but kill that man because I hated him, I did so violently hate him that I could not but do this unto him.” That moral impotency (his extreme hatred) aggravates the crime, that that made it to be done, made it so highly faulty, and so much the more heinous, that it is done. He is not less guilty, but the more, by how much the more his hatred was predominant and prevalent in the case. Why, so this disaffection to God and to Christ and to holiness, (which is impotency) is an impotency seated in the will, and the ignorance hath its root, it ariseth and proceeds from thence, that is, that men are “alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, and because of the blindness of their hearts.” A blindness which they love, a blindness which they choose, as it is, Ephes. 4. 18. Whereupon, all their misery is self-created. The miseries wherein men are involved in this world, which make it another hell to them, (a hell on this side hell,) and the miseries of the final and eternal state, they are all self-created: that is, they do arise from a fixed, inveterate malignity against the Author of their being, and that very nature itself, whereof their own, at first, was an imitation. An amazing thing, but it were impossible, if men did love God, to be miserable. Loving him is enjoying him, and enjoying him is felicity, if any thing be, or can be. The image of men’s future miseries, you have in their present state. What is it that makes the world such a hell as it is, but men’s hatred of God and of one another? For (as was said) if there were no contention at all, among men on earth, but who should love God best, and one another best, and who should do most for him, and for one another, what a heavenly life should we live here, a heaven on this side heaven: but the hell on this side hell, is only this, that men’s hearts are filled with enmity against God, and one another: and from this malignity proceeds their infidelity, that they do not unite to God in Christ when they are called to it; which is no excuse, but an aggravation. But, in the mean time, that is the most wonderful goodness that can be thought, that such overtures should be made to men, God having given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

LECTURE XXV.*

And this may suffice to be said, in answer to that first objection against the divine goodness, the eternal miseries of the most. And, indeed, the sum of all that can be said upon that account, doth amount to this, as if it were a thing inconsistent with the goodness of God, that he hath made such a creature as man, given him so excellent a being, made him after his own image, that is, endowed him with a reason and a will, in his very creation: and, that having made him such, he did not unalterably fix him in a good and happy state the first day, but that he thought fit to pass him through a state of probation into his final state; and upon this lapse and degeneracy, he did not do for every one in order to their recovery as he hath done for some. In answer whereto, you have these considerations laid before you.

But we pass on to the other objection; the temporal afflictions of good men. Some may be prone to impeach the divine goodness upon this account, and object against what hath been said on that subject. But here, such as find themselves disposed so to object, should reflect upon themselves and consider, what they themselves are. Are they good men that do thus object? Or are they such as are afraid to be so on this account, and are thereupon so very officious as to object this on the behalf of others, while they themselves are loth thereupon to become good, apprehending they shall not serve a good master, and are therefore willing to wave and decline his service? If they be men of this latter stamp and character, that do so object, it seems that their sense must be this, that they will never be good themselves, unless God will hire them to it by temporal rewards and emoluments, by indulging them to live a life of ease and pleasure and opulency in the world. And for them whose sense this is, I have but these things briefly to say to them:

1. That true goodness can never be so mercenary. They are never like to become good upon these terms; if God should give them their own terms.

2. I would have them consider what other choice they can have. If they will not serve God, and devote themselves to him, and admit to be such as he requires, (that is, truly good,) but upon these terms, what else will they do? What other master, or service, or way have they to make choice of? Can they, by

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their not being willingly subject to the governing power of God, exempt themselves from an unwilling subjection to his vindictive power? Whither will they betake themselves? will they leave God's dominions? will they go beyond the bounds of his territories? whither will they fly? Neither earth, nor heaven, nor hell, can keep them out of his reach; as the Psalmist, at large, speaks it in that 139 psalm, and the prophet Jeremiah in the 23 chap. of his prophecy. "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Is it to be a disputed thing between him and you, whether you shall serve him and comply with his good and acceptable will? And,

3. If God should give such men their terms, whereas they appear to be in the temper of their spirits bad enough already, they have a great deal of reason to think that would make them a great deal worse. It needs abundance of previous and preventing grace not to be the worse for a good condition, here in this world, as all experience shews. And,

4. Lastly, I would appeal to such, whether God is not, in such respects, abundantly good to them already. Hath he not given you breath and being and all things that you enjoy? How great are the favours that you partake of, in common with the rest of men! To instance in what the context mentions: "He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the just and on the unjust." What a case were you in, if God should put out the sun, and if he should turn the fruitful land in which you dwell, into universal barrenness, by continual withholding his rain? If he should turn your present health into continual sickly languishings, and your ease into tormenting pains, and your plenty into pinching wants, and straits? And more than all this, if he should turn his invitations to you to pray and supplicate for higher, and those that may tend to eternal mercies, into prohibitions; and say to you, "Never pray, never supplicate, never look up, I will receive no addresses from you?" If his invitations to you to surrender yourselves, and become his, and take him for yours, should be turned into protestations against it, "I will never be your God, and you shall never be my people?" Think while this is not the case, if God be not abundantly good to you already, so that upon your own account you have very little reason to contest the matter with him.

But, if good men do object this, as possibly against their more habitual frame, under the power of some temptation they may be apt to do, as we find it was with the Psalmist in the 73 psalm: and the like offence and scandal, good men are repre-

sented as, sometimes, apt to take at their own afflicted condition, compared with the prosperous state of worse men, against which, much of that 37th psalm is directed, and that 21st of Job; and the beginning of the 12th. chap. of Jeremiah's prophecy: let such but go into the sanctuary, as the Psalmist did, (in that 73d. psalm) retire themselves, consider the thing in the secret divine presence, and commune with God about the matter, and not with their own souls, nor consult with flesh and blood, and let them but consider such things as these, briefly,

(1.) Whether this matter of fact be ordinarily and generally true, that the case of good men is worse than that of wicked men in external respects. It is a matter that deserves to be considered and inquired wisely about; and certainly, upon inquiry, it will rather be found otherwise: that is, except in the paroxysm of persecution against instituted religion; (for it is very rare that men should be persecuted for natural but,) "if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus," he must expect to "suffer persecution." I say, except in some such paroxysm of persecution upon such an account, for Christianity itself, as to those that live among pagans, or for this or that institution of them that live among christians, that case being excepted which is not constant; ordinarily, it appears evident that the better men are, the better their state and condition are in this world. Their religion obligeth them to that temperance, sobriety and diligence in their callings, prudent and discreet management of their affairs, that in ordinary cases it is most plain and manifest, that there are much fewer who are ruined by their religion, than that are ruined by their wickedness, by their riot, and by their debauchery; more persons, more estates, and more families are ruined that way, if there be but a survey taken of the state of things in this world: and the apostle offers this very consideration, (in that 1 Cor. 10. 13. even to the very suffering christians of that time) "There hath no temptation," (that is tentative affliction) "befallen you but what is common to men," but what is human. It is true, the account is not common, but the matter of the affliction or the afflictions materially considered, are common to men. Are good men thrown into jails, and sometimes put to death for their religion? Truly, so are bad men for their wickedness, as frequently, and, if we should make a general computation, much more frequently. They suffer the same things very commonly, upon a less comfortable account. And,

(2.) Where this is really the very case, that the condition of good and holy men is, in this world, much worse than that of the worst men, as many times it is so; they are to consider the

vastly different value of spiritual and temporal good things, and this is the great business of a christian, to labour to have that spiritual sense in exercise, by which to be able to discern between good and evil, and to prefer the things that are more excellent: as those two scriptures compared together speak; Heb. 5. 14. and Phil. 3. 8. They ought to have their naked, unvitiated senses by which to discern between good and evil, and to abound in that judgment and sense, in all sense, by which they may distinguish the things that differ, and prefer (as that expression admits to be read) the things that are more excellent. And then, how much greater is the value of a sound and well tempered mind and spirit, above that of all earthly and worldly accommodations and enjoyments imaginable, which are but the gratifications of our flesh and external sense, at best.

And,

(3.) Such are to consider what is the experience of christians of all times, concerning the aptitude and useful subserviency of external afflictions to inward and spiritual advantage: they say, when they are in their calmer, and more considering frames that it is good for them, that they were afflicted, and, that God hath done it in very faithfulness to them. And,

(4.) Lastly. It is God's own declared end, in the temporal afflictions, he lets befall his, and therefore, would have them count it all joy, when they fall into divers temptations, that is, tentative afflictions. James 1. 2. Count it all joy, because it made greatly for their perfection. The trial of your faith worketh patience, therefore, count it all joy; implying, there is more of real good in that one single excellency of patience, than can be of evil in all the external afflictions, absolutely resigned and submitted to the divine pleasure. Here is so much of an inchoate heaven, such a heaven as our present state admits of, this one thing hath, as is not only enough to make us patient, but joyful under the various temptations and trials of this kind, that we are apt to fall into, or lie under. And hereupon, where this sense hath been impressed upon the hearts of good men, they have thought the sufferings of the present time, were not worthy to be compared with the end of them, which was to be wrought out thereby, as in that, Rom. 8. 18. "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." This is my arithmetic, so I account, or this is my logic, so I reason: the word may be rendered either way, this is the rational estimate I make of this case, having turned it round, and viewed it on every side, and balanced things with things, that the sufferings of the present time, this *now* of time, this very point

of time, are not worthy to be compared (alas, it is not to be named the same day,) to the glory that is to be revealed. It is as nothing in the account, as if we should weigh a feather against a mountain. This is my rational estimate and judgment in this case. And, that God doth design the afflictions of this present state, as a preparation for the future, and eternal state, we have most expressly laid down in that, 2 Cor. 4. 17. "The light afflictions which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." It is a *metathesis* which is not usual in Scripture; do work for us, that is, indeed, do work us for it. And it is to be understood, principally, of subjective glory, not objective; for that can never be more or less to any: it is essentially the same in itself with divine glory, but subjective glory, not objective. It is essentially the same in itself with divine glory; but subjective glory to be impressed, that is, more or less, according to the capacity and disposition of the subject. And we grow more capable, and are larger vessels, receptive of greater glory, as our temper is: and our temper is better, and made more receptive of larger and more glorious communications, even by the sufferings of this present time. By the light afflictions which are but for a moment, we are so much the more apt for the eternal weight of glory, which is to ensue; which we are not barely to be told, but to bear, answerable to the notion of weight. We are not only to be mere spectators of the glory there spoken of, but the subjects of it. And then, if this be all that God doth design by the afflictions that he lets befall good men here in this world, to refine them, to make them more partakers of his own holiness, and consequently of fuller glory, greater and higher measures of glory, is this any ground of taking up diminishing thoughts concerning his goodness? Yea, I might add,

It is that which his very relation doth oblige him to, even as he is our Father: your heavenly Father is perfect. For what a Father is he to us? Or in what sense is he Father to his own? He is the Father of their spirits; so his word speaks contradistinctively of him, to the fathers of our flesh. Of the flesh we have other fathers. Heb. 12. 9. He is not the Father of our flesh; he is the Creator of it: but of our spirits he is the Father. He is the Father of them, both upon a natural and supernatural account, as they have his natural image, being intelligent and spiritual beings like his own: and, as his regenerate children, have his holy image renewed in them. Now the very relation doth oblige him (if he be a Father to us, that is, to our spirits,) more principally to mind the advantage of our spirits. That very relation doth not only admit, but re-

quire that he should let us suffer in our flesh, if it may be for the advantage of our spirits: and that this outward man should be beaten and shattered day by day, even unto perishing, if, while this is a doing and suffering, the inward man may be renewed day by day. He must take the principal care about that to which he is a Father. Affection must follow the relation; the relation is to our spirits, and the affection must be, principally, to our spirits.

But I shall insist no further on that part. It remains only to make somewhat of *Use* of what hath been said, especially touching this divine perfection of the goodness of God. And,

1. Be hereupon encouraged to cherish this apprehension concerning God, take heed that nothing ever shake your fixed belief and apprehension of this. And whatsoever reasonings do arise in your minds at any time, forelay this always, let it be always a thing forelaid in you. Yet God is good to Israel, as the Psalmist begins that 73 psalm. Nothing can be of greater importance, either to the liveliness and vigour, or even to the very substance and being of religion, than a fixed, stable apprehension of the divine goodness: that religion is nothing, the soul whereof is not love. If love be not the very soul of your religion, your religion is a carcase, an empty nothing. But that love may be the soul of it, there must be a constant apprehension of the loveliness of the object. Labour then to have your souls possessed always with a deep and fixed apprehension of the divine goodness. Contemplate it in every thing that you behold, in every thing that you enjoy, yea, even in the lessening and qualifying of those evils that you suffer. Go up and down this world with hearts full of this thought; "the whole earth is full of his goodness." Collect all the instances you can of the goodness of God, and keep by that means, such an apprehension alive and in vigour concerning him. What a mighty spring would this be, of cheerful and joyful and pleasant religion. Let no thought arise, but let it meet with a seasonable check, if it tend to any diminution of divine goodness. And,

2. Preserve a worshipping, adoring frame of spirit Godward upon this very account, having your hearts full of this apprehension and sense; labour always to be in a posture of adoration, apt and ready always to look up, carrying that as a motto engraven on your hearts, "I am less than the least of all thy mercies." And again,

3. Endeavour as much as in you is, accordingly to look upon that immediate promanation of the divine goodness, his law; that which issues, which proceeds so directly from the goodness of God. Esteem it to be what really it is, the product and image of the divine goodness. Look upon him

as absolutely, universally perfect, and consider the reasonableness of what is said concerning this law, in correspondency thereunto. "The law of the Lord is perfect." Psalm 19. 7. And considering this one single perfection of the Divine Being, his goodness, make a proportionable judgment concerning his law, in reference to that; that is, that it is an expression of his good and acceptable will: and labour, more and more, to prove that by a vital sense, by an experimental relish in your own spirits. O! how good is it to be what he would have me to be! what that most perfect rule of his doth require and oblige me to be. And,

4. Accordingly judge concerning the course of his providential dispensations. His law precribes to us the way in which we are to walk; his providences make the way in which he walks; labour to apprehend goodness therein too. All his ways are mercy and truth. That is, you are to judge according to the series of his providences complexly taken, and as together they do make up one entire frame. And so, indeed, we are to make up our judgment concerning his law. Not by this or that particular precept, for it would be a very hard imposition upon the mind of a man, to judge and pronounce concerning the goodness of that command to pluck out the right eye, or cut off the right hand, or the right foot, abstractly taken, without reference to the conjunct precepts, and without reference to the end, to which, altogether, they refer. And so, if you look upon providence, you are not to pronounce concerning this or that, separately and apart, considered by itself. As you would not make a judgment of the goodness of a piece of arras by looking on it folded up, where you can only discern a piece of a leg, or a piece of an arm, it may be, or the limb of a tree, but look upon it unfolded, and there see the entire frame of it all at once. So consider the providences of God, in reference one to another, and in reference to their end in which all things shall finally issue, and into which they shall result, and you must say as the Psalmist doth, "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth." And as Moses, in that triumphant song of his, in the 32 Deut. where he tells us, in the beginning, his design was to publish the name of the Lord, that is, to represent the glory of his attributes; "Because (saith he) I will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe ye greatness to our God: He is the rock, his work is perfect." Take all together, you will see it will be perfect work at length, entire, all of a piece; and that nothing could have been spared out of that series and chain of providence that compose and make up the whole course. And then,

5. Endeavour that your knowledge of God may be practical, vital, unitive and transforming, as touching this very thing, the divine goodness. O! how much to be lamented is it, that we should have such a notion of God in our minds to no purpose? the notion of so great a thing, a Being absolutely perfect and infinite, even in this perfection, goodness itself, immense goodness lying in our minds, idle, dead, useless and in vain; so that our hearts are in reference hereunto but a mere *rasa tabula*. There is a notion in our minds, but nothing correspondent impressed upon our hearts, such an apprehension of God as this, if it were vital, lively and operative, would transform us, make us aim continually to be such as he is, which I shall further press by and by. It would powerfully attract and draw us into union with him. What! shall I live at a distance from the Fountain of all goodness, immense goodness, goodness itself, love itself! God is love. He that believes the love of God, is hereupon drawn to dwell in God as he is love, considered under that notion, and so to have God to dwell in him; as the apostle expresseth it, 1 John 4. 16. What mighty influence would this have upon our whole course, if we did go with lively, operative, apprehensions up and down the world of the divine goodness! How should we disburden our souls of care! With what cheerfulness should we serve him! How little doubt should we have concerning the issue of things! of that glorious reward which a course of obedience, service, and fidelity to him, a little will be followed with at last. But that our knowledge of God, as to so great a thing as this, should be like no knowledge, as if we knew nothing, or as if we thought the quite contrary concerning him; methinks, this we should look upon as an insufferable thing, as a thing not to be endured, and so take up resolutions, dependant upon his grace, never to be at rest till our hearts were like this apprehension of God, that he is perfect in goodness. And hereupon further,

6. Make sure of your relation to him as your God, as your Father; and consider and contemplate his goodness with that very design, that you may be indeed stirred up to aim at coming, without more ado, into that relation. We do not much concern ourselves so seriously to inquire touching the character of a person with whom we are never to have to do, with whom we have no concern nor ever expect to have any. If we hear of any such as an excellent person, we hear such a thing of him with more indifferency of mind, "I do not know him, and I am like never to know him; and be as good and as excellent as he will, I am never like to be the better for him." But

when I receive an account of one, as a most excellent person, who designs to adopt me at the same time for his son, and overtures are made to me for that purpose, I think myself highly concerned to inquire into the character of a person to whom I am to be related. And so should we consider the characters that we meet with of God; for we must either have him as our Father, or we must be children of a worse father, or of the worst of fathers. Therefore, this should be hearkened unto, your heavenly Father is perfect, perfectly good, perfect in goodness, upon this account, that overtures are made to me in order to my becoming one of his children: I am to come into his family; this is the thing that is proposed to me. And should not I labour to know what a one he is, and to contemplate the representation that is made to me of him, upon this account? And,

7. Consider with highest admiration and gratitude, the greatness, the privilege, that you are, or may be so related. As the case is stated, if this be not, there is nothing wanting but your own willing and joyous acceptance of the overture, falling in with it, resigning and giving up yourselves most absolutely and entirely to him; and taking his Christ for yours; with him goes the sonship, that is, with the acceptance of his own eternal Son. John 1. 12. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed in his name." And then, consider the greatness of the privilege, that you are, or may be thus related to the Most High God as a Father, to the best, most perfect, and most excellent of beings. You may have him for your Father, and perhaps you have him so already. How great a privilege is this! To have him for your Father is to have all. He that overcometh, shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. Rev. 21. 7. "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." God is to be your portion and inheritance, that if we suffer together with him (which is but a trifle, not to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed) we may be also glorified together. Rom. 8. 17, 18. Methinks, this should run in our minds every day; we are either related to this blessed One, as our Father, or we may be; we are invited and called by the gospel, (and it is the great design of this gospel) into this blessed state. Methinks, it should run in our minds all the day long, that that glorious and most excellent One, should look down from heaven upon such an abject worm as I, and say to me, "Call me Father, take me for thy Father." A heart that were full of the sense of this, would soon grow too big for all this world. What a trifle

would this world be to that soul which were full of that sense; "God is become my Father, I have a Father in heaven, that doth whatsoever he will in heaven and in earth, and there is no withstanding him." He can do what he will, and he will do nothing but what is kind and good to them that willingly consent to come into this comfortable relation to him. You see how distinguishingly such a case is spoken of in the next chapter, Mat. 6. in the latter end. Do not you so and so, like the gentiles. Do not torture yourselves with cares and thoughts, "what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and what you shall put on," and what shall become of your affairs and concerns in the world, and the like: the gentiles do so: after these things do the gentiles seek; but your heavenly Father knows what you need; you have a Father in heaven that knows all your concernments, and that minds all of them, with all wisdom, and all the tenderness and kindness imaginable, I would not have you be as if you had no Father, to put yourselves into the same condition with pagans and outcasts, and those that are without God in the world. And then,

8. Lastly; Imitate God in his imitable perfections, and especially in this his goodness. I say, imitate him with all the goodness that is possible, in all his perfections: "Be ye perfect, for your heavenly Father is perfect." So I would shut up, bringing the exhortation in the text, and inferring reason together. And pray drive it to this one particular thing, to which the context draws and claims it, that is, unto love: and even unto such love as shall reach enemies themselves. You very well know, that God could have shewn no love at all to any in all this world, but he must shew it to an enemy: all were in enmity and rebellion against him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." And this world was only possessed with such inhabitants, all sunk in carnality and earthliness, and deep oblivion of God, and full of anger and displeasure, upon being put in mind that there is One that claims a right over them, and that would have all their thoughts and their love: this they cannot endure; this carnalized race of creatures cannot bear this. "For the carnal mind is enmity against God." And he could never have been kind to men but he must be kind to enemies. For all were become his enemies, affected liberty, and could not endure the thought that there should be a power and a Lord to prescribe to them. I pray, let us labour to imitate this great perfection of the divine goodness, even in this very application of it to enemies. This is the beauty and the glory of the Christian religion, the thing wherein it excels the precepts of the most refined paganism, and of

that which was higher, (as it was grown,) Judaism itself. “You have heard that it was said of old time, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy:” (as it is in the context) “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.” I never expect the Christian religion to flourish much in this world, till this appear and be exercised as the common temper of christians. They are to be such a sort of men, as that all the world may be the better for. If you express never so much of unkindness towards them, if you use them hardly, they will bless you, they will pray for you, they will do you all the good they can, all the good and kind offices in their power. When this spirit comes to be revived among men, it will make the Christian religion (as I may say) *grassari*, mightily to prevail and grow upon the world. The world must fall before such a sort of men as this. But that it will never do while, in this respect, christians are just like other men, as wrathful, as vindictive, as full of rage, and as full of revenge as any body else. Christian religion must grow upon the world, by things that will strike the sense, that incur the most sensible observation of men. Every one can tell and sees it when one is kind to them, and when they have good returned for evil. But there are two things most directly opposite to this temper, which christians are wont too frequently to overlook, never to animadvert upon: the one is,

(1.) When they let their hearts tumultuate with too great fervour and anger against men, upon account of their profaneness and irreligiousness; and they think themselves warranted so to do: such a one is a wicked man, an open, visible enemy against God and Christ, a rebel against heaven. And so they allow themselves to let wrath have its vent and liberty towards such men, and upon such occasions. It was a great deal of zeal for Christ, that the disciples discovered, when they would have had fire to fall down from heaven to vindicate his cause upon those Samaritans that would not receive him into their town. But, saith Christ, “Ye know not what spirit ye are of.” This is quite another thing from that spirit which I intend to introduce into the world, and which must breathe in, and animate, the religion that I am setting on foot among men. The other is,

(2.) Their confining their kindness and respects to men of such and such a character, to this or that party. It is a temper more grossly remote, more vastly different from what is enjoined upon us here; and the thing that our Saviour animadverts

upon in this context, as that wherein we do not only not exceed the pharisees as such, but even publicans themselves. ver. 20. We are told, that except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God: not even into the initial kingdom. As if he had said; “Ye are not fit for the Christian state, you do not come within the confines of Christianity, real Christianity, if your righteousness do not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees. But when men do confine their respects and the kindness of their hearts to a party, this is not only to outdo the pharisees, but even publicans and sinners, for they do so; if you love and salute them that love and salute you, if you are kind to them that are kind to you, what do you more than others? do not even the publicans and sinners the same? But “be ye perfect;”—(that is the contexture of this discourse) “even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

And so I have done with what I designed upon this subject, of the divine perfections or attributes; the next we come in course to, will be that of the divine decrees and purposes of God: and more especially concerning men, and with reference to them.
