

A DISCOURSE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.—JOHN XVII. 3.

THIS chapter contains Christ's last prayer with his disciples, after his farewell sermon, which began after Judas his departure, John xiii. 31, and ends at the end of the 16th chapter. The design of his sermon and that of his prayer was one and the same; his discourse to them was, that they might have peace in him, John xvi. 33; that they might acquiesce in him for peace with God;* that peace of conscience was only to be possessed by the knowledge and love of Christ. His prayer for them in their hearing was, that they might have a firm and full joy, ver. 13; that they might have an antidote against all their fears and troubles they should meet with in the world, and a strong foundation for their own supplications to God. Zanchy calls it the foundation of the church from the beginning of the world to the end of it. It always had, and always will have, its efficacy for every believer; it is a copy left upon the earth of what he doth intercede for as an advocate in heaven. By an inspection into it, we may know what Christ is doing above; for it was that his people might have a full joy, a strong cordial in all afflictions, desertions, temptations.

Some think it to be the same with that prayer in the garden; but that opinion hath no firm foundation.†

(1.) The matter of the prayer is different. In this, our Saviour prays for his own glorification, for assistance in his approaching passion, and an unloosing afterwards the bands of death by an happy resurrection; in that, he prays for a removal of the cup which was brewed for him.

(2.) The gesture is different. In this, he lifts up his eyes to heaven, in token of a confidence in his Father for the answer of his prayer, with such confidence as he hath in heaven in his intercession; in the garden, he fell prostrate upon the earth: Mat. xxvi. 39, 'He fell on his face, and prayed.' His eyes were towards the earth.

(3.) His company were not the same. In this, his disciples were with him; in that, he withdrew from his disciples, taking only three with him, Mat. xxvi. 37, and presently went aside from them also by himself, ver. 39. This prayer they all heard, the other they did not, for sleep had possessed them.

* Ferus.

† Gerhard, Harm. cap. clxxx.

(4.) In this, he prays as Mediator, and pleads the terms of the mediatory covenant, which had been agreed upon before his coming into the world; in that, he prays more like a man from the strugglings of the flesh, as though there had been a contest between human nature and his mediatory office. In the one, he declares his deity; in the other, evidenceth his humanity, in the infirmities of the flesh. In this, his soul was free from disturbance; in that, 'his soul was sorrowful and very heavy, even unto death,' Mat. xxvi. 37, 38. He prayed then as one standing charged with all our sins, which made him bow his head to the ground; he prayeth here as one that hath satisfied for our sins, triumphed over his enemies, and performed his Father's will: John xvii. 4, 'I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' In fine, this prayer in regard of the matter he doth still pursue in heaven, the other petition he never did afterwards, nor ever shall reassume into his lips.

If any part of Scripture be to be magnified above another, this seems to claim the pre-eminence, it being the breathing out of Christ's heart before his departure, for the comfort of his disciples, and the succeeding church to the end of the world; a standing monument of his whole mediatory design, and his unalterable love.

Ver. 1, 'These words spake Jesus, and lift up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee.' Christ first acted with man in the name of God by teaching,* he now acts with God in the name of man by praying. It is a miraculous prayer in the person of Christ, who is essentially one with the Father, to whom he prays;† personally one with the Son of man, who prays here to the Father.

Father. Not *our Father*, as he had taught us to pray, but *Father*, to shew that the paternity of the Father to him was in another manner than that to his people. He was the natural Son of God, believers adopted ones.

Thy Son. In a way of eminency and peculiarity above others; thy Son by eternal generation, thy Son in his humanity by the grace of personal union.

The hour is come. The hour of my passion, the hour of thy satisfaction; the hour of thy expectation, the hour of my victory and thy glory. I am coming to the last upshot of my humiliation, I have managed an obedience to thee hitherto with all care and diligence; I am now come to perfect it by my death, I will not decline the last act of it; decline not thou, O Father, the glorifying of me, while I stand as the butt of all thy wrath for the sins of men.

Glorify thy Son. Glorify him in his death, by accepting it as the death of thy Son for the sins of the world; glorify him in his death, by manifesting at that time that I am thy Son. God did so by miraculous testimonies of his innocency in the time of his passion, by rending of the temple's veil, obscurity of the sun, quaking of the earth, and the cleaving of the rocks, which made the centurion that guarded him pronounce him to be 'truly the Son of God,' Mat. xxvii. 54.

Glorify him in a resurrection; glorify thy Son in his deity, by a manifestation of it; glorify thy Son in his humanity, by conferring new endowments of honour and immortality upon it. He prays here for a manifestation of the glory of his deity, which had been obscured, for an addition of glory to his humanity, which had not been yet enjoyed, by a resurrection and exaltation of it to the right hand of the Father. He prays for a manifestation of his deity: 'Glorify thy Son.' He was the Son of God by eternal genera-

* Illyric. in loc.

† Gerhard, Harmon. cap. clxxx.

tion; it is the glory of his deity therefore which is here desired by him. Not the essential glory of the Deity, for that could not be interrupted; not any addition to it, for, being infinite, he was not capable of it, but a manifestation of it; not simply in itself, but in his humanity, which had been veiled by the flesh ever since he emptied himself into it. He prays to be glorified in that state wherein he prays, which was a state of union with the human nature. His essential glory could suffer no detriment, his manifestative did. As the sins of men are said to dishonour God, not that they detract from the glory of his essence, which cannot suffer any diminution by the sins of men, but as they deny and obscure the manifestation of his glory; the sun suffers no loss of light in its body by the veil of a thick cloud, but the brightness of his beams is masked. As the Father was to be glorified by Christ, so was Christ to be glorified by the Father. Now, the Father could not be glorified by the Son in a way of addition, but manifestation, causing the glory of God to break out upon the world, which had so long been obscured by an universal idolatry. He glorified the Father by a manifestation of his name, ver. 4; and in like manner is glorified by the Father in the manifestation of his deity.

That Christ prays here for the glory of his deity as well as of his humanity is evident,* because he prays as mediator and priest, desiring a mediatory glory; but he was mediator and priest according to his divine as well as human nature, and therefore desires that he might be known to the world, not only to be a just and innocent man, but the eternal Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, the expiator of sins, and in that work infinitely delightful to the Father.

Glorify thy Son. Glorify him as thy Son, that as thy Son he may glorify thee. The Son of God was in the world as a great light in a dark lantern, clouded and covered with clay, that though the candle burned, it did not appear, but through some crannies. He desires that this thick mist might be dispersed, that the glory of his divinity might shine forth in his humanity, as a candle through polished glass. The glory of Christ was to be manifested to be the Son of God: John i. 14, 'We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father;' a glory in his resurrection, his ascension, in the mission of the Spirit, which declared him to be no other than the only Son of God; and so verse 22 of this chapter is to be understood, 'The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.' As it is my glory to be the Son of God, so I have given them this glory, to be the sons of God by adoption, 'that they may be one, as we are one;' in the same relation of sonship, though in a different manner.

His petition for this glory he urgeth by two arguments:

(1.) One in ver. 1, 'That thy Son also may glorify thee.' The glory of the Father was concerned in it, whose justice, wisdom, love (and all the attributes so signally manifested in redemption), had lain under as great a disguise without the glory of Christ, as the deity of the Son did under the veil of his flesh.

(2.) Another, † taken from the happiness and salvation of the elect, ver. 2, 'As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' Unless the humanity had been glorified by a resurrection, there would have been no assurance that the debt had been satisfied, and no sure ground of faith; unless he had been exalted to the right hand of God as an advocate, there had been no security for our debts. His resurrection was necessary to make men believers for what was passed, his exaltation was necessary to make them comfortable believers for

* Zanch. de tribus Elohim, part. i. l. 4. c. 10.

† Zanch. ut supra.

the time to come; and unless his divine nature had been manifested in the mission of the Spirit, and the collation of miraculous gifts, there had been no foundation for the propagation of the doctrine of redemption, and so that glorious work had lain wrapped up from human view. The other was necessary as a ground of faith, and this was necessary to the declaration of the doctrine of faith, and an incentive to the embracing of it. Since he was shortly to die, and be executed under the notion of a criminal, a blasphemer, and a wicked man, if he were not raised again, not one would believe in him as mediator, and so the glory of the Father, and the salvation of the elect, had sunk with the glory of the Son.

Observe,

1. The inexpressible care of Christ for the comfort of his people before he went out of the world. He had preached to them, he would pray for them in their hearing, that their joy might be full. He could not manifest his care in an higher manner than by using his power with his Father for their good; here he gives an assurance of the efficacy of his mediation, the certain terms wherein he stood with the Father. They might before have questioned the truth of those things which he had said unto them; but there was no room for any doubt, when they find him, a little before his death, asserting the same things to his Father, begging the accomplishment of them. Howsoever some of them might suspect the declarations of a man, they would not suspect his appeals to God.

2. The consideration of God's being a Father is the highest ground of confidence in prayer, and a strong argument to excite the kindness of God towards us. 'Father, glorify thy Son.' It is a glory Christ hath purchased for, and given to, every believer, to call God *Father*: John xx. 17, 'My Father and your Father;' before his passion it was, 'I go to the Father,' now '*your* Father' as well as mine. Not *our* Father, but *my* Father and *your* Father, mine by nature, yours by grace; yet as really yours by grace, as mine by nature. Our addresses are to be to God as a Father, since the relation is real, really purchased, really confirmed. Members should imitate the head, use their privileges, since the Redeemer hath taken our infirmities that we might partake of his dignity. With what confidence may a child ask, with what bowels will a father give. Christ had the sense of his Sonship when he prayed, and we should have the sense of our adoption.

3. The passion of Christ was the determination of God. 'The hour is come,' the time pitched to a moment, the hour and the work of the hour agreed on and determined, between the Father and the Son, in an eternal council; all the consultations of the Jews against him were successful till this hour. Times and events are in the hands of God.

4. Christ was a voluntary Redeemer. The hour is come. I am ready to perform what thou hast enjoined and I have promised. He sought no shelter from suffering; he expressed here no sorrow for it, no grief at it; he looks beyond the hour of suffering to the hour of glory. We should be voluntary subjects, and look through the cloud of suffering to the glory of the crown.

5. The full assurance of obtaining what we want must not chill our supplications for it. Who can have greater assurance of supply than our Redeemer had of assistance in his task, and exaltation after it? Insured by the promises to him, backed by the oath of God, that he should be a priest for ever, of which he had at this time a sense and impression upon his heart, John xiii. 1, 3, he knew that he should 'depart out of this world unto the Father;' and 'knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, that he was come from God, and went to God,' yet he prays for that glory. Promises are not damps, but incentives and guides, to prayer; they are to

inflare us, not to cool us. How can we pray in faith without a promise, which is the ground of faith, since prayer is nothing but a putting promises in suit! Precepts command us to pray, and promises direct us what to pray for, with hopes of success. The promises of a seed to Christ stand firm, yet he is now in heaven an advocate interceding for it. As Christ, though assured, hath nothing without asking, so neither can his members. Promises encourage to put in our claim to them, and not our waiving it. When Daniel knew that the term of the church's captivity was near expired, according to the promise of God, he buckles more to prayer, Dan. ix. 2, 3.

6. The glory of God must be principally in our minds, and nearest our hearts in all our supplications. Christ prays first for his own glory, but as a means for the glory of his Father, before he prays particularly for the good of the church: 'Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee;' and only for such a glory for himself, whence the glory of the Father might spring with a greater brightness upon the Son; for, by the raising Christ, and manifesting the glory of his deity, the Father would be glorified in full declarations of himself, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the author of the great redemption, as a God that so loved the world as to send his Son into it for the redemption of it. 'Hallowed be thy name,' is the first petition in the Lord's prayer. The glory of God must weigh more in our thoughts than our private interest: his glory is to be our end in our common actions, 1 Cor. x. 31, much more in acts of religious worship. If another end be higher in our hearts, in our prayers, though we pray to God, we really worship an idol, viz. self; though God be the object, yet he is not the end. We must seek to God for all blessings, with the same end for which God gives them; he gives us the highest for his glory: Eph. i. 6, 'He hath accepted us in his beloved, to the praise of the glory of his grace.' We must beg for self subordinately, but for God's glory ultimately. Our Saviour begged glory for himself, that he might return glory to his Father. To beg any thing for ourselves principally, is the prayer of some lust, ambition, or covetousness; to beg any thing for God's glory is a prayer of grace, like that of our Saviour's.

7. The glory of the Father and the Son are linked together. The Father cannot be glorified without the Son, nor the Son without the Father. They are in conjunction in all the actions of redemption, and therefore in the glory redounding from it. The Father glorified the Son when he declared him to be Saviour of the world; and by this declaration was the Father discovered to be full of bowels to the world. The sun in the heavens is not glorified but in his beams, and the beam is not glorified but by the communication of light from the sun; what glory the sun hath is discovered in the beam, what glory the beam hath redounds to the sun. The Father was glorified in all his acts which concerned the glory of Christ; his wisdom, in finding out so full and efficacious a remedy; his justice, in his death; his power, in the sustentation of him in his sufferings, and his resurrection from the grave; his veracity, in every circumstance which had been foretold; his love and kindness, in the mission of the Spirit, to spread his wings over the world, who was before confined to the Jews. As the glory of both is linked in itself, it must be linked in our services; we must honour both, one as the object of worship, the other as the medium; the Father as the rector, Christ as the ambassador. As the Father is not glorified by Christ, but by first glorifying Christ, so neither is the Father glorified by us without our glorifying Christ first by believing. When we glorify Christ as the Son of God, we glorify God as the Father of Christ; we cannot glorify the paternity without acknowledging a filiation, nor acknowledge a filiation without honouring the paternity.

8. Christ's prayer being argumentative, teacheth us the manner of our praying, which should consist of arguments for God's glory and our happiness: not that arguments move God to do that which he is not willing of himself to do for us (as Christ's pressing arguments to his Father was not to inform God of the necessity of what he prayed for), as though the infinitely wise God needed information, or the infinitely loving God needed persuasion, but it is for strengthening our faith in him. All the prayers in the Scripture you will find to be reasoning with God, not a multitude of words heaped together; and the design of the promises is to furnish us with a strength of reason in this case: Dan. ix. 16, 'Now, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thy anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem.' He pleads God's righteousness in his promise of the set time of deliverance; after he had settled his heart in a full belief of the promise of deliverance, he shews God's own word to him. The arguments you will find drawn from the covenant in general, or some promise in particular, or some attribute of God, or the glory of God. All this prayer of Christ is full of arguments drawn from several heads; the first petition is backed by one: ver. 2, 'As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him,' which is another reason he urgeth for his sustentation in his passion, and his resurrection and exaltation; and the sense runs thus:—It is necessary I should be glorified, since thou hast given me a power to give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me, which was not given me as an empty title and useless power; give me therefore such a glory which may make that power I am endowed with significant for those ends for which it is conferred; the giving eternal life was the great end of my coming into the world, which life cannot be had without the knowledge of thee the true God, and of Jesus Christ as mediator. The glory of my humanity and the manifestation of my deity are necessary to the exercise of this power, and the attainment of the end thereof, that those which thou hast given me may know who I am, that I am a priest and mediator of thy appointment, thy Son, in whose hands their happiness is secure, that so they may trust me and believe in me; and herein, O Father, thou wilt be glorified, for by this they will understand how wise, holy, true, good, merciful, loving thou art to the sons of men.

Observe,

1. The glory of Christ, and the glory of the Father in and by Christ, is the security of the glory of the church and every believer. The glory of the Father is the first link in the chain, upon which all the other benefits Christ desires for the church do depend. The first reason he presseth for his own glory is the glory of the Father, the next is the salvation of the elect. As they are joined in Christ's prayer, they are also knit together in themselves. It is the glory of God that the whole lower creation, made to set forth his praise, should not be the triumph of the devil, that he should not boast that he had frustrated God's design. Is it not the glory of God that his eternal counsel should have its full accomplishment, that the beauty of his believing creatures should be restored, the honour of God established, and the enemies of God put to confusion? This hath the same bottom as the glory of the Father hath, viz., the glory of Christ. Since this is established, the other will be completed, and the eternal glory of believers stand as firm as the glory of the Father. The perseverance of a believer is secured, for if it be the honour of God to snatch souls out of the devil's hand, it is for his honour to keep them, that they may not be regained by the enemy from whom they have been delivered.

2. The glory of Christ was necessary for the salvation of believers. It is

upon this account Christ pleads for it. Had he not been raised, sin had not been expiated ; had he not ascended, heaven had not been opened ; had he not been set at the right hand of God, the atonement of sin had not been secured ; had not the Spirit been sent into the world for the glory of Christ, the knowledge of this expiation had not been propagated.

3. The infinite love of Christ shines forth in this. A power was given him. He desires no glory of his Father but what was necessary for the good of his people, and what he would lay out wholly for their interest. Christ esteems not any glory but as it is of use to his elect ; and his chiefest glory consists, not in possessing a power, but in exercising it for their benefit. Take notice of the love of the Father too ; this power was given by him to this end, that he should give eternal life to those that were his Father's donatives. Upon this the salvation of the elect stands firm. The end of God's giving authority to Christ, and the end of Christ desiring a glory for the exercise of that authority, is one and the same ; Christ will not be unfaithful to his Father, to neglect the end of the power he is entrusted with, nor will he cross the end of his own petition. What stronger argument can a believing soul urge in prayer, and embrace as a ground of faith ? The Father's gift and the Son's request centering in one end, which will be denied by neither, affords a strong consolation. As the end of the righteousness Adam had was to convey it to his posterity, so the end of the power Christ hath is to convey righteousness and secure happiness to his spiritual seed, who hath the immutable strength of the Deity surmounting the weakness and mutability of Adam's humanity, and will be as faithful to his trust as Adam was false to his.

4. How large and extensive is the kingdom and authority of Christ ! It is not limited to narrow confines. It extends over every creature, over all flesh, not one exempted ; he hath a throne above the greatest monarchs ; he is King of kings and Lord of lords. They cannot escape his iron rod who refuse to subject themselves to his gracious sceptre. All that are fallen under the power of the devil by sin are now under the dominion of Christ in grace or justice. All nations are subjected to him, as his inheritance and possession. Ps. ii. 8.

5. The kingdom of Christ is by a divine authority. Thou hast given him power : Ps. ii. 8, ' Ask of me and I will give thee.' It is not usurped, but by an eternal grant, and perpetual. Whatsoever he doth in his kingdom, in order to the eternal life of believers, is ratified by God the Father, the donor of this power to him.

6. The whole scene of the government of the world is for the promoting the eternal life of the elect. All the world is in the hands of Christ. He hath power over all flesh for this end, to give eternal life to those that God hath given to him. Every act of his government tends to this end. What is the end of his power is the true end of the exercise of that power, in every act of it in the world. It must needs be so by consequence ; and how sweet will it be at last to see the whole combination ; how unanimously every providence did conspire to this end, which our ignorant souls cannot now discern !

7. We see what is the right way to gain eternal life. The power of bestowing it is invested in Christ ; we must have recourse to him not only as the purchaser, but as the donor, by authority from the Father. We must believe in him as the purchaser upon the cross, call upon him as the distributor upon his throne. He had power given to merit it, as he was one sent ; he had power given him to confer it, as he was one exalted.

8. One mercy sometimes is a strong plea for the obtaining of another.

The gift of a power over all flesh is an argument used by Christ for a further glory. The power would be a fruitless gift; God would lose the honour of it, the praise of it, the improvement of it, if Christ were not put into a full capacity for the exercise of it. How often may we find logic enough in one mercy to argue for more, with that God who is not willing the honour of his mercy should be lost, when the desires of his creatures are to glorify him. To what purpose should God justify and sanctify, if he did not intend to glorify? He would else lose the glory of his former mercy, and his people would lose the comfort of it. If God lays the foundation, it is a strong plea for his raising the building to its full height.

We come now to the text, 'This is eternal life,' &c.

This is a transition from his prayer, declaring what eternal life was. Some understand it of the intuitive knowledge of God in heaven; but it rather seems to be meant of the knowledge of God here in this state of pilgrimage.

1. The reason of the petition evinceth it.* Since thou, O Father, hast designed me to give eternal life, I can never accomplish this unless thou dost glorify me, because eternal life can only be conferred on those who acknowledge thee, and the mediator thou hast sent. If I be not raised, none can be rationally induced to believe me to be mediator; and if I do not ascend to heaven, the Spirit cannot come into the world, and consequently all means of manifesting thee in the mediator will be wanting, and the eternal life I was designed to give be kept from those thou hast designed for it.

2. He declares that those apostles who were then with him had known that he came out from God, and had believed that God had sent him, ver. 8, and so had the root of eternal life in them, who yet were without an intuitive knowledge of God, of a blessed vision, which belongs only to a state of glory. It must therefore be meant of a knowledge of God by faith in this world.

But it is the effect for the cause; the knowledge of God is not formally eternal life, but the cause of it, and the antecedent means to it. It is not eternal life in the formality and nature of it, but in the infallibility of causation; because if men had the true knowledge of Christ impressed upon them, it could not be but they must believe in him, and consequently have both a right to eternal life and the foretaste of it. It is frequent in the Scripture to put the effect for the cause, as John iii. 19, 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world,' *i. e.* this is the cause of condemnation.

This knowledge of God is not only a knowledge of God and Christ in the theory, but such a knowledge which is saving, joined with ardent love to him, cordial trust in him, as 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 'Then I shall know even as also I am known,' *i. e.* I shall love and rejoice, as I am beloved and delighted in by God. It is not only a knowledge of God in his will, but a knowledge of God in his nature; both must go together; we must know him in his nature, we must be obedient to his will. The devil hath a greater knowledge of God's being than any man upon earth, but since he is a rebel to his will, he is not happy by his knowledge. It must be such a knowledge as leads to eternal life, and hath a necessary and infallible connection with it, as the effect with the cause, which is not between a speculative knowledge and salvation. It must be therefore such a knowledge which descends from the head to the heart, which is light in the mind and heat in the affections; such a knowledge of God as includes faith in him.

Two things constitute this knowledge:

1. We must know God, the true God, as the gospel discovers him, in

* Gerhard. Harm. cap. 180.

opposition to all false gods ; that he is spiritual, just, powerful, merciful, faithful.

2. We must know God as the Father of Christ ; we must know him in that relation to Christ, without which knowledge we can have no right conceptions of the economy of redemption, because all proceeds from the Father through the Son.

That which is the greatest stumbling-block in the text is that clause, ' thee the only true God,' whereby some would exclude the deity of Christ. Christ prays to the Father, and acknowledgeth him the only true God ; if the Father therefore, say some, be the only true God, then Christ is not God, and they tell us that Christ is *Deus factus*, *Deus constitutus*. But to say a *made God*, is as great nonsense as to say an *uncreated creature*. Both carry a contradiction in the terms. The Scripture doth frequently and plainly assert the deity of Christ : no creature can be equal with God. But Christ was ' in the form of God,' and ' thought it no robbery to be equal with God,' Philip. ii. 6. He was equal to God in his deity, though inferior to God in his humanity ; the form of God stooped to the form of a servant, but the form of a servant despoiled him of nothing essential to the form of God ; he ceased not to be what he was before, when he became in the womb of the virgin what he was not before. ' All things that the Father hath are mine,' saith Christ, John xvi. 15 ; what is more the Father's than his essence and deity ? The essence, therefore, and deity of the Father is the essence and deity of the Son. Austin argues well upon John i. 3, ' All things were made by him,' by the Word ; therefore, himself was not made, for nothing can make itself ; and, it is added, ' without him nothing was made.' Therefore, the *λόγος* is not *ex rebus factis*. He is therefore God, for there is no medium ; and he is called ' God blessed for ever : ' Rom. ix. 5, ' Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.' Where the Greek article *ὁ* is added, which the adversaries of this truth deny to be added to *Θεός* when it is attributed to Christ ; and John, as if he had foreseen what work would be made of this *solum* against the deity of Christ, gives us an antidote against it : 1 John v. 20, ' We are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life ; ' where the article also is added.

The answer to this is various.

1. Some* understand the word *μόνον* *one*, not alone, or only, and so translate it, that they may know thee the one true God ; and the word is often of that signification.

2. Others say Christ here acknowledgeth the Father the only true God, because the Father is the fountain of the Deity. In regard of the *essence*, there is no prerogative, but only in respect of the *persons*, which consists only in order and personality, as the Father is said to beget and the Son said to be begotten. That may be affirmed in one respect, which cannot in another ; as Mark xiii. 32, the Son is said not to know the day of judgment, but the Father ; not the Son of man, but the Son absolutely ; he knew it not as man, but he knew it as God.

3. Others say, to omit many other answers, that this particle *only* is put to exclude false gods, which is most satisfactory. It excludes none that are of the same essence, but all that are not. The Son is not excluded from being God, as Deut. xxxii. 12, ' So the Lord alone did lead them,' *Jehovah*. The Son is not excluded by that name *Jehovah*, for Christ led them, and in their murmuring they are said to tempt Christ, 1 Cor. x. 9. It was Christ who is called the angel of the Lord that conducted them, Exod. xxiii. 20,

* Zanch. de trib Eloh. part. 1, lib. 4, cap. 10.

Exod. xxxii. 34, Isa. lxiii. 9. The word *only** doth not exclude the Son; for then, when it is joined with the Son, it should exclude the Father from being God. But it is joined with the Son, Isa. xlv. 22, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else; I have sworn by myself, that unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.' That this is understood of Christ by the best interpreter is evident, Rom. xiv. 11, where, speaking of the standing of all before the judgment-seat of Christ, he proves it by this place. 'For as it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' In Isaiah, it is spoken in opposition to idols, as appears by the 20th verse; and according to the apostle's understanding, it was Christ that spake there, asserting three times there was no God besides him, ver. 21, 22. Shall the Father therefore be excluded from the Deity, because Christ saith so positively there is no God besides him? There is no place to which that in the Romans can refer, but to that in Isaiah.

Again, worship is due only to God: Mat. iv. 10, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' Doth this exclude Christ from being worshipped, to whom it is due from the angels as well as from men?

Again, this word *only* in other cases doth not exclude, but include, those that have the same respect with the person spoken of, as Deut. i. 35, 36, God swears that not one of that generation should see the good land save Caleb; yet Joshua is not excluded, who manifested the same integrity in the report of Canaan after they had been to view it.

Again, when Paul saith, he 'determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified,' 1 Cor. ii. 2, doth he exclude the knowledge of God the Father, and the knowledge of Christ glorified as well as crucified? No, surely.

Again, what is attributed to the Son, the Spirit is not excluded from; therefore what is attributed to the Father, neither the Son nor the Spirit are excluded from. As when it is said, Mat. xi. 27, 'None knows the Father but the Son,' is the Spirit excluded, who 'searcheth the deep things of God,' and 'knows the things of God'? 1 Cor. ii. 11. And indeed, in common expression, the word *only* is not exclusive of any that are in conjunction with a person we speak of; as when we speak of a tradesman that usually hath the choicest commodities of this or that sort, we say he is the only man in London for such wares; we exclude not those that are partners with him in his trade, but all that are not in conjunction with him in it.

4. The scope of the place doth evidence that the Father is called the true God, in opposition to idols;† for when Christ saith all power was given to him, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given to him,—those that were given to him were among the Gentiles as well as the Jews,—he here respects them both. The Gentiles worshipped many gods, the Jews worshipped one God, but rejected Christ as mediator. Now the knowledge of both is necessary to salvation. In the first clause, he respects the multiplicity of heathen gods; in the other, the Jewish contempt of the mediator. So then the expression excludes only the heathen idols. In 1 Thes. i. 9, 'How you turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God,' God is called the true God in opposition to idols.

5. The deity of Christ is asserted in every verse almost before and after, and therefore is not excluded in this. He hath 'power over all flesh, to give eternal life' to them; too great a power to be entrusted in the hands of a mere creature, and too great a gift to spring from a mere creature. The one

* Gerhard. Harm. cap 180.

† Ibid.

is an infinite power, and cannot be managed by a finite head and hand ; it requires omniscience to the due exercise of it ; the other is an infinite happiness, and cannot be bestowed and secured by a finite strength. This eternal life is the knowledge of God ; there must be a work upon the understanding and upon the will to produce this saving knowledge. These two faculties in spiritual things lie open only to the touch of an infinite power. The power over all creatures extends to their inward motions, thoughts, turnings of their heart for the good of the elect, which is only the prerogative of God, not of a creature. He had a glory with the Father before the world was, ver. 5 ; not in his humanity before it was in being, therefore in the deity ; and the glory conferred upon his humanity cannot be managed without a conjoined divinity.

Again, the knowledge of the Son is made a cause of eternal life, as well as the knowledge of the Father. It is not to be thought that the knowledge of any creature should be counted equally necessary to salvation with the knowledge of God ; if our happiness consist in the knowledge of both, then both the Father and the Son are of the same nature. The term *Father* manifests it ; God was the Father of Christ from eternity ; Christ was with him before any creature was in being ; if the Father were the eternal Father, the Son must be an eternal Son.

6. I might offer another consideration of this place, viz., that *the true God* may refer to the veracity of God the Father in his covenant with Christ, and his promises to us (the Syriac seems to carry it this way ; 'To know thee to be the only God of truth'). A fiducial knowledge is here meant, a knowledge accompanied with faith and trust in God, the ground whereof is particularly the veracity and faithfulness of God in his promise ; and the truth of God in his promise to man is founded upon the truth of God in performing his covenant with Christ, which Christ insists upon, ver. 4, 5, where he speaks of his own office performed by him in the manifestation of God's name, as a work God gave him to do, and claims a glory as due by a former transaction between them. Or thus, I cannot give eternal life unless I be glorified : by this thou wilt evidence thyself to be a true sincere God, not giving me an empty power ; and men's knowing and understanding this, and thereby knowing me to be thy Christ, sent by thee, will be their way to eternal life. Or it may be understood of the promises declared by the prophets of exalting him after the performance of his work upon the earth ; and by the glorifying of him after he had made himself a sacrifice, God would declare himself a God of truth in the performance of the covenant made with him, and the promises published by the prophets, the knowledge whereof would be a motive to and ground of faith, and so the means of eternal life. So it is life eternal to know and believe in God as a God of truth in his promises made to and concerning Christ, not only in his mission but his exaltation. The word *ἀληθινός* is many times taken so* as *ἀληθινοὶ λόγοι* (Plutarch), and *ἀληθινοὶ φίλοι*, true friends, that do not deceive. The Father so may be said to be the only true God, as he was the person promising Christ to us, and covenanting with Christ about the work of redemption, and the person to whom the mission of Christ is ascribed. Christ was the person promised to us as a Redeemer, and the person covenanting with God the Father about redemption. Christ now being upon a plea for himself and his people, that he might be enabled to glorify God, urgeth the declaration of God's veracity, as the only means whereby eternal life might be conveyed to men. And since veracity is an essential attribute, neither the Son nor the Holy Ghost are excluded from being the true God ; but the Father is

* Stephani Thesaurus.

considered here in a personal transaction, as standing in the present economy. I will not urge it, because it is an untrodden path, but leave it to consideration, which perhaps it may somewhat deserve.

We may see in the text,

First, The cause or nature of happiness, knowledge, by way of excellency and exclusion of everything else as the cause of happiness.

Secondly, The object of this knowledge, God and Christ.

1. God : to know him in his nature, perfections, effluxes in and through Christ ; to know him as one.

2. Christ : to know him as commissioned and sent by God ; in his person and in his offices.

3. Conjunctly : God and Christ, God in Christ. It is *ἐν διὰ θεοῦ*, as 2 Pet. i. 2, 'through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ,' *i. e.* through the knowledge of God in Christ ; and Rom. i. 5, 'grace and apostleship,' *i. e.* the grace of apostleship.

Observe,

1. Knowledge of God and Christ is the life and happiness of the soul. What meat is to the body, that, and more, are divine truths to the soul. In the clear sight of God as the supreme good, the understanding is satisfied, the will filled with love, and all the desires of the soul find the centre of their rest. The vision of God in heaven is the satisfaction of the soul, and the imperfect knowledge of him here is our imperfect felicity. It is the root of eternal life, which will spring up in time to mature fruit, to the knowledge of him above, which is the complete happiness. True happiness ariseth from truth known and goodness beloved.*

2. Eternal life and happiness consists not in any worldly thing, not in riches or honours. The soul is a more excellent part of a man than the body ; the happiness of it must consist in something which is the proper object of it ; and more excellent in the rank of beings than the understanding is in the rank of faculties. The operations of that conduce more to felicity than the actions of sense.

3. The knowledge of Christ is as necessary to happiness as the knowledge of God. If a man had the knowledge of God in as clear a manner as the angels have, yet without a knowledge of Christ he were as remote from happiness as the devil. Though the knowledge of Christ be not simply necessary to the angels who never fell, and so needed not a mediator, yet it is necessary to us, who are obnoxious to God's wrath, and so need a reconciler, because of the enmity ; a redeemer, because of our slavery ; a refiner, because of our filthiness ; a mediator, because of our distance to bring us to God.

4. The true knowledge of Christ is not only a knowledge of his person, but a knowledge of his commission as sent. It is a material question that the pharisees asked our Saviour, 'By what authority doest thou these things?' though they asked it maliciously, to get advantage against him by his answer. We could have no comfort if we did not know and consider by what authority he acted in this great affair. Our security in Christ lies in his authority from God. Faith hath comfort in him as he is the Son of God ; comfort in him as he is God's commissioner, but higher comfort as he is both joined together. As being the Son of God, he hath ability ; as being sent of God, he hath authority. He might have been the Son of God without authority to such a work, had he not been commissioned ; he might have been sent of God, and commissioned by him, and not have done the work he was appointed, had he not been the Son of God, and so had an infiniteness of

* Senault.

ability. Christ sets out both these as the ground of faith to us: 'Glorify thy Son,' ver. 1; 'whom thou hast sent,' in the text.

Those which I insist upon are,

Doct. I. The knowledge of God, and Christ the mediator, is the necessary means to eternal life and happiness.

Doct. II. The true and saving knowledge of God is only in and by Christ.

I. For the first. The knowledge of God and Christ the mediator is the necessary means of eternal life and happiness. It is the knowledge of God as discovered, not in the creatures, but in the Scripture; a knowledge of God through faith in Christ, which is able to make us wise to salvation. The tree of knowledge in paradise became our death, and the tree of knowledge in the gospel becomes our life. The knowledge of God and Christ doth not only free us from a dark and obscure walk, but is 'the light of life,' John viii. 12. The true knowledge of God and Christ is an effectual and infallible means of salvation, because upon such knowledge faith doth depend: Psal. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.' Though no man can come to Christ unless the Father draw him, yet God draws every man by the cords of a man, by such means as are proportioned and fitted to the principles of his nature. Now it is as proper for a man to be led and drawn by the light of knowledge, as it is for a spark to fly upwards, or a stone to move downward. The drawing by the Father to Christ is explained by God's teaching of men, and men's apprehension of that teaching; and between men's thus learning of that which God teacheth, and their coming to Christ, there is an essential connection: John vi. 45, 'Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me.'

This knowledge is a certain, full, and persuasive assent to the unity of God, his nature, his word; to the mediation of Christ, and God's communications through him grounded upon a divine light, as plain and evident to the mind as any natural light is.

I. In general, what kind of knowledge this is.

II. That this is necessary.

III. In what respects it is necessary.

IV. What are the properties of this knowledge, whereby it is distinguished from other knowledge which is not saving.

V. Use.

I. What kind of knowledge in general this is.

1. There is a speculative knowledge: a study and knowledge of God upon the same account that men study and desire to know other things that are excellent and delightful; as both the contemplation of God in creation, and the contemplation of God in redemption, afford notions very gustful to a delicate understanding. Thus a man speculatively knows God and Christ when he is well skilled in the revelation of God, the history of Christ, the analogy between the types and predictions of Christ in the Old Testament, and the accomplishment of them in the New, in the person of Christ. A knowledge of God by creation many of the wiser sort of heathens had, who have discoursed excellently of the nature of God: Rom. i. 21, they are said to 'know God.' A knowledge of God by revelation, the Jews had in the Old Testament, who yet rejected the Son of God; a knowledge of Christ many learned men professing Christianity have, who know Christ in the bark of the letter, not in the sap of the Spirit; as the Jews knew him under the veil of types, but were ignorant of his person when he came among them. This is such a knowledge which men have of a beautiful picture, or a comely person with whom they have no acquaintance; or as an astronomer knows

the stars without receiving any more special influence from them than other men, or the inanimate creatures.

(1.) This knowledge is natural. In regard of natural education, whereby they suck in and vent those notions rooted in them; in regard of natural principles in the soul, which conclude something of God, though nothing of Christ. There are some fragments of the broken tables of the law in the hearts of men, whereby they know the being of a God, and something of his nature, helped by reason and discourse, removing imperfections from him in their conceptions of him, and comparing him with things that are most excellent in their apprehensions. But there is no natural knowledge of Christ; for all the sparklings of creatures, and all the letters of the law laid in them and put together, present not a syllable of a mediator. But this natural, educative, and historical knowledge, is not that here meant. It is a spiritual knowledge our Saviour intended; for he intended that which hath a connection with eternal life, which must have a principle framed by an higher hand than that of nature. As things visible in themselves cannot be seen without a visive faculty and eye, and that well tempered, and rightly disposed for the perception of the object, so neither can God, who is wholly spiritual, be spiritually known by evangelical revelation, without the cure of the mind from those films which are upon it by corruption. A spiritual principle is as necessary to a saving knowledge of God, as a visive faculty is to the discerning of visible objects.

(2.) This is not enough. A man may know an artificer by the excellency of his workmanship, without any affection to his person: Rom. i. 21, 'They glorified him not as God, nor were thankful.' Not one of all those philosophers, as one observes,* though they discoursed of one God, had some right apprehensions of his nature, yet ever composed one hymn in the praise of him; though there be among their poets some hymns writ in the praise of their fabulous deities. They pleased themselves barely in those inquiries and reasonings, without descending to that piety which is the true end of knowledge; and though their understandings had some glimmerings of light, their wills sunk under their imperious unrighteousness. If a speculative knowledge were our felicity, the devil, who is in the deepest misery, would be seated in the highest happiness. He knows God, because once he enjoyed him; he knew Christ, because he most feared him; he did profess his knowledge of him, when scarce any upon earth well understood what he was: Luke iv. 34, 'I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God;' yet, notwithstanding that knowledge, was desirous to continue in the exercise of his government, and the practice of his impieties: 'Let us alone.' His knowledge is not his eternal life, but his eternal death. Since, therefore, God is known in his perfections more by the devils, his professed enemies, than by any of the sons of men, this knowledge of God, which is the way to eternal life, is such a discovery which never did nor ever can enter into the hearts of devils. Speculative knowledge of God, without any further relish, is like the knowledge of the nature of meat in the brain of a starved philosopher, that hath not a bit of bread to put into his stomach. Speculations are often a torment without affections. No man could find a repose in the knowledge of God in heaven without love in his will, as well as light in his mind. Light without heat preserves not a man from chillness and shaking.

(3.) Yet though this speculative knowledge be not saving, it is useful in the world. It is a promise that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord: Isa. xi. 9, 'They shall not destroy in all my holy mountain, for

* *Estius in loc.*: 'What they knew naturally, in those things they did corrupt themselves.'

the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.' Not a saving knowledge, because it is of another kind than the knowledge in the mountain of the Lord, and subjectively, in the earth, the carnal part of the world, as distinguished from the holy mountain. By such a knowledge in man, God secures his people from the evil of the world, and justifies his proceedings in the hearts and consciences of the world. It is also useful to the person that hath it; for without this he could never have a saving knowledge; it is the foundation of a spiritual: though a speculative might be without a spiritual, yet a spiritual cannot be without a speculative; a foundation may be without a superstructure, but a superstructure can never be without a foundation.

2. There is a practical knowledge of God and Christ, which is not only an acquaintance with God, but a laying up his words in our hearts, Job xxii. 21, 22; which is not a floating knowledge in the head, but a knowledge sinking to the heart; not a knowledge in the brain, but efficacious to make an union with him: 1 John v. 20, 'He hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true,' where union follows upon knowledge. The speculations of God may fill the head, and the heart be empty of a sense of him, and the life barren of an imitation of God. This doth not deserve the name of a knowledge, but in the apostle's account is truly an ignorance: 1 John ii. 3, 4, 'Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' Such answer not the end of knowledge; and it can no more rationally be called a knowledge of God, since it hath no life and soul in it, than a dead carcass can be called a man. Such a knowledge, that hath no life in it, cannot be the means to eternal life: what hath not life cannot convey life. The devil's knowledge is a dead knowledge, but the knowledge of God in an angel, joined with obedience to God in his practice, is his eternal life. The other is knowledge floating in the brain, buoyed up by some corrupt lust from sinking further. This is wisdom 'entering into the soul,' 'truth in the hidden parts,' Ps. li. 6; not a flourish in the paper, but a letter; the knowledge of the object, and an embracing the end of that knowledge. For though it may be a clear knowledge in the head, yet it is really a deep ignorance, a fluttering bubble, because the notion of God is not sucked in for that end for which it is let out; it is made known, that it may be melted into an affectionate practice, and not lie like a hard lump in the head. Every man ought to know God in order to his embracing him; and without this affection and love he knows nothing as he ought to know: 1 Cor. viii. 2, 'If any man think that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.' For a man may have knowledge enough to stuff his head, but if barred from his heart and affections, it stands but begging in the outward court for admittance. The thinking of God and Christ with the head, and embracing Christ with the heart, are two distinct things; as the seeing a country in a map, and by travelling over it with our feet, are different kinds of knowledge. The one is a knowledge of the truth, the other 'an acknowledgment of it as it is after godliness,' Tit. i. 1. When the notion of God is not only pictured in the head, but the image of God engraven upon the heart; when the stamp in the heart is like that in the word, as a counterpart of a writing: a heart to be his people, as God hath a heart to be our God: Jer. xxiv. 7, 'I will give them an heart to know me; they shall be my people, I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.' The evangelical promise is not so much to give us an head (though that is included), as a heart to know God.

For,

(1.) This is an enlivening knowledge. A spiritual knowledge is always attended with a spiritual life; a new man, and such a knowledge as is after the image of God, go together: Col. iii. 10, 'Having put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.' As the natural image of God consisted in understanding and will, so the spiritual image of God by grace consists in a rectifying those faculties; the understanding with a spiritual knowledge, and the will with a spiritual bias. The faculties we have from God as creator by nature, the operation of those faculties about their proper spiritual objects we have by grace. As the apostle distinguisheth 'the form of godliness' from 'the power,' 2 Tim. iii. 5, so he doth a form of knowledge from the life of it, Rom. ii. 20, which is a knowledge in the letter, not in the spirit, verse 29; the one is a picture wherein every limb is painted, the other is quickened and animated with a divine life. Speculative knowledge is as the light of torches, guiding, not heating; this as the sun, which both directs and warms; a fire felt as well as seen; truth known, and truth used as a compass to sail by. When the knowledge of the nature of God is impressed upon us for imitation, and is, as the conference of Christ with his disciples, inflaming the heart, Luke xxiv. 32, and driving away the cold affections towards God; when righteousness is understood as well as judgment, and that as a path, and a good path, to walk in; when we are not only directed to the path, but are pleased with the goodness of it, and the approving wisdom enters into the heart, and the knowledge of it becomes pleasant to the soul, Prov. ii. 9, 10; when there is not only a knowledge of God, but a liking to retain it; a sight of the sun, and a delight in his beams; a knowledge of the fire, and approach to its heat; a mighty pleasure in God and Christ, as a sweet ointment poured forth;* when God is known and embraced as the chief good and ultimate end; Christ known and embraced as the way to be at peace with God, and an honourer of him: such a knowledge as is not only like animal spirits in the brain, but vital spirits in the heart enabling for action; not like a cloud hanging in the air, but distilling in fruitful showers for the assistance of the earth.

(2.) A likening knowledge. When we know Christ crucified in the conquest of our sins by his death, Christ glorified in the elevation of our souls by his ascension. To know a living God with a dead heart is at best but a carnal knowledge, a dead knowledge, unsuitable to a living object, which calls for lively actions. To know Christ crucified, and have no efficacy of his death; to know Christ risen, and lie closed up in the grave of sin; to know Christ is ascended, and have creeping affections upon the earth: this is a notion of Christ, not a knowledge of him. That is the teaching of God, when the truth is learned 'as it is in Jesus,' Eph. iv. 21. Powerfully directive, conforming the soul, as it did the human nature of Christ, to the will and mind of God, when the understanding is not forced to comply with the corrupt appetite of the will, but the will conformed to the true notions of an enlightened understanding. Such a knowledge, which ravisheth the mind, quickens the prayers, seasons the converse, and fortifies against temptations. Such a knowledge as wraps up the soul in admiration, spirits the will to operation, allures it to a close union with the truth discovered, till it be like a leaven working in the will, and shaping the whole man according to its own mould. The fixing our eye on God by a spiritual knowledge derives a tincture from him, dyeing our souls into his own likeness; if the

* By knowledge, the Jews for the most part, if not always, understand a practical knowledge; and by wisdom, a theoretical.—*Jacchiades in Dan. i. 4.*

life doth not differ from that of an infidel, the knowledge, though as high as an angel's, is no more saving than that of a devil.

And if knowledge be not thus,

[1.] It is useless. No knowledge in the world is commendable but as it is digested into will and reduced into practice. Should the eye direct the hand and foot, and they never move, what advantage would the body have by the eye's direction? It is all one to be blind, and not to have the end of the visive faculty answered by the motion of the members.

[2.] It is not commensurate to divine revelation. It is not a knowledge according to the word, if it be not like the word, the instrumental cause of it; if it be not 'sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit,' the rational part from compliance with the corrupt affections of the sensitive, and so a destroyer as well as 'discerner of the sordid thoughts and intents of the heart,' Heb. iv. 12. No material thing is perfectly known, unless it leave an impression upon those senses which are requisite for the knowledge of it; neither is divine truth known, unless it leave a full and commanding impression upon the mind, the faculty of knowledge. And because divine things are revealed for their goodness as well as for their truth, and the truth revealed in order to the apprehension of their goodness, it is not knowledge suitable to the intent of divine revelation, if the goodness be not swallowed and digested, as well as the truth chewed.

3. There is an experimental knowledge of God. Speculative knowledge is a sound of words and thoughts, experimental a sense of them, and God hath not left the soul without a spiritual relish, any more than he hath left the body without a tasting palate. And, therefore, one* calls it well *gustus spiritualis judicii*; it is a witness of the truth in us, 1 John v. 10. There is a knowledge of Christ after the flesh, an admiration and esteem of him, as some excellent moralist that hath published eminent precepts for the regulation of human conversation. This is no more a saving knowledge of Christ than the knowledge of a philosopher's thesis, or Seneca's moral aphorisms, amount to. It is a putting Christ in the same balance with them. But a spiritual knowledge of Christ is not only a relish of those precepts, but a draught of Christ in the soul, a receiving the spiritual emanations of God and Christ upon the heart. It is to know God in the power of his grace, and Christ in the virtue of his life, Philip. iii. 10; God in the streams of his love, and Christ in the sweetness of his blood; when we see him upon the cross, and taste him in the soul, which is not only a knowledge by the understanding, but a knowledge by a spiritual sense, Philip. i. 9.

There is such a knowledge as this. The Scripture expresseth the knowledge of God by the acts of sense, as well as by the acts of reason; for we have more experience of things by sense than we have by discourse. After the discourse of anything with all the reason in the world, there must be recourse to sense to make it plain and evident; hence ariseth the advantage of similitudes drawn from sensible objects, which clear what mere reason is not able to do. We find the knowledge of God set out by the acts of sense; as by tasting, 1 Pet. ii. 3, 'If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious;' or relishing, Mat. xvi. 23; by smelling, 2 Cor. ii. 14, 'The savour of his knowledge;' by feeling, 1 John i. 1; often by seeing, which, being the quickest and most piercing sense, represents things to the understanding more clearly than bare report. And this kind of knowledge is necessary to happiness, for without it we can have no clear nor worthy notions of God, but more likely disparaging ones; as a man that never saw the stateliness

* Junius.

of London, or any city like it, cannot mount higher in his conceptions of it than that it may be a little better than the best market town which he hath seen in his country, but he is not like to have conceits of it according to the greatness of the place, the magnificence of the buildings, the gallantry of the people. When once he comes to behold it, he will find his former conceptions of it to be vastly short of the beauty of the place. He would scarce be convinced of it without a sight. Indeed, this knowledge of God is imperfect here because of our present state. But some experience there is here answering to the vision hereafter, as a map of that which the soul is travelling to a sight of. This kind of knowledge of God is banished from the unclean spirits; they have lost the savour of what they knew of God, and feel nothing but the power of his wrath.

This differs from a speculative knowledge,

(1.) In the means and manner of knowing; not in the object. The object is the same in both God and Christ, the difference lies in the manner of their apprehension. One is by a common created understanding, the other is by an understanding given for that peculiar end: 1 John v. 20, 'The Son of God hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.' One is a conception of God, the other a taste; one knows God as a man by human strength, the other knows God as a Christian by sense and a divine knowledge; one is by 'feeling after God,' Acts xvii. 27, the other is by God's breaking out in divine beams upon the soul, like a 'day star arising in the heart,' 2 Peter i. 19. One is by the natural strength of the understanding, improved by hearing, meditation, discourse; the other is the effect of an infused faith and the Spirit's operation; one knows God in the Scripture by reading, the other by relish, and finds something in his own heart agreeing with it; what he reads with his eye is drawn by a divine pencil in the soul. There is a knowledge of a thing without us, and a knowledge of a thing within us. Men know there is a happy heaven, and heathens entertained it as an universal notion; but a believer knows it in himself by some beamings upon his heart,—Heb. x. 34, 'Knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance,'—which do more powerfully break in upon him in the time of sufferings. So there is a knowledge of God from reason, nature, report, and a knowledge of God in ourselves by the workings of his grace. A man may know this or that meat to be sweet by report, yet not have the knowledge of it by taste; the one depends upon the strength of his head to conceive, the other upon the goodness of the palate to relish it. Though both have the same object, yet they are not the same knowledge; he that prays from right principles, and he that prays from wrong, have the same object of prayer; both pray to God, but they differ in the manner of their praying, which makes one acceptable, the other not, and therefore the object doth not make our prayer right; so neither doth the object make our knowledge saving. Yet the first knowledge makes us in a capacity for this, but it is frequently without it; a man may know that which he doth not spiritually desire, but he can never spiritually desire that which he doth not know. As the manner of Adam's knowing sin before and after his fall was different, so is the manner of knowing God. Adam knew sin in the theory before he was guilty (for, knowing the law, he could not but know what was contrary to the law, and what acts would violate it), but when he turned offender he knew the power of sin, felt the evil of that which he did before but understand. A natural man knows God as Adam did sin before his fall, he understands something of his nature; but a gracious man feels the influences of God, and finds himself under the power of divine grace.

(2.) In the clearness of knowing. This is such a knowledge that can better describe God, from his spiritual illapses into the soul, than the clearest reasons of men with all their speculative notions. A blind man may know something of the reasons of colours, but he cannot know them so feelingly as he that hath eyes in his head. A man may know wine by the sight and smell, but not so clearly as when he tastes the sweetness, and feels the cordial warmth of it in his stomach. Speculative knowledge is such a knowledge as Peter and John had of Christ's resurrection upon the report of Mary Magdalene, John xx. 2, 3, &c. They saw the linen clothes, and no body there, which increased their belief and knowledge; this was a dim-sighted knowledge to that which Christ gave them by his apparition. When they could see both his hands and his sides, this was an experimental knowledge; and when he pronounced peace to them, this was a knowledge of interest, an assurance given that they were interested in the happiness and fruits of his resurrection. There is an excellency in divine knowledge that cannot be discovered by the tongues of men or angels; an experience and spiritual sensation renders a man more intelligent than all discourses can. As the natural sense best judgeth of sensible objects, so doth the spiritual sense of divine. He that hath tasted honey hath a more lively knowledge of it than the most learned man that never tasted the sweetness, or felt the operations of it. Nor can any conceive so clearly of the excellency of the sun, by the discourses of the richest fancies, as by seeing its glory and feeling the warmth of its beams. A man's own sense will better inform him of the beauty of the heavens than the elevated reasonings of philosophers. Divine truth acted upon the heart, and felt in its influence, is more plainly known than by discourse and reason. I would rather have the feeling which a sincere soul hath of God, than all the descriptions of him by a notional apprehension. One is knowledge in the notion, the other in reality; the one is the effect of well-educated nature and common grace, the other the fruit of a spiritual eye-salve, Rev. iii. 18, and an inward breathing; the one is a shining upon the head, the other a shining into the heart, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

(3.) In regard of the effects. This works the effects which the other is too weak to produce. A little experimental sense of the majesty of God brought Job more upon his knees than all the pressing discourses of his friends, or his own knowledge before his affliction: Job xlii. 5, 6, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see thee; wherefore I abhor myself.' A glimpse of God will bring forth more saving fruits than all the reports of him to the ear, or speculations in the mind. God and Christ felt, refresh the soul more than the lifeless notions of them. The inward virtue of bread tasted and digested refresheth the body more than the colour and figure can delight the eye. The contemplation of meat may please a philosophical understanding, but the turning it into our nature, the having it in our body, strengthens and cherisheth the whole man. There is a pleasure in the historical knowledge of God and Christ, a pleasure in the meditation of the nature of God, the ends of the coming, passion, and resurrection of Christ, the nature of his mediation. But what is this to the powerful operation in our hearts, and the conveyance of his life into our souls? Just as meditation of health by a sick man comes short of the pleasure of feeling health in his veins, and every member of his body. The one is like the delight a man takes in seeing a city in a map, the other like the contentment he takes in seeing the strength of the place, the beauty of the buildings, the harmony of the government, and the observations he makes thereupon.

4. There is a knowledge of interest ; or an interested knowledge of God and Christ. Experimental knowledge Peter and John had of Christ's resurrection when Christ appeared to them, interested knowledge when he pronounced peace to them. Though the knowledge of the excellency of God, and of Christ's going to heaven, is a ground of comfort, yet an interest in this is the formal part of our felicity. What satisfaction can we have, if we have no part in God, if Christ went not to heaven *for us* ? The devil hath a knowledge of God in the theory, but a torment from that knowledge in the reflection. The knowledge of God, without hopes of an interest in him, is terrifying. While Adam retained his purity, the attributes of God were cordials to him, he could delight in his goodness, have access to his power, refresh himself by the faithfulness of God ; innocence and interest see nothing but what is highly ravishing in God ; but all the divine perfections which took the part of innocent man, while he continued faithful to the law of his creation, render God terrible to fallen nature ; there can be no happy knowledge of God, with a satisfaction to the soul, without a recovery of his lost interest. That knowledge which renders us as happy as we can be in this world, is to know God in covenant our God ; to know God as our Father, Christ as our Mediator ; to know Christ as a surety paying our debts, and God as a creditor accepting the payment for us ; to know God in his eternal counsels as a Father ; to know Christ in all his offices as our perfect Redeemer, settling and securing our happiness upon a stable bottom ; to know Christ as our Lord, John xx. 28 ; to know God so as to be accepted by him, and to know Christ so as to be ' found in him,' Philip. iii. 8, 9 ; to know God not only as a pardoning God in his nature, but a pardoning God to our souls (such a knowledge God promiseth, Jer. xxxi. 34, ' They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest : for I will forgive their iniquity'), as also a knowledge of him as our Saviour and Redeemer, Isa. lx. 16. That is a happy knowledge, when we can say with Paul, ' Christ, who loved me, and gave himself for me,' Gal. ii. 20, when we can feel Christ dwelling in us by faith, ' the hope of glory,' Col. i. 27. A speculative knowledge is contemplation, this is fruition ; that elevates us in admiration, this springs up in affection ; that is like the knowledge of a picture, where the features of the person are commended by strangers to them, this like the knowledge of the friend, whose picture it is, and the remembrance of the sweetness of his disposition, his cordial affections, &c.,] which possesseth the soul with a more sensible delight than others can take in the comeliness of the piece.

These four sorts of knowledge are not equally necessary. The speculative is necessary as a *foundation* ; practical, *essentially necessary* ; experimental and interested, *necessary to the comfort of knowledge*. The two first are necessary to the being of a Christian ; the two latter, to the well-being. The two first together, constitute our happiness ; the two latter sweeten our imperfect happiness in this world. Indeed, experimental knowledge and interested are necessary in regard of the matter of the knowledge, though not in regard of the actual sense and knowledge. We cannot have any initial happiness, without the influence of God's grace, without a share in his favour ; but both these may be without the actual sense and perception of them. Speculative, is knowledge received ; practical, knowledge expressed ; experimental, the relish of it ; and interested, the foretaste of happiness. A speculative knowledge is like that of the queen of Sheba's, at a distance ; an experimental is like her sight of the order and glory of Solomon's court, that left no more spirit in her.

II. This knowledge of God is necessary. Religion and true grace is called *wisdom*, in the Proverbs. Wisdom is the knowledge of the highest things. No wisdom without the knowledge of truth, therefore no wisdom without the knowledge of God, the prime truth, the chiefest good, whence all truth and goodness in other things flow. This is the portal.* No happiness can be without truth and goodness; all religion consists of them, all felicity is composed of them: truth to be known, goodness to be embraced, by the creature, else no communication of happiness to it. Knowledge and love fit us for acquaintance with, and enjoyment of, God. We actually embrace him by love, after we perceive him fit for our embraces by knowledge. Knowledge imprints the similitude and *idea* of the object upon the understanding; love draws out the soul to close with the object so understood. By knowledge, God conveys himself in his glorious perfections to our view; by love, we give up ourselves to him. By knowledge, we see God; by love, we enjoy him. By knowledge, we see what is enjoyable, and worthy our affection and fruition; by love, we enjoy what we see. Still, remember that this is not to be understood of a common knowledge of God, where the gospel is preached; it is such a knowledge which is given by Christ to those he hath a charge of; it is such a knowledge that is not only the effect of Christ's universal power over all flesh (for so the general preaching of the gospel is, whereby men attain a common knowledge); but such a knowledge as those only have who are 'sanctified by faith,' Acts xxvi. 18. He had 'power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life,' *i. e.* he had power to propagate the gospel among the Gentiles, that the knowledge of God might be given to those that had been given him by his Father; whereby it is manifest that it is a knowledge different from the common knowledge of the gospel.

1. This was the subject-matter of the ancient gospel promises. This God promised in the evangelical dispensation, when he would manifest himself in the riches of his glory, and treasures of his goodness to his creatures: Isa. xlix. 23, 'Thou shalt know that I am the Lord;' and the chief happiness of the church in the confluence of the Gentiles to her, as the foundation of all religion, is his manifestation to them, and their clear view of that manifestation: Isa. xix. 21, 'And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day.' It is the peculiar of the gospel: Hos. vi. 3, 'Then shall we know the Lord.' When the knowledge of God shall be spread over the world by the great prophet, in the teachings of his Spirit, then should men have an ardent zeal to increase in the knowledge of God; and in this knowledge our spiritual life consists. We shall live in his sight. How? By the knowledge of the Lord. By the knowledge of God in this life, men have foretastes of the life to come. It is by the knowledge of God in Christ that we see the sword of justice sheathed, which guarded heaven against us, the bowels of mercy enlarged to open heaven for us. It discovers God calmed and appeased, gives us delightful views of him, and a secure and complete happiness.

2. There is no way of conveying happiness can be conceived without this. Our ignorance must be removed, whereby we may understand God, as well as our perversity, whereby we may seek him. All sin begins in folly, ignorance, and forgetfulness of God: Ps. xiv. 2, 'None that did understand and seek God.' First, 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.' From that ignorance sprung up corruption and abominable works. What the psalmist speaks of one, ver. 1, he speaks of all, ver. 2, 3, 'They are all gone aside,' and the not understanding of God was the root of it, Rom. iii. 11.

* *Nulla res, qualiscunque est, intelligi potest, nisi Deus priùs intelligatur*, is a maxim in the schools.

The root of our misery must be removed, to plant that of our happiness. God hath ordered knowledge to be the first step to salvation, so that none is saved that come not in by the way of the knowledge of God revealed in the gospel: 1 Tim. ii. 4, 'Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.' The gospel being nothing else but a manifestation of God in Christ, a knowledge of this precedes the application of salvation. As the sun doth not make his heat to be known but by his beams,* so God doth not save according to his ordinary dispensation, but by the knowledge of himself, though the discovery of himself, in divers ages, hath been various and by degrees. As the light at the dawn is more obscure than that which is near the approach of the sun to the horizon, so there was a more obscure knowledge of God, and the Redeemer, at the time of the first promise. Adam might not know well what to think of God when he saw himself expelled paradise, just after a gracious promise of a deliverer. It was somewhat brighter at the giving the law, when God would give man some dark shadows and pictures of Christ, and when himself would be known by his name *Jehovah*, and the conduct of his angel. It was clearer, in the times of the prophets, when the chariot of the Sun of righteousness was approaching to the world, and the light broke out before him; but a more glorious discovery, when this Sun did arise and appear in the earth; yet, from first to last, every dispensation was made up of some discovery of God, the manifestation of his name, the declarations and representations of the Messiah. The knowledge of God and the Redeemer, being the design of God in every age of the world, is no less necessary now than it was then; and, indeed, the knowledge of no other thing can confer a blessedness upon us. Whatsoever makes another happy, must be greater and better than that which is made happy; but, since nothing in the world is better than the soul of man, all the knowledge of inferior things cannot constitute him blessed. The knowledge of God and Christ can only fill the insatiable mind, satisfy the vast desires, and settle the staggering soul.

3. The happiness of God consists in the knowledge of himself, his own perfections, and delight in them. God is the object of his own happiness.† The knowledge of God himself is the felicity of God. No being is really happy without reflection upon, and knowledge of, that happiness. If God should be happy by the knowledge of anything else but himself, that which he did contemplate and know would be greater and better than God, because his happiness would depend upon it. Felicity can never be in anything inferior. God hath nothing higher and better than himself to contemplate. This gave him a satisfaction before the world was, and this would still be his blessedness, if all things should be reduced to the depths of nothing. Since, therefore, he created the world, to communicate himself and his own happiness to the rational creature, felicity cannot be attained by anything less than the knowledge of the supreme good according to the creature's measures. The angels themselves are only blessed in the contemplation of him, and affection to him. In being encompassed with his bright rays, and having their affections inflamed by him, Mat. xviii. 10, 'they behold the face of God.' As God's knowledge and fruition of himself makes up his felicity, so the knowledge and fruition of God composeth our happiness.

4. The happiness of heaven, which is the ultimate and complete happiness of the soul, consists in a knowledge of God. The sight of God is made by our Saviour the reward of purity of heart: Mat. v. 8, 'The pure in heart shall see God;' and to see him as he is, in the glory of the other world,

* Amyraut de l'Evangile, pp. 148, 149.

† Eugubin. de perenni Philos. lib. iv. cap. 13.

1 John iii. 2, 3, when all the rational faculties shall be satisfied with light, and the desires replenished with love. The privation of this knowledge is hell; the punishment consists in a banishment 'from the presence of the Lord,' 2 Thess. i. 9. If felicity, in the highest region, consists in a sight and knowledge of God, the happiness of the soul must consist in the same, according to the imperfect degrees. If a perfect happiness cannot be without a perfect knowledge, imperfect cannot be without a partial knowledge. When we are acquainted with him, we are not only at peace, but we can delight ourselves in the Almighty, and lift up our faces unto God, Job xxii. 21, 26. Knowledge of God here is the dawn of heaven; knowledge hereafter, the meridian of it.

5. This is that the devil endeavours most to hinder. He is the enemy of man's happiness; he envies man a better state than himself hath; his time is spent in barring the door against it. The course he takes is to bemist the understanding faculty, 'that the light of the gospel of Christ might not shine into it,' 2 Cor. iv. 4. He put our first parents upon the knowledge of other things to deprive them of the knowledge of God. He is always pecking at this seed of knowledge. If he cannot kill it, he will sow some cockle to choke it. All errors in the mind have the devil's blessing, and knowledge his curse. His kingdom is a kingdom of darkness. Light is an enemy to his dominion, and he to light. When the knowledge of God breaks in upon the heart, the devil falls like lightning from heaven, as well as at the preaching of the gospel by the disciples, Luke x. 18. It expels his, and introduceth another empire. This is our happiness, which is the devil's grief. That must be necessary for us, which God's and our great enemy took all the pains to stifle.

III. In what respects is this knowledge of God necessary? We owe duty to God as we are creatures; we are unable to perform it as we are guilty offenders. We must know God to know our duty; we must know Christ to know the way of performing it; we must know God, therefore, in the perfections of his nature, and Christ in the sufficiency of his mediation. We must know God in his ravishing goodness, his affrighting justice, his condescending mercy, his adorable wisdom, his unshaken veracity; we must know him as offended by sin, as pacified by Christ. Without the one, we shall not be humbled; without the other, we shall not approach to him. We must know him in his precepts, else how can we obey him? in his promises, else how can we trust him? We must know Christ in his offices, as an atoning priest, as an instructing prophet, a protecting and governing king. We must know him in his transaction with his Father, descent to the world, his return to heaven, in his humiliation on earth, exaltation in heaven; we must know him upon the cross and upon the throne, and the ends of both his states: Philip. iii. 10, 'Know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.' How else can we be 'conformed to his death,' or have confidence in his life? We must know him in his nature, without which we cannot have a knowledge either of the truth or efficacy of his satisfaction. The truth of it depended upon the reality of his humanity; the efficacy upon the strength of his divinity. Without this knowledge, how can we believe in him? how can we love him? how can we perform those acts which are necessary to our salvation? This is a knowledge above the knowledge of nature; that is too muddy to be a spring of any spiritual action, raised love or hearty reliance. It is not a knowledge of God by rational deductions, but spiritual illuminations. The knowledge of God in the creatures is as the dawn; the knowledge of God in the Scripture is as

the day-spring. But what is either dawn or day-spring to a blind eye? The day-spring may be in the world, yet not in our hearts; we cannot work without light, and though there be the greatest light, we cannot work without sight.

That which is precedent to eternal life cannot be without the knowledge of God.

1. Without it there can be no motion towards God, or for God. Without a natural knowledge of God we can never think of him, or have any natural motions to him; without a spiritual knowledge, we cannot perform any spiritual action. Without knowledge, we cannot act as rational creatures, because all actions tend to rest. No creature acts for that end that it may always act, but acts for some end wherein it may acquiesce. That which is our proper rest must be known, we can never else order our motions to it. Everything that hath rational or sensitive life must have some kind of knowledge, to act suitable to its station in the world, and the nature it is endowed with. A beast cannot live without some knowledge, by natural instinct, of the proper food for the maintaining the life of it; a man cannot act rationally, though he have the shape and life of a man, without a habit of first principles which is by nature put into him. So neither can a man act spiritually without truth put into the heart by grace, as an indwelling and abiding habit, a truth known, and a truth dwelling in us and abiding with us for ever, 2 John ver. 2. There are the 'first principles of the oracles of God,' and of 'the doctrine of Christ' to be known, Heb. v, 12, vi. 1, before we can go on to a spiritual perfection; answering in a spiritual creature to those first principles which are in every man by nature, without which he cannot act as a rational creature. The apostle implies the necessity of those principles, while he blames them for sticking there without making a further progress. As knowledge is necessary to the being of any action, so a various kind of knowledge is necessary to the various kinds of actions. Natural knowledge is necessary to natural actions, moral knowledge to moral actions; so supernatural knowledge is necessary to supernatural actions. As the acts are, so must the knowledge be; supernatural acts cannot flow from an understanding stuffed only with natural principles, no more than rational acts can be the products of a brutish fancy and instinct; that is, as a beast cannot act rationally unless he had the reason of a man, so a man cannot act spiritually unless he hath the understanding of a Christian, an understanding given whereby to 'know him that is true,' who ought to be the proper centre of all our actions, 1 John v. 20. The whole body is dark if the eye be so, Mat. vi. 22, 23; the whole body of a man's acts are acts of darkness if the mind be blind. As the mind is, so the nature is; corruption of nature began in wrong notions received in the mind, whence those actions sprung which laid Adam and his posterity as low as hell without the grace of God. There must be then other notions in the mind, and other principles in the heart, before we can be fit for recovery out of natural misery. While the eye of the soul remains muddy, all our perceptions will be tintured with that corruption; a suffusion in the eye will cause a confusion in the acts; what the eye is to the body, that is the understanding to the soul. The truth was in Jesus, it must be in us as it was in him; not as a loose notion, which would have engendered staggering motions in the service of God and work of his mediation, but as a rooted habit, a law in his heart, established as firm in his heart as it was in the sanction. Since, therefore, all our actions towards God are to be both a reasonable and a spiritual service, there must be a reasonable and a spiritual knowledge as the foundation, to raise up action as the building.

(1.) There can be no worship of God without it. Since God made us for his own glory, that we might do those things whereby he might be honoured, we must know the excellency of his nature, and what is suitable to him. It is impossible to glorify him whose honour and greatness we are wholly ignorant of, Ps. cxix. 25. David was God's servant, had a desire to serve him, and therefore desires God to 'give him understanding, that he might know his testimonies.' Worship is the fruit of knowledge. God promises to be known of the Egyptians in the time of the gospel, and then they should do sacrifice and oblation, Isa. xix. 21. The Egyptians knew there was a God, a supreme God, but they never worshipped him till they came to know him in the gospel revelation. 'In that day' he would be known to them. In what day? In the day when they should speak the language of Canaan, ver. 18; in the day when he should send them a Saviour, ver. 20. There is no worship acceptable to God without the knowledge of Christ, and access by him. Daniel opened his window, and prayed to God 'towards the temple,' a type of Christ. He that comes to God must not only know that he is, but he must know that he is a rewarder, Heb. xi. 6, not by a natural knowledge, for so the heathens both knew the being of God and the bounty of God, but a distinct knowledge of God as a rewarder and accepter in Christ; for that the apostle means when, in describing this way of worship, and giving examples of it, he gives instances of the faith of the worshippers and their respecting God in Christ.

[1.] Without this knowledge of God we should never worship him in a right manner. We must know that he is, before we can direct any religious act to him; so we must know what he is, before we can direct any religious act to him in a right manner. If we would worship him out of love, we must know that he is amiable; if with fear, we must know that he is powerful and just. Whatsoever the principle of the worship is, it must have knowledge for the foundation. Without a knowledge, we cannot affect him; without a strong knowledge, we cannot love him ardently. If our love be low, our worship will be slight, and want that affection which is a necessary ingredient in it. According to the weakness of our knowledge is the slightness of all our acts towards God. When we understand not his justice, we shall presume upon him; when we are ignorant of his glorious majesty, we shall be rude with him; unless we understand his holiness, we shall leap out of sin to duty; and the steams of our lusts will be as nimble as the desires of our souls. If we are ignorant of his excellency, we shall want humility before him; if we have not a deep sense of his omniscieny, we shall be careless in his presence, full of roving thoughts, guilty of vain babbling, as if he wanted information, Mat. vi. 6, 7. Ignorance renders a worship false, as well as a zeal erroneous, Rom. x. 2. If we worship God from custom, and not from knowledge of him, we render him no better a worship than we should render to the impostor Mahomet, if his religion were the religion of our country.

[2.] We should be apt to worship some falsity and fancy instead of God. Such an one that knows not God would be as easily induced to worship some angel or saint in a glorious apparition, as a man that comes to court to see the king, and knew him not, might be apt to imagine that some person of quality he saw richly dressed, and bravely attended, might be the prince. The heathens, having not the knowledge of God, stamped every great benefactor a deity, and adored every one that was highly useful to their country as a god. Without a knowledge of him, we shall be apt to seize upon anything from which we find assistance as a god; and, like some heathens, worship the first thing we meet in a morning: If we know not God, yet

since we have naturally a notion that there is a God, we shall be apt to have false conceptions and misrepresentations of him. To worship what we misconceive, is not to worship the true God, but a god coined and moulded by our own fancy; and since false conceptions of God are degradings and disparagements to him, all worship guided by them is a worship of that notion and image we have set up in our mind, and not a worship of the true God. It is at best a worship like that of the Athenian idolaters, a worship of an 'unknown God,' Acts xvii. 23; they knew not who he was, and they knew not why they worshipped him. Certainly, as worship is a flower in the crown of the Deity, so a worship of him according to his infinite perfections is a debt we are bound to pay, and therefore bound to know him, that we may give him his due; otherwise we shall worship, not a Scripture God, but a fancy god, a god made up by the capricious of our own brains, and modelled according to our own genius. It is an observable and difficult place, Amos v. 25, 'Have you offered to me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?' Did they not offer sacrifices to God? The worship of Moloch was entertained in the following ages. God denies that they worshipped him all that forty years. What if we should conjecture this as the reason, because all the while they had notions of God according to the Egyptian idols? The adoring the calf was but an imitation of the Egyptian worship; while they had a false notion of God, likening him to the Egyptian Apis, all the worship they performed to the true God being tainted with this notion and conceit, was not a worship of God. 'Did you offer to me,' when you had such ridiculous and unworthy conceptions, that you could find out nothing in the whole frame of nature as an image to represent me, but that of a calf? It was a sign what unworthy conceits of me did lodge in your minds, which rendered your worship unacceptable and displeasing to me; which conceits were not displaced from their heads by the breaking of the idol.

[3.] Such an ignorant worship is certainly idolatry. It is not only a wrong object draws upon men the guilt of idolatry, but a right object worshipped in a wrong manner. When we worship him not suitably to his perfections, or not according to his command, Lev. xvii. 3, 4, 7. God commanded that an ox, or lamb, or goat, intended for sacrifice, should be brought to the door of the tabernacle; not killed in the camp, or out of it; if they did, he would count them guilty of blood, and, verse 7, esteems it no more than as a sacrifice offered to devils. The tabernacle being a type of Christ, Heb. ix. 11, this command signified, that whatsoever was offered to God out of Christ was of no value to him; as hateful as murder, and esteemed by him as if it had been offered to devils.

Since, therefore, nature cannot represent God* in his brightest apparel to us, we cannot worship God by all our natural knowledge of him; for as by nature we rather know what God is not than what he is, so by nature we may rather tell what worship is not worthy of him than what is. We cannot then worship God without the knowledge of him. We cannot know him in Christ, by all the strength of nature, without divine revelation; and indeed it was a natural notion among the heathens, not to receive a form of worship but what had a stamp of a divine authority; therefore all those lawgivers who settled any religion among them, pretended an intimate acquaintance with some of their esteemed deities, to make their form of worship entertainable. There is a necessity, therefore, of the knowledge of God, and of Christ, to present a worship to God acceptable to him.

(2.) No obedience to God, without the knowledge of him. The will of

* Mornæ. verit. Relig. Christian. cap. 20, pp. 388, 390, 391.

God is the rule of obedience, and Christ is the pattern of obedience. Obedience to God is an imitation of God in righteousness and holiness; we must therefore know the perfections of God, which we are to imitate, as well as the law of God, according to which we are to regulate our actions. Obedience therefore is described* to be nothing else but knowledge digested into will, affections, and practice. The motion of the will cannot be regular without a touch of the understanding. If the spring of the will's motion be from the affections and appetite only, it is an erroneous motion in regard of the order of nature, though to a right object. Now, where there is a defect in the first concoction, there will be a defect in the second and third: defect in knowledge will cause an error in practice. Alienation from God's life, *i. e.* from an imitation of his life, as well as animation by a living principle contrary to him, is rooted in the 'blindness of the heart,' Eph. iv. 18; and the reason men take steps from one sin to another, and are fruitful in iniquity, is because they know not the Lord, Jer. ix. 3. When men are ignorant of the true God, they will not want Pharaoh's apology for their sin: 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?' Exod. v. 2. The whole mass of vice in the world ariseth from the false ideas of God, whom men shape according to their depraved fancies; as the Ethiopians paint the image of their gods black, according to their own dark colour. Hence men receive encouragements to all kinds of vice, when they think God such an one as themselves. There is no truth nor mercy among the ten tribes, because there was 'no knowledge of God in the land,' Hos. iv. 1, 2. Had they known the nature of God, they could not have sinned at such a rate, as if they had passed beyond the limits and censure of any law.

All obedience ariseth from knowledge. As error in knowledge was the first deformity of man, and the cause of all the rest, so the knowledge of God is the first line the Spirit draws upon the soul, whence, as from the first matter, all those beautiful graces that appear in every region of the soul are formed. Every action of obedience, as it must be quickened with grace, so it must be informed with knowledge. Holiness must be a holiness of truth, springing up as a branch from truth as a root, Eph. iv. 24. True holiness, or in the Greek, 'holiness of truth.' As all rebellion against God steams up from a false conception of him, so goodness and holiness break out of the womb of a sound notion of him. 'The mind is first renewed ere the 'new man is created in righteousness,' Eph. iv. 23, 24. The apostle renders it impossible for a man to know God and willingly break his commands, and gives such a pretender to divine knowledge no better term than that of a liar: 1 John ii. 4, 'He that saith I know him, and keeps not his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;' he hath not a grain of a divine habit of truth resident in his heart. 'Know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart,' is David's directory to Solomon, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. No service without knowledge, no sincere service without a spiritual knowledge of God in covenant. As ignorance of God is the cause of sin, so the knowledge and sense of him is the best antidote against it. Men cannot sin freely under an acquaintance with infinite fury. The common knowledge of God and Christ brings forth some fruits of a sort of obedience in men, and cleanseth them from the common and barefaced pollutions of the world; the common knowledge of God hinders many wicked men from hurting in his holy mountain. What more glorious fruits than bare appearances would the spiritual knowledge of God and Christ produce and ripen in the world! 2 Pet. ii. 20. If we know him in the glory of his

* Sibbes's Bruised Reed, p. 241.

grace, in the amiableness of his nature, what a choice delight should we have in our approaches to him, and our actions for him! The more clearly he is understood, the more he is beloved; and the more he is beloved, the more readily he is obeyed. The angels that behold his face run most cheerfully to perform his errands, Ps. ciii. 20; and no doubt but the perfect illumination of the glorified souls is a partial cause of the steadiness of their wills. Whatsoever looks like obedience, and is not informed by knowledge, is no more an act of true obedience than the action of a man in his sleep can be called a human action, since it is no product of his reason, but a start of his volatile fancy. Paul's questions were orderly when he was charged by Christ, first, 'Who art thou?' then, 'What wilt thou have me to do?' Let me know whom I am to obey.

(3.) No grace can be without the knowledge of God. Some knowledge of God may be without grace. The devils are as much filled with one as they are empty of the other. But it is not conceivable how grace can be without knowledge. The knowledge of God in the text may be called eternal life, because all graces, which are the seed of eternal life, grow up from that as a root. In the change of the soul there is an act of vision before an act of transfiguration; the removing the veil before the turning the heart, 1 Cor. iii. 16. The eye is opened, light darts upon the understanding, and thence beams upon the will. The glory of God is beheld before the frame of the heart is changed, 1 Cor. iii. 18. The whole work of grace is therefore called 'light,' as the whole state of nature is called 'darkness,' 1 Peter ii. 9; as the understanding is the leading faculty, so knowledge, the privilege of the mind, is the directing principle that leads, and the will follows: the enlightenings of the one make men immediately capable of the quickenings of the other. As the common knowledge of God makes men capable of sin, which a beast, because of the want of understanding, is not, so the special knowledge of God in Christ puts men in a capacity for grace. The philosopher determines that moral virtues cannot be without intellectual. All divine motions in the soul are regular: every wheel in the watch moves in due order; the faculties are not jumbled together; the understanding commands, and the will obeys. Light first discovers, and will embraceth. The new creation,* as well as the old, begins with a *fiat lux*, whence all the creatures were to derive their beauty, and are more excellent and serviceable as they are endued with a more sparkling light. The knowledge of God and Christ is the chief ingredient which makes the composition of the inner man. As without light there could not be a visible world, so without this there cannot be a spiritual. As the common engrafted notions of God, left in men's hearts by nature, are the root from which common moral virtues grow, so the spiritual knowledge of God in the gospel is the root from whence divine graces branch themselves. No form without matter, no grace without knowledge of God. No active principle can be without an object; God is the object of grace. Whence the new creation of a man is called a 'translation from darkness,' Col. i. 13, and renewed men are called 'light in the Lord,' Eph. v. 8; when the mind, which was stuffed with base and unworthy opinions of God, is made by the Spirit the candle of the Lord, spreading its light through the whole man. All those things which 'pertain to godliness,' whereof grace is not the meanest, are 'given through the knowledge of him,' 2 Peter i. 2, 3. This knowledge of God and Christ, shining upon the heart of a natural moral man, makes his moral virtues to commence spiritual graces; as the more generous and commendable acts of a beast would cease to be brutish actions, and become human, if he had a rational

* Vines' Impostures.

understanding infused into him. Without the knowledge of God's justice, we shall not fear him; without knowledge of his ability and fidelity, we shall not trust him. Without knowledge of his goodness we shall not seek to him, and without a knowledge of his majesty we shall not humble ourselves before him. So that, without the knowledge of God, there will be no grace in the principle or habit.

As to instance in particular graces.

[1.] Faith cannot be without the knowledge of God and Christ. Without the knowledge of God, we know not the ultimate object of faith; without the knowledge of Christ, we know not the immediate object of faith and the way to come to God. This grace therefore is set in a double seat by divines, in the understanding and will; it is properly a consent of the will, which cannot be without assent in the mind. Knowledge is antecedent to faith in order of nature: 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed;' Isa. xliii. 10, 'That you may know and believe that I am he.' Who can read that doth not know his letters? who can believe that understands nothing of the perfections of God or offices of Christ? What image is in the inward sense was first in the outward organ; what fiducial frame there is in the will was first ushered in by assent in the understanding: Heb. xi. 6, 'He that comes to God must know that he is.' The knowledge of the bare existence of God will not bring the creature to him; but the knowledge that he is a rewarder will, because this knowledge includes an apprehension of some good in the object known, and so hath a spirit of life in it to quicken the affections and elevate the heart, which was before dead to any such motion. That knowledge which acquaints a man with no good in the object known will never excite any motion to it. No man can come to God, who is infinitely above him, unless he knows him to be infinitely good and ready to receive him. Who will apply himself to a prince or any other man for help, whom he thinks to be severe, sour, tyrannical, one more like to scoff at his misery than relieve him? There is, therefore, a necessity of the knowledge of God as a God of tender bowels, and therefore a necessity of the knowledge of Christ, in whom only he discovers himself to be a gracious Father. The spiritual knowledge of him in Christ is as an emission of virtue from the loadstone, that draws the iron to cleave to it. We must know the goodness the fountain, and his faithfulness the executor, of promises, and his power that enables him to be as great and good as his word. We never reasonably trust a man that we know not fit to be trusted: we cannot trust a God whom we know not to be the highest goodness. Men by reason know that there is a God, but it is so dim in the discovery of his perfections that it sees not light enough to raise it up to any close act of a fiducial dependence on him. The discovery of God in Christ in the heart sets the whole man a-crying out, Soul, return to thy rest!

[2.] No desire for God without it. The Israelites' stomachs were never sharpened for Canaan, but wambling towards Egypt, till they tasted the grapes of the country. The apprehension of God as true makes us adore him; the apprehension of God as good makes us desire him. The more clearly we know his perfections, the more fervently we shall desire both to enjoy him and imitate him. How soon will such knowledge bud in desires, and blossom and flower in good affections! 'If thou hadst known, thou wouldst have asked,' John iv. 10; if thou hadst a clear knowledge, thou wouldst have had an eager affection. The clearer the representations, the more nimble the desires. Doubtful and wavering conceits of the goodness of a thing keep back the appetite from any motion. If we know not how full a spring God is, and ready to emit his streams, how can we thirst for

his boundless communications to us? Where there hath been a relish there will be an appetite, 1 Pet. ii. 3; desire of the word riseth from a taste that the Lord is gracious. Knowledge of a thing always precedes our appetite to it. A toad, not having the knowledge of its own venomous nature and the excellency of other creatures, can never desire the being stripped of his own or invested with the other. This desire after God springs not from a bare speculation, but a strong impression, a spiritual taste; for a bare speculation hath no more strength to make a motion in the will than the poetical descriptions of far countries can persuade a potent prince to take a long voyage for the conquest, or a merchant to venture his stock thither for a trade. The more distinct and savoury our notions of God and his goodness are, the more ardent flame will be in our wills. The more distinctly a man conceives of the excellent relish and wholesomeness of this or that kind of meat, the more will his appetite be invited to taste of it, especially if before he hath sensibly enjoyed a satisfaction in it. And indeed, a strong appetite is a great sign of a spiritual illumination. It is ignorance of God chokes any longing for him, and makes us either not to desire the enjoyment of him, or beg for it very faintly. Men that never put up a quick prayer to him, never had any knowledge of God in them; and when any of us pray faintly, our knowledge of God is not actuated in us. Without some knowledge of God, men will rather shake off all thoughts of him, all wishes for him, and no more desire the fruition of him than a blind mole desires to see the light of the sun. Their language is with those in Job, 'Depart from us,' not 'Come unto us,' Job xxi. 14. Where there is no knowledge, there can be no fruition; and where no desire of knowledge, there can be no desire of enjoyment.

[3.] No love to God without knowledge of him. Though a thing be made up of delights, and hath an amiableness interwoven in every part, yet, if it be not known, it cannot be affected. We cannot love God 'with all our hearts,' with the affective part, till we first love him 'with all our minds,' with our reason and intelligent part, Mark xii. 30. Love always supposeth the knowledge of the beloved object, since it is nothing else but *perfectum judicium de bono amato*. Good cannot allure the affections, unless it be apprehended, and knowledge cannot inflame the affection unless the object be imagined as good: both must concur to the exciting love. None can pay a debt of love to anything till he knows it justly deserving and challenging that love. No man in the world can be beloved by another till something be seen in him as lovely, either the wisdom of his head, the sweetness of his nature, the beauty of his person, or the obligingness of his carriage. How can we have any elevated affection to God, unless we understand the amiableness of his nature, the infiniteness of his perfections, and the expression of them for the good of mankind? How can it be expected any can have a heave of affection to Christ, who understands nothing of those treasures of knowledge, grace, and wisdom wherewith he is replenished, who knows nothing spiritually and feelingly of the design of his coming, his low condescension, his yearning compassion, his full goodness, and his sincere affection? Without it, we shall value God and Christ no more than a swine doth a pearl, a child a learned book, or a prince a heap of rubbish, no more than the Jews did the divinity of our Saviour hid in the weak casket of his humanity. The beams must be united together in the burning-glass, and shine directly upon the heart, before the affections will take fire. The daughters of Jerusalem seemed to scorn him, and reproach the hot affections of the spouse, as if unworthily placed, or too fond in their exercise, till a glimpse of knowledge by her description quickened them with some heat of love, which kindled in them desires of seeking him: Cant. v. 9, 'What is thy beloved

more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?' whereupon she begins a description of his beauty, and then, Cant. vi. 1, they desire to seek him with her: so soon may a little spiritual knowledge of Christ dropped into the heart turn a scoffer into an admirer. Had the Jews known Christ to be the Lord of glory, they had never crucified him, 1 Cor. ii. 8; they had turned adorers instead of murderers. The mind must be spiritually illuminated to see God in an evangelical lustre; it must be filled with astonishing and affecting notions, of God before the heart can have a valuation of him, and a disesteem for the things of this world. The apostle indeed saith, 1 Peter i. 8, 'Whom having not seen you love,' but he doth not say, 'whom having not known you love.' There is a knowledge of invisible things by faith, which takes possession of the heart by the ear, and attracts the affections. Ignorance of God must be removed before an affection to him will take place, since it is not only a cause but a part of our enmity to him, Eph. iv. 18. We may have the knowledge of a scholar without the love of a Christian, but we cannot have a Christian love without a Christian knowledge and savoury apprehension of God and Christ. Unless we know the nature of God, we may love some false thing instead of God; and unless we know the nature of Christ, the union of his two natures, and the fulness of grace, we can never love him after a right manner.

[4.] Joy and delight in God. I mean that delight which is a duty, not that which is only God's dispensation; an active, not a passive, delight. Who can delight in music that cannot hear it, or be pleased with the scent of a rose that cannot smell it? Who can delight in God that hath no sense of the goodness of his nature, and the happiness of fruition? Who can delight in his ways, who doth not understand him as good and indulgent in his precepts, as he is sweet and bountiful in his promises? If we did know him, we should be as easily drawn to rejoice in him, as by ignorance we are induced to run from him. Such charms would be transmitted to our hearts as would constrain a joy in them, in spite of all other delights in perishing pleasures. Knowledge of God is a necessary preface to a spiritual joy in him, Ps. civ. 34. First, by a sweetness tasted in meditation, and then a delight in God, the object of it; and according to the apprehension we have of the object, are the degrees of our delight in it. It is all one to a blind man, be he in a palace richly furnished, or a dungeon hung with cobwebs. What pleasure can a man ignorant of God's nature and delightful perfections, and that represents him through some mistaken glass, which imprints unworthy notions of God in his mind, what pleasure can such a man take in approaching to God, or what greater freedom can he have in coming to him, than a malefactor in being brought before a judge?

[5.] No repentance without the knowledge of God. The times of ignorance and impenitence are one and the same, Acts xvii. 30. If there be no right conception of the nature of God, there can be no sense of the evil of sin, and the contrariety of our nature to him;* but when the soul sees God and sees itself, it will be filled with self-aborrenency. How can we bewail our offences if we understand not the purity of his holiness, the severity of his justice, the tenderness of his mercy, the irresistibleness of his power, and the inevitableness of his wrath?

[6.] No fear of God without it. As the justice of God and his anger must be apprehended before he can be feared slavishly, so the majesty of God and his goodness must be understood before he can be feared filially. Who can stand in awe of a majesty he is ignorant of?† Men, not knowing God's

* *Contraria juxta se posita magis illucescunt.*

† Barlow on Tim. par. i. p. 29.

nature, have often presumed so much upon his mercy, that they have been destroyed by his justice; as some, through ignorance of the true quality of a fruit, have found their death where they expected their pleasure.

[7.] No true patience without it. Since true blessedness consists in the spiritual and affectionate knowledge of God as the supreme good, no man can be truly content under crosses, who doth not apprehend the goodness and fulness of God and Christ. All patience not founded upon this bottom is a brutish stupidity. The apostle lays the courage of the believing Hebrews upon their spiritual illumination: Heb. x. 32, 'After you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions.' When their light was great, their patience was steady; and they had not only a contentedness under sufferings, but a joy in them, because they had an experimental sense and knowledge of God as a rewarder, and had some sweet foretastes of the rich inheritance he had provided for them: ver. 34, 'You took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and more enduring substance.' The feeling of Christ, and the tasting his sweetness, is the best antidote against temptation. He that knows no richer sweetness than is in the devil's baits, will easily be exposed to the danger of them. Without this knowledge, the slight impressions on men will be like a few heat drops, dried up by a scorching temptation almost as soon as they fall.

As none of these graces can be without the knowledge of God and Christ, so

(2.) Without it there can be no acting of any grace. All grace is nothing else but an imitation of God, a resemblance of God's perfections in the creature, and the acting of it a representation of the lineaments of his divine virtues: Eph. v. 1, 'Be ye followers of God, as dear children.' The copy must be known before it can be imitated. It is a conformity to the image of Christ, Rom. viii. 29. All grace is summed up in a conformity to God and Christ; for it is nothing but a restoration of the divine image, a re-implantation of that in the soul, which was defaced and lost by Adam. As the seal leaves the whole print upon the wax, even the least point engraven upon it, so doth God and Christ upon the heart. Every grace is a member and part of the divine image, and answers in some proportion to some imitable perfection of God. If we know nothing of the lineaments of God, how can we make a report of his excellency to the world in our actions? How can we express ourselves in any virtue, if we know not the prototype, the first pattern? The want of the knowledge of God made all the heathen virtues trivial things, mere shadows; the knowledge of God and Christ could only tincture and dye them into divine graces. Humility proceeding from some sordid humour or by-respects is not a grace, but when it springs from a knowledge of the condescensions of God, or contrariety to God, or a knowledge of the humility of Christ, it is then a grace.

How can we return lively affections to him, if we know not the emanations of his love? How should we be at a loss for holiness if we understood nothing of the holy nature of God, and his hatred to sin? How would the consideration of God's justice against sin help us in the exercise of our justice, in the mortification of our affections to it; and the knowledge of the patience of God under affronts received by us make us patient and submissive under strokes inflicted by him! It is this makes the Christian more signal in gracious actions towards others. How readily would his love break out to others in an imitation of God's love to man! What a tender and compassionate disposition would be manifested to men if there were an actuated knowledge of God's mercy and compassion to us! The consideration of God's veracity would render men faithful in promises; the perfec-

tions of God, if more spiritually known, would bring forth more of those pleasing fruits in the soul. It is impossible an act can be without an object; nothing is grace but as it is conversant about God, or hath a respect to God. There can be no act about an unknown object. There can be no form without matter, nor any acting of that form but in matter; no grace without knowledge, no acting of grace but in knowledge. The frame of grace is raised upon the infused notions of God; illumination precedes renovation of the will. As the right motion of the will supposeth an enlightened mind, so the acting of grace in the will implies a present and actuated knowledge of the object about which it is conversant. There is no faculty excited in any act but by some object; that object is not entertained at first in any power of the soul, but in the understanding, that first propounds the object as worthy and suitable to be followed by the other powers of the soul, whose office it is to act. All impressions upon the lower faculties are made by the highest, as all motions depend upon the highest sphere in the heavens. There must therefore be a distinct knowledge of God. God abstracted from his perfections, his power, holiness, faithfulness, love, is not the object about which any grace can be conversant, but God as revealing himself, clothed with such excellency as suit and answer the creature's necessities. If I act faith, I must conceive of his power to relieve me; if I act faith upon his promise, I must conceive of his faithfulness and truth to make good his word. We cannot work without light, nor act grace without the knowledge of God and Christ. If we must be 'perfect as God is perfect,' we must know the perfection of the copy we are to follow. The more knowledge we have of God, and of the nature, offices, and communications of Christ, the more distinct are the actings of grace.

(3.) No growth in grace without it. As the degrees of our knowledge are, so are the degrees of our grace: Rom. xv. 14, 'You are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge.' 'Growth in grace' is promoted by 'the knowledge of Jesus Christ,' 2 Peter iii. 18. The one is the root, the other the branch; the root may be without the branch, but the branch can never grow without a root. As the root is strengthened, so are the branches; what is in the root is communicated to the branches. If love flames more vehemently, it is by the addition of the fuel of knowledge: Philip. i. 9, 'That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment.' Love, which is a grace that adorns us in the world, and is a part of the glory of heaven, burns hotter as our knowledge is clearer. A firm and stable knowledge is as necessary to the increase of love as to the being of love; 'Επίγνωσις signifies a clear knowledge. Fruitfulness in every good work depends upon the increase of the knowledge of God, as the fruit of the ground upon the dew of heaven: Col. i. 10, 'Being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.' The strength of grace is promoted by the increase of knowledge: 'A man of knowledge increaseth strength,' Prov. xxiv. 5. The strengthening the foundation is a strengthening the building. All graces depend upon the increase of faith, and faith is the firmer by an increase of knowledge. 'The path of the just,' or his walk in the ways of God, is expressed by a 'shining' or growing 'light,' Prov. iv. 18. As there was more truth, so there was more grace by Christ than by Moses, John i. 17. As there was but obscure truth under the law, so there was but weak grace; when truth shone, grace flourished; as the plants renew their strength with the spring's sun. The law made no such discoveries of God as were revealed by Christ. The communication of the greatest knowledge of God was reserved for the honour of the great Prophet, and the full effusion of grace was reserved for the honour of his royalty.

All the declarations by the law could not give so much knowledge of truth as the gospel, and therefore make no such impression of grace upon the soul. Truth and grace go hand in hand together, and spur on one another. Truth excites grace, and grace spurs on to the inquiry after truth. Christ himself had not been full of grace unless he had been full of truth, thoroughly acquainted with the nature of God and mysteries of his will: John i. 14, 'full of grace and truth.' It is the fulness of his human nature, for he speaks of the Word as made flesh and dwelling among us. And accordingly, when he prays for the increase of the disciples' graces, and their progressive sanctification, he prescribes the means: John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.' The word is nothing else but a discovery of God, which affords motives to holiness, and can strengthen the soul against all the invasions of the devil, that envies grace, and endeavours to rife it. A spiritual knowledge of God would spring up in delightful thoughts of him, and those would be as a refreshing influence to all the graces of the new man.

(4.) No continuance in grace without it. True grace cannot be totally lost, but it may miserably decay. True grace will decay, and pretended grace will quite wither without it. As it is impossible any man can close with God in Christ without a knowledge of him, so it is as impossible that he can persist in that state without the continuance of that knowledge. Knowledge of God is part of the 'anointing of the Spirit, which teacheth the believer all things,' 1 John ii. 27. Grace is the divine lamp in the soul, which lives and burns by the oil of the Spirit's teaching; a lamp will out without oil to feed it, and grace will burn dim without knowledge to supply it. The apostle owns the knowledge of Christ to be the anchor that keeps us from being tossed to and fro like children, Eph. iv. 13, 14. Ignorance is the mother of inconstancy in the ways of God; the *unlearned and unstable* go by couples, 2 Peter iii. 16. Where there is no knowledge of God to ballast, there is no security against the force of winds and waves. Those that are unlearned in heavenly wisdom will be unstable in heavenly ways. The want of root made the temporaries wither: unless we *know* God, we cannot *follow* on to know him, Hosea vi. 3. It is as natural for a saving knowledge of God to press on farther as it is for a counterfeit knowledge to draw back. But an experimental sense will preserve the soul from apostasy: John iv. 14, 'Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst,' *i. e.* he shall never thirst for anything else; for this he cannot but thirst, till he comes to a full fountain. It is not a savoury knowledge of Christ if it be not attended with a thirst for more. Where there is only a sensitive, carnal apprehension of God and his truth, there may be some resolutions, some pangs, but the fit will quickly cease. The silly conceit of a bread and water from heaven, that should satisfy their hunger and quench their thirst, which might free them from toil and sweat in the world, made some Jews with lively affections cry out, John vi. 34, 'Evermore give us this bread.' Christ by bread meant himself, and by eating he meant faith; they understood it of earthly bread, and had their affections accordingly; but when they understood the truth of the case they 'turned their backs upon him,' ver. 66. How soon were their affections extinguished, which had nothing but a carnal apprehension for a foundation! It is a 'full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God the Father, and of Christ,' that preserves a soul from seduction by enticing words, Col. ii. 2, 4, 3. No comfort can be without the knowledge of God and Christ. Peace as well as grace is multiplied by this, 2 Peter i. 2. Acquaintance with God is the channel through which the blessings of peace flow into our souls, Job

xxii. 21, 22, &c. All joy in or from God presupposeth a knowledge of him, for spiritual joy is seated in the mind, not in the sensitive part of the soul. All the pleasure that rational creatures have is by an act of their understanding. The light of knowledge begets the light of joy and peace in the heart, as the light in the body of the sun begets the light and shine in the air. The assurance of understanding doth arise from the 'acknowledgment of the mystery of God the Father, and of Christ,' Col. ii. 2; because the knowledge of those is a means to beget assurance. In the light of God we enjoy the light of comfort: Ps. xxxvi. 9, 'In thy light we shall see light. There may be a knowledge of God, and a terror with it. The devils' knowledge renders them less at ease in themselves than an ignorance would; though their knowledge of God be greater than others', yet it is more distasteful to them; they have only a knowledge of God in his justice to terrify them, but no hopes of his mercy to pacify their troubles. Yet without it we can no more have any fruition of God, than a man whose senses are bound up with sleep can rejoice in the presence of beautiful pictures. As the operations of the will depend upon the touch of the understanding, so the comforts of the soul depend upon the clearness of the understanding contemplating the object. The best good, though never so near us, cannot be comfortable to us while we are under the darkness of ignorance; nor can there be any comfort without the knowledge of Christ. There was in Adam no necessity of the knowledge of Christ, because there was no necessity of his knowledge of a mediator in his innocent estate. He knew God in his nature, and in his personal relations, and his works of creation; but what a misery are we in without the knowledge of Christ as well as God! What pleasure can we have in the apprehensions of an offended and injured God, unless we know him in the methods of his reconciliation, which cannot be understood but by the knowledge of Christ, because no atonement is made by any but him? The more any knows of God without Christ, the more he knows of a deplorable contrariety to him. What spark of joy can he have unless he can see a way of bringing God down to him, or of his ascent to God, unless God would strip himself of his nature to converse with him, or he be unclothed of his corruption to be fit to converse with God? He sees terror as well as sweetness, wrath as well as grace. The knowledge of Christ, as receiving the darts of God's wrath upon himself, to reflect upon the soul the beams of his grace, must step in before the thoughts of God can be comfortable any more to us than to devils.

(1.) No comfort in this life. Without godliness there can be no rational satisfaction, and sensitive comforts deserve not the name of a rational contentment. Godliness and contentment are coupled together by the apostle, 1 Tim. vi. 6. Godliness is nothing but the spiritual and practical knowledge of the mysteries of God. Nothing can have any real comfort without answering and attaining the end of its being. The end of our creation was not simply to enjoy the creature, or satisfy our sense, but to glorify God, to observe the prints of God's goodness, and return the praise to him. The world was made for the manifestation of God's goodness; 'the heavens declare the glory of God' materially, man is to give God the glory of it formally; without this, man hath not a pleasure suitable to the end of his creation. What praise now can any one render to God who knows not the excellency stamped upon his works, knows not his glory and goodness manifested in redemption? All praise of God without understanding is not pleasant to the offerer, and as unwelcome to God as the scraping of a lute by an ignorant hand is to a delicate ear. We are to 'praise God with understanding,' Ps. xlvii. 7, *i. e.* with a knowledge of his nature, his works, his

excellencies in him. We lose the comfort of our being by not answering the end of our creation, and this we cannot do without a knowledge of God and Christ, and so lose the pleasure of those raptures and ecstasies of joy, which an observation and praise of God fills the soul with in secret. What rise is there for this, if we are unacquainted with the matter and object of this praise!

(2.) No pleasure and comfort to one ignorant of God, if he were admitted into heaven. The happiness of heaven consists in a clear knowledge of God, and a pure affection to him. It is as impossible for a man remaining ignorant of God to take any pleasure in him, were he admitted into the local heaven where God displays his glory, as for a blind man placed upon a high tower to relish a delight in the beautiful prospect, so long as he wants eyes to behold it. Such an one would want happiness in the midst of an ocean of it, as a millstone in the midst of the sea wants moisture in the centre, because of the thickness and harshness of its parts. He that takes no pleasure in inquiring after God, and seeing him in the glass of the gospel, would take as little or less in seeing him face to face. An unenlightened mind could have as little delight in heaven, by reason of its ignorance, as an unrenewed will could, by reason of its impurity. A swine that understands not the delicacies of a musical air would rather run away affrighted at a loud concert than diligently listen, and take more satisfaction in a puddle or heap of garbish, things suited to his sense and nature, than in those objects he hath no conception of.

IV. What are the properties of this knowledge of God and Christ, whereby it is distinguished from that knowledge, which is not saving and eternal life.

1. Negatively.

(1.) It is not an immediate knowledge of God and Christ. As we are acquainted with a man face to face when we see his person, and view his features; we have no such knowledge of angels, much less of God. Nay, the things of the world which are visible to us are not known so much in their formal nature as by their operations; we do not immediately know the sun so much as by his beams enlightening the earth, and quickening and refreshing the spirits of all creatures. It is more especially true of our knowledge of God, who is not known immediately in his nature, so much as by his excellent works of creation, providence, redemption, and the revelation of invisible mysteries in his word. The invisible things of God are understood, not by immediate speculations about the nature of them, but by the things that are made, Rom. i. 20.* Those things that are invisible in God, and that cannot be known or seen with an immediate view, do shine forth in his works, both in the first forming them and the constant preservation of them, wherein he discovers such marks of an infinite power and unexpressible goodness, which is the glory of his Godhead, that if they were represented in a glass they could not be more visible. He is encircled with that ocean of light through which no mortal eye ever did pierce, or can approach to: 1 Tim. vi. 16, 'He dwells in light to which no man can approach; whom none hath seen, or can see.' It is used to express the impossibility of an immediate knowledge of God. We see the created light of the sun overpowers the eyes of our body; how much more the glorious light of God the eyes of our souls, since he 'clothes himself with light as with a garment!' Ps. civ. 2. As the sun, though it discovers other things to us by its light, yet by reason of the greatness of its light hinders

* Amyraut. in loc.

us from an immediate sight of itself; so, though God discovers himself in other things to us by his light, yet it is too immense for us to have an immediate knowledge of God. In his appearance to the Israelites, he was covered with a cloud, to shew the weakness of our understandings about divine things; and how easily is it dazzled at his ineffable brightness!

(2.) Nor is it a comprehensive knowledge. When the psalmist had flocks of precious thoughts of God in the day, the next morning he was as far from finding him out to perfection as before: Ps. cxxxix. 17, 18, 'When I awake, I am still with thee,' *i. e.* I am where I was; I have made no further progress, but am to begin again, so infinite are thy perfections. Moses, that was dignified with the greatest familiarity with God, could arrive no higher than the sight of his back parts. A beast, by seeing our actions, may better comprehend our nature than we comprehend the nature of God. To know comprehensively is to contain, and the thing contained must be less than that which contains, and therefore if a creature could comprehend the essence of God, he would be greater than God. It is infinitely more difficult for any creature to comprehend the nature and perfections of God, than it is easy, upon the sight of his works, to acknowledge there is such an incomprehensible being; he makes darkness his pavilion and hiding-place. The comprehensive knowledge of himself is only within himself, and none can know God as he knows himself, unless he were God; his name is secret: Judges xiii. 18.

God is the highest in the rank of beings, the chiefest in the scale of good, the supreme in the nature of the intelligent; man is the lowest of intelligent creatures. How can he that is in the lowest form of reasonable creatures mount up to the knowledge of the supreme author of all beings? We are not able to conceive of God as he is, because our apprehensions take their first rise from sense and sensible objects. There must needs then be an infinite distance between our conceptions of God and his nature, as the conception that a man that never saw the sun hath of the sun, by the light of a candle which he hath seen, is far inferior to the glorious nature of that luminary. Christ only knows the Father, and 'he to whom the Son will reveal him;' yet upon Christ's revelation no man can know God comprehensively; not for any weakness of revelation, but incapability in the creature. The ocean hath water enough to fill the biggest vessel, yet it can give no more to it than the vessel is able to contain.

[1.] We cannot comprehend the creatures that are near to us. Not to speak of angels, that are creatures of another sphere, whose nature we are not able to measure, and whose appearances were formidable to the believers under the Old Testament, we find our reasons twinkle at the sight of a star; though we behold its sparklings, we cannot understand fully the nature and dimensions of it. How are our reasons blocked up by clouds of matter from piercing into the nature of a stone we tread on! How are we puzzled to know the soul of an ant, the forms of beasts and plants! Is not the acutest reason too blunt to pierce into their hidden natures? How are we then able to ascend into the cabinets of the almighty Creator! How blind are we in the nature of our own souls, which we bear about in our bodies every day, and feel the operation of in every motion! How then can we 'by searching find out the Almighty unto perfection?' If all the wit of the world hath not been able to content the understanding of man, in the reason of the ebbs and floods of the sea, the intervals of an ague, the nature of the sun, the attractive virtue of the loadstone, and a thousand other things which nonplus the reason of man, is it possible to comprehend God? If we know not the works of nature, can we think to know the Author of nature? Are we

ignorant of the nature of the effects, and shall we think fully to understand the cause of them, which infinitely surpasseth them? If we know not the world, which is as a point, it cannot be thought that we can comprehend the circumference itself.

[2.] In heaven, God shall not be comprehensively known. It is true there will be a fuller perception of God, and a clearer notion of him in heaven; the infinite treasures of wisdom and goodness, which lie hid in God to be admired, will be then more clearly seen; yet God can never descend from his own infiniteness to be grasped by a created understanding. For in the highest pitch of glory the soul is but finite, and therefore still too short to enclose an infinite being in its understanding, even to an endless eternity. In heaven, the glorified soul is still but a creature. Heaven glorifies our natures, but doth not make our being infinite; and till a creature can mount to the pitch of a creator, it can never understand the nature of the Deity. When Moses desired to see God's face, or essence, Exod. xxxiii. 18, that God might be known to him as the person of a man is known to another by the discovery of his face, God tells him not, thou *shalt* not see, or thou *mayest* not see, but *canst* not see my face: verse 20, 'For there shall no man see my face and live,' *i. e.* as the Jews expound it,* no created understanding can attain this. That one perfection of his love which we are more sensible of, and are exhorted to know the length and breadth of, yet the apostle tells us in the same breath that it 'passeth knowledge,' Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19; and the peace of God, which is an effect of his love, 'passeth all understanding,' Philip. iv. 7. And though it be said, 1 John iii. 2, that 'we shall see him as he is,' it is most convenient to understand it of the sight of Christ in his visible human nature at the day of judgment, and not of the essence of God; for he speaks of the appearance of God, understanding Christ's appearance, which the Scripture frequently speaks of. There will, indeed, in heaven be a wider enlarging the faculty, and a fuller discovery of the object, greater sparklings of light and glory, enough to satisfy; yet still the perfections of God will be above our comprehensions; the understanding will be dilated and strengthened, a clear light put into it, which is not any species of God, but a spiritual principle created by God to perfect the understanding for the contemplation of him.

[3.] The angels, who have had the fullest vision of God since their creation, cannot know God perfectly; and that upon the same reason, because they are creatures. There must be some proportion between the faculty and the object, but there is none between a finite understanding and an infinite essence. They know God in a more excellent manner than other creatures can do in the world; they stand before his face, they see the signs of his glorious presence; but their contracted understandings cannot comprehend the essence of God, which hides itself in the secret place of eternity. If God could be grasped by any finite understanding, though angelical, he were not infinite. The angels signify as much by the covering their faces before the throne of the divine Majesty, that the majesty of God is too mysterious for the most capacious understanding, Isa. vi. 2. And, therefore, it is generally said that the human nature of Christ,† though being straitly united to the divine nature, he did behold the divine essence, yet could not comprehend it, because the human nature was finite, and a creature.

Nor can we have a comprehensive knowledge of Christ; the Spirit doth take of Christ's, to shew to the believers, John xvi. 14, 15; but not all of

* Maimon. de Fundam. legis, cap. i. sec. 10, p. 6, 7.

† Wolleb. compend. lib. i. c. 16, the humanity of Christ did see God *ὅλας*, but not *ὅλων*.

Christ's, for all the things of Christ cannot be shewn to any man ; as his divine nature, being infinite and incomprehensible. We know God, as we know the sea ; we behold the vastness of its waters, but we cannot measure the depths and abysses of it. Yet we may be said truly to see it, as we may touch a mountain with our hands, but not grasp it in our arms. We know God to be omnipotent and immense, but we cannot comprehend his power and immensity. Nor can we know the counsels of God ; we may as well expect to span the heavens, and enclose the sea in a nut-shell, as to understand those judgments which are 'past finding out,' Rom. xi. 33. So that this is not the knowledge God requires of us, or that can be called our happiness, but that we should know what kind of God he is—merciful, just, wise, holy, true,—and how those perfections are manifested in Christ. Yet, because we cannot comprehend him, the more we ought, and the more we shall, admire him. Our admirations of the brightness of the sun are greater, by how much the less we can look upon the body of it without winking and shielding our eyes from the onset of his beams : so should they be of God.

(3.) Neither is it a perfect knowledge of God in this life, so far as it is possible for a creature to know him, that is required. Our knowledge of God in this life is as the knowledge of him in a glass, obscure, and apt to be dimmed by the steams and breath of our unworthy affections and notions of him. We cannot arrive to great measures because of the misty cloud upon our minds, the beam of sin in our eye ; our soul, clogged with a fleshly clay, cannot ascend to a perfect knowledge of God. We are like a man closed up in a room, where light comes in at some crannies and chinks of the shutters ; and though the sun shine ever so clearly, he cannot behold the glory of it while he remains thus closed up. While we are in this dungeon of flesh, clouded with sin, we cannot know the glory of Christ, till we are freed from that darkness by taking away the shuts and obstacles. We have still thick scales upon our eyes, and too much of the veil upon our hearts. Paul, that was ennobled with extraordinary revelations, yet pretended to no higher a knowledge of him than 'as in a glass,' and that not clear, but 'darkly,' 1 Cor. xiii. 12. The fuller knowledge is reserved for another life. We must know him here by his name, not by his face ; by his grace, not by his glory. Who can see so well with sore eyes as when the organ is healed ? Christ looks 'through the lattice,' Cant. ii. 9, gives us an imperfect sight of himself. God keeps back much of the knowledge of himself to humble us for our first curiosity in Adam, our common root, and to whet our longings after another world, wherein we shall know Christ no more by a stooping faith, but an ascending vision ; when we shall, as it were, with Thomas, put our hands into his wounds. Yet a perfection in the knowledge of Christ, as well as in grace, must be aimed at in this life. So the apostle did, Philip. iii. 12 : he 'followed after, if he might apprehend ;' and all that are sincere are thus minded. He did not apprehend all of Christ, but laboured still in inquiries after him, and took greater strides in his journey to him. Light of knowledge is sown here, but the harvest is above. We can never totally shake off our ignorance, till we surmount our natural corruption.

(4.) The knowledge of God and Christ which is saving, differs not from other knowledge in regard of the object, but the manner of knowing and the effects of knowledge. One knows by a natural understanding, and knows God in the Scripture as he would know a thing written in any other book : the other knowledge is by an understanding opened to take in more fully what is presented. The shutters which barred out the

light are pulled down, whereby the light breaks into the room more clearly : Luke xxiv. 45, ' Then opened he their understandings.' Two may behold the same picture, the object is the same ; but one having a more piercing eye, and exacter judgment, will better discern the lineaments and beauty of the work, which the other cannot perceive, though he views the same object. Suppose a beast that knows his master, and the servants that gave him food, were changed into a man, and endued with a rational soul, he would have the same object of knowledge ; but he would know them in another manner, with an understanding given ; whereas he knew them before only by a customary sight, a strength of imagination. And another kind of knowledge in the effects. A child of a year old may know his parents, his father, mother, and the servants ; but when he grows up, though there be no change of the object, yet there is in the effects of his knowledge. He knows them with more reverence, with more rational affections, with expressions of duty. So the knowledge of God differs in a sound Christian from the knowledge others have under the preaching of the gospel ; he knows God and Christ in a clearer manner, with a spiritual eye, and brings forth affectionate and practical fruits of that knowledge.

2. What this knowledge of God is affirmatively. The world pretends to know God, but Christ flatly denies it, and appeals to his Father for the truth of it in his last prayer : John xvii. 25, ' The world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.' That part of the world that Christ had preached to and declared the message from his Father, knew not God ; they heard the report of him, they could not but know the doctrine delivered, but they rejected it, refused the embracing of it, and therefore it was no knowledge of God. He that hath a true sense of God cannot but love him, trust in him, humble himself before him, hope in him, resign up himself to him, and bless and praise him for his manifestation.

The difference therefore of this knowledge from any other is,

1. In regard of the effects.
2. In regard of the manner of knowing.

1. In regard of the effects.

(1.) It is a transforming knowledge. Such a knowledge which doth necessarily include a conformity to the object. There is an external manifestation of God in the gospel to the ear, an internal manifestation in the heart. The one is called a *report*, the other a *revelation*, Isa. liii. 1. The common privilege of the gospel is to be heard ; the special, to be manifested to the saints by a powerful operation in the heart : Col. i. 26, 27, this ' mystery ' is ' made manifest to his saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory.' When Christ is made known *in* them the hope of glory, as well as *to* them ; when the knowledge of God in his grace, and the history of Christ in his nature, offices, and passion, is turned into an image and stamp, working the heart into its own form. Such a manifestation of God spiritually as men have of God naturally : Rom. i. 19, ' That which may be known of God is manifest in them,' as well as shewn to them ; shewed to them in the creatures, manifest in their consciences ; notions of God riveted that cannot be blotted out though resisted by flesh. In the saving knowledge, the notions of God in his gospel discovery, and of Christ in his mediation, are manifest in the heart, insinuating themselves secretly into the inward parts of the soul, and moulding the heart into the form of the evangelical doctrine. Such a revelation of God and Christ in a man as changeth the whole frame and model of counsels and counsellors

which before were followed : Gal. i. 16 : When Christ was revealed in him, he ‘conferred not with flesh and blood.’ The historical knowledge of Christ is a knowledge of Christ in the purity and misery of his flesh ; the other is a knowledge of Christ in the renewing of his Spirit. The one is a knowledge of the truth *as it is in the doctrine* ; the other a knowledge of the truth *as it is in Jesus*, a transcribing the copy in the heart. The knowledge of the one is like a man’s sight of a star, he gazeth upon it, but is not turned into the image and sparkling beauty of that star ; the other is like a man’s knowledge of a virtuous person, whose amiable endowments and carriage he admires, and from an admiration proceeds to imitation, and framing himself according to that pattern. When knowledge creates love, love delights to draw the picture of the beloved person.

[1.] This change is the proper end of this knowledge, therefore it cannot be a right knowledge till it doth attain the end. As the end of the Israelites’ looking upon the brazen serpent was to be changed from wounded to sound men, from dying to living, the end of the angel’s moving the waters in the pool of Bethesda was to enrich them with an healing virtue for the cure of bodily distempers ; the end of this motion was not attained unless some cure were wrought. The forming of Christ in the head, changing the notions in the mind, is in order to a Christ formed in the heart, changing the inclinations of the will and the temper of the soul. A renewing in knowledge is in order to the renewing the image of God : Col. iii. 10, ‘Renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created them,’ removing the ignorance to remove the deformity. It is expressed by opening the eyes, but with such a virtue lodged by it in the heart that attracts it from the devil to God : Acts xxvi. 18, ‘To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.’ The motion of the will is the end of light in the understanding. When the eye is opened to behold the truth, the next step is a change of false notions of God and religion to true ; after that, a conversion from Satan the prince of darkness, to God the father of lights ; then follows justification, sanctification, and the completeness of happiness. Not only the beginning of this change, but the progress of it till it arrive to perfection, depends upon our looking on Christ : 2 Cor. iii. 18, ‘With open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.’ The glory of God and Christ are beheld and known in the glass of the gospel, and a divine beauty conveyed, as was to Moses in his converse with God, by a reflection of his beams, just as the rising sun changeth the air into its own likeness, and transforms the world from the deformity of darkness to the beauty of light, or colours laid upon canvass assimilate it to the object whose picture it is. There is a reflection from the understanding to the will whereby this change is wrought, and it is by look after look that it is perfected to a full resemblance, according to the degrees of spiritual knowledge. When this knowledge is *enlightening*, it is the image of God in the mind ; when it is *enlivening*, it is the image of God in the heart ; a picture of God and Christ, drawn in the understanding, which enamours the will, and assimilates the whole soul to God. The gospel is this glass, which doth not only represent the object, but alters the complexion of the soul. This transformation is the end of the opening the eye, that the object may be viewed, and the heart changed thereby. As human knowledge is insignificant unless it attain the end of knowledge, so is divine, or the knowledge of God. The sublimest knowledge of God, therefore, which centres not in this end, is to no purpose, unless to aggravate our sin and sharpen our misery. This is not gained by a loose knowledge, as a man knows the sun by his beams ;

but he hath not the image of the sun in the ball of his eye unless he look upon the body of it.

[2.] The change of the soul to a perfect glory in heaven depends upon the perfect knowledge of God and Christ; and therefore the change here depends upon this knowledge. This knowledge therefore cannot be a right knowledge without this, which is the proper effect of it. The vision of Christ in his glorious state shall then cause likeness to him: 1 John iii. 2, 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' We shall see him in his glory; we shall, by that view, be transformed into the image of his glory, as by contemplating his virtues we are here changed into the image of his grace. The devils and wicked men shall see him in his glory at his appearance, but not be happy by him, because their knowledge of him doth not change their devilish complexion. As it is an uncomfortable knowledge of him then which doth not change the soul into the image of his glory, so it is a miserable knowledge of him here that doth not alter us into the image of his grace. The true knowledge of God works the same effects here, according to its degrees, as it will hereafter. As a perfect sight will draw the clearest and fullest lineaments of God in the heart, so an imperfect knowledge of him here must cause some shadows and imperfect draughts of him in the soul. It is not else a knowledge of the right stamp.

[3.] Such an effect of the knowledge of Christ is therefore necessary. Every notion of God and Christ in the mind must spring up into a new grace in the will, and be as a root of life in the heart; it will else be but as a feather in the cap or flower in the hand, which will make a little show and wither, and leave no prints behind it but those of condemnation. That knowledge of God which is not beautified with grace, instead of making us amiable Christians, will render us deformed devils.

Well, then, consider, do we find grace conformable to our knowledge of God and Christ? Doth the knowledge of God's holiness in Christ render our souls holy? Doth the consideration of his majesty sink us into humility? Doth the thoughts of his condescension lay the soul at his feet? Doth the knowledge of his power subdue our pride, the knowledge of his love transform us into love and affection? Doth grace in our hearts bud forth from the notions of our head? It is then such a knowledge of God as secures our happiness. Do we see Christ in the brightness of his divine nature, and the veil of his human, to admire his condescending kindness? Do we know him travelling to mount Calvary, in the greatness of his strength, to spring up sorrow for our sins? Do we see him wrestling with devils, to pull the prey of precious souls out of his hand, to rest upon his power? Do we know him offering up to the justice of God the full satisfaction of blood, and paying the demanded debt to a farthing, to accept of him as a propitiation? Do we know him wielding a royal sceptre by the will of his Father, to obey his authority? Do we know him pierced, and know him raised? know him on the cross and on the throne? in the reproaches of men and the glory of his Father? to be assimilated to him in the likeness of his death and the quickenings of his resurrection? It is then a living knowledge, such a knowledge as now buds and blossoms, and will ripen up to eternal life.

2. It is an affective knowledge. All saving knowledge is full of sense. The beams of truth in the mind beget a kindly heat in the will. The understanding forms motives of fear and love of God, and offers them to the will to be pursued; the soul desires to know him more, that it may love him. Some, therefore, define divinity to be affective.* All men have some

* Ales.

knowledge of God objectively, but it is not formally a divine knowledge, without the affections of love to him, and delight in him. This saving knowledge is a knowledge of a reality in God and Christ. Another may have clearer notions, know truths in their connections, but a Christian knows with a more excellent knowledge, because more affective, with a heat as well as light. What shines upon the head kindles love in the heart. Others have the same object of knowledge, but it appears not in that amiableness to them; there is a difference between a rational and spiritual knowledge, as there is between the Spirit, the author of the one, and reason, the spring of the other. Natural knowledge lies sleeping in the head, without jogging the affections; spiritual light cannot be without spiritual heat: Luke xxiv. 31, 32, 'Their eyes were opened, and their hearts burned.' The one hath light like that of a torch; the other influence, as well as light, like that of the sun. It is the property of light not only to enlighten, but heat. Some, therefore, make fire to be nothing else but condensed light, and light to be rarefied fire. The true light of God is always accompanied with a flame of love, which clasps about the object. The divine philosopher could say, that souls, first by a view, and then by a love of the divine beauty, recover their wings, and fly up to their heavenly country. Have we, therefore, not only a shine in our heads, but a warmth in our hearts; not only a beam in our minds, but a spark in our affections? It is then a saving knowledge of God. Both must go together; knowledge without affections is stupid, and affections without knowledge are childish. The diviner the light in the mind, the warmer will love be in the soul. The clearer and stronger the beams upon the wall, the stronger will be the reflection. In knowledge, we are passive in the reception of the divine beams; by affection, we are active, and give ourselves to God.

To prove this, consider that,

(1.) All the knowledge we have of God is insignificant to happiness, without suitable affections. God's end is not so much to be known by us, as to be loved by us, and the discovery of himself is in order to a return of affections from us: John xiv. 21, 'He that loves me, shall be loved of my Father; not he that only knows me. We cannot suppose that in heaven the blessed are enriched with a greater light, but that they may be spirited with a greater love. Love and holiness are the perfection of the soul there, and contemplation but a means to bring in the heart to him. It is more glorious to love than barely to know. Those that distinguish the orders of angels, place the seraphim above the cherubim, because they have a more ardent love, as well as the clearer knowledge. If we want love to others, the apostle accounts us ignorant of God, because God is love: 1 John iv. 8, 'He that loves not, knows not God, for God is love.' Much more is he ignorant of God, that is empty of affection to him, who is more amiable than any creature. It is one thing to know God, and another to retain God in our knowledge. One may be said to know God, who can discourse rationally of God, as those philosophers could, Rom. i. 28; but they retain God in their knowledge, that are inflamed with affection to him, and scorn all things in comparison of him. Though we may seem to have a clear knowledge, it cannot be thriving without this, not continuing; when anything is loved equally with him, there may soon be a forsaking of him. All the knowledge a natural man hath of God, is such a sight of the excellency of God and Christ, and his truths, as a beast hath of a diamond; he seeth it sparkling, but knows not its real worth, and therefore hath no satisfaction in it, nor affection to it.

[1.] Since this knowledge is transforming, it cannot be so without affection.

Without knowledge of him, we can never affect him; and without affections, we can never be like him. We are not changed into his image till we behold his beauty so as to love and adore him. It is not only a beam of his loveliness, but a ray of his love, that changeth the temper of the soul. Though the light of the fire attends the heat of it,* yet it is not the light, but the heat, transforms combustible matter into fire. It was not Christ's knowledge of us, but love to us, stooped the divine nature to assume ours; nor our knowledge, but faith and love, that elevates us to the divine. As Christ is a Sun of righteousness, not only shining, but warming, if we be like him, there must not only be light in our minds, but warmth in our affections.

[2.] It could be no better than the knowledge of a devil. If we had as high a knowledge of God as an angel hath, without affections suitable to the angelical state, it would be our torment, not our happiness. This saving knowledge differs from the other, as the knowledge of angels doth from that of devils. The light in their minds hath sprung out into a constant affection ever since their creation, and could never see a spark in anything else to draw them to any dislike of God. The devils have a knowledge of God, but are as much empty of affection to him as the angels are of any hatred of him. The knowledge of the good angels would be their torment, as well as the knowledge of the devils, if they had not flames of love, as well as beams of light. That only is true knowledge that acts us to a conjunction with God.

[3.] The knowledge of any object is to little purpose without a suitable affection. As a man hath not a right knowledge of sin, unless he feel the dreadful weight of it, so as to loathe it,—Ezek. xxxvi. 31, 'Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and shall loathe yourselves for your iniquity';—nor a right knowledge of the word, unless he doth believe it; nor a right apprehension of the world unless he counts it contemptible; so no man knows God aright unless his heart be set upon him, according to the worth of the object known, and the savour of the ointments of Christ. It is impossible a man can have an intellectual spiritual view of God, but he must see him amiable and worthy of his choicest affections; and he cannot be so injurious to himself and his own sentiments, as not to give his own apprehensions their due by giving God's amiableness his. He cannot be said, therefore, to have any sound apprehension of God, who hath not a choice affection to him, and delight in him. He that doth not praise the skill of an artist in his workmanship, discovers either his ignorance or his envy. As a faith without works hath no better a title from the apostle than a dead faith, James ii. 20, so a knowledge without love is no better than a dead, stupid knowledge, a knowledge buried in the grave of earthly affections. No man can be so stripped of affection to himself, as to neglect that good which he doth really know. No man can imagine that another apprehends that as excellent, with which there is not a full closure of his affections. If Moses had not slighted the treasures of Egypt for the reproach of Christ, he had not testified any true knowledge and esteem of him, Heb. xi. 26.

Well, then, can that man be said to know God to be clothed with majesty, before whom angels cover their faces, and mountains tremble, who hath no fear to offend him? Doth he know God to be a consuming fire, and himself but stubble, that hath no dread of God? Doth he know the mercy of God, who hath no care to please him, but presumes upon his goodness? Can he

* Fatal Doom, or Charms of Divine Love, p 9, changed.

be said to know God's holiness, that hath no sense of his own uncleanness? Doth that man know Christ to be a blessed Redeemer, who doth not fall at his feet? Doth he know him groaning upon the cross for sin, and bruised for it, who lets that sin live with welcome in his soul, which grieved and bruised him? If knowledge in the head doth not work spiritual affections in the heart, it can never be put upon the account of a saving knowledge; it is not really knowledge, but only a pretence to it.

(2.) Without affection, we answer not the end of the knowledge of God. The revelation of God is made to us for our imitation, he is discovered as the chiefest good and the exactest pattern. The sum of the law consists in love, and the end of the gospel manifestation is to engage our love. Christ is not represented only as a dying man, but as God-man dying for the sins of the world, suffering in our stead, and therefore to raise our affections, not to content our curiosity. Faith and love must join hands, 1 Tim. i. 14. The gospel, which is a representation of God in Christ, is said to be worthy, not of observation, but of acceptation, ver. 15, and worthy of observation in order to acceptation. The knowledge of a law is to raise a love to it, Ps. cxix. 97; the knowledge of the law-giver ought not to do less. As we know not righteousness till the law be in our hearts,—Isa. li. 7, 'Ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law,'—so we know not God till he be in our affections.

(3.) Our knowledge of God ought to be conformable to his knowledge of us. God's knowledge of his people is attended with affection. He is not said in Scripture language to know, unless he love: Amos iii. 2, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth.' There is a great difference between God's knowledge of omniscience, and his knowledge of affection. With the first he knows all creatures, with the other his people. As God is not said to know us without testimonies of his affection to us, so we cannot be said to know God without leaps of our affections to him.

(4.) Application of ourselves to the knowledge of God without affection is not agreeable to the nature of our souls. The choice of the will in all true knowledge treads upon the heel of the act of the understanding, and men naturally desire the knowledge of that which is true, in order to the enjoyment of that which is good in it. The end of all the acts of the understanding is to cause a motion in the will and affections suitable to the apprehension. God hath given us two faculties: understanding, to know the goodness of a thing, and a will to embrace it. To content one faculty in contemplation, without contenting the other in embracing what we know, is to give a half satisfaction to the soul; it is to separate those two faculties of understanding and will, which God hath joined. Knowledge is the glory of the mind both in this and the other world, the object of that is truth; but there is another faculty which must have its perfection, that is, the will, the object whereof is good; and the content of that faculty lies in embracing the good apprehended both in this life and the next. This, therefore, must be gratified as well as the other, and each faculty must have a full rest in a due object; the soul else cannot have an entire satisfaction according to the latitude and capaciousness of its nature. Therefore all abstracted notions of God, without an influence upon the will, are barren, and not agreeable and satisfactory to the nature of the soul. It cannot be satisfied with contemplation without fruition, and such an intimate fruition as may affect the whole nature. Now, to have this enjoyment is not only to know God or think of him, but to embrace him by love, to clasp about God with spiritual affections, to receive the touches of his goodness every moment. To give the soul a full satisfaction according to the nature of it, is to have a stamp

of the nature of God upon our understanding, and a stamp of the goodness of God upon our wills.

(5.) Without affection, our knowledge of God may have, and will have, base and corrupt ends. And therefore our knowledge cannot be saving without it. Men may desire to know, out of a natural itch, the relics of Adam, or out of a desire to enlarge the perfection of their understanding (as the knowledge of philosophers did tend chiefly to such an end), and may have no higher aims in endeavouring after the knowledge of God than endeavouring after the knowledge of other things, either natural or moral. Perhaps this affecting the knowledge of God may arise from pride and ambition; and a desire of being esteemed eminent in intellectuals and discourse may make the pulse of their affections beat strongly to this knowledge, it being natural to men to be displeased more with being counted fools than being counted vicious, and to have more natural desires after knowledge than after virtue, even as Adam had. Nay, men may desire to know God and the truths of God as a stirrup to some lust, and to foment some carnal design, as gain, which may be promoted by religious discourses. But certainly much of the knowledge of God which is pretended among us, though it may arise out of an affection to knowledge, yet may be without an affection to the object of it. As there is a knowledge of God when there is not a 'glorifying of him as God,' Rom. i. 21, so there may be a desire to know God without any desire to glorify him. As a man may desire to know sin, to see a man when he is drunk and to observe his carriage, not out of any design he hath to loathe that sin, but to make his observations upon the carriage and disposition of the person while he is under the power of that filthy act, which is but to satisfy his curiosity; or he may desire to see a man in the exercise of some virtue out of the same end, not out of a desire to conform himself to that pattern; so a man may desire to know God, and Christ, and the truths of Christ, not with any intent to have his affections with an exact harmony centre in them, but to satisfy that natural thirst which he hath for knowledge. And a man may have a great delight in this knowledge of God, as Isa. lviii. 2, they did 'delight to know God's ways,' and 'delight in approaching' to him, but (as their fasts were, ver. 4) 'for strife and debate.' And that delight may arise from a delight in the excellency of the object, as a man delights to contemplate the nature of the sun and stars more than the nature of a clod of earth, yet cannot be said to love them, but loves his own act of contemplation and knowledge of them. Many thus know God, and are inquisitive after the knowledge of him, as a curious object of knowledge, not as a spiritual object of love and delight to bestow the flower of their affections upon. Such often miss of their intent: God obscures himself when he is searched after with such curiosity. And such a knowledge will end in apostasy, as it began in corruption; the man will return as a dog to lick up his vomit, or a swine to wallow in the mire, as those did who had escaped the pollutions of the world 'through the knowledge of Christ,' 2 Peter ii. 20-22; which knowledge they did probably affect out of curiosity, because of the novelty of it, the noise it made in the world, or some by-end, which made them cast it off when it ceased to serve their purpose, and so at last count Christ and his cross foolishness.

Well, then,

Try your knowledge of God by your affections to him. What strong desires are there for the enjoyment of God and Christ; what delight in approaches to him; what propensities of the heart in spiritual duties? Do they spring from affection, or move by the fears and jerks of conscience? Doth the knowledge of Christ in his mediation, natures, offices, as the only

remedy for our lost souls, kindle desires, holy affections, unexpressible heart-breakings for him, as we find David's heart often flying up upon this wing? Is there a love to God rising out of a sense of his love to lost man? God cannot be known as an infinite, and unbounded, and outflowing goodness without a flight of our affections to him. It is as impossible that a good spiritually known should not be beloved, as that any good should be beloved that is not known. Every common witness of God in the works of creation 'fills the heart with gladness,' Acts xiv. 16, 17, much more every spiritual witness of God in the work of redemption apprehended by the soul. If created excellency insinuates itself into our affections, the supereminent beauty of God must much more when he is seen and known. The spiritual light which comes from God is for God. In other knowledge, self-love poiseth the heart, but a saving knowledge conducts the heart to an admiration of God and affection to him. In heaven, a clear vision renders the beholder full of the most glowing affections. The angels 'always behold the face of God,' Mat. xviii. 10. *Always*, as not counting anything else worthy of a glance, but in obedience to his order. Nothing can be called a saving knowledge of God which doth not rank all our affections in order to the object of it.

3. It is an active and expressive knowledge; it expresseth in the life what is in the head and heart. A change in the heart engenders affection, and affection will break out in action; love will lay a constraint upon the heart. We commonly say of a notoriously profane man, though he may have excellent parts, and a great stock of knowledge, that he is a sot; because his knowledge is not operative in ways agreeable to it, he acts like the most ignorant person. He cannot be said to know God to be holy, and the gospel to be a doctrine according to godliness, who hath not a practice according to the rules of godliness. To be sensual, is to have nothing of the Spirit: Jude 19, he hath nothing of the light of the Spirit who is under the conduct of a corrupted sense. And the apostle intimates it plainly, that unless men 'awake to righteousness' and avoid sin, they 'have not the knowledge of God,' 1 Cor. xv. 34. A bedrid knowledge it is, without affection proper for it, rather the torment than ornament of the soul. All knowledge, without an imitation of God, is but a stupid, sleepy notion. We have then a full assurance of knowledge, when we are followers of God, 1 Thes. i. 5, 6. The first principle which is taught by the manifestation of God is to deny ungodliness: Titus ii. 12, 13, 'The grace of God teacheth us to deny ungodliness.' As God's knowing us is not a simple view, but a provident care, so our knowledge of God is not a simple speculation, but a divine operation of the soul, as well as in the soul. If 'he that commits sin hath not known God,' 1 John iii. 6, then he that hath known God doth not commit sin. He flatters not himself in any, arms himself against all, commenceth an irreconcilable war against the lighter troops as well as the main body, and stands upon his guard to prevent every invasion. He that knows Christ, knows that he is worthy of all his service, since he, and none but he, was crucified for him. He that knows God, knows the necessity of enjoying him, and will therefore be guided in those ways which tend to the enjoyment of him. If a man knows a medicine to be excellent for the cure of such a disease which he labours under, and is sensible of the necessity of it, he will certainly apply it. As Christ discovered the knowledge of God in the world, to dissolve the works of the devil in the world; so when the knowledge of Christ shines in the heart, it dissolves the works of darkness and lust in the soul, for it discovers right notions of sin and vanity, and he

that hath right notions of it cannot affect it. When Noah knew God in his threatening justice, he obeys God in the building an ark. When Abraham knew God in the mercy and truth of his promise, he obeys God in offering his Isaac. The one's knowledge wrought against the reproaches of an unbelieving world, and the other's against the tide of a natural affection: so powerful is this divine knowledge, where it seizeth upon the heart, to bring forth the fruits of fear and holiness. Let none of us therefore flatter ourselves that we have a saving knowledge of God without imitation of him, that we understand Christ to be a sufficient Saviour without relying on him. It is a knowledge in the form, and an ignorance in the power. Without an evangelical obedience, a professing Christian knows no more savingly than a moral heathen, because he acts no better than such an one.

(1.) This knowledge is life. It is 'the light of life,' John viii. 12; an active, lively light, by an Hebraism. All lucid bodies in the heavens are active in their own nature, and direct men in their several spheres of activity in the world. When the sun riseth, men rise to their daily task; when the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines forth in the face of Christ in the heart, there is a resurrection to vital actions. It is 'a well-spring of life unto him that hath it,' Prov. xvi. 22. If it hath a vitality in it to convey life, it must needs rise up in excellent operations, according to the measure of it, unless that we can suppose that a divine principle in the mind should produce nothing else but a dead sleep in all the other parts of the soul. Life it is, and life is not without activity; eternal life it is, and that cannot be without a succession of vital acts to eternity.

(2.) The end of knowledge is not attained without actions suitable to it. If we have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, there is a stripping off the rags of the old Adam, a change of 'the former conversation which was according to deceitful lusts,' Eph. iv. 21, 22; 'but you have not so learned Christ,' &c. As the word is an engrafted word, so the knowledge of God is an engrafted knowledge, which is inserted in the stock, to change the nature of it into that of the graft, and causing the production of fruits from it according to the nature of the slip joined with it. The Scripture, which is a discovery of God, is not only a history but a rule. God declares himself as our Lord and as our pattern; Christ is manifested as an image of conformity as well as a propitiatory offering. Where he is known as a propitiation for our comfort, he is known as a pattern for our practice. The end of knowledge is to impress a sound image of the goodness of an object as well as the truth; the truth to be eyed, and the goodness to be imitated. Distinct conceptions of God, and rational discourses of Christ,* glorify him no more than a painter doth the party whose picture he hath drawn. The glory of God consists not in a lifeless notion of him, but an active resemblance of him. A natural man may have some pleasure in knowing the nature of God, but he cares not for knowing the ways of God: Job xxi. 14, 'We desire not the knowledge of thy ways;' he would know him to be merciful, but not know him to be holy. He is opposite to the truths of God, because they are repugnant to the delights and interests of the flesh. The Scotists defined divinity well when they made it *practica*; better than Aquinas, who made it *speculativa*. Every illumination of the mind is not to speculate, but to work by; every notion of God is a direction to some sphere of action. The end of Christ's knowledge of his Father must be the end of our knowledge, both of God and himself. He knows his Father's secrets to reveal them, and he knows his Father's will to perform it. As we are to pray that we may do the will of God as the angels do, so we are to know, that we may

* Jackson, vol. iii. quar. cap. viii. p. 129.

do the will of God as the angels do it. The incarnation of Christ was for action; the divine nature had not attained its end in the business of our redemption, without union to the human, as necessary to mediatory acts; nor doth our knowledge of God attain its end without union to the will, as necessary to all religious operations. The knowledge of Christ is like the former prophecies of Christ, which would not have had their effect without his incarnation; nor hath knowledge its effect without (so to speak) an incarnation of it in our conversation. The end of knowledge is directive; the proper effect of knowledge is the observation of the direction, to write after the copy, to work according to the pattern, to do what is agreeable to the perfections of God, to honour what we see honourable in God, and to disparage none of those excellencies we profess to know.

(3.) All the knowledge of God and Christ, without action corresponding thereunto, is no better in the account of God than ignorance, unless it be accidentally to condemnation. Without obedience, we are truly ignorant, though our speculations may be as sublime as those of devils: 1 John ii. 4, 'He that saith, he knows him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar.' The true knowledge of God doth not only glitter in the understanding, or glimmer in a profession, but beams out in a vigorous conversation, acting all things agreeable to the will of God. That knowledge of God which doth not take root in the heart, and grow up into life and spirit, is ignorance in the account of God. Those Gentiles, Rom. i. 21, that are said to know God, are, ver. 28, said not to know him; they knew him as rational men, not as obedient men; they had a notion of him, without any affection to his service; they had high speculations of his excellency, but nothing of his perfections and his law writ in the tables of their hearts: such a knowledge as geometicians may have by understanding the rules of a science, not such a knowledge as an artificer may have by the practice of those rules. No doubt but Eli's sons had a knowledge of God and his law by education, but because it did not slide into their conversation, they are said not to know the Lord, 1 Sam. ii. 12. Not to know God, and not to obey him, are one and the same thing in the account of God at the day of judgment, 2 Thes. i. 8; and it is called ignorance, because men with that knowledge act as if they were wholly ignorant of the nature and will of God. They behave themselves as men that never heard of God or Christ would be expected to do. They may be Christians in knowledge, and pagans in life. True reason in everything doth naturally tend to practice. He is of no use in a society or commonwealth who is swallowed up in contemplations, and launcheth not out into a useful activity. An idle knowledge is of no use for God, and the end of a man's creation; it is but a pretence, a mere puff of a fleshly mind. There is as much difference between such a dormant knowledge, and that which riseth up in sprightly motions for God, as between the sun in a statue bravely gilded, and that in the firmament dispersing his influences into all the corners of the world, and honouring his Creator by his daily race. We no more know any truth of God, unless we digest it, than a man knows the virtue of bread, unless he concocts it, and feels the strength of it in his limbs. Practice is the evidence of knowledge; it cannot be rationally concluded that he knows God to be omnipresent, who neglects the duty in secret required of him, or apprehends him to be just, who in a course of sin denies it, and presumes upon his mercy. God puts an emphasis upon Josiah's obedience, as an evidence of his knowledge: Jer. xxii. 16, 'He judged the cause of the poor and needy; was not this to know me? saith the Lord.' More than ever God said of Solomon, who had his brain better filled, and his heart more empty. Solomon could discourse excellently of the nature of

God, and ravish men with his wisdom ; but God never said of that, ' Was not this to know me ? ' Other knowledge may make us admired among men ; this only makes us acceptable to God.

(4.) The least saving knowledge of God is of an active nature. The wise men had but a spark by the discovery of a star, and that put them upon seeking the King of the Jews, Mat. ii. 1, 2 ; the least star in the heavens, though it hath not so much light as another, has its influences and regular motions. Another may discourse better of the nature of God, speak distinctly of the glory of his attributes and works, discourse of the nature of sin, give an hundred reasons against it, yet obey not that God he speaks of, and be a slave to that sin he disputes against ; whereas he that hath the least spark of the spiritual knowledge of God and Christ, walks more according to the nature of God, and demeans himself with more honour to the perfections of God in his life, than the greatest discourser of him can with his tongue. He is continually inquiring what purity, fear, love, dependence, obedience, grief and joy, the holiness, majesty, goodness, mercy, faithfulness, power, and righteousness of God, calls for at his hands. Such an one hath a martyr knowledge ; is content to part with anything, with all, for the glory of that God he knows : the other, that hath a flourishing wit, a loose, unrooted, floating knowledge, would not part with the least drop of blood in his body for the honour of that God he pretends to know ; he would cast all the knowledge of God and Christ at his heels, rather than part with anything for him, when Christ and his life come to a contest. But the least grain of the saving knowledge of God renders a man an habitual martyr.

Well, then, try your knowledge of God by this. As sin is not known unless it cause grief in the heart, so God is not known unless the knowledge of him quicken an obedience to him. Where this spiritual knowledge of God is implanted, and the sweetness of Christ experimented, there will be a delight in those services which are well pleasing to him ; a joy in all motives to him, and a swiftness in all motions for him ; a delight, both in the service itself, and the object of it.

4. It is an humbling, self-abasing knowledge.

(1.) It humbleth us before God. To know God without knowing ourselves, is a fruitless speculation.* The knowledge of ourselves and our own misery, without the knowledge of God and his mercy, is a miserable vexation. The end of it is to pay God a glory due to him from his creature. Pride debaseth the Deity, and snatcheth the crown of glory from God to set it upon the creature's head ; but this saving knowledge sinks man to the dust without sinking him to hell ; lays him flat on the earth, thereby to raise him to heaven. True knowledge, and a melting heart, are inseparable companions ; Christ joins hardness and ignorance together, Mark viii. 17. It is the nature of other knowledge to puff up, 1 Cor. viii. 1 ; of this, to pull down. The plumes of a proud spirit fall at the appearance of God. He regards himself as a worm, when he understands the excellency of his Creator. Without it, it is but a knowledge in conceit, not in reality ; he knows nothing of God, though he thinks he doth, 1 Cor. viii. 2. Manasseh had some knowledge of God, no question, by the religious education of his father Hezekiah ; but it went not for current coin in heaven till he was in an humbled frame : 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13, ' Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.' It is not a knowledge of God till it make a man shrink into a sense of his own baseness and nothingness. A bare dogmatical knowledge of God advanceth man without a proportionable advancement of God. It is of the same nature with other knowledge ; that which comes from our

* Dr Preston.

own reason is our fondling, it brings forth the fruits of old Adam ; that which is dropped in by the Spirit brings forth the fruits of the Spirit, renders a man sensibly obliged, not to his own wit, but God's grace. A rational revelation rather hardens the heart than melts it ;* as a rational conviction is light without heat. Other knowledge discovers other things, but not a man's self ; like a dark lantern, which shews us other persons and things, but obscures ourselves from the sight of ourselves ; but the knowledge of God is such a light whereby a man beholds himself, as well as the way wherein he is to walk.

[1.] It is such a knowledge as scatters the mist that is upon the heart, and thereby discovers its filth. The first beam shot into the heart by the Spirit darts to the very centre, and discovers the nest of filth and poison. As the beam is shot from God, it reveals his beauty ; as shedding its light upon the soul, it reveals its deformity. As the beam from the sun, that conquers the darkness of the night, discovers the glory of the sun, and the filth of a dunghill at the same time. The sensible discovery of the holiness of God, and the sufferings of Christ, in the very act, opens the sinfulness of sin. The majesty of God shews him his vileness, the purity of God his filthiness, the justice of God his demerit, and the power of God his impotence. If the soul knows God in his glory, it sinks down, with Isaiah, at the very first ray of it, in a sense of its undone condition : Isa. vi. 1, 5, ' Woe is me, for I am undone !' נִרְכַּמְתִּי ; I was silent, (Symm.), *ἠσιώπησα*, as if he had attempted to join with the angels in the praise of God at the sight of him, but was struck down with a sense of his own unworthiness. ' I am a man of polluted lips,' *i.e.* I am not worthy to praise God ; so powerful was one ray to affect his whole soul with a sense of his sin, and his miserable estate by it, and stripped him of all conceits of self-worth.† When the soul hears God in the law, it trembles at the thunder. When it sees Christ bowing upon the cross, it cannot but bow down under a sense of that iniquity which caused it. To know Christ savingly, in the first glance, is to know ourselves to be children of wrath, under the curse of the law, and liable to the justice of God. To know Christ as mediator, implies our distance from God ; to know him as reconciler, our enmity ; to know him as redeemer, our slavery ; to know him as a prophet, our ignorance ; as a priest, our guilt and weakness ; as an advocate, our inability to manage our own cause. Every notion of Christ is a light that opens our eyes to advance faith in God, and humility in ourselves. Every rule is *index sui et obliqui*, it shews its own straightness, and the crookedness of anything applied to it. All the glory of the stars, as well as the darkness of the night, disappears at the rising of the sun. At the shedding of this beam upon the heart, the natural glory of a man's own righteousness is obscured, as well as his guilt and loathsomeness manifested. When the elders saw God in his glory, they fell upon their faces, Rev. iv. 10. When John Baptist saw Christ, he was sensible of his own filthiness, and need of washing : Matt. iii. 14, ' I have need to be baptized of thee ;' an expression not used before by him to any of the multitude. How is a soul, at the first breaking out of this light upon him, humbled at the consideration of his unworthy thoughts of God, unsuitable to the notions he is now possessed with ! How doth he distaste his own temper, to be so little affected with a God so transcendently worthy of his highest love ! O my soul, why wert thou so base, so vile in thy apprehensions and pursuits, as to cast thyself down to adore such despicable objects as sin and vanity !

(2.) It is a knowledge that comes from God, and therefore must needs

* Strong.

† Grot.

humble. It is a beam from him ; it is not therefore to nourish that pride in the creature which he punished upon the fall with so long a chain of miseries. It is he 'teacheth the meek his way,' Ps. xxv. 9. He makes sinners meek by his teaching ; and when they are meek, they are subjects capable of more knowledge and instructions from him. If the meek are the subjects of clearer teachings, the effect of this discovery is not to exalt their pride, but enlarge their humility. Pride cannot naturally flow from anything that is divine. It is none of God's offspring, but the devil's brat. God, who hath set us a pattern of humility in his own condescensions, and set us an example of humility in the person of his Son, can never be the Father of that which is so contrary to all his designs in the world. Pride is the devil's fly-blow in the soul.

(3.) The knowledge of God is always attended with a comparison of the soul with him, if it be saving. There cannot but be some reflection. The angels, in their knowledge of Christ as their confirmer, cannot but reflect with humility upon their mutable state by nature, which might have rendered them by their own folly as sinful and miserable as devils, without the grace of God, and their confirmation in a happy state by the Son of God. So in the knowledge of God's excellency, the soul cannot but reflect upon its unsuitableness to God. It sees God, and falls out with itself. It loves God, and is angry with itself. It beholds God, and looks upon itself with disdain. Peter could not receive a look from his master without reflecting upon his unworthy carriage, and melting into tears. When a man looks upon the earth, and the things upon it, he is apt to believe he hath an acute eye ; but when he looks upon the sun, and finds himself confounded by the brightness of its light, he is sensible of the dulness of his eye in comparison of that lustre which glared upon it. So when we fix our eyes upon ourselves, and dwell upon the thoughts of any excellency, righteousness, or virtue in us, we turn self-flatterers, and are apt to imagine that we are some great thing, above the sphere of common nature, and the insects of mankind ; but when we turn our eyes towards heaven, and take a prospect of the holiness, wisdom, righteousness of God, which ought to be our copy to write after, our pride is dashed out of countenance, our holiness appears sordid, our righteousness matter of shame, our virtue feeble, our wisdom folly, our actions madness, and all our excellency a mere senseless shadow. We are then humbled, not only for our sins, but our services, when we find those duties we are apt to boast of bear no proportion to the holiness of God. When Paul knew Christ, he was not only humble in himself, but rejected all confidence in the religious props he rested on before, Philip. iii. 8. He then beheld himself a dead man, and his services dead services, when he understood the righteousness of God manifested in a crucified and raised Christ. One spark of the divinity of Christ in a miracle brought Peter upon his knees with a self-reflection : 'Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man,' Luke v. 8. It will make men humble for the sin of others. If we know God spiritually to be great, excellent, holy, we cannot but with grief behold the sons of men so careless of his honour, and travailing with a birth of perpetual injuries against so excellent a majesty ; when we compare his nature with their practices, and reflect how little he hath deserved such carriages, and how much he hath deserved the contrary. The angels having the most glittering heads have also the most affectionate hearts to the glory of that majesty which they adore, and therefore they rejoice at the conversion of a sinner ; by the same reason they have, if not their grief, yet their indignation at the abuses God suffers in the world by wicked men, when they make this judicious comparison.

(4.) The more knowledge any ever had of God, the more humble they

have been. When Peter grew in the apprehensions of the ends of the death of Christ, he had no more those aspiring thoughts to think himself fit to reprove his master, as when he had the first revelation of him to be the Son of God, Mark viii. 29, 32, Mat. xvi. 13. Young scholars are most proud. Duarenus* used to say, Those that come to the university the first year are doctors in their own conceits, the second year licentiates, and the third year students and learners. Not an apostle outstripped Paul in the knowledge of God and Christ, nor came up to an equal measure with him; nor did any equal him in his humility, who sets himself upon record to the world as the least of saints, and the chiefest of sinners. Christ, who lay in the bosom of his Father, became a worm rather than a man, in making himself of no reputation, Philip. ii. 7. In conformity to him, the more clear the revelations of God are to our souls, the more voluntary disannulments there are of ourselves. The angels that have the nearest approach to the deity, and the richest prospect of his glory, cover their faces with an awe of his majesty, as if they did acknowledge the imperfection of their understandings, that they are not more knowing; and cover their feet too, which are the affections of spiritual beings, as if they were ashamed that their love, delight, and zeal were not more glowing. A great stock of natural knowledge debaseth a man in his own eyes, because he apprehends his own weakness to get to the top of that mountain he would reach by his inquiries. Socrates, who was the most knowing man of his age, was sensible that he knew nothing, because the more a man knows, the more he finds his own ignorance, and his inability to shake it off; and that the things he is ignorant of are more than those which he seems to grasp in his understanding. Much more doth a spiritual Christian see, that what he knows of God and Christ is inconceivably less than what he is ignorant of. The more he knows those objects, the more he knows his own defects, and his want of conformity to them. Agur was one of the wisest men of his age, whether he was Solomon, or some other in the time of Solomon (which is more probable), yet counts himself void of wisdom, 'more brutish than any man,' and not having the understanding of a man; as if he were not so wise and knowing as the vulgar sort, as well as inferior to the more raised sort of mankind, as the words *בְּיָדֵי טִיִּשְׁתִּים* signify, Prov. xxx. 2, 3; and he speaks it in reference to the knowledge he had of God, as appears by verse 4. The more any man sees of God, the lower he falls in his own eyes.

As this knowledge of God makes us more humble before God, so it makes us more humble and meek to men. This was promised as a fruit of the knowledge of God in the gospel. It was this should turn ravenous wolves into gentle lambs, and render their natures as meek as before they were cruel: Isa. xi. 6-9, 'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the cow and the bear shall feed together, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.' It is such a knowledge as quells the pride of man, and the injustice and oppressions and furies engendered by that fruitful principle. The names whereby they are denominated are names of meekness, lambs, kids, calves. Cruelty should grow mild, and inflexible tempers melt; ravenous dispositions be laid aside; the nature of man towards God, and the nature of man towards his neighbour, be changed. The knowledge of Christ in the gospel pulls up such base affections by the roots, which would else grow in an ignorant, untilled heart, as weeds in an unmanured field. If men, therefore, are ready to fall foul upon one another upon every occasion, they have not advanced many steps in the knowledge of God. For

* Walæus de Sabbat. Orat. in fine ii. p. 225.

this temper of humility is one effect of this divine light, it being rendered by the prophet as the cause of such a miraculous change. Where there is not, therefore, such a visible effect, there is nothing of the cause. The knowledge of the Lord can no more be in the soul without humility, than the sun can be in the heavens without dispersing its light on the earth, nor the enlightening Spirit without meekness a fruit of it, Gal. v. 22. Wisdom 'changeth the boldness of the face,' Eccles. viii. 1, and spreads a modesty in the soul; he is thereby less apt to censure others, and more sparing in his judging his brother. God hath a perfect knowledge of himself, and is the highest pattern of humility: 'He humbles himself to behold the things done in heaven and in earth,' Ps. cxiii. 6; much more is it his humiliation to solicit sinners, to bear patiently their affronts. None knew the Father but the Son, who humbled himself to the flesh of man, and to death for him. The angels also that excel in knowledge, as standing before the face of God, excel also in condescending ministries to men, who are more above the greatest man in the dignity of their nature, than the greatest man upon the earth can be above the meanest person by his education and dignity.

Well then, if this be an humbling knowledge, let us try ourselves by it, whether we are arrived to it or no. He that hath not a melting heart hath not been under the shinings of this sun. The darkness of pride will be scattered by the strength and vigour of this light. The saving knowledge of God and Christ crucified lays a man flat on the ground; and the knowledge of God reconciled, and Christ risen, doth both humble and revive. A proud divine knowledge is as great a contradiction as to say, an humble diabolical malice.

5. It is a weaning knowledge. It weans a man's heart from all things below. Clear manifestations of God elevate the soul to God, when ignorance of him depresseth the heart to one creature or other. The excellency of God dims the beauty of the creature, and the true knowledge of this excellency sets the creature below God in the heart. It leaves no room for anything else, as the eye that hath gazed upon the sun admits not presently any other image into it. This divine knowledge disparageth the value of anything else, it represents sin vile, and the world empty. It is such an inestimable treasure, that it is not to be put in the balance with anything else. All other things which carnal men esteem are but thin and airy notions to this knowledge; everything that hath a tincture of flesh and blood, human principles, fleshly counsels, expire when this wisdom shines in upon the soul: Gal. i. 16, 'I consulted not with flesh and blood;' nor can any man that hath found this mine of gold leave it for a mite of brass. When Christ and his sweetness is discerned and tasted, life is a torment, death a pleasure. Simeon upon his sight of Christ desires to depart, since his 'eyes had seen God's salvation,' Luke ii. 29, 30; nothing in the world could be worth his desires after a sight of the Redeemer. And Paul, who both had and valued the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, esteems everything in the world no better than dung, and longs to be dissolved, that he might be in his arms, Philip. iii. 8, and i. 23. As when the sun appears in the heavens, it doth not only discover itself, but discloseth all things on the earth; so when God manifests himself to the soul, he doth not only give the knowledge of himself, but shews to us the true nature of other things, that they can bear no proportion to the excellency of God and Christ, and bestows such a judgment and understanding upon us, that we look upon things under other notions and considerations than before we did; as men have other apprehensions of things in the light than they had in the darkness of the night. He doth not know God, that doth not apprehend him to be more excellent than the withering

flowers of any creature whatsoever ; as he doth not love Christ that loves him not above all creatures ; and he doth not worship God who worships the creature equal with him,—Rom. i. 25, *παρὰ κρίσαντα*, worshipped the creature, *juxta creatorem*,—so he doth not know God that knows him not to be excellent above all creatures, and esteem him accordingly.

6. It is a fiducial knowledge, a knowledge of faith : Ps. ix. 10, ‘ They that know thy name will trust in thee.’ Faith and trust are the concomitants of this knowledge. Such will address to God in all their straits, and rely upon his truth and goodness. And the spirit of wisdom is joined with the acknowledgment of Christ, Eph. i. 17. Faith is principally meant by knowledge in Scripture ; some therefore interpret the knowledge of Christ, which is eternal life in the text, to be faith. No knowledge, indeed, without faith can be eternal life, or the next way to it ; and by knowledge (Isa. liii. 11, ‘ By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many’) must be understood a believing knowledge, and cannot be understood otherwise. All that have a general knowledge of Christ, though never so high, are not justified, for that excellent state the Scripture ascribes only to faith. His knowledge, objectively, the knowledge of him, faith in him ; and faith is called knowledge, because it is radically in the understanding, as liberty is, but it is formally in the will. Not that the understanding is the proper and sole seat of faith, because faith is *fiducia*, trust or reliance, which is not an act of the mind, but of the will. But faith is in the understanding in regard of disposition, but in the will in regard of the fiducial apprehension ;* for faith is not one simple virtue, but compounded of two, knowledge and trust. The common subject is the heart, the special seat of each part is the understanding and will (yet those two parts cannot be separated but the nature of faith is destroyed), as original righteousness was both in the mind and the will ; and the happiness of heaven, which is but one entire happiness, consists both in the acts of the understanding in contemplation, and the acts of the will in the embracing the contemplated object ; but by knowledge or sight in Scripture is principally meant faith. Abraham *saw* the day of Christ, John viii. 56, and with such a sight as sprung up in joy ; he saw it in the promise ; he knew it by way of energy in the propitiation of Christ, and virtue of his Spirit ; he had the power of Christ’s death in the mortification of his unbelief, before the death was felt by the Son of God upon the cross, and rose to a new life by the virtue of Christ’s resurrection, before Christ laid his head in the grave. It was certainly a sight of faith ; for the Jews, to whom Christ spake this, saw him with their bodily eyes, beheld his day, they saw him personally face to face, and knew him in the flesh, yet were wholly ignorant both of the excellency of his person and virtue of his offices. It is one thing to know the nature of God, and another thing to know God in covenant as our God. Of the Sidonians God said, ‘ They shall know that I am the Lord,’ Ezek. xxviii. 22. In a way of justice, they shall know that I am of a righteous nature. But of his people Israel he saith, ‘ They shall know that I am the Lord their God,’ ver. 26 ; a God in covenant with them, in whom they have an interest. It is an interested knowledge ; a relying upon God in his covenant as theirs, according as the Scripture propounds him. There is as great a difference between the common knowledge of God in an unbelieving scholar and a believing Christian, as between the knowledge that a gardener hath of plants and flowers in his master’s garden : he knows how to dress them, knows the names and the nature of every particular plant and flower there ; but though the knowledge of the owner of it doth not extend to all those particularities, yet he knows it to be his, conveyed to

* Rivet. in Isa. liii. 11.

him, and of right belonging to him, Another man delights in a beautiful field and garden, pleaseth himself with the variety of the flowers and pleasures of the walks ; the owner delights in it upon this account too, loves to consider the nature of the trees and plants ; but he hath a knowledge of it, and delight in it above the other's ; because of his property, he knows the possession of it, and the commodities arising from it, to be his. This knowledge is always with some glimmerings of hopes that God and Christ are his, according to the tenor of the covenant. Though there be not a full assurance, the title and evidence is not clear to him, and may seem to have some flaw in it, which he hath not yet overcome, yet all true faith hath something of comfort and hope with it, for it is wrought by the Spirit as a comforter, convincing of the sufficiency as well as the necessity of the righteousness of Christ, upon which the soul in this saving knowledge flings itself, and follows this glimmering, till he comes to a greater light, whereby to read his own interest in Christ, as Paul did : Gal. ii. 20, ' Who loved me, and gave himself for me.' Afterwards, indeed, there is a knowledge of feeling : 2 Tim. i. 12, ' I know whom I have believed.' I have known him by faith, and I know him by feeling ; I knew him to be good before, and therefore I trusted him ; but since I know whom I have trusted, and have a rich experience of him.

[1.] There is no saving knowledge without this fiducial act. It properly follows upon our espousals with God ; it is a knowledge after contract : Hosea ii. 20, ' I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord ;' and therefore must be a knowledge of faith. He that hath no lively motions hath no life, he must have breath at least ; nor is there any lively knowledge of the grace of God in Christ without vehement desires at least after him, and unutterable believing groans. Can any man know God in his wrath who doth not tremble at it, or any man know God in his grace that doth not catch hold of it ? He knows him not that thinks him not excellent enough to be the sole object of his confidence and affiance. No man that disparageth that which is truly excellent in itself can be said to know the excellency of that thing. If I set up anything in the world as the ground of my trust more than God, it is evident that I acknowledge a greater virtue, strength, and power in that than in God and Christ, whom I refuse, and may well be said not to know and understand the transcendent goodness of him that I reject. Lay not, therefore, any claim to a knowledge of God as almighty, infinite goodness, and tender bowels, if you resign not up yourselves wholly to him : to his grace to pardon you, to his power to relieve you, to the death of Christ to mortify sin, and that in his own way, the way of his precepts, not in ways of our own invention and presumption. But, alas ! do not many prop up themselves in some earthly thing, as if there were no God in Israel to be sought unto ; strengthen themselves in their own righteousness, as if there were no Mediator commissioned and sent into the world ? Confidence in any other thing denies the being of God, or if not that, yet it denies the excellency of God ; if not that, the goodness of God ; and so implies that there is no knowledge of God as he is gracious and glorious in himself, because there is no trust in him. I am sore afraid most of the knowledge of God and Christ we have in this age is a mere notion of faith, without value, like a ring without the diamond. He knows best that hath concocted in his heart what he understood in his head.

[2.] The highest rational knowledge of God cannot profit, without this knowledge of faith. The general and common knowledge of Christ is but a knowing after the flesh, not in the power of his Spirit, and can no more

advantage than the Jews' knowing him, or Judas his living with him, did them or him without believing. In the Scripture, Christians are not called knowing persons, but believers. It is a pleasure to a physician to consider the nature of a medicine, and pierce into the quality of each ingredient in it; but if he be invaded by the disease for which that medicine is proper, all his knowledge of it and delight in it will be no support to his body, unless he takes it and joins it in a close contest with the distemper. All the pleasure he hath had in the search and contemplation of it, and the experience of the strength of it upon his patients, will not check the malady of his vitals, or stop the rage of the humour, though his knowledge were as large as Solomon's, without application of the remedy. Christ is the remedy for our spiritual diseases, faith is the application. A man is no more a Christian by knowing the nature of God and Christ in a notional way, or being able to unfold the mysteries of redemption in generous strains, than a philosopher, who can discourse accurately of the nature of metals and jewels, can be said to be rich, when he hath never a penny in his purse. The knowledge entitles him to a natural wisdom, but the possession to wealth. If he were a slave in the galleys, the riches of his knowledge would never strike off the weight of his chains; one jewel in possession to pay for his redemption would be of more value than all his philosophy. And just such a person is he that delights in the knowledge of his bags and quantity of gold, but makes not application of it to his present indigencies; it is as if he had none, but were the poorest beggar that craves an alms from door to door. There is as great a difference between this notional and fiducial knowledge, as there is between the knowledge of an angel, who comes under the wing of Christ for his confirmation in his happy estate, and the knowledge of a devil, who rejected him as his head, which is thought by some to be the devil's sin. It is likely by Scripture it was pride, and probably it was pride of this nature, as I may have occasion to shew in the prosecuting the doctrine of unbelief. As the angels' knowledge of Christ being proposed as their head could not have advantaged them without an act of consent to him, and acceptance of him, answering to faith in us, as well as a knowledge (they had not else come under his wing as rational creatures by an election and approbation of him), so neither can our knowledge of him without an accepting of him.

[3.] The clearer a saving knowledge is, the stronger will be our faith and confidence in God and Christ, and the stronger our faith, the stronger our knowledge. As the more knowledge a physician hath of the nature of simples, the more confidently will he apply them; and the more he finds their virtue in the application, the surer knowledge of them he arrives unto. The more we spiritually understand God, the more we shall trust him on his own credit; and this is properly faith. All the attributes of God are the crutches of faith, the bladders upon which faith swims. When we know the strength of them, and are sensible of the sufficiency of them and our own need, we shall with greater assurance rely upon them, as they are engaged in his promises: his wisdom, in making promises that he *can* accomplish; his faithfulness, in making promises that he *will* accomplish; his power, in being able to make good every tittle of his word. Not an attribute of God but inspires faith with fresh vigour. And so the more we spiritually and sensibly know the tenor of Christ's commission, the ends of his death, the causes and ends of his resurrection and ascension, we shall the more willingly cast our souls upon that security, and draw sweetness by faith from every flower in God's garden. The angels adore the goodness of God more fervently than we can, and have a greater confidence in that goodness, be-

cause their apprehensions of it are clearer, and their taste and experience of it hath been stronger. The brightest needles move quickest, and stick fastest to the loadstone. The clearer our knowledge, the closer our adherence. He that spiritually knows God and Christ, will rest upon God's bare word with more stedfastness than if he had the strongest assurances of all the princes in the world for a great estate.

7. It is a progressive knowledge, still aiming at more knowledge and more improvements of it. Though the knowledge of God be at first infused into us by the inspiration of the Spirit, yet neither that in the head, nor grace in the heart, have their full strength at their first birth, but attain their stature gradually. Natural knowledge, which is a common work of God upon men, arrives not at its growth in a moment, but in a tract of time. He that first found out the inclination of the loadstone to the pole did not presently apprehend all the virtues of the loadstone, nor was able to sail about the world by it, though this afterwards grew up from the first invention. We go up a mountain step by step. Christ doth not perform all the parts of his prophetic office at once; there is a further declaration of the name of God to succeed the first: John xvii. 26, 'I have declared thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them.' And the ravishments by the virtue and influences of his second shall exceed those of the first revelation, for those further declarations are accompanied with greater manifestations of affection, and fuller communications of divine love to the soul. Some things are too bright for the soul at the first opening of its weak eyes. Men at their first conversion have but glimpses of things, as the man, Mark viii. 24, who saw 'men as trees walking,' till Christ put his hand upon his eyes, and made him see objects before him more distinctly. As the stone from our hearts, so scales from our eyes, fall off by degrees. No man is so wise but he may be wiser.

(1.) All true knowledge is alluring. The first sight of a mystery is transporting, and also alluring to a further inquiry: Prov. i. 5, 'A wise man will hear, and will increase learning;' he will arise to more sublime thoughts and discoveries. He will be adding, as in arithmetic, figure to figure, till he comes to a just sum, deducing one rule from another till he come to the utmost; as the branch grows from the body of the tree, and one branch from another. It is the nature of all true knowledge to sharpen the mind for more. He that hath found a mine will follow the vein till he masters it. The scholar that hath a taste of any curious learning will not leave the pursuit till he hath pierced into the bowels of it, and by turning over books, and stretching his thoughts, hath increased his stock. It is also the nature of spiritual knowledge to put an edge upon the appetite, and open the understanding wider, that it may be filled with more. The voice of it is that of the grave, *Give, give*. The times of the gospel were promised to be inquisitive times: Dan. xii. 4, 'Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.' A little knowledge of God doth not hush our desires, but awaken them. The barbarous people, by tasting the fruits of Italy, were not at rest till they saw and conquered the country. One taste of God and Christ is to make us cry out, 'Evermore, Lord, give us this bread.' It is to enlarge our appetite, not to dull and scantle it; to engage us to make further inquiries into 'the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,' Eph. i. 16. They had a spirit of knowledge; but the apostle prays for further perfection in the knowledge of Christ, and a fuller opening the eyes of their understandings to get into his secret things, and behold more of his glory. It is as natural for a saving knowledge to press to further attainments, as it is for a counterfeit knowledge to flag in its pursuit.

(2.) It is utterly impossible that any man can have a saving knowledge of God who stands at a stay in what he has, without any desires to make a further progress. As it is impossible faith or a full assent or consent to the doctrine of the gospel can be without unutterable groans for the full application of the good things promised in it, so it is impossible this saving knowledge can be without eager thirsting for a larger communication. He that seeks not after more light never had any saving glimmerings of any in his heart: Prov. xv. 14, 'He that hath understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feed on foolishness.' The seeking knowledge is a sign of an understanding heart; any man's feeding on foolishness is an evidence that he understands nothing of the sweetness of a spiritual banquet. That merchant that is sensible of gain will increase his venture and desire richer commodities; the understanding heart will venture out for more spiritual knowledge. As no man hath true grace who doth not make additions, and rise to the exercise of those graces which are more spiritual, more the delight of God and the beauty of the soul, so neither hath he any taste of God and Christ who doth not aspire and travel to more spiritual discoveries of his glory. There is not only to be a knowledge, but a 'following on to know the Lord,' Hos. vi. 3; a 'following hard after him' to see his glory, Ps. lxxiii. 2, 8. He never tasted the sweetness of it that is cloyed with it, nor ever understood the beauty of the prospect, that is not desirous to get up to the top of the hill to pleasure his eyes with a full view. An acquiescence in any degree is a sign the knowledge pretended is but a counterfeit, that God is not the delightful and estimable object of his mind, that there is no experimental acquaintance with him. Certainly, he that esteems him will desire to lie at his feet to receive his instructions, and will implore Christ for the exercise of his prophetic office, which is as truly exercised by his Spirit in the world, as it was in his person in the days of his flesh.

First, This principle of saving knowledge is an active principle. If it be the light of life, a living and lively light, it will by its activity proceed from strength to strength, from dawn to daylight, from daylight to sunrise, and from that to the meridian, Prov. iv. 18. The sun in a statue will stand like a stock, but not the sun in the heavens. If, through the darkness of the understanding, there is an alienation from the life of God, Eph. iv. 18, then by an enlightened understanding there is an approach to the life of God. Can partakers of the life of God stand at a stay? Can we ever be like God by ignorance and small measures of knowledge? God cannot increase in the knowledge of himself, because the knowledge of himself is, as himself, infinite; but that soul that is truly God-like aspires to as high a knowledge of him as the creature is capable of. He hath no desire to take further steps in grace, who doth not desire to thrive in the knowledge of Christ, which is as the dew of grace.

Secondly, There is no conformity to Christ without a thirst after more knowledge of God. Our Saviour grew in wisdom as he did in stature, Luke ii. 52; not that Christ had any sinful ignorance, but the habits of wisdom and knowledge infused into his human nature grew up to maturity according to his natural growth. They are not his members that grow not proportionably to the head, and, being rational members, they must grow in knowledge as well as in strength. The image of God in the new creature doth partly consist in knowledge, Col. iii. 10, yet it is not necessary to this conformity that all should have an equal degree of knowledge. It is probable all in heaven have not an equal vision of God, since there are different degrees of glory; yet the least degree of the vision of God there is with a perfect conformity, and without the mixture of the least impurity. But there is no

conformity here to Christ without some knowledge of him. Some grow according to means and measures, and an ardent thirst for fuller manifestations of him. Some think that in heaven there will be a constant proficiency in the knowledge of God;* and why not, since finite is capable of additions as numbers are of more units, which may be increased by adding, yet none so great but may be made greater by addition of more to them?

Thirdly, He can have no desire to enjoy God who doth not desire a clearer knowledge of him. What desires can he have of fruition, who doth not delight to know more of him whom he pretends he is willing to enjoy? He hath no mind to set foot in heaven, nor hath any notions of the happiness of that place, whose affections are not enlarged to a further prospect of him who is the sole essential happiness there. Whosoever hath had any taste of heavenly pleasure, will endeavour to beautify his understanding with divine objects, since part of the happiness of heaven consists in a perfection of that faculty of the mind.

It is then certain that a knowing soul cannot be idle, but inquisitive; spiritual knowledge is no less attractive than natural. When we come to a little knowledge in those lower things, we are still aiming at more, as those that found out new countries were still making more voyages to perfect their inquiry. It is impossible that any that have tasted the saving knowledge of God can rest in low measures, but they will be attempting a full discovery.

This progressiveness consists chiefly,

First, In a clearer sight of what was in part known; not so much extensively, in an increase of particular objects, as intensively, in a clearer view and more spiritual apprehension of what we knew before; as growth in grace is not in new graces (for they are all included in the habit of grace first put into the soul), but in a strength of each particular grace and the actings of it. As a man that studies the nature of some particular grace, and the actings of it. As a man that studies the nature of some particular creature, by his search comes into a sight, not of new objects, but of more reasons of things, and a clearer inspection into that which was the object of his knowledge before. The knowledge in heaven consists not so much in the knowing new objects as in knowing with an inexpressible clearness God and Christ, whom we know but in a glass, and that darkly in the world, not in an addition of new objects, but an accession to the degrees of our knowledge.

Secondly, It is a growth in estimation of the object, and strength of desires for it. It is a certain rule in spirituals, as it is in naturals, everything when it moves regularly to its centre moves more swiftly towards the end of its motion; so will the motion of the soul be in longings and thirstings after a more full view of God and Christ, the nearer it comes to salvation. The 'soul breaks for the longings it hath to the judgments of God,' Ps. cxix. 20, the methods of his wisdom; one desire treads upon another; he desires, and is covetous for more longings for him; he longs, and thinks he doth not long enough. It grows in estimations of him: Ps. cxix. 72, 'The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.' He values it daily more and more above all the excrements of this earth.

Thirdly, It is not a growth or desire terminating in a notion of God, so much as the fruits and proper intendments of that notion. It is a mystery of faith and a mystery of godliness, a mystery to be known and mystery to be practised. But the growth is in the mystery of faith, in order to a growth in it as it is a mystery of godliness, to know God for the ends for which he is revealed, and Christ for the ends for which he was commissioned. It is a desire for the way of God's precepts, Ps. cxix. 27, 33, not to indulge carnal

* Zanch. in Hos. vi. 3.

affections or an intellectual curiosity, but to direct his paths and strengthen him in his walk. A man in a journey desires not so much the knowledge of the nature of the soil or of the fruits of the country, as the way of it, to attain his journey's end. David, having a knowledge of God, and being ravished with it, desires to be acquainted with the way to the fruition of that whereof he had some sight; hence he so often desires God to open his eye, that he might behold him, and teach him the way that he might attain to him. He that hath a delightful prospect of excellent buildings and fruitful grounds which he may have the possession of, would have a more accurate survey of them. The next step naturally is to desire to know a way thither: Prov. i. 5, 'A wise man will increase in learning,' תהבלות, the word signifies properly the mariner's art or pilot's skill in steering a ship, or an acuteness in acting. A wise man will hear and increase in learning, in order to improve what he knows for his direction and steerage in his course in the world, which is as a stormy sea, and needs care and skill.

2. As there is a difference in the effects of this knowledge, so also in the manner of it.

1. Saving knowledge is distinct. Though grace be not perfect, yet there is an habit of grace, and all the parts of grace in the soul of a renewed man; so, though this knowledge be not perfect, yet there is a distinct view of God and Christ in all the necessary parts of knowledge. Another may know the attributes of God, but he sees not the glory of them shining into the heart: 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.' It is a distinct view of God's perfections, in their affecting glory; of his wisdom, in contriving redemption; his justice, in punishing our surety; his mercy, in bestowing pardon in his beloved one; and the beauty of his holiness in all: and of those a believer hath a distinct apprehension in his mind, and a gracious and distinct impression of them on his heart. He knows the nature of Christ, his offices, the fruits of his death, and comforts of his resurrection, the cordials of his intercession, so orderly as to make use of them in his several exigencies, and have recourse to each of them by faith in his distinct pressures. It is a shining into the heart, as the sun upon the world at the creation, whereby Adam had a distinct view of the creatures then formed; and in the new creation, this divine light breaks into the soul, repairs the faculty, whereby there may be a plain spiritual view of the glory of God, as figured in the appearance of Christ. An owl sees the light, but not distinctly that or anything by it, not because there is want of light, but a want of a due disposition and strength in the eye to discern it. It is a manifestation of God's name, John xvii. 6. God was more distinctly known by his name *Jehovah* among the Israelites, than he had been in the world before, *i. e.* in the manifestations of his truth and power in performing the promise of deliverance to them; so he is known in Christ in fuller expressions, and more letters of his name, than he was to the Israelites. The other knowledge is as the sight of a man in his picture; this, as the knowledge of a man in his person, whereby his lively disposition and excellencies are discerned. It is a knowledge by inward manifestation and irradiation of the soul. The times of ignorance are called night and darkness in Scripture; in the night there is no evidence of the true figures and colours of things. The time of divine discovery is called day, and light; and believers, 'light in the Lord;' there is a plain appearance of the object in its excellency manifest to them, whereby they discern things that differ: the difference between Christ and the world, grace and sin. It differs from the knowledge of others, as the sight of a ship by an unskilful eye from that

of the shipwright or pilot, who understands all the parts of the workman's skill; or the sight of a picture by a limner, and one ignorant of the art. One sees the hidden pieces of art, the other the outward figure and composure. The knowledge of the Christian is the work of the Spirit by special grace, the other is the work of education and industry. A divine work is more clear than a human. It is such a knowledge as the apostles had after the Holy Ghost came upon them, and had dispelled their darkness, scattered their shadows, and refined their minds, and made them see the counsel of God in the sufferings of Christ, and behold the bottom of it with a divine light; whereas before, their knowledge was confused and feeble, they scarce knew before he was to die: after his death, they understood his sufferings, but nothing of the true reason and design of them till the Spirit descended upon them; and, therefore, Christ tells them in the time of his life, that though he 'had been so long with them, they did not know him,' John xiv. 9. Unless the knowledge of God and Christ be thus distinct, it may stuff the head, but not improve the soul.

2. It is a certain knowledge. Not a guess or imagination, but a real thing, as if the soul had a perfect demonstration. It is surer than the knowledge of the first principles or common notions in man; surer than the perceptions of sense, or conclusions of reason. The knowledge of things we have by experience depends upon the deceivable sense, which often needs the correction of reason; the knowledge we have by reason is uncertain, because the mind of man is often prepossessed with crooked notions, which cannot be the rule to measure straight truths by. Reason is full of uncertainty, and dubious; and the more we know by natural reason, the more we doubt. But this knowledge is more divine than any demonstration,* because it is not founded upon human reason, but divine and infallible revelation, which can neither deceive nor be deceived. It is by an inward sense and taste, which renders a man more certainly intelligent of what he feels, than all men in the world can be by a rational discourse without a sense. Truth is inned, and inlaid in the heart; there is a plerophory and full assurance of knowledge, Col. ii. 2. Other knowledge doth fluctuate, and a man rather suspects that he sees, than see clearly,† which is rather an opinion of God and Christ than knowledge, such as the philosophers had of natural things, which they could not assure themselves whether it was clear science or opinion. But saving knowledge is a solid and certain apprehension of the object known. Hence, it is called a sight of the glory of God with open face, 2 Cor. iii. 18, an intellectual and spiritual sight, 'the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1, *ἐλεγχος*; such a conviction that brings a fulness of light with it to clear the thing, and make the heart fall down under the power of it, and nonplusseth all disputes against it. As the Spirit so strongly convinceth of sin, as to arrest all objections and pleas, banish them out of the heart of the sinner, so he strongly convinceth of the truth of God and Christ, and chaseth away all the carnal reasonings, as the light of the rising sun doth darkness before it. It is such an evidence that brings substance along with it, 'the substance of things hoped for.' It evidenceth God and Christ, and the things of God and Christ, to be substantial, solid things, and not imaginary notions and doubtful opinions. This was promised in the times of the gospel: Isa. lii. 6, 'My people shall know my name; they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I.' The repetition of a thing in the Hebrew dialect shews the certainty of the thing spoken of. They knew God by the prophets; they should more surely

* *Θειοσιτόν τι πάσης ἀποδείξεως.*—Origen.

† Amyrald. Thes. Salmur. part ii. p. 91, thes. xxxvi.

know him in the times of the gospel, in the greatness of the deliverance he would work for them. It is clearer than the prophetic visions ; for it is a sight that is produced by the dawning of the day, and the arising of the day-star in the heart, 2 Peter i. 19, which is meant of a knowledge of Christ in this world, for in heaven the knowledge shall be by the light of the sun. It is a knowledge here which is the forerunner of a full knowledge in heaven, as the day-star is of the rising sun. And Christ himself affirms to God this certainty of knowledge, John xvii. 8, ' They have surely known that I came out from thee,' which is more than a loose opinion. And, indeed, there is nothing more sure to an opened understanding than a divine light, though to an eye sore with sin the light is as imperceptible as the light of the sun to the eyes of an owl.

(1.) The manner of this knowledge must bear some proportion to the object, and the manner of revealing it. As the object excels all other objects, so the manner of knowing must be different from all other manner of knowledge, and therefore more certain in what we know of it, by how much the objects God and Christ are more excellent and real, the living God, and an eternal Christ. It is not coined by flesh and blood, nor depends upon the blindness of reason ; but it is *from* the Father which is in heaven, as well as *of* the Father which is in heaven, Mat. xvi. 17 ; a manifestation from Christ, John xvii. 6, ' I have manifested thy name ;' a ' sure word ' whereby it is taught, 2 Peter i. 19, surer than all the maxims of the world. The object is most real : God, the author of all being, the fountain of nature and grace ; Christ, the band of the whole creation. The manner of revealing was most certain ; the manner of knowing must be in some measure suitable to the object known, and the way of its manifestation : the principles of faith are more certain than those of any science.

(2.) It is wrought by the enlightening virtue of the Holy Ghost, and therefore must be most certain. The knowledge of God, as well as faith, is the gift of God, wrought in the soul by inspiration. God gives not erroneous principles to the creature. The debauchery of our reasons was not from God originally, but from the lasting invasion of sin, and permitted by God as a judge to continue for our punishment. This teaching is by ' the Spirit of truth,' John xiv. 17, 1 John ii. 27, who inwardly presents the excellency of God and Christ to the understanding, as the word doth to the ear, and that not like a flash of lightning that gives a vanishing light, and after leaves us in a worse darkness than it found us ; but he abides as a Spirit of truth in all the darkness of this world, for ' he dwells with you, and shall be in you.' The instruction will be certain, till the Spirit prove an uncertain teacher. It is his demonstration, and therefore powerful, 1 Cor. ii. 4, and surer than any demonstration by reason, by how much the Spirit, the teacher of it, is above all the reason in the world ; it is ' the Spirit that searcheth the deep things of God,' 2 Cor. ii. 9, 10, mysteries above the ken of corrupted reason, and hid in the secret place of the Most High, which are therefore most precious, and of the greatest reality and value. Since therefore this knowledge is a fruit of divine teaching, and from an infinitely wise and infallible teacher, the soul of a believer is more assured of the reality of it than it is of its own life and being. He knows by sense and reason that he lives, but the knowledge he hath of God and Christ is by the Spirit, a principle infinitely superior to both the other.

(3.) Saving knowledge is such a knowledge, for kind, as Christ had of God. The words and declaration of God, which God gave to him, he gave to his disciples, John xvii. 8. The knowledge Christ as man had of God is com-

municated to a believer, in the kind, though not in the same measure. And herein doth consist partly our conformity to Christ; the soul is conformed to Christ in all the parts of it. It consists not in the repair of one faculty, for that would be but half a resemblance. It would be monstrous for the will to be conformed to Christ, and the understanding to the devil; the will to be acted by grace, and the understanding possessed by nature. It cannot indeed be supposed in the order of natural operations, how the will can have an holy conformity to Christ, till the understanding hath an intelligent conformity to him. As the will is made like the will of Christ, so the mind is enlightened in a similitude to the mind of Christ; that as Christ is in the heart the ground of the hope of glory, so he is in it the guide of the mind: Philip. ii. 5, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;' 1 Cor. ii. 16, 'But we have the mind of Christ.' 'The spiritual man judgeth all things,' because he understands the mind of Christ; because his mind is informed and enlightened by that Spirit which illuminated the human mind of Christ. And needs must he judge as Christ did, who hath not only a knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, but a mind acted by the same Spirit of Christ, and suited to the mind of Christ, and hath such notions and piercing insight into the things of God, for the kind, as Christ had. I will not say that this is the sense of the place, though something of that nature seems to be included in the manner of the apostle's argument, or may be inferred from thence. We may be said to know as Christ doth, as we are said to be holy as Christ is holy, in regard of likeness, as the light of the stars and sun are true light, have a likeness one to the other, and are of the same kind, yet the light in the sun is more full and clear than that in the stars. As there will at the last day be a glory of the body like to the glorious body of Christ, Philip. iii. 21; and a glory of the soul much more like to the soul of Christ; so there is an initial likeness to Christ in each faculty in every renewed man. Now as Christ's knowledge of God was certain, and the knowledge of himself was certain, so this saving knowledge of God and Christ in a true believer is as certain, for the measure of it in this world. And though there be doubts and waverings in the hearts of believers, yet they do not respect the object, the nature of God and Christ, and the ends of his death, but are in regard of the subject, and an interest in those glorious things. Now though this knowledge be imperfect, yet it is certain in every believer. They know, though it be but in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 12, and that which they know is certain. There is certainty in star-light as well as in sun-light, though the light be not so much. 'We see through a glass darkly.' It is a certain sight, though not clear, because the organ is not fully fitted for it. Every true believer can say, as those, John vi. 69, 'We believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.' Before the light of the knowledge of God broke in savingly upon him, he had doubtful notions of those things, he counted them as shadows, discoursed of them because the rest of the world did, and because he had been brought up that way, yet without any savour of them. He knew not whether he knew or no, as Paul, whether he was in or out of the body. But since, he beholds such a clearness and reality in the mysteries of the gospel, that he is more confirmed in the certainty of them than of any in the world. There is light shot in, which carries its own evidence with it, and is too bright to be nonplussed by the darkness of reason. The things of God and Christ are discerned in the head, and realised in the heart.

(3.) It is a firm knowledge. Some have a floating knowledge of God. Truth in their mind doth dance as the image of the sun or stars in a pail, according to the motion of the water. Truth and error are like a pair of

scales, sometimes up and sometimes down. But as true faith, so saving knowledge, is stedfast like a needle, sticking to the loadstone without wavering : Col. ii. 5, ' Stedfastness of our faith,' *στερέωμα*, *firmamentum fidei*, firmament of faith, as stable as the heaven and heavenly bodies keeping their constant stations and courses, and admitting nothing heterogeneous into them. It is but a shadow of knowledge which halts between two opinions. The knowledge of Christ being admitted upon the highest account frames the soul into an acquiescence in it. It is 'an unction from the holy one,' 1 John ii. 20, which, as it opens, so it fortifies the understanding. It is an habit : Heb. v. 14, 'Who by reason of use ;' by reason of *habit*, in the Greek. The faculty is firm, and can never be totally vitiated ; though it may, as the natural taste, be impaired by some diseased humour tincturing the palate, yet it returns again to its former temper. It is such a knowledge that keeps men in a way of righteousness, and prevents them from returning to be swine. It makes them see the mire to loathe it, and the purity of God to love him. They that are taught of God, depart not from his truth : Ps. cxix. 102, 'I have not departed from thy judgments : for thou hast taught me.' The psalmist renders God's teaching him as a reason why he did not depart from God's judgments. Therefore that knowledge of God, which is taught by God, is an establishing knowledge, not a volatile, airy thing, such as children have, which are 'carried away by every wind of doctrine,' Eph. iv. 14, tossed to and fro between one passion and another, rather than between one reason and another ; but a settling ballast, such as the martyrs had who were slain for the word of God, the divine *λόγος*, and the testimony they bore to his person and offices, which they held, and held as an undoubted truth, Rev. v. 9. They held the transcript of God and Christ imprinted on their hearts firm, as a marble doth the letters engraven on it ; the other sort of knowledge is fading, as easily blotted out as letters upon sand with the next wind. In the one there is only a taste of 'the powers of the world to come,' of the death and resurrection of Christ, which are the powers of the age of the Messiah, which was called by the Jews the world to come, Heb. vi. 5 ; the other is as a constant sight in the heart, as firm as a graft in the stock, which becomes one with it ; not only a light of truth, but a love of truth ; notions spring into the mind, and love stands ready to set and root them. If any man therefore pretends to a knowledge of God, and withdraws from him to the things of this world, and the miry ways of sin, he knew no more of God than a swine doth of the cleansing bath ; he discovers a greater hatred of God, for whensoever any good is forsaken after it is pretended to be known, it shews a greater detestation of it and desire of disunion from it. Whatsoever therefore the pretences of apostates are, they never knew God, because God is so lovely in all his perfections, that it is impossible for any soul that knows him not to love him, and cleave to him.

(4.) This saving knowledge of God and Christ is, in all the affections which attend it in the soul, unexpressible. The affections rising from it are unexpressible by the soul that feels it ; all words are below the sense, as a spark is below the brightness of a flame. In common things we find often a secret power excite a liking or dislike in our mind which we cannot fully discover to others, either in the greatness of the pleasure or abhorrency which is in ourselves. The natural affections we have to something admit of no expression, much less the spiritual affections. A friend that you know and love dearly, whose virtues you admire, you can never discover so exquisitely in his endowments as that another should admire and love him with an affection equal to what you bear to him. Who can imagine the depth of David's sense in his contemplations of God under those spiritual strains he

clothes himself with in his Psalms, unless he felt the same inward transports as David did? Who can understand the exquisite satisfaction our Saviour had in his thoughts of his Father, in his addresses to him, and obedience to his will, unless he could be equal to him in all those? It is the same thing in spiritual as in natural knowledge. No man can understand the delight a scholar takes in his inquiries into some curious learning, but he that hath had a taste of the same pleasure himself, no more than a man can understand the heat of fire that never felt it. Paul, in his revelations, heard 'words unspeakable' in their own nature, as well as 'unlawful for him to utter,' 2 Cor. xii. 4. Nor can any conceive the inward ravishments of a soul in the meditations of God and Christ, who never had a spiritual view of the excellency of those ravishing objects.

Use.

I. Information.

1. See the insufficiency of all other knowledge to eternal happiness. Other sciences are shadows of wisdom; this a sound wisdom, Prov. iii. 21, referring to the study of the wisdom of God. All other kind of knowledge delights a man at present, help him to pass his life with some comfort, but gives not a drop of balsam at the hour of death for any spiritual wound, or the least cordial dram for a drooping soul; whereas this sound wisdom is a treasure of things new and old, to support under any calamity. It will keep us from being afraid of sudden fear, or of the desolation of the wicked when it comes, for the Lord, that is savingly known, shall be our confidence, and keep our feet from being taken, Prov. iii. 24-26.

(1.) Skill in the affairs of the world, and arts useful to human societies, first appeared in the seed of the serpent and the idolatrous generation of the world. The posterity of Cain, the head of the unbelieving world, are upon record in Scripture for such inventions. When his generations are reckoned, there is Jabel who first invented the art of ordering cattle, and Jubal his brother, the inventor of music, and Tubal Cain, the first artificer in brass and iron, Gen. iv. 20-22. No such remark set upon the children of Seth, reckoned, Gen. v. 21, 22; only Enoch's walking with God, and Lamech's prophecy of Noah, as if he had been the promised seed; their minds were taken up with that knowledge which fitted them for a better life. The knowledge of the Greeks, whence the choicest learning was transmitted to Europe, was derived from Phœnicia to Egypt, the one the posterity of Canaan, the other also of Ham, both eminent for idolatry.

(2.) Christ never directed men in the knowledge of any thing but of God. He never took flesh, nor laid it down, to make us philosophers or artificers, skilful in the affairs of the world or knowing in political concerns, but to purchase for us the knowledge of the mysteries of heaven and sanctifying grace; he was a prophet to manifest the name of God, not the nature of creatures. He came, not to instruct us in the nature of the elements, the reason of natural motions, to inform us of the nature of the stars and heavenly bodies, but the nature of God, the designs and methods of his grace. The teaching worldly skill was too low for the grandeur of his prophetic office, and should be too low for our choicest consideration, but only in order to the enlarging our faculties for more clear apprehensions or illustrations of divine knowledge, to be foundations for spiritual meditations, and more sensible perception of heavenly truth. Our Saviour knew all the secrets of nature, the usefulness of human arts to the comfort of the world, but never recommended any of them as sufficient to happiness. Nor after his resurrection, in his discourses with the disciples, did he acquaint them with the curiosities of paradise or the orders of angels, but with the pro-

phets, concerning himself and ends of his death, and resurrection, and glory in heaven, Luke xxiv. Had those been sufficient or necessary means, the Scripture had been full of natural demonstrations, it had been a book of nature, instead of a book of grace. It was not the design of it to render men scholars, but Christians; and though there be many excellent sprinklings of natural learning in divine writ, they are occasionally set down to lead us to the understanding the nature of God, and our own duty, the two states of man, his misery by sin, and his happiness by grace. And therefore, to rest in that which God never rested in, Christ never taught or admired, to rest in that which devils and wicked men are all acquainted with and are no enemies unto, can never render a soul happy.

(3.) It can never of itself help us to the knowledge of divine things. A man with treasures of other knowledge in his head may have, and often have, hearts insensible of the beauty of God and excellency of Christ. It may make a man higher, by head and shoulders, than other men, but never make him like to God. The highest intellectuals, without those saving apprehensions, are but peacocks' feathers with black feet; they can no more purify the soul than the blood of bulls and goats could atone our sins. The understanding the intricacies of nature, and the most ingenious mysteries in the world, and a connection of all the most useful worldly sciences, cannot advantage our spiritual and eternal happiness, because the things themselves which are the objects of that knowledge cannot do it. The knowledge of a thing cannot do more than the thing known can do. If the bowels of nature and moral truth were as open to any of us as they are to the highest angel, nay, had we an understanding of all divine as well as human mysteries, without this affectionate knowledge it would render us just nothing: 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 'Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing.' Of no account before God. A man may be theologically knowing and spiritually ignorant. Nicodemus was none of the lowest sect, a pharisee, nor of the lowest form among them, a ruler among them, had the knowledge of the law above the vulgar, yet was ignorant of the design of the Messiah, and the mystery of the new birth. A man may be excellent in the grammar of the Scripture, yet not understand the spiritual sense of it. As a man may have so much Latin as to construe a physician's bill, and tell the names of the plants mentioned in it, yet understand nothing of the particular virtues of those plants, or have any pleasure in the contemplation of them, so we may discourse of God, and the perfections of God, and the intendments of the great things of Christ, without a sense of them. Though this be a good preparatory to a spiritual knowledge, yet it is insufficient of itself without some further addition. It doth not heal the soul's eye, nor chase away the spiritual darkness. 'In much wisdom is much grief,' Eccles. i. 18. In this wisdom only there is the choicest pleasure.

(4.) It often hurts and hinders men from the saving knowledge of God and Christ. The wisest men are not always the disciples of Christ, but many times enemies to him; the most ingenious men have often been the most malicious and ingenious devils. Natural wisdom is most apt to count divine wisdom foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 21, 23; a hatred of Christ often perks up under it. The greatest philosophers in the primitive times were the sharpest enemies to Christianity, and while they were intent upon human wisdom, they counted divine revelation no better than a fable, and scorned to sit at the feet of divine revelation, which agreed not with their own idolised principles. Unsansctified wisdom is the devil's greatest tool.

The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field, and this creature is culled out by the devil to be the instrument of the first seduction of mankind. The affectation of a knowledge not due to Adam brought a cloud upon Adam and his posterity, and separated him from the knowledge of his Creator, which was to be his sole happiness. The intent poring upon red hot iron, or other metals, blinds the eye, and hinders it from seeing the sun, or any thing else by it. Too much intensesness in carnal wisdom dims the eye to spiritual objects. The common people knew Christ, and thirsted for the knowledge of him, Mark xii. 37, when the intelligent pharisees were as spiritually blind as bats, and so wicked as to boast of their unbelieving ignorance, and set it as a pattern for the people: John vii. 48, 49, 'Have any of the rulers, or of the pharisees, believed on him? But this people, who know not the law, are cursed.' Upon which account it is remarked by the evangelical historian as a matter of astonishment, that 'a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith,' Acts vi. 7. It is better to have a little of that knowledge which conducts to a Redeemer, than much of that which puffs up, and makes you swell too big for a mediator.

Well, then, let not other knowledge swallow up your pursuits after this. Other knowledge is useful, a gift of God, but it is the handmaid, not the mistress. It must not thrust out that which is more noble; the light of a candle equals not that of the sun. The angels are not said to bend a look into natural things, though they exactly know the order of them; but it is their employment, as well as their happiness, to stand before God, to view his face, to inquire into the things of Christ. That which angels most affect, should be the affecting object of our souls, which differ in their spiritual nature but little from that of an angel. Other knowledge will die with our bodies, this will live with our souls; that vanisheth with our breath, and this is perfected in glory. That renders us not happy, it doth not satisfy our curiosity; it is stone instead of bread; it strikes not off one link from the chain of spiritual darkness in us; it is no fortification against death and hell. But divine knowledge satisfies our desires, nourishes the soul, is bread to our hunger, light to our eyes, music to our ears, a cordial to our hearts, and the womb of it is full of nothing but felicity. In short, it is the light of life, spiritual, eternal, the other at best but the light of a natural and temporary life. Let not, therefore, the itch of our curiosity, wherewith Adam hath infected us, stop our ears against the instructions of God. Let none of us for a fading delight lose that which is solid and substantial. We shall be like that person, that while he was busy in contemplating heavenly bodies, tumbled into a ditch; and we, while we aim only at skill in other things, fall into an eternal ignorance of the most lovely and necessary objects.

II. Information. We see here the order of God's working, if knowledge be a necessary means. First knowledge, then grace; first knowledge, then that life which is eternal. No house can possibly be built without a foundation; the groundwork first, then the superstructure. Illumination leads the way, and the inclinations of the will follow. God doth not cross the natural order of the faculties in his operations, though he doth their corruption. He leads men by the cords of a man, by those natural obligations on him he makes use of in his way of working; expels darkness, to make room for light; opens the understanding, thereby to incline the will; rectifies the prejudicate opinions of God and Christ, his ways and methods. None can be a priest to offer spiritual sacrifices to God, till he be a prophet to discern what is fit to offer to him. An approbation of things that are excellent, and sincerity in the practice, is founded upon knowledge and judgment, Philip. i. 9, 10. The new nature is conveyed by the knowledge of

God and Christ, Col. iii. 10. As ignorance and error were the deformity of the old man, so wisdom and knowledge are the first line in the beauty of the new. The first draught of God is in the mind, and thence terminates in the will. Nathanael had a false notion of Christ; he was possessed with the opinion of the scribes, the doctors of the law, that no prophet could come out of Nazareth, John i. 46; that the people of that place were contemptible in the eye of God, because no prophet had risen from thence, since prophecy was first in the church. But Christ acquaints him with something divine in himself, by telling him his motions, what he did under the fig-tree, ver. 48, convinced him of the folly of his former notions, discovered to him the truth of his prophetic office, acquaints him with undeniable arguments for his information; then his will and acknowledgments orderly follow: 'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel,' ver. 49. None are enlivened till they be first enlightened by Christ. He is not life to any without being light in the mind: John i. 4, 'The life was the light of men.'

III. Information. The excellency of a true Christian. The best Christian is the best scholar; he hath a knowledge in the issue equal to that of the angels, superior to that of devils, more effectual than that of the greatest philosopher: Prov. xvii. 27, 'A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.' 'The Spirit of the holy God is in him, and light and excellent wisdom,' as was spoken of Daniel, Dan. v. 11, 14. It is a light flowing from the fountain of light, a fruit of divine teaching and divine touch; a true light, John i. 9; more valuable than all the trifling sceptical knowledge in the world. The meanest believer knows, if not more, yet better than the brightest star that fell from heaven. What others see by candle-light, he sees by the light of the sun; what is hidden to others is open to him; what others have a natural understanding of, he hath a spiritual, Col. i. 9, *ὄψεις πνευματικῆς*. The publicans who heard the excellent discourses of Christ concerning the nature of the Father, and the design of his coming into the world, were more excellent than the pharisees, who knew the same divine revelation, but had no affection stirred in them but that of anger against the publisher. The spiritually knowing Christian can discern God in his word better than others can in all his creatures. He practiseth what he knows. The excellency of a drug lies not so much in its quality, as in the operation of that quality. We measure the excellency of things, not by the outward appearance, but the nobleness and usefulness of their effects. The meanness of a Christian doth not so much disparage him, as the excellency of divine knowledge ennobles him. He hath a soul truly God-like, that knows God with a conformity to him. The sun shining upon a body, and the body reflecting the beams of the sun, render it lovely, though low in itself. The knowledge of a Christian is, by inward and close revelation, attended with strong and high reflections. Others know the matter of the gospel, a Christian knows the mystery of the gospel. The strongest natural knowledge is not proportionable to divine things, and therefore renders not the soul as excellent as the spiritual knowledge of God. The one fits men for converse with man; the other for communion with God in this and another world.

IV. Information. How sad is it for men to abuse to wrong ends the means of knowledge, which in itself is eternal life. As men turn grace into wantonness, so they turn knowledge into rebellion; as men will run many scores in debt because grace is free, so some will run more eagerly to sin because they know God is merciful in Christ, and use their knowledge for an encouragement to sin. This is a monster composed of a Christian's

head, and a swine's heart; an angel's wings, and a serpent's body. This is like Belshazzar, to quaff healths in the vessels of the temple. To use it well for gracious ends, is like Solomon, to melt down the gold of Ophir for the service of God, and work it into vessels for the sanctuary. How many are there that are angry with the knowledge they have, and the means to get more, because they cannot be at ease in their sins? Their lusts are enraged, while their consciences are enlightened. The devil's knowledge is so far from assuaging his malice, that it increaseth his fury. They know God as a judge, but regard him not as amiable and worthy to be imitated. The knowledge many philosophers had in the times of the gospel's shine, was so far from enabling them, because of their corruptions, to see the beauty of those discoveries, that they were rather excited to oppose the gospel principles with more stoutness of heart, that it might be truly said of them, as Isa. xlvii. 10, 'Their wisdom and their knowledge perverted them.' It is base to turn the means of the knowledge of God into the service of the devil. It is good when we use them to check us in sin, to wean us from it, and render God more lovely and desirable to our souls. God's discoveries of himself are not that he may be abused, but that he may be loved. He shews himself in his goodness, which is his glory; the end of goodness is to attract our affections, not to excite our enmity.

V. Information. If the knowledge of God and Christ be the necessary means to eternal life, how deplorable is that want of this necessary knowledge of God which is among us! How lamentable are the cataracts bred in the eye of our understanding by the power of the flesh! Nicodemus* could not understand the first principles of Christianity, though he had been educated in the church, studied the law, had an honourable notion of Christ, was affected with his miracles, and was instructed in the principles of Christianity by the mouth of truth itself. How great is our blindness in the things of the kingdom of God! The knowledge many men have of Christ is a knowledge of his outside, not of his spiritual nature and excellency, so as to relish him. The notions of the goodness of God, and salvation by Christ, are transporting doctrines; men are pleased with them as children are with the pictures in a philosopher's book, without studying or knowing anything of the inward sweetness and learning in it; without prying into, and being savourily affected with, the mysteries of the gospel. They have a knowledge of God and Christ by report, as men have of a famous prince, without any acquaintance, and happy familiarity with him; as defective in this true knowledge as a ploughman is in the principles of astronomy. Most men's lives are a dream; they profess religion, account themselves happy in that profession, content themselves with some self-pleasing fancies and notions, without distinct inquiries into the truths of heaven. How sad is it to have eyes, and not know the sun; to have understandings, and not know that which is only worthy to be known; and not see God, who is as visible by his word and works as the sun by its light! The irrational creatures outstrip us in the sense of what concerns the good of their nature; the crane and swallow, the ox and ass, are better proficients in the good belonging to their nature, than corrupted man in what is necessary for his happiness, Jer. viii. 7, Isa. i. 3.

1. This ignorance is natural. It was the glory of man in his creation to have the knowledge of God. The goodness of the creatures, which God beheld in them after they were formed by him, consisted in their natures and qualities suitable to them. If other creatures had qualities suitable to their natures, the noblest creature could not be defective. If man had been

* Daille sur Jean iii.

created with an ignorance of God, he could not have been good, under that which is the deformity of a rational nature. But since the crack by the fall, there is not a man that by nature understands God, or knows him to seek him. God, in his exact search in the world after its pollution, found not a man but was as ignorant as he was corrupt : Ps. xiv. 2, 3, ' The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God ;' and the result is, that they were ' all gone aside ; they were altogether become filthy ; not a man that doeth good, no, not one.' Not a man without blindness in his understanding, as well as filthiness in his will and practice ; which, lest it should be thought to be meant only of a particular deluge of corruption peculiar to that age, the apostle expounds it as a charge against the whole world, comprehended in Jews and Gentiles, Rom. iii. 9-11. We are no more born with a saving knowledge of God in our heads and hearts, than with a skill in philosophy and mathematics ; no, nor so much, for we bring into the world a faculty capable of them by ordinary instruction, but incapable of the other without special illumination. The eye is born quite blind to spiritual, but purblind only to natural, knowledge. It is as possible to read the law in tables of stone after they are pounded to dust, as to read true notions of God and Christ in lapsed nature. This is excellently described by the apostle : Eph. iv. 17, 18, ' Vanity of the mind, darkness in the understanding, and blindness of the heart.' The essential faculties of the rational soul : the mind, the repository of principles, the faculty whereby we should judge of things honest or dishonest ; the understanding, the discursive faculty and the reducer of those principles into practical dictates,—that part whereby we reason and collect one thing from another, framing conclusions from the principles in the mind ; the heart, *i. e.* the will, conscience, affections, which were to apply those principles, draw out those reasonings upon the stage of the life, all corrupted,—one vain, the other dark, and the third stark blind. And the most ingenious nations for natural knowledge and civil prudence verify the apostle's character in their brutish actions.* The Egyptians, that were men famed for their knowledge, and derived the sciences to the other parts of the world, were worse than beasts in their worship. The Greeks, who counted their Athens the eye of the world, were not more refined, when they adored thirty thousand gods, and some of them infamous for murder and adultery, and had three hundred and twenty-four several opinions about the chief good ; and the Romans, eminent for civil prudence, were not much behind them, when they worshipped a fever, and dignified a strumpet with the title of the goddess of flowers. A great philosopher among them takes notice of this ignorance of God in the various notions they have of him.† If you ask an artificer, a poet, a philosopher, a Scythian, a Persian, what God is, you will not find them all of the same opinion. Even those among the heathens, who for acts of justice and temperance might put men under the gospel to the blush, have had a thick darkness upon them in regard of God. They saw not ' the bright light which is in the clouds,' Job xxxvii. 21. The knowledge of God hath been as much out of their ken as those moral virtues were in their practice. And the proneness of men to idolatry in former ages, while the most intelligent persons in the nature and ways of God were living among them, discovers the greatness of men's natural ignorance. The posterity of Noah in the world were overspread with it, while Noah, Shem, and Heber, the father of the Hebrews, were living among them, from whom they heard other instructions. For Noah died in the fifty-seventh year of Abraham ; Shem and Heber after Abraham's death ; the one thirty-

* Moulin, Dec. i. serm. 3, pp. 75, 76.

† Maximus Tyrius, Dissert. i. sect. 3.

five, and the other fifty-four years after, as is gathered from Scripture chronology.* This natural ignorance is in all men by nature; so that Paul had good reason to say that 'the natural man' (which state we are all in as we are born) 'receives not the things of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 14. Every man is born with a veil upon his heart, and spiritual things cannot be discerned by a faculty spiritually depraved. This is partial in good men; they have a light in their minds, but obscure. They know but little of God, nor can ever know him to the utmost, nor search him out unto perfection, because he is infinite. And this is in some more, in some less, according to the acuteness or dulness of their natural capacities, their various diverting employments and conditions in the world; or according to the variety of the means of knowledge, which may be in one place more than in another. Some parts of the world have not the sun in that beauty and strength as it is in others. The best Christian heart, in comparison of what it should be, is a land of darkness, not a fully enlightened Goshen. Since original sin hath dealt with us as the Philistines, with Samson, put out our eyes, they are cured but partially in this world; the perfection is reserved for another.

2. This natural ignorance among men under the gospel is wilful. Many have no desire to know what they ought to know of God, that their consciences may not press them to do what they know. They hoodwink themselves, and close their eyes against the light of the glory of God, that they might not see the filthy puddle and hideous deformity of their own hearts. That knowledge which is the ornament of the soul they account the torment of their conscience; are wilfully ignorant, that they may be destroyed more pleasantly, and with less fear. How epidemic is this! The light shines upon the head, yet shines into few hearts; is no more regarded by men than pearls by a swine. It is a disparagement to be ignorant in a man's proper art; not counted so to be defective in this, which is of absolute necessity. Other ignorance is condemned, and this affected. 'The world by wisdom knew not God,' 1 Cor. i. 21. The understanding and natural wisdom is employed in any vile service, rather than inquiries after God, and with more delight entertains a natural discovery than a divine revelation.

(1.) Men are commonly contrary to it. The imaginations which lift up themselves against the knowledge of Christ are the darlings; a mighty unwillingness to have them pulled down and razed to the ground, 2 Cor. x. 5, 6. We have not only an ignorance at our birth, but a stubbornness joined with it. 'A wild ass's colt' is the best term the Scripture gives us, Job xi. 12. The wild ass is the most untamed and unteachable creature. † No beast is more brutish and ignorant than a child at its birth; nor any wild creature kicks more against the tamer than man against the instructions of his Creator. The natural notions of God men are not willing naturally to cherish; they would raze out the engraven letters; but since they are so deeply impressed as not to be obliterated, they fill the characters with dirt, keep them by unrighteousness from being legible, that they may be secure in the practice of their unworthy principles: Rom. i. 28, they 'like not to retain God in their knowledge.' The beams of an heavenly light are offensive to men; like wild beasts, which run from the rising sun into their dark dens. A deaf ear and a stout heart are evident testimonies of an affection to darkness and disaffection to light, John iii. 19. There is a natural 'love to a lie:' 2 Thess. ii. 11, 'For this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they shall believe a lie.' When God gives men up to a lie, he makes no impression of a lie upon them, as he doth of truth and divine knowledge in the illumination of the Spirit, but gives up a man to himself,

* Vossii Histor. Pelag. lib. iii. part iii. sect. 6, p. 365.

† Mercer.

withdraws his light, the natural consequence whereof is to run the road of nature, and believe a lie rather than truth. Since Adam's credulity is the inheritance of his posterity, they take God for a serpent, and the serpent for a god, and are as unwilling to receive the sparks of the one as they are desirous to entertain the deceits of the other. Whosoever hath unworthy and despicable thoughts of God is averse to any beam that discovers him; no man can affect to know that which he doth not value.

(2.) Men are naturally conceited that they know enough of God. There are two deplorable qualities in man.

First, An incapacity to understand the mysteries of God, by reason of the dulness of the flesh.

Secondly, An unwillingness to confess his ignorance, by reason of pride and conceitedness. Man by birth is a headstrong creature; yet, as vain as he is, he would be counted wise: Job xi. 12, 'Vain man would be wise,' and that in the things of heaven. Those that know least of God are transported with an overweening conceit that they know most, that they know enough, and more than enough. As in the sight of God's majesty we think ourselves nothing, so in the ignorance of him we think ourselves more than we are. When sick men conceit themselves sound, they will wilfully refuse any remedy which may convey health: John ix. 41, 'Now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains.' The opinion they had of their knowledge made them wilfully refuse the cure of their ignorance.

Thirdly, Men are commonly negligent of knowledge. If there be not a sensible contrariety to it, or a foolish conceit that they have no need of it, though there be a sense of the want of it, yet there is a common negligence in seeking it, and making due inquiries after God. There is a sleep and a pleasure in sleeping; men love to slumber, Isa. lvi. 10. Those who cannot endure a darkness in other things, nor acquiesce in a confused knowledge of them without searching into their causes, and reasons or effects, are well contented with a weak and languishing knowledge of God, quickly tired in their pursuits of him. They look up to the sun, and presently take their eyes off again; glance at spirituals, and fix to naturals. Where is the man who hath intent thoughts upon his Maker and Redeemer? How little or no time is it that we spend daily in viewing his glories by meditation! How many rise and lie down without any reflection upon the Author of their lives and motions, and upon the Mediator, who purchased those for them after a forfeiture! Are not the stupendous works of creation visible, the amazing works of redemption legible? Do not sparks of his wisdom rush out of every creature flying round about us? and yet we are lazy in the improvement of them to attain a further sight of that God who is the author of them. Have we not the sun in the firmament of the gospel, but do we cast our eyes often upon it? Do not little fancies please us more than substance? A prodigious sottishness possesses men, under multiplied motives to endeavour after the knowledge of God. How many are there in the world, and in congregations, that never improve one sermon to advance in the spiritual knowledge of God?

(3.) This wilful ignorance, partly from contrariety, conceitedness, and negligence, is frequent among us. There is among us a common knowledge of God, which prevents the world from being a shambles, and preserves the security of his people. It is a guard to the true seed in the world, as the straw and chaff is to the grain of corn. Abimelech's natural knowledge of God restrained his hands from offering violence to Abraham; but saving knowledge is a fruit not to be found in every hedge. The levity of men in the ways of God is an evidence of it: 'like children, carried about with every

wind of doctrine.' As want of strength makes the bodies, so want of knowledge makes the minds of children capable of being moulded into any form. The assent is not fully given to divine revelations. They may have some of the seed of the word in their affections when they have little in their judgments. If there were a spiritual knowledge of God and Christ, why should men be so soon inveigled with error, and fling off the acknowledgment of those truths, whence they have confessed they have reaped a harvest of comfort? What is the reason evil is so often chosen, since our wills naturally are determined to nothing but under the notion of good, but the blindness of our mind? We never choose evil because it is evil, but because we apprehend it to be good. Where the heart is not won to God, the mind is not enlightened by him. Our little love to him, delight in him, zeal for him, thoughts of him, testify too many dark clouds between him and our understandings. We have no sound sense of his justice if we tremble not at it, no savour of his holiness if we do not strive to imitate it. What though we may have a notion of Christ crucified, risen, and ascended! The mystery of Christ is veiled to our eye if our hearts be sunk into the world and lust. Our darkness comprehends not the shining light, John i. 5. It rather stifles the notions of God than is dispersed by them. How soon do we forget what we seem to know! Our Saviour laboured to instruct his disciples during the time of his life in the doctrine of his death; it leaked out of their minds, as if they believed nothing of his former declarations till the appearance of his person was an irrefragable testimony of the truth of his words. If our knowledge of God were more spiritual, the operations of our souls would be more heavenly. Whosoever knows him is still flying towards him. Creeping earth-worms, lukewarm Laodiceans, careless Gallios, conceited pharisees, know little, understand less, and savour nothing of God and Christ. Our ignorance of God is too great, because our estimations of God are too little.

To awaken us against a wilful and negligent ignorance, consider,

[1.] It is inconsistent with Christianity. He deserves not the name of a Christian who wants the necessary knowledge of a Christian. He deserves not the name of a rational and intelligent creature who neglects the employment of his mind about the most worthy object. Spiritual ignorance doth as much unchristian a man that hath the name of a Christian, as natural folly unmans a person who hath the shape of a reasonable creature. Should we call this a world if there were no sun, or a man a man that hath no eyes in his head, nor reason in his mind? It would be a shadow of the world, the ghost of a man. Christianity without knowledge is an appearance and nothing else, like the picture of a man without reason. A true Christian bewails Adam's loss, endeavours to repair it, to get a light restored to his mind, and a beauty to his soul. He approves of Adam's sin that sits contented in that darkness Adam brought upon himself and his posterity. Can that man be counted a follower of Christ, that is pleased with the plague of nature, which the light of the sun comes to scatter by his beams? Was any poor Egyptian at ease in the judicial darkness, were his groans silent, or his desires weak for the removal of it? Yet how many souls, capable of an inheritance of light, sport themselves in the thick fogs of spiritual ignorance! He hath a pagan heart, under a Christian name, that can talk of the design of the new Adam, and yet be pleased with the predominant darkness and nature of the old. It is against the end of the gospel; the promise concerning the gospel times is, that 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,' Isa. xi. 9, not full of the ignorance of God. Light, not darkness, is the glory of a gospel state. The ignorance of the apostles in the

time of Christ concerning the nature of his mediation, the design and end of his death, is intolerable now in any that bear the name of Christians. That was before the death and resurrection of Christ, ours after the clear manifestation of that which in the time of his life was obscure to his disciples.

[2.] Ignorance is Satan's tool and chain, whereby he acts men and keeps them in captivity. He obstructs knowledge, and guides us in rebellion by ignorance. The knowledge of God opens the secrets of Satan's kingdom, and reveals the mystery of his government. It is the breaking out of the light of the glory of God in the gospel that makes him fall from heaven like lightning, Luke x. 18. None gratify Satan so much as ignorant persons. While this chain is upon the greatest mere moralist, he is as sure under the conduct of the devil as the profanest wretch. He can be content to let men please themselves with the shadows of virtue, while he can hold them sure by the chain of darkness. He knows he can lead anywhere those that want eyes to see their way. The darkness of the mind and the power of Satan are the same thing: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' Whosoever is possessed by the one is not free from the command of the other; darkness chains Satan to punishment, and darkness chains us to Satan. It is the devil's tool whereby he works in us; he makes a vast use of it in his motions in the world, and his assaults of the soul, Eph. vi. 12. He is called 'the ruler of the darkness of this world,' of the dark ignorant principles of this world. The darkness in the heart, whether total or partial, is the handle to every operation of his upon us; and the thicker, that is, the stronger second he hath to take his part in all his contests against our spiritual welfare. By our foolish principles, he makes work in our fiery passions. The more we understand of God's nature and Christ's offices, the more we shall be able to discern his subtlety, and prevent or withstand his attempts, Eph. vi. 14, 15, 17.

[3.] Ignorance of God is the cause of all sin in the world. This is the fountain of all the sin that ever was; of the first sin, 2 Cor. xi. 3. Those sins which are against knowledge of a particular precept, are grounded upon an ignorance of the nature of the Lawgiver. Sin springs from an error of imperfection in the understanding. If a false judgment be erected, false orders will be issued; innumerable evils, determinations in the will and errors in practice, will be the consequents; wrong notions of God will give birth to foul evils. A *vertigo* or megrim in the head causeth irregular and unsteady motions in the members. Hence it is that the Scripture gives the name of folly to sin, and fools to sinners. To forget God is the character of all wicked men: Ps. l. 22, 'Consider this, ye that forget God.' Sin grows from the root of folly. Why do men 'give themselves over to commit lasciviousness with greediness?' 'Because of the blindness of their hearts,' Eph. iv. 18, 19. Why did not the Sadducees believe the resurrection? Because they 'knew not the scriptures, and the power of God,' Mat. xxii. 29. Why are men corrupt in their ways? Because they 'say in their hearts, There is no God,' Ps. xiv. 1. Why did the ungrateful Israelites provoke God in the wilderness forty years of mercy together? Because 'they did err in their hearts, and did not know his ways,' Ps. xc. 10. Ignorance of the glory of God, the nature of sin, and the necessity of proper ways of expiation, was the cause of the greatest wickedness that ever was committed in the face of the sun. The Jews had framed a false notion of a carnally victorious and triumphant Messiah, that would make them conquerors of the world, and therefore crucified the Lord of glory. This fashions men to lust, 1 Peter i. 14. All wickedness flows out like a torrent,

Hosea iv. 1, 2 (he that doeth evil hath not seen God, 3 John 11), where there are false conceptions of God, or true notions of him misapplied. The motion will be irregular when men imagine a careless God or an impure God, that he doth not regard our ways, is patient, without anger, threatens only to scare, will not damn men to everlasting torment for a small crime, his anger endures not for ever; what will not a man do by those encouragements upon the invitation of a temptation? When the Gentiles' imaginations of God became vain, their practices quickly became abominable, Rom. i. 21, 24. Mistakes of God, and impudence in sin, hold one another by the hand. When the mind is corrupt and destitute of the truth, then break out strife, and envy, and railings, and all the black regiment of hell, 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5. No foundation in blindness for any regular walking. Hence it is that sins are called works of darkness, but (as some think) never darkness itself, for by that word in Scripture is signified error and ignorance. That which hath no being can have no operation, that which is not known can never move the conscience. If it be not known, it is so far a nonentity, a thing of no existence; a man can have no gracious operation, because without knowledge of God he can have no gracious being. It is not so much the pleasure of sin as the ignorance of God that preserves men's affections to vile lusts. Were the pleasures of sin, like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, seven times hotter and more sparkling than they are, they could not detain them by their charms, if they had a prospect of the goodness, sweetness, and kindness of God. The beauty of this object would leave in them no spirit for the other. For when the soul knows God to be the chief good, and clearly apprehends him under that notion, all the chains of sin and Satan cannot draw him, nor the allurements of them woo him totally from him. But you may as soon cause an ass with his heavy limbs to run a race as swiftly as a stag, as cause an ignorant person to repent and come to Christ. You may as well find reason in a bat, as repentance and faith and spiritual thirst in an ignorant person. As this is the cause of all sin in the world, so the remainders of it is the cause of all the slips in the best of God's people, which cost them so many sad groans. As a total blindness endangers a fall into precipices, so a partial blindness exposeth to many stumblings in the way.

[4.] Willful ignorance of God is damning. If the knowledge of God be eternal life, ignorance of God must be eternal death. Mere ignorance destroys as well as disobedience. Vengeance will be rendered on 'them that know not God,'—on heathens that had not a beam of the gospel, as well as on them 'that obey not the gospel' revealed to them, 2 Thes. i. 7, 8. If God hides his gospel from a man, it is a sign of a lost estate: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'If the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;' much more when a man hides the gospel from himself, which is not only a neglect of God, but a contempt of grace. He affects his own damnation, as he affects darkness that shuts his eyes against the sun, and refuseth the benefit of the light. If it be damning where the true notions of God and Christ are not revealed, it is much more when the revelation of him is rejected or abused. There is so much of God manifested in his works as renders him in some measure intelligible, and God hath given them a faculty to know something of him, whereby their neglect renders them also inexcusable. How could a man be inexcusable that did not see the sun, if he had a negative inability to see it? God hath given as much light to men in his works as is due to an intellectual nature, and to this end, that men might be inexcusable (for so those words, Rom. i. 20, *so that they are without excuse*, might be more to the design of the apostle rendered), 'that they might be without excuse,' not noting the event of

their neglect, but the design of God's manifestation, that if they did neglect it, they should have no ground for an apology.

But where God hath over and above added out of grace a scriptural light, and made the glorious manifestations therein plain, and when the revelation is clearer than that in the creatures, clearer than that in the law, which was called night, in comparison of the knowledge in the gospel, which is called day (not that the one was absolutely dark, but in comparison of the other, as the night is not absolutely dark because there is a star-light, or some light in the sky, but much short of the light of the day), wilful ignorance under such opportunities of knowledge renders men more deplorable than heathens. Inexcusable is he that hath seen God riding in the chariot of the gospel, and the Sun of righteousness moving in the hemisphere of the word, and will not behold that sun by whose light he walks upon the earth, and performs his daily affairs. What can be answered when the question shall be put, How came you to be ignorant of those things which have so often been inculcated to you? ignorant of that God in whom you live and move? ignorant of that God that shines in every plant,* every motion of the heavens, and clothes himself with the robes of yet greater glory in his word? There lies as much an obligation upon us to the knowledge of God, as to universal obedience to God. We are bound to inquire after him, what he is, what we must do to please him, and how he will be worshipped. He therefore that is wilfully defective in inquiring after God, and searching into his will, hath no intent universally to obey him; if he had, he would take pains to know him, and what would please him, which is necessary to a state of salvation. We know what the fate of those is that have no intention of universal obedience. It speaks the heart set upon sin, and a fear of coming to be acquainted with anything that may hinder them from committing it. A man ignorant of God and Christ can no more recover out of his mortal disease, than a sick man can without the knowledge of an able physician, and the application of a sovereign remedy. It is only by the knowledge of Christ that we have justification from our guilt, Isa. liii. 11. No man can be freed from guilt by ignorance; to think to be saved by ignorance is the same as to imagine to live without a knowledge of food, and to be happy without acquaintance with the necessary means of happiness. That which is our sin can never be our apology; and being a gross sin, is so far from excusing, that it renders itself more grievous, and the condemnation more terrible. And though it be said that Paul 'obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief,' 1 Tim. i. 13, it will give no comfort to those that are wilfully ignorant, unless they can prove that Paul was one of that rank; he did what he did ignorantly, because the gospel was never revealed to him till Christ revealed it from heaven. It is likely he was furious against the Christians by an implicit faith in the pharisees' determinations, as well as out of a zeal of the law. By the same reason that any would palliate their ignorance by this, and imagine a salvation because of that, they may fancy unbelief also to be a cause of obtaining mercy, which no man that owns the Scripture can have any pretence to.

To conclude, wilful ignorance of God and Christ under the gospel doth not procure a single damnation, but one with the most terrible circumstances, a condemning sentence with God's mock and laughter, turning his delight and compassions to a pleasure in his vengeance: Prov. i. 23, &c., 'Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and you

* Qu. 'planet'?—ED.

refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but you have set at nought all my counsel; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.'

Use II. Is of comfort to those who have this saving knowledge of God. Is it not an high satisfaction to be in the light, while many others are in darkness, to have an acquaintance with the Creator and Redeemer, while others have a familiarity only with the devil? As he that is ignorant of God is miserable, though skilled in all natural and moral knowledge, so he is transcendently happy who knows his Creator, though blockish in all the arts in the world. If he were possessed with as great a wisdom as Solomon, he could have no addition to his essential happiness. As the fruition of God in the end is the sole blessedness of a creature, so the knowledge of God is the sole means to blessedness, without anything else to piece it out. Christ in the text mentions nothing else in concomitancy with it, 'This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus-Christ whom thou hast sent;' this and nothing else, this without anything besides. Such an one is in union with the highest truth, he hath a spring of spiritual life within him, a divine manna that nourisheth his soul to everlasting life. It is a comfort that God hath fixed the fitness of the soul to enjoy him, not in a natural strength of the understanding, but in an affectionate knowledge of him, a qualification all are capable of. If only wise men, and men eminent for speculation, were capacitated for eternal life, how few would God have to know him or enjoy him! But the meanest man, that hath neither opportunity nor capacity for an elevated contemplation of God, may attain this spiritual knowledge and an elevation of affection to him.

1. Such an one knows more than all the carnal world besides. What the world knows of God is by a common illumination, as Christ is 'the light which enlighteneth every man that comes into the world,' and by the largeness of a natural capacity; but what a Christian knows of God is by a divine infusion, strait union, by a particular act of God, making Christ wisdom to him, 1 Cor. i. 30. He knows him not only by a natural instinct as the world doth, and as beasts know their proper food and what is convenient for them, but by a special revelation, an inshining, a choice favour not indulged to every one: 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given,' Mat. xiii. 11, a gift out of his secret cabinet, not out of his common exchequer. How comfortable was it to the shepherds to have the revelation of the birth of Christ, which was concealed from the pharisees and grandees of the Jews! God darts out a divine light upon whom he pleaseth, he refresheth babes with his beams, while he leaves the wise and prudent with their blind eyes in the dark. Poor fishermen had this privilege, which was denied to the towering philosophers of the world. And almost all the revelations of Christ there were among the heathens, were communicated to the weaker sex, some women called sybils, who had a prophetic spirit of those things. Some of their prophecies are true, though not all true which is inserted in their oracles; they knew more than all the rest of the world. The eye is a little member, but it views at once the whole surface of heaven within its reach; a little saving light from God gives a man a prospect of such glorious things, which reason cannot reach; a little spiritual light, with the constant assistance of the Spirit, shall behold more of God than the biggest intellect without it, as a little eye with a multitude of sparkling spirits shall see further and clearer than a greater without that assistance. Many men of the deepest insight and quickest parts are furthest from the knowledge of God.

2. It is an evidence of grace to have a transforming, affectionate know-

ledge of God and Christ. No wicked man doth understand, Dan. xii. 10, *i. e.* experimentally, affectionately, transformingly. Ignorance is a sign of gracelessness, spiritual knowledge is a fruit of the Spirit, and a sign of all the other fruits of it; for it is a covenant mercy, and flows from God's being our God, and it is a fruit of the grace of God given us in Christ to be enriched with it, 1 Cor. i. 4, 5. The clearness of the church's eyes, like the fish-pools of Heshbon, in the apprehension of spiritual mysteries, is part of her beauty, in the summary description of it, Cant. vii. 4. The eyes are the organs of sight, and the instruments of knowledge which convey objects to the understanding. It is a sign of a man's being in covenant with God, to have an heart to know him, Jer. xxiv. 7. Heb. viii. 11, 'I will give them an heart to know me, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, I will put my law into their mind.' The great promise of the new covenant was, that they should know God better than under all the rudiments of the law; a knowing God by a law in the heart, as well as by a notion in the head; for the law written in the heart is a reason rendered why they should know God. He speaks not of a knowledge that lies in the common field, but a knowledge hedged in, and peculiar to the covenant children of God, the heirs of heaven, and brethren of one family, not to all that bear the name of Christians, for it is such a knowledge as is accompanied with sanctification of the heart, Heb. viii. 10, and justification of the person: ver. 12, 'For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.' Where this knowledge is, it is a sign of the special favour of God; since it is a gift only in his power; (God doth not use so solemnly to promise that which is within our common reach), and is conveyed by a special act of the Spirit. It being a covenant mercy, it is a cabinet mercy. Men without it are in the chains of darkness and the devil; those that have it are freed from the devil's yoke. What a comfortable thing is it to be within the arms of the everlasting covenant! Where covenant graces are bestowed, all covenant blessings will of right follow.

(3.) What comfort may such have in all kind of afflictions? This, like musk, will perfume the most loathsome dungeon. We have enough if we have this spiritual knowledge of God, though we want all things else. Death cannot be dreadful when Christ is known and felt in the power of his grace. The view of Christ raised the heart of Stephen above fears and anguish, when stones were ready to break in pieces the case of his body: Acts vii. 55, 56, 'He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.' This knowledge is the strongest cordial: the sweetness of this surmounts the bitterness of the other. When the sun is clearly seen, the high winds do rarely trouble the mariner. In death, we need the greatest supports, and what greater than to consider you are going to one you know? Though you change your place, yet not your acquaintance; you pass to a strange country, but not to new company. And indeed, afflictions are so far from being ground of discomforts, that they are rather cordials in the issue, because they advance us more degrees in this knowledge, which is the means of eternal life. We often learn more of God under the rod that strikes us, than under the staff that comforts us: Ps. cxix. 71, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.' If the sun should perpetually shine in our hemisphere, how could we understand God's workmanship in those little spangles of the heavens? Though the night hide from us the beauty of the sun, yet it discovers the brightness and motions of the stars. God had not at all been discovered to us without the

bleeding afflictions of Christ; nor is not fully learned of us without our own. Daniel was in captivity, when he had the most perspicuous visions of Christ; John in exile in Patmos, when he had the revelation of Christ's walk among the candlesticks, and the methods of God in the affairs of the church. And Paul mounts up in choicer apprehensions of spiritual objects, as upon eagle's wings, in his epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, which were writ when he was in bonds at Rome for Christ, wherein appears an higher flight, a stronger ardour, a more divine efficacy of Spirit in him. This spiritual knowledge of God and Christ prepares us for afflictions, comforts us in them, and is enlarged by them.

(4.) Comfort in the measures and degrees of knowledge. It is eternal life to know God and Jesus Christ; Christ regards the quality, not the quantity. The disciples, who were present with Christ in this prayer, and of whom he acquaints his Father that they had known him, had but little knowledge, yet it was true and sound, though not in such great measures as afterwards. Not that this should be encouragement to laziness; for the small measures in them before the death of Christ are inexcusable now, under greater means than they had before the coming of the Spirit upon them after the Redemeer's death and resurrection. All believers have not the same measure of knowledge, yet all have the truth of it; there are degrees of knowledge, as there are of grace; God distributes the knowledge of himself according to the nature of the several subjects, as the sun doth light to the stars according to their several capacities. All the apostles, in the time of Christ's being in the world, had not the same measure and clearness of insight. Peter confesseth him to be the Son of God when the rest were silent; and none after seems to have the knowledge of Christ and his mysteries in the same elevation with Paul, yet all had a sufficiency of knowledge, both for themselves and others. Nay, believers themselves have not at all times the same sparkling measures of light: as the sun shines clearer in some parts of the day than in others, yet in every part of the day there is light enough for men to perform their affairs by. Look to the quality of your knowledge, that it be sound, spiritual, transforming, as well as to the quantity. See what favour attends it, what affections it engenders; not what speculations it raiseth. A great heat with a little light is better than a clear light with an hard frost and benumbed limbs. The spiritual eye, as well as the natural, is opened by degrees. Bless God for what you find; rest not in twilight, but long for stronger beams. Look to God for light: Ps. xxxiv. 5, 'They looked to him, and were lightened.' Look not to Moses and the prophets, but as the means; look to Christ, who is the light that enlightens every man that comes into the world. The more casts of our eye upon him by faith, the fuller of beams shall we take them off. A look towards him attracts light from him, a look towards the sun clears all things about us.

(5.) And let me add, that it is the office of Christ in heaven to pity us and relieve us in our bewailed ignorance. He that prayed thus, and asserts the knowledge of God and of himself to be eternal life, is ordained by God an high priest, to 'have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way,' Heb. v. 1, 2. As he pities his people under the remainders of sin, so under the remainders of darkness, the cause of the other. It is one of the greatest troubles of a gracious soul, that he knows no clearer; and the mediator's strongest compassions are exercised about that which is his people's urgent distress. What hath Christ compassions for, but to exert upon their greatest perplexity? What use were they for, if the proper object of them be neglected? He hath all his offices to remove the fruits of our fall. The darkness of the mind was the first, and the cause of all the

mischiefs since. If the crazed understanding be not cured, no saving work can have its full effect. This being the root of our misery, is the first proper object of our Saviour's compassions. His compassions are his qualification for every office; were he not compassionate, his royalty would rather be a tyranny, his priesthood an empty title, his prophetic office an idle name. As he pleads against the guilt of sin, which as a priest he hath expiated; as he pleads against the power of sin, which as a king he hath broken: so he pleads against the remaining ignorance of the soul, which as a prophet he is expelling. As it was his business at the first to declare God, so it is still his employment more fully to discover him. As he owns the gift of his Father's power in the text to spread this knowledge, so he promiseth in the same prayer to be faithful in his office: John xvii. 26, 'I have declared thy name, and will declare it.' He was the light of men, not only at his incarnation, but before; no age or period of time was there wherein he scattered not some illumination in the world. He 'was the light of men,' John i. 4, and 'lighted every man that came into the world,' ver. 9; nor is less pitiful to men's ignorance, and industrious to remove the continuing shadows in the hearts of his people, than he was before. As he is the author of their knowledge as well as their faith, so he will be the finisher of the one as well as the other. He is a Sun of righteousness, and is to do spiritually what the sun doth naturally, send forth his light to disperse the darkness, and his influence to heal the barrenness of the soul. The natural sun, indeed, pierceth by its influence the obscure bowels of the earth, which, by reason of their thickness, obstruct the entrance of his beams; but the Sun of righteousness bestows not his influence without his light. He is first a prophet to enlighten, before he is a Spirit to quicken, in the first work. He is the same in the progress; as we cannot have spiritual life before light, so we cannot have an increase of spiritual life without an increase of spiritual light; and to this purpose he took our nature, that he might pity and remove our darkness. Is not this a comfort, to have the glass of his word below, wherein to see him; a Spirit within, to wipe and clear our eyes; and an high priest above, to exercise his compassions towards us upon this very account?

(6.) The saving knowledge of God any have, is an evidence of a future state, of a happy vision, and an earnest of their arrival to it. Since it is the means of eternal life, there must be an eternal life, the issue of this knowledge. Of what use are means that are without an end? Since nothing can satisfy the soul here, nor can our souls with a perfect contentment know God through the grates and lattices of a dark body, with the scales and shades upon the mind, there must be a time wherein a glorious liberty from prison shall be conferred, Rom. viii. 21, the shadows fly away, and a contenting vision be bestowed upon a longing heart; otherwise the soul could not have an happy and satisfactory eternal life. Not to have such a knowledge as to satisfy the full desires, would be half an eternal death; not answering the vastness of the power the Father bestowed upon the Son for the conferring it, nor answering the compassions of the Son to the ignorant in removing the hindrances. Besides, the more knowledge there is here, the hotter the thirst for more. As God is the author of those sparks we have, so he is the author of that heat which ariseth in the soul by those sparks. It cannot be supposed that a God of infinite goodness, who created man for the fruition of himself, and after he was dead in sin revived him, and planted in him quick and ardent desires for himself, should do this without designing a full satisfaction to him, which never any of the choicest spirits had in this world, and therefore must be in another. Where do you find any blessed soul at rest

here? David is still upon pursuit after a sight of the glory of God; Paul still reacheth forward to the things before, and breathes after a full apprehension, putting up petitions for all whom he had the care of and affection to, that they might be enriched with all knowledge, understand the riches of glory, be filled with all wisdom. Doth it consist with such a watchful, sincere, and unspotted goodness of God, to raise and continue such inclinations in his creatures, to encourage and influence them, and never to render them completely satisfied? Shall God thus let any soul that hath had a glimpse of him lie grovelling and panting, without reaching out his hand to lift him up, and unveiling his face in time to him to behold his glory? Annihilation had been better than boundless desires, eternally unsatisfied, and eternally languishing. The understanding, the noblest faculty, first seized upon by God, will not always want the noblest contentment in the view of its proper object. The sun communicates not itself to the air, but by the enlightening of it. God is the father of glory as well as of grace, and is a father of grace in order to his being a father of glory. God doth not design to mock his creatures, or to defeat the desires of his own exciting. It is in point of knowledge as well as other things that God is our God, Jer. xxiv. 7. He will one day be our God in the highest perfection of all the fruits of the covenant, so that ignorance as well as sin and infirmity shall be chased far from us. The covenant will want its full accomplishment till the dim knowledge of God be drowned in a perfect and clear vision. And since the shadowy light we have is so delightful, how ravishing must that be which shall discover God in his full glory! If the earnest be so pleasing, how delightful shall be the full payment, since an earnest is the least part of the sum contracted for!

(7.) Where God doth communicate the knowledge of himself and his Son, he will not hide from gracious souls any other knowledge necessary for them in the world. The giving the greater is an assurance the less shall not be withheld, which may further them in that which is the principal end. Yea, he sometimes reveals his secret purposes to them concerning his transactions in the world. God would not conceal from Abraham his determination concerning Sodom, because he had been acquainted with the grand secret of his mercy in the Messiah: Gen. xviii. 17, 18, 'Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do, seeing that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?' Have I manifested my gracious purpose to restore mankind to my favour, and the means how I will do it, which the heart of man could never think of, and so many hundred years are to run out before it be accomplished, and shall I make a difficulty to acquaint him with my intended judgment upon Sodom? God often gives those that know him a sense and sight of judgments he intends to bring upon a people: 'Who is wise, and he shall understand those things?' Hosea xiv. 9. Both the threatenings and promises contained in that prophecy.

III. Use. Of exhortation.

1. Try yourselves whether you have the knowledge of God or no; try it not so much by the notions you have of God and his truth as by the operations of it, and the draught of the perfections of God in your own souls. The greatest heads have often had the worst hearts. Christ had not more desperate enemies in the whole world than the intelligent pharisees, the Jewish doctors, who had the law at their fingers' ends. See whether we have a transcript of God and Christ in our own souls. When we cast our eyes upon God, let us reflect upon ourselves, and see whether the temper of our hearts answer the notions in our heads. Can any man say, I know God to be merciful, and I have an imitation of it; God is holy, and I have a draught

of it; God is omniscient, and I have a deep sense of it in my actions; God hath a sovereign dominion, and I have an obedient frame; God is true in his word, and I have a sincerity answering to divine truth, a faith in his promises, a fear of his threatenings; there are some lineaments in my heart answering in some measure to the perfections of my Creator? And can any man consider Christ as obedient to the will of God, and see a conformity in himself to that heavenly image? I know Christ felt the sting of death for sin, and I feel the power of that death breaking my sin, and sinful heart; Christ had an happy resurrection, and I feel the blessed fruit and influence of it, in raising my soul to a newness of life. This is only the true knowledge of God and Christ, which sinks down in affection, and expresseth itself in imitation. Conclude not of yourselves by some fleshly apprehensions of some pleasing doctrine of Christianity, as notions of the mercy of God, justification by Christ, freeness of grace. An intent speculation of such things may force men into a rapture by the strength of a sprightly imagination, without the inward living spirit of him in the heart. This is such a knowledge as the crazed fancy of a madman may have of wealth and palaces, who hath neither a penny in his purse nor a house for his head. The trial of ourselves is by a thirst for the performing of the will of God, a motion in his ways, sense of his greatness, embraces of his grace and dictates, and spiritual affections to himself and his laws. There is as vast a difference between the knowledge of God in the letter and that in the spirit, as there is between the statue of an angel with his wings and a real angel in heaven. A knowledge in the head is as money in the purse, a knowledge in the heart is as money for our use. Nor let us conclude by the delight we have in speculations. There is a secret joy in the contemplation of any truth of a lower size, much more in the speculation of the highest, noblest, and firmest truth. The notion may be delightful when a conformity is unpleasant. We may affect the accomplishment of our minds without any endeavouring to better our hearts. Speculation is an employment of wit, but the spiritual knowledge is a conjunction of heart to God and Christ. We may value a meditation of him when the conformity to him may be of as little esteem with us as the straw and dirt we tread under our feet. The understanding and will are two distinct faculties, have distinct operations; the acting of the one doth not always infer the acting of the other. We may delight to look upon that we would not feed on, yet true knowledge is always attended with a delight: 'When wisdom enters into thy heart, and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul,' Prov. ii. 10; the more innate light there is in the eye, the more the eye delights in the beams which from without strike upon it; the more darkness in the eye, the less pleasure in the sunshine. He that loves his lusts, hates the light which discovers their ugliness; he that loves God, loves the light which discovers his beauty. True knowledge is always accompanied with more ardent desires to know. One ignorant of God desires not to know him, that he may sin with the less rebuke and perish with the less fear. It is a sign the soul hath tasted of divine sweetness, when it longs for greater communications; it is so far from assuaging, that it quickens the appetite. Moses was master of the Egyptian learning, but set not up his rest in that. He had more acquaintance with God than any man in the world; yet, after he had been discoursing with God in the mount, he is an earnest petitioner for more discoveries: Exod. xxxiii. 13, 'I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.' That is no true knowledge of God that surfeits and clogs the soul. Those heavy spirits, that are scarce masters of a groan for it, never understood the excellency of it. Not to desire to know him is to contemn him, and he that undervalues him never had any understanding of him.

2. Rest not in a discursive understanding of God. The understanding in a state of innocency, with its full stock, did not preserve the will from a destructive obedience to the sensitive appetite, when it was wholly freed from those ill biasses which make its motions irregular now. Mere knowledge now cannot be forcible enough to prevail with the will under the power of those ill habits, which imperiously tyrannise over it. The eye and hand of a man can never cast a bowl right, which hath a false bias disproportioned to the aim of him that useth it; the reason of the caster cannot make it move, but according to its false bias. Till the wrong inclination of the will be displaced, it will not come under the guidance of the understanding, though it were as strongly enlightened as the highest angel. It will move according to its natural impetus and habit, notwithstanding all that light in the mind, as self-will acts the devil against God, contrary to all the light in his understanding. No intellectual act, abstractedly considered, can be a gracious action; all acts in the understanding receive their gracefulness and beauty by the termination of them in a God-like act of the will, which is the proper seat of grace. We come to enjoy God, not only by an act of our understanding, but by an act of our will. A glorified saint, no, nor the human nature of Christ, is not happy so much by a prospect of God, as by an intense affection to him. God stands not so much upon our knowledge of him, as our delight in him; and it is no sign of our union with God, unless affection to him be joined with it. All rational creatures affect knowledge in order to some good; the desires of good are more settled, and are more the fruits of a natural instinct than desires for knowledge. This, therefore, cannot give a complete satisfaction without a taste of his goodness. If we desire knowledge only for the sake of knowledge, we thwart the nature and natural motions of our souls. It is not the perfection of the understanding, without the purity of the heart, which brings us to enjoy God, Mat. v. 8. Impure creatures, with the highest intellectuals, cannot look upon him. The glory of Christ was to do the will of God; his knowledge of him was in order to obey him. Get a fresher experience, therefore, of every truth of God which you know; this is the ballast of the soul; the other is but a vanishing sound. Improve your knowledge. In knowing God, we receive only from him; in loving him, we give ourselves and all that we have to him, and God bestows himself rather upon them that love him, than upon those that only know him.* As it is worse to hate God than to be ignorant of him, so it is better to love God than merely to understand him. We may use our speculations to pride, but we cannot make ill use of our holy affections. By loving, we make a larger progress in a little time. Love doth more firmly knit us to God than knowledge, for the strength of knowledge consists in discerning, the strength of love in union. By contemplating God, we contract, as it were, his infiniteness according to the capacity of our conceptions; by loving him, we enlarge our minds to the immense latitude of his divine goodness. By knowing him, we do, as it were, bring him down to us; by loving him, we lift up ourselves to him. We know only so much as we can receive and are capable of, but we love not only what we see, but what we imagine there is of goodness beyond our sight. We see the divine excellency obscurely, but we may love it intensely; we see little, but we may love much. Knowledge gives us a sight, and love gives us a possession; we find him by knowledge, but we enjoy him by love. Let us improve our knowledge of him for inflaming our affections to him, that we may be prepared for the glory of our eternal life. The understanding is but the door of the

* Ficin. lib. i. epist. 116, pp. 663, 664.

heart; to let God and Christ stick there, and not bring them into the heart, is to give a cold entertainment to that which deserves the best.

3. Prepare, and wait, and long for heaven. We have but a glimpse here of the excellency of God and beauty of Christ. The church's eyes, though clear as doves, are 'within her locks,' Cant. iv. 1; a fair eye of faith, but still some obstructions to a full sight. The light now shines in a dark place, it shall shine there without a spot of darkness; that which is in part shall give place to that which is perfect; the light of God shall dart immediately upon the soul without reflection from a glass; all shall meet in the 'unity of the knowledge of the Son of God,' as well as in the 'unity of faith,' Eph. iv. 13. The motions of the body shall not obstruct the operations of the soul. There will be light without darkness, knowledge without ignorance, clearness without dimness; no turbulent affections shall confound the eye, nor distractions divert the soul. 'We shall know as we are known,' 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Every gracious soul is perfectly known by God here, *i. e.* accepted by him, but is not fully illuminated by him; but there will be as perfect an illumination from him, as there is an acceptation with him. The thick scales shall for ever fall off from the eye, and the dark veil from the heart, that it may behold without weakness and winking. As the most excellent object shall be presented, so it shall be beheld in the most excellent manner; the spiritual eye shall be fortified, and the divine glory shall be unclouded, and the pleasure of seeing shall be as great as that of enjoying. The clearest knowledge here is unconceivably short of that above, as the sight of a sore eye is of that of an eagle. The chains of spiritual sloth shall be knocked off, the diversions of worldly objects shall have an eternal remove. Ignorance within shall perish, and darkness without shall vanish. Here the soul sees what God is not, there it shall see him as he is to be seen. Surely those that thirst not for this state, that prepare not themselves for it, that long not for the passing away of those gloomy shades, that they may satisfy themselves with full visions and full affections, and according to their measures prepare themselves by diligent inquiries and affectionate motions, never yet had any taste of the most desirable object.

4. Therefore daily endeavour to increase in the knowledge of God. Our main work in the world is to increase in the knowledge of sin, that we may more vehemently detest it; and the knowledge of God, that we may more closely embrace him and resign up ourselves to him. Paul, who was advanced to a higher step in this than any in the world, had taken up a settled resolution to 'know nothing but Christ and him crucified,' as the most excellent knowledge he could busy himself in, 1 Cor. ii. 2, and would neglect no means to grow up in the apprehensions of him 'of whom he was apprehended,' Philip. iii. 12. It is not said we must follow on to know for such a time, Hos. vi. 3. No time is fixed, and therefore it must be continually. We should quicken any divine spark in our souls.* If the first beams of spiritual light give life, the further increase more abundantly increaseth that life; it being eternal life, we are nearest to life when we rise highest in knowledge. If the mind be opened, it can no more take pleasure in a little knowledge than the eye of the body can in a little light, by which it delights itself in any visible object. It can take no pleasure in a little, but as it is a presage of more approaching. He therefore that saith he knows as much of God and Christ as can be known, never understood the depth of his own natural ignorance, the immensity of God, the dimensions of the love of Christ, and the nature and unweariedness of the Spirit's teaching. Should all men in the

* As Jamblichus speaks of Pythagoras, he did ἀναζωοποιεῖν τὸ θείον, Vit. Pythag. lib. i. cap. 16.

world engage in no other study but this of God and Christ, to the world's end, they would confess that that which they know is unconceivably short of that which they are ignorant of. It cannot be so great but it is still capable of a further increase, like a river that is not so big but it may swell higher, and larger, by the admission of lesser rivulets. There is a ripe age, a manly stature in understanding, which we must aim at: 1 Cor. xiv. 20, 'Be not children in understanding.' The apostle, who had the fullest insight into the nature of God and offices of Christ, puts himself into the number of them that knew but in part: 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 'I know but in part.' And therefore, as we desire to be as angels in glory, we should endeavour to imitate the angels in their acute search into the mysteries of Christ, and wisdom of God in him;* they know much, yet desire to know more, 1 Pet. i. 12. The truth is, as Adam offended in endeavouring to know more than he should, we offend in neglecting to know so much as we may. Our first parents would know too much, and their children too little, though there be 'unsearchable riches of Christ' to be searched into, Eph. iii. 8.

(1.) There can be no growth in grace without an increase in the knowledge of God. God is the object of grace, the object must be known before any act about it can be exercised; and as the object is cleared, the acts about it are more vigorous. There may be indeed a knowledge without grace; but there can be no increase of grace without an increase of knowledge, as the heat of the fire cannot be made more intense without a supply of fuel. There may be slight affections up and down, rovings, like those of a ship without ballast tossed by the waves, but making no way. Knowledge hath faith in its root, and all other graces for its fruit: 2 Peter i. 5-7, 'Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge;' then follows temperance, patience, godliness, charity. As the root is strengthened, the branch spreads itself, and the fruits grow thicker. The knowledge of the word is the entrance of life, the means of begetting is the means of nourishing the soul to eternal life. If the stock decays, the fruits which grow from it cannot flourish. The increase of it was as much the subject of the apostle's prayer for the Colossians, as the first fulness of it in them, and that with respect to their fruitfulness, which depended on it: Col. i. 9, 10, 'We cease not to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work;' and as a means to it he adds, 'increasing in the knowledge of God.'

(2.) It is not likely there can be any other fruit than that of apostasy, without increasing in the knowledge of God. If knowledge be not improved, it will decay. 'Evil men wax worse and worse,' 2 Tim. iii. 13. As some lust is the cause why men desire not the rudiments of knowledge, so some lust is the cause why men desire not the improvement of knowledge, and this will be like a thief in the candle of the Lord, making it sweal away, like a deluge of water extinguishing the fire. If God opens the floodgate of corrupt affections, the flood will quench those sparks which seemed to be spiritual, as well as it did those natural sparks in those the apostle speaks of, Rom. i. 26. The ground that is bad of itself, when overflowed with salt waters, is much worse, and cannot bring forth what it did before. A stop in knowledge, though a man be acquainted with the first principles, is the first inlet to apostasy, according to the apostle's intimation, Heb. vi. 1, 2. After he had checked them in the former chapter, for sticking in the first principles of Christianity, and exhorted them in this chapter to proceed further

* Eph. iii. 10, *ἵνα γνωσθῆτε εἰς τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ γνώσεως*. Clem. Alexandr. Barlow on Tim. part ii. p. 51.

in the knowledge of the mysteries of religion, he immediately subjoins the doctrine of apostasy; 'For it is impossible for those that were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift,' &c., ver. 4. If you grow not to a greater maturity in knowledge, you are in danger of returning, not only to your former ignorance, but more corrupt affections. If they took up their station in the first principles, they could not pass on to perfection, and this is an evidence that they were going back, and distasting those first rudiments which they had learned and embraced. This is evident in natural and civil affairs: the tree that doth not thrive will soon rot, and the tradesman that doth not increase his stock will soon be out at heels, and he that doth not improve his knowledge will prove a spiritual bankrupt. And such a wilful darkness which men bring upon themselves by their perversity, is but one step from destruction. The plague of darkness upon the Egyptians did immediately precede the slaying of their first born, and the destruction of the flower of their militia in the Red Sea. Increase, therefore, in the knowledge of God is the way to prevent backslidings. Weak bodies soon stumble, when strong bodies walk and do not faint, but hold out to the last. To increase in affections is to increase in heat and vigour, to increase in spiritual understanding is to increase in strength, which consists in a compactness and closeness of the joints, which is the strength, health, and stability of the body. A river enlarged by the entertainment of many little streams is not dried up so soon as a small stream.

(3.) Every degree of increased knowledge will be more satisfying and ravishing. As it was in the feast where Christ was, the best wine was reserved for the end of it, the knowledge of God behind is to that which we have, as a full draught of precious liquor is to a taste or sip. The clearer our light, the stronger our comfort. All doubts arise from the weakness of judgment, ignorance of the nature of God, the offices of Christ, and tenure of the covenant. This is promised: Hosea vi. 3, 'We shall know, we shall follow on to know the Lord,' *i. e.* according to the Hebrew idiom, we shall knowingly follow on after the knowledge of God, or go from knowledge to knowledge. We shall have his assistance, who is prepared and ready to break out upon us as a morning light, refreshing and growing stronger every hour, with new manifestations and a lively heat; and like a former and latter rain, as fresh showers in the spring to draw out the flowers and beauty of the earth, and the latter rain in autumn to ripen to an harvest. By *rain* in Scripture is signified knowledge: Deut xxxii. 2, 'My doctrine shall drop as the rain.' The first beam is admirable, it is a marvellous light, 1 Peter ii. 9. It discovers things worthy the search, and is more surprising upon every inquiry. God and Christ are infinite treasures, inexhaustible fountains, a mine which upon every search presents with new riches. God always remains intelligible, and upon a faithful search will every day tear off part of the veil from the heart, and part of the veil from his own face, and send forth richer influences of life and joy.

Well, then, let us increase in this knowledge.

[1.] Let us endeavour to enlarge our faculty. Eye-salve is to be procured to make us quick-sighted, Rev. iii. 18. The mouth opened wide is filled with nourishing food; the eyes opened are filled with visible objects: Ps. exix. 18, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' He hath an enlightened understanding, but sensible of his imperfection, longeth for a greater enlargedness, that he might see more ravishing wonders in God's law. Much more surprising wonders are there in God the law-maker, and Christ the law-repairer.

[2.] Let us not be puffed up with a vain conceit that we have knowledge

enough. Let us rather bewail our ignorance than boast of our understanding. Sense of indigence is the first step to fulness; empty souls are capable of being filled. What we know of God and Christ is infinitely below what is to be known of them.

[3.] Let us rise to more spiritual apprehensions. It is hard for us to have elevated thoughts; carnal notions are most apt to possess our minds, and naturally our thoughts of God and Christ are no better in their kind than Nicodemus's of regeneration, imagining it to be a re-entry into his mother's womb, John iii. 4; or the Samaritan woman, who framed no higher conceptions of the fountain of living waters than those she had of her father Jacob's well, John iv. 12. There is a knowledge of Christ after the flesh, 2 Cor. v. 16, carnal conceptions of divine glories; and there is a knowledge of Christ after the Spirit, in his spiritual appearances, his spiritual works; a knowledge of Christ, not so much as he was conversant upon earth, but as reigning in heaven, glorious and prevalent in his intercession. This was the end of his death, and this should be the aim of our knowledge. As Christ rose from a low and infirm state to an heavenly glory, to a more spiritual discovery of himself, so should we keep time with his several states in our knowledge of him. There is a knowledge of the history of Christ, and there is a knowledge of the mystery of Christ; this latter we should grow in, which is the true manna of the soul. Rise from dull notions to sprightly and more affecting apprehensions of God and Christ.

[4.] Let us increase in the knowledge of whole God and whole Christ. View all the perfections of God. Be not only intent upon some of the first magnitude, but on those that seem the lesser sparks, which have an influence one time or other upon the souls and lives of men. He is not worthy of the name of an astronomer, who gazeth only upon one or two planets, with a neglect of the rest, which have their particular excellency as well as the other heavenly bodies. As there is nothing in the heavens, so there is nothing in God and Christ, but is worthy of our understanding and consideration, and affords matter of instruction and matter of consolation one time or other. Let us not satisfy ourselves with a knowledge of God in the mass; a glance upon a picture never directs you to the discerning the worth and art of it.

[5.] Let us fetch the increase of this knowledge from the true principle, from the word. By the Spirit in the word it was first imprinted; by the Spirit in the word it is further enlarged. The improvement of a man in any science must be fetched from the principles of that science, not from the principles of another; no one would study the art of painting to improve himself in the skill of physic and medicines. Studying the word of God is the way to increase in the knowledge of God's nature, Christ's offices, and more spiritual apprehension of them.

5. Exhortation. To those who are void of the spiritual knowledge of God, labour for it. What need there be more urged than the title of it in the text? It is eternal life, therefore worthy of the most exact diligence. As the deception which had seized upon the understanding of the first man was the cause of death, so the light of understanding our Creator and his immense love in Christ, is the cause of life. Other sciences may be a tree of knowledge, this is a tree of life. It is a doleful consideration to see men impertinently spending their time and consuming their strength in the study of creatures (with a neglect of this), a knowledge wherewith they may descend to hell with sorrow, rather than that whereby they may ascend to heaven with joy. This knowledge, as it advanceth our states, so it elevates our natures. 'A man that understands not is like the beasts that perish,' Ps.

xlix. 20. Divine knowledge is above all the wisdom of corrupted nature, and renders a man superior to a mere son of Adam. All other knowledge, though commendable in its kind, if it be not improved for this end, will degenerate into sensual, if not devilish, James iii. 15. It will either rest in a more refined sensuality, a life of depraved reason, or fit a man to be a malicious devil against the interest of Christ. Shall not then eternal death scare us from our slothful and beloved ignorance? Shall not eternal life allure us to divine wisdom? Was it the misery of the world ever since Adam to have a blindness of mind? And shall any of us rest contented in that misery, and resolve to be no wiser and happier than the Gentiles, that were alienated from the life of God through the blindness of their minds? God said of light at the creation, it was good; he was the author of it, it entered into the composition of all creatures. He doth not say so of darkness; that is not his creature, but a privation of light. God never said of ignorance, or of any thing understood by darkness, It is good. Shall any of us resolve to persist in that which hath not the least spark of goodness in it, that hath not the least syllable of God's approbation, that is the foundation of all the contempt of God in the world? Who ever knew him but blessed themselves in that knowledge, were loath to part with it, valued it above the world? Who ever knew God clearly but loved him ardently, stuck to him closely, fell before him humbly, found rest and satisfaction in him? And shall not the experiences of those vast numbers who have had a saving glimpse of him, give us one lift from our heavy ignorance? Paul was no blockhead, being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a learned pharisee. Nor would the high priest and his companions have appointed a dull person commissioner against the Christians; yet all the knowledge he had before his acquaintance with Christ, and all the time and pains he had spent in it, he counts but loss in comparison of this, Philip. iii. 8. And the best petition he thought he could put up for the Ephesians was, that they might have 'the spirit of wisdom in the knowledge of him,' Eph. i. 17.

Motives.

1. Is not the object excellent? Ps. viii. 1, 'How excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens!' Do we conceive God full of wisdom, goodness, righteousness, tenderness, and compassion? Can we imagine such a being, clothed with those unchangeable perfections, the original of all that goodness which is in any creature, the author of the beauty of the world? Can we, I say, pretend to believe there is such a being, and sit at rest in our ignorance of him? Shall we pretend to believe there is a Redeemer, who descended from the throne of majesty to the vale of misery, took our flesh when he had no need of it, stooped to the infirmities of our nature, and was full of no other design than a thirst for our welfare, carried himself with all sweetness and tenderness in the world, was the exact image of his Father; and have no desire to make more exact inquiries after him, that we may understand what he is? Is not God the Father of lights, the supreme truth, the most delectable object both of the human nature of Christ, the happy angels, and glorified saints? Is he not light without darkness, love without unkindness, goodness without evil, purity without filth, all excellency to please, without a spot to distaste? Are not all other things infinitely short of him, more below him than a cab of dung is below the glory of the sun? And is it not a sacrilege to steal our understandings from so excellent an object as the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? Shall we know creatures and not our Creator? Shall we be inquisitive after the nature of plants, beasts, worms, and flies, and not be acquainted with the excellent author of our souls, who gave us

our knowing faculties? In whose service should our rational powers be employed, but in the discovery of the author of them? If the object be more glorious than the whole scheme of nature, the knowledge of this object must be also excellent, for as actions, so knowledge, is specified from the object.

(2.) Are not the great works God and Christ have done for us sufficient allurements? Are we not his creatures, and shall we not know our Creator? Are we not his offending creatures, and shall we not know our forbearer? May we not be his repaired creatures from the ruins of our fall, and shall we not know our Redeemer? Shall we not know that God whose image we bear, whose mercy we enjoy, in whom we live, move, and retain our beings? Shall we not know him by whose death we may live, by whose blood we may be beautified, by whose resurrection and ascension we may be dignified? Shall we be in a capacity to enjoy all those benefits, and be willingly ignorant of our benefactor? Without a knowledge of him who hath atoned our sins, and purchased that heaven we had forfeited, instead of that hell we had a thousand times deserved, how can we be thankful to him for what he hath done? What shame should cover our faces, what anguish should gnaw our souls, for our spiritual sloth and ingratitude! Is not God love—love in all his ways and methods? And are our hearts so out of love with him as to neglect inquiries after him? To what end doth he extend his open hands, but that we might 'seek the Lord'? Acts xvii. 25, 27; and is an unthankful ignorance of him a worthy requital? It is not enough that we know there is a God and a Redeemer, but we must know what they are, what they have done, what glories there are in their natures, in their actions; that is the import of the text, 'to know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' Not only to know thy being, but thy excellency; not only to know that Christ is sent, but to know what that Christ is who is sent. Redemption was not for the blessed angels, yet they 'earnestly desire to look into' those things, 1 Peter i. 12. Christ is more a benefactor to us than to them in regard of redemption. Why then should their industry in searching be more than ours? It is not commendable, it is not lawful to be ignorant of him, who darts his heavenly beams upon our senses in the works of nature, and upon our souls in the works of grace. No greater injustice, no greater impiety, than to contemn or neglect the knowledge of that God whose image we are.

(3.) Hereby only we can satisfy our natural thirst for knowledge. The desire for knowledge is the peculiar property of man. His being rational differenceth him from all creatures. No creature seeks a redemption from ignorance but man. Brute animals rest contented in their ignorance; and for man to rest contented in his, is to be as bad or worse than a beast, to neglect the proper object of knowledge, to know those things which are as good as nothing. It is more suitable to the nature of man to take pleasure in the search after truth, than for mighty men to triumph in the conquests of countries. There is in man a greater ambition for knowledge than for anything else. No reproach doth more perplex him than to be counted foolish. Nor doth any man with any pleasure confess his ignorance, because ignorance belongs not to the original nature of man. As the nature of the will, by the law of creation, cannot be satisfied with a flashy and drossy good, till it mount to that which is pure and refined, and, after the enjoyment of an inferior good, is still putting the question, 'Who will shew us any good?' Ps. iv. 6, so the nature of the understanding pursues after the causes of things, and cannot rest till it come to the fountain-cause of all the rest, that hath no cause of itself. When any good is presented to the will, the next question

naturally is, Is there no higher good than this? So when a truth is presented to the understanding, the next question is, 'Is there no higher truth than this?' The will can only be satisfied with that good which is not exceeded by any other, and the understanding with that truth which is not excelled by any other. By this knowledge we are speaking of, our natural thirst is delightfully satisfied and increased; the soul is pleased with what it attains, and enlarged for what it wants. There is an uncertainty and doubtfulness in all other knowledge but this. Is there anything we think we know but may be battered by others' contradictions? Have we not often doubtful thoughts of that one day which we thought we clearly knew the day before? Do we not often quarrel with ourselves, and call that our dotage which a few days before we thought our glory; and question those sentiments which a few hours before we thought unquestionable, and as certain as the daily motions of the sun in the heavens? But here the foundation is unshaken: a God there is, and a God of infinite perfections; a Redeemer there is, and one of infinite tenderness. The knowledge of him by the word is certain, like the knowledge of a sunbeam. Here we may drink full draughts to quench our natural thirst after knowledge, since all things are best and surest known in their principle; and the mind of man is restless, like the needle in the compass, not to be established without a look to the highest truth. We are here sure of a mine, and the fruit of attaining will recompense the pains of inquiring. Let us therefore be so generous as to believe this natural thirst cannot be better satisfied than by knowing God and Christ, the most amiable objects; and let us never continue in that ignorance, which, if we observe our natural desires, we should account our shame; for if there be any satisfaction to the soul (which of all creatures under heaven approacheth in its nature nearest to the nature of God, and seems to be boundless in its operations), it must be in the understanding that which is infinite; and that it is neither heaven nor the company of angels, but God and Christ, who have an infiniteness to answer the pantings of the soul, and make a full reply to all its cravings. The satisfaction also consists in the certainty of the object of this knowledge, there being more sound and convincing reasons for the being of a God, his goodness, omnipresence, necessity of redemption, a future state of happiness and misery, than for any affairs of this world.

(4.) All are bound by the law of nature to know God. There is not an obligation by the law of nature to know Christ, unless it be as rational creatures are obliged to know and believe whatsoever God should reveal unto them; but there is a formal obligation upon man as a rational creature to know his Creator. For since all know that there is a God, by whose care and providence all in this world are ruled, they are obliged by the same law of nature to inquire after this God, and to endeavour to arrive to the knowledge of him.* What nation was there, though never so barbarous, that did not own even in their idolatry the worship of a God? For they naturally knowing that there was a God, did naturally know that that God was to be worshipped. Since, therefore, the law of nature obligeth us to inquire after God, he that neglects the knowledge of God sins against the law of nature. The wrath of God is threatened to be poured out upon them 'that know not God,' Ps. lxxix. 6; but the wrath of God is not manifested against any but those that are transgressors of the law.

(5.) This knowledge is only the perfection of the soul. The more excellent the object is, the more it doth perfect and strengthen, as well as gratify, the faculties of the soul: Prov. i. 9, it is 'an ornament of grace to the head;'

* Zanch. tom. ii. lib. iv. pp. 249, 250.

a greater ornament to the soul than a diadem can be to the head of a prince. The soul of man being enriched with two faculties whereby he is distinguished from all other creatures on earth, viz., understanding and will, his happiness must be placed in the exercise of those two about their proper object; the understanding, in knowing God as the object of happiness, and the will in willing to love him. Truth is the perfection of a rational understanding; the highest truth must then be the highest perfection of it. The mind of man was not created to determine itself in the contemplation of the lower things of this world. The sight of the beauty of God is the end of the soul, and what is the end of a thing is the perfection of it. The end of God in the creation was to communicate his goodness; the perfection of a soul, then, consists in the highest participation of that goodness according to its capacity. The image of God consists in this knowledge, Col. iii. 10. Every image is a participation of beams from the original. As darkness is the deformity of the world, and light the beauty of it, whereby the beauty of everything else is discovered, so knowledge is the beauty of the understanding, as ignorance is the deformity. If the knowledge of everything had been the perfection of man's soul, there would have been implanted notions of those things in the soul at her original, or they would have been the matter of divine revelation; but there is neither of those; there are not notions implanted; the soul could not then be so ignorant of the frame and motion of the body she dwells in. She knows not by natural, but acquired notions, the several rooms of the house wherein she resides. How many ages was man ignorant of the circulation of the blood, the distribution of the chyle through the *vena lactea*! Nor are those things the matter of divine revelation in the word. Christ discovered not a sublimity of natural knowledge, he spake not a syllable of those things, but of the discovery of his Father and himself. The Son of God had not employed himself in divine discoveries, had not the knowledge and embracing of him been the ornament and happiness of a reasonable creature. The most natural notions men bring with them into the world, and which are most obvious to their first notice, are that of a God, and desires for happiness; and the discovery of this, and directions in our aspiring to and preparations for another state of life after this, was the subject of the revelation made by Christ. Again, as it is the happiness of God to know and love himself, because he is the highest truth and goodness, so it is upon the same account the happiness of a creature to know and love God. If we could possibly suppose any goodness superior to God, it would be the felicity of God to know and love that goodness; he could not settle himself upon his own perfections, but run out in inquiries after, and affections to, that goodness superior to his. Certainly the mind of man, being nobler than the body, ought to be nourished with the choicest food; the perfection of it cannot be obtained but by that object which is most perfect in itself, and most capable to convey perfection to it. God only, as he is the rest of the will, so he is the only banquet of the mind. The soul being of a divine original, it being 'given by God,' Ecces. xii. 7, can only be nourished by divine dainties and converses, as the body doth attain its perfection by things of the same nature with its own composition. Let us, therefore, out of love to the perfection of our minds, pursue after this knowledge. The mind is an active thing; it will be busy about something or other; pitch it therefore upon the most excellent and most satisfying object; employ it not in the picking of straws, but gathering of pearls. When we employ it about things lower than God and Christ, without any regard to the adoration and admiration of them, we degrade our understanding, deprive it of its true end, and thrust it from that worthy employment allotted to it, which was to survey the works

of God, read his handwriting, and from thence arise to a further knowledge and admiration of our Creator himself.

(6.) This knowledge is highly delightful. All 'knowledge is pleasant to the soul,' *intellectio est quies intellectus*, Prov. ii. 10. The natural desires for knowledge are strongest, therefore when attained the delight is sweetest. The more reality any object hath, the more pleasure is in it; spiritual things are most real, and therefore the delightfulest. Natural knowledge is pleasant. What a sweetness is there in knowing the secrets of nature, and the phenomena in the world! The knowledge men have of them, though upon erroneous principles, is delightful; much more would it be so if the knowledge were exact and grounded upon certain principles of truth. The delights of learning surpass the delights of sense, and the pleasure of a scholar the pleasure of a swine. The heathen philosophers were so ravished with their chips of natural knowledge, that they sometimes neglected those things which were necessary for the sustaining their bodies. Now if the views of God in the dark disguise of his creatures cast the soul into pleasing raptures, the views of God in the clear glass of Christ must snatch the soul into the third heavens. The pleasure of carnal knowledge is to that of divine, as the delight of sucking the ivy bush is to that of drinking a sprightly wine. The pleasure is always answerable to the excellency of the object delighted in; if therefore a clear demonstration of nature resolves a man into a rapture, much more must a clear demonstration of God, because, as all righteousness is from God as the original, so all truth is by derivation from God. If therefore truth in the streams be a delightful prospect, the bubblings of truth in the fountain must much more put the soul into a spiritual ecstasy. As it is with a man born blind whose eyes were opened, how would he bless himself to see a burning lamp gilding the room where it is? But the sight of the moon walking in its brightness would enhance his joy, and the sight of the sun in his noonday glory, obscuring all the lesser lights, would much more pleasure and astonish him. All 'light is sweet,' but 'it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun,' Eccles. xi. 7. It is more pleasant to behold the sun, than all the diamonds in the world in conjunction; so the knowledge of God and Christ must be much more delicious than the knowledge of all creatures, by how much they are unconceivably more above them. If there be a gladness upon the sight of a beam emitted from the sun, what must there be in the views of the sun itself in its brightest beauty! Our very meditations of God are sweet, and resolve in a divine joy: Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditations of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord.' The greater degrees of knowledge will bestow a stronger influence of delight upon the soul. There is a rich perfume in the knowledge of Christ, a 'savour:' 2 Cor. ii. 14, 'The savour of his knowledge;' ver. 16, 'A savour of life to life,' vital to all the parts of the soul; and the more lively the knowledge, the more of pleasure. That which doth most increase strength, is most cordial to the vital parts of the body.

[1.] It is a pure delight. All other things have their spots, which allay the sweetness in the knowledge of them. God is purity without spot, light without darkness, all excellency to create delight, without any imperfection to raise disgust. As ignorance and forgetfulness of God will render men at last absolutely sad, without any mixture of joy, so the knowledge of him will render men, according to its degrees, as cheerful, as in the highest degree it will hereafter render them happy: it affords a pleasure without froth or scum.

[2.] It is a full pleasure. Others are but drops, this fills the soul to the brim, and leaves little or no room for any intruders. The angels, that have

the vision of God, hanker not after anything the world calls sweetness. The satisfaction of the mind is proportionable to the excellency of the object known. God being therefore the fullest object, affords the fullest joy.

[3.] It is a durable delight when all others will wither. Other knowledge is as a rainbow, pleasant to behold, but quickly vanishing, like the sound of music in the ear, which pleaseth and expires. The departure of an object strips the admirer of his real pleasure. Jonah's joy withered with the gourd wherein it was placed, but the knowledge of God and Christ is attended with a perpetual delight, since they are objects as durable as they are excellent; for where there is a saving knowledge, there is an eternal knot made between the understanding and the spiritual object, which cannot be dissolved.

[4.] It is a pleasure like to that which God has, which consists in reflections upon, and affections to his own nature. God cannot have an infinite satisfaction in anything besides himself, because nothing is infinite but himself. Upon this account let us pursue after this wisdom. The lowest degree is pleasant, joy is fulfilled in the soul upon the manifestations of God by Christ, John xvii. 13, which mounts to a greater height as we rise in higher degrees. Upon every fresh discovery, new joys disclose themselves. The search after God is a greater happiness than the fruition of anything in the world can be. But when the understanding, the highest faculty, and God, the chief truth and good, meet together, an unexpressible satisfaction must be the result of such a meeting. God being infinitely better than all creatures, the knowledge of him must be infinitely more delightful than the knowledge of all things besides. And though he cannot be perfectly known, yet this doth not blast the pleasure, as the heavens are too boundless for our eye, and the stars too numerous for our account, yet it is pleasant to behold the one and view the other.

(7.) If we do not labour to know God, we endeavour, as much as in us lies, to make God lose all the glory of his creation and revelation, because no creature under the heavens is a capable subject of this but man. All other creatures, that have sense without understanding, can only perceive those things which are objects of sense, as colours, odours, &c., but God being a Spirit, falls not within the limits of sense. Man only was made with an understanding to know the invisible God. The contempt of this knowledge, or the neglect of it, with a preferring the knowledge of everything else before him, is to deprive him of the glory of his work. All our natural gifts will not make us immediately serviceable to God, without a spiritual eye. This knowledge, though in one ignorant of the world, renders him more capable to pay immediately the glory due to God, than the greatest scholar with his philosophical wick of oil. A sunbeam reflected from the wall gives more heat and warmth than a thousand lamps. It makes God a loser in the glory of his gospel revelation. Knowledge is the basis of all our motions and affections to God which the gospel enjoins. The wheels were full of eyes, which some think* refers to the great measure of knowledge God would afford in the time of the gospel, Ezek. i. 18. When God should dwell in the world in glorious and majestic representations, the wheels, the people, should be full of eyes. If we neglect then the knowledge of God, we hinder him (as to us) both of the end of creation, wherein he hath made himself legible, and the end of his gospel dispensation, wherein he hath made himself evident in his Son.

(8.) It is easy to have a knowledge of God and Christ. What difficulty there is in it, lies not in God, or in the means of revelation, but in ourselves. As the law might be observed, but for the corruption of our flesh,—Rom.

* Lightfoot's Temple, chap. xxxviii. p. 253.

viii. 3, 'The law was weak through the flesh,'—so God might be spiritually seen, but for the soreness of our eyes. It lies not in the object, but in our indisposition, in regard of the enmity of our nature, and the unworthy notions we have naturally of God. No wisdom is less admired and less affected, men hate wisdom and thereby love death, Prov. viii. 36, there being a dissimilitude between the nature of God and the corrupt nature of man. Nothing so easy to be known as God, though nothing so hard to be searched out unto perfection. The sun doth visibly offer its beams to every eye that will open itself, and let him shine upon it. Nothing more easy to be seen than the sun, yet nothing more hard to be pierced into and fully understood. If we do not know God, it is not for want of light in him, but for want of will in us. He hath not so clouded himself in thick darkness, that it is impossible to have some prospect of him. He hath set his footsteps in the creatures, and unveiled his face in the Scriptures; he hath made himself intelligible in his works and in his word, and breaks out upon our understandings in both. What is knowable of God in order to practice is not closed up from our sight, we have rich discoveries of his holiness and excellency in his word, which informs us what our behaviour should be towards him. We must not apprehend God to be so mean a being as that we can easily satisfy all our curiosities about him. Know him perfectly we cannot, unless we had an understanding as infinite as his own; and indeed we might well be ashamed of that God, that were so little as to be measured by our finite capacities. Yet so far as doth conduce to our practice and comfort, God is as intelligible as anything in this world, and more; we may know more of his original goodness than of the derivative goodness of any creature. His attributes are as evident to us as the quality of anything we see; we may as soon know that God is good, and excellent, and holy, as we may know that the wall is white or no. We have higher principles of the knowledge of him. We have sense to view the effects of his goodness, we have reason to draw conclusions from the excellency of creatures, to inform us of the transcendent excellency of God; and we have revelation, which surmounts the other two principles of sense and reason. What though we cannot know his essence? Do we know the essence of any one thing in the world, or can we satisfy ourselves in all our inquiries about it? His perfections are unfathomable by us, yet he is obvious to our minds if we will not close our eyes. We can as easily see the sea when we stand upon the shore, as it is impossible for us to reach with our eyes the bounds of it. But suppose the knowledge of God we speak of were very hard, shall the difficulty which whets us in other things take off our edge in this? Who can boast of the knowledge of any one creature? Yet since the world began men have been peering into the secrets of them. Multitudes have been busy in the search of natural things, and the difficulty is less affrighting now than it was before; shall then the seeming difficulty of the most satisfying objects close up our desires and endeavours in the search of them? It should rather add spurs to our diligence. Paul's foresight of what was out of his reach slackened not his desires and endeavours of attaining, Philip. iii. 12, 13. The knowledge of Christ is easy; had it not been so, he would not have so sharply rebuked his disciples for their ignorance: Mat. xv. 16, 'Are ye yet without understanding?' Is he not the subject of the whole Scripture, and, like a golden ore, runs through every vein in the mine? He is the centre wherein all the lines of the Scripture meet; we can open no part of it but something of Christ strikes upon our minds, as light in the day upon the opening of our eyes. 'In the volume of the book it is written of him,' in the first promise, and in the last line of

the Scripture. He is the *Alpha* and *Omega* of all revelations and discoveries; it is therefore our own fault if we will be in darkness under a noonday sun. God desires we should know him; why doth he else compare himself to so many objects in the visible world, but that we may have frequent remembrances of his excellency; and ascribe to his incorporeal nature the members of a man, as arms, ears, &c., which are incompatible with a spiritual being, but that, knowing ourselves and our own frame, we may rise up to a knowledge of him?

(9.) Consider, is not our time spent unprofitably in everything else when we neglect this? All other wisdom is perishing, this heavenly wisdom only endures for ever. Will the skill in trades remain with any man, and be an advantage to him in another world? Not but that there must be time spent in learning and improving your callings for the good of yourselves, families, and the community; but not so much as to swallow up the time due to the other. There is a satisfaction in natural learning; but what advantage is that in another world, where worldly wisdom and learned subtleties shall take no place? There will be no use of them in eternity, whither we are travelling. It is the knowledge of God and Christ we shall there be examined about; we may have the greatest wisdom of the world, and be without this saving knowledge at the last day, and receive the punishment of devils, instead of the happiness of Christians. Christ never put up a thanksgiving to his Father for the learning of the pharisee, or the wisdom of statesmen, but for the revelation of himself to the babes of the world, Mat. xi. 25. The knowledge of a good man only is understanding, Prov. ix. 10. It is a dreadful place against the wise as well as the mighty men of the earth: 1 Cor. i. 26, 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty.' Prudence and power, abstracted from divine knowledge, are contemptible in the eyes of God. Here and there one wise and mighty man marked out for an happy eternity, but not many. All knowledge below this is but the knowledge of trifles. In other things, we lose our time for the most part; by this, we gain an happy eternity. Other knowledge will not prevent the loss of ourselves; in this, we find God and ourselves too. Let us not therefore sell our understandings for nought, as God complains they did his people, Isa. lii. 3. Other gettings are inconsiderable to the gain of understanding, Prov. iv. 7. Oh that we could take as much pains to get this, which is eternal life, as the heathens have taken for human sciences, which could not secure them from eternal death, and seek for it with as much industry and as high a value of it as we would for silver and hidden treasures! Prov. ii. 4, 5.

There are hindrances of this knowledge, and helps to it.

Hindrances. (1.) Corrupt affections. When the apostle had exhorted the Ephesians to be 'renewed in the spirit of their minds,' Eph. iv. 23, he seems to add directions to his exhortation; and one is, verse 26, to be watchful over their passions, 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.' Else they would give place to the devil, who is the great enemy of divine light, and the 'ruler of the darkness of this world.' Passions are the fumes of hell, to cloud and obstruct the beams of Christ from shining upon the mind; these distract the native force of the soul, and choke all beginnings of divine meditation. Who can learn anything in the midst of a storm? A serenity of mind is a way to know God: Ps. xlvi. 10, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' A turbulent spirit is a bar to it. The soul overcast with unworthy passions is no more fit for this light, than the sky thronged with clouds is for the light of the sun, or a foul glass to reflect an image. Light and inconstant spirits have not the knowledge of God, any more than running water can receive the force of a sunbeam, which glides away from one after an-

other, and remains under the power and force of none. You can never set a stamp upon a floating cork till you take it out of the water. Corrupt affections warp the understanding to irregular operations.

(2.) Sensuality. Sensuality, and a want of the Spirit, the great enlightener, are inseparable companions: Jude 19, 'Sensual, having not the Spirit.' A generous knowledge can never grow up in a sensual spirit, any more than a generous plant can in a marsh always covered with salt water. An atheist may be said to know God as well as one steeped in sensuality, which is practical atheism. Those that deny God in their works never understood him in their mind: 1 Sam. ii. 12, 'The sons of Eli were sons of Belial,' and therefore 'knew not the Lord.' This being a familiarity with hell, can never be a means of acquaintance with God. The way to be heavenly wise is not to be brutish. Laughter is mad, and sensualists mad men, who can as well understand God as bedlams can understand sobriety. The more the soul is sunk in bodily pleasures, the more feeble and unactive it is, the more languishing and sickly; the more it soars above them, the more lively and fresh it appears. The heathen philosophers could therefore prescribe the soul's abstraction from the body to be necessary to divine knowledge and meditation. So great a privilege as this is not becoming one that is in a professed slavery to the flesh. The Jews say that the sensuality of the seventy that were with Moses, when they saw the vision of God, was the cause they had not a more perfect sight; from Exod. xxiv. 11, 'They saw God, and did eat and drink;' understanding it not of the actions afterwards, but of the reason why God gave them not such a measure of the Spirit as Moses (which is signified by laying on his hand), because they were soaked much in sensual delights. Who can see the glory of the sun where all the windows and gaps, through which the light should peep, are daubed and stopped with a thick clay? While we are clogged with the thick and filthy mire of base lusts, we cannot behold the glory of God and Christ.

(3.) Carnal conceptions of God. We are naturally apt to frame a notion of God, according to the complexion of worldly things, or our own passions; to think God 'such an one as ourselves,' Ps. l. 21, hereby erecting an earthly and vicious deity. The heathen had at first the knowledge of God: Rom. i. 19, 'God hath shewed it to them;' and they are said to 'know God.' The true God discovered himself; God would not have discovered a false god to them. But they not only neglected the improvement of this knowledge, but mixed the carnal brood of their own opinions and resemblances with it. And by this mixture of the natural knowledge they had of God, and the corrupt notions they entertained of what this God was; by this unnatural mixture, I say, was produced a monstrous and misshapen image of God in their minds, and in the world, unworthy of God, and unworthy of a rational soul; as when some genuine and true principle mixeth with some foul and carnal conception, the issue is monstrous. Men study to frame such notions of God as may maintain their pride and wantonness, and feed their lusts, not satisfy their understandings. Such errors in the head hinder us from a spiritual sight of God, as a mass of congealed vapours in the head darkens or tinctures the eye that it cannot rightly discern objects before it. The head must be purged of that flux of humours which discharge themselves to that organ, before the blemish it hath occasioned be cured. Erroneous prepossessions must be displaced before good principles can take root in the understanding; the mind must be unclouded of those mists before it can discern the most excellent objects.

(4.) Earthliness. A soul steeped in earth cannot attain divine things. Clogged wings cannot mount into the air. The mud of the earth is a screen

between the beams of God and eye of the soul. When the mind is covered with thick clay, it cannot behold the admirable things of the gospel, or receive any impressions of the Spirit on it, any more than those that work all the day in deep mines, under ground, can behold the sun. A little of the world delighted in, will hinder the sight of God. Though the sun be vast, the heavens large, and the sun dart his beams round about the world, yet if a small brass farthing be laid upon the eye it cannot see the sun, or the beams of it which shine round about it. John v. 44, 'How can you believe, that receive honour one of another?' Ambitious and covetous men are so possessed with their immoderate desires after honours and riches, that they cannot much mind natural knowledge, more proportioned to the genius and gust of their souls, and much less divine. The mind of man cannot at one and the same time attend several charges; when the strength is spent one way, it is languishing another. Earthliness hinders the knowledge of Christ, and bars out a right estimation of the things of heaven. A man brought up in a dungeon cannot know the excellency of superior bodies. A worm that dwells always under the earth may as well see the sun, as a man whose eyes and mind are in the centre of the earth understand and see God. Worldly spirits have more of the earth-worm than the man. We must therefore do as Christ bids the blind man, wash the clay off our eyes in the pool of Siloam. The more of earth we have, the less capable we are of the illuminations of heaven; the centre of the earth is dark and obscure, and is not penetrated by the light of the sun.

(5.) Pride of reason. When we 'lean to our own understanding,' we 'acknowledge not God,' Prov. iii. 5, 6. The pharisees were the proudest of all the people (John vii. 49, 'Have any of the pharisees believed on him?'), and they were the most ignorant of gospel truths; they would have their own opinions a rule to all the people. Pride being the devil's sin, cannot be pleasing to God. He that looks upon himself too much, is like to look up to heaven too little; we cannot behold ourselves and heaven together at the same instant. If God hide spiritual revelations from any, it is from 'the wise and prudent,' Mat. xi. 25, 30, *i. e.* from those that think themselves wise enough; and it is dreadful to consider, that it is God's pleasure, and he hath Christ's thanks for it. They both concur against pride: God will not open the veil to such, and Christ applauds his Father's proceedings. The first lesson Christ teacheth in his school, being the doctrine of self-denial, as a foundation of all other learning, is point blank against this. We enjoy most of Christ when we feel ourselves empty, and we are like to know most of Christ when we acknowledge ourselves ignorant. The Laodicean church conceited she had clear eyes, and therefore knew not her blindness, and desired no eye-salve, Rev. iii. 17, 18; such will be contrary to the apostle's rule, James i. 19, &c. Quick to speak, and slow to hear, and God never sets such a divine plant as this in such rocky ground; they are heights and fortifications which hinder us from the knowledge of Christ, ἰψώματα καὶ ὀχυρώματα, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

(6.) Curiosity. Either desiring to know, only that we may know, not that we may obey, or prying into things too high. Curious inquiries about things which are not revealed, hinder that knowledge which is saving from making any great impression. When God discovered his glory to the Israelites, in giving the law, he 'set bounds to the people,' Exod. xix. 12, 21, that they might not be too busily inquisitive. The gospel, though more open and large, hath still its limits: 'It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power,' Acts i. 7. To desire to know more than God would have us know, is to come short of

that which otherwise we might be capable of knowing. When Adam would aspire to a greater measure of knowledge than God would allow him, he fell thereby into a brutish state. God is to be judge of what is fit to be revealed, and if we would go further, we entrench upon his wisdom and sovereignty. There is a wisdom to sobriety, Rom. xii. 3. Curious disputes are the same in spirituals, with the extravagancies of bedlams; while men think to strengthen, they crack their brains, as the foolish fly approaching too near the candle, loseth both its eyes and wings. God makes foolish the wisdom of this world, turns such aspiring wisdom back into folly. The wise man compares knowledge to honey, Prov. xxv. 16, which if eaten in too great a quantity, provokes vomiting; instead of pleasing, it weakens and hurts the stomach. Superfluous inquiries after God are the disease of the soul,* and are so far from drawing the veil, or making it thinner and more penetrable, that it thickens it and makes it more obscure.

(7.) Inquiring no further than what hath been imprinted on us by education; or to take truth upon trust from man, to 'have the faith of Christ in respect of persons,' James ii. 1. Though we may know a spiritual truth, yet it is not in a spiritual manner; the object of knowledge is good, but the manner of knowledge lame, and wants its due rectitude. When we receive any truth from a human authority, or in respect to a person, we receive it upon no better an account than we should a fable delivered by the same hand.† Custom, tradition, and the examples of others, are the rise of the knowledge many men have of God and Christ. It is true, indeed, we come to know a star by another's pointing us to it, but afterwards we come to know it by its own light.

Directions, both for the attainment and improvement of divine knowledge.

1. Prayer. This is a general means for everything we want, but ought to be more pressed than any, both because of its universal influence, and the common deplorable neglect or slight performance of it. The knowledge of God springs not from a natural but a divine light; it is not an extract of nature, a branch growing up from the root of our own abilities, but of a divine original wrought by the 'Spirit of wisdom and revelation,' Eph. i. 17; it is not the prize of a quick imagination, but a bended knee; the apostle else had not been so earnest a supplicant in this behalf for the Ephesians. It is not the proper act of our own understanding, but a reception of illapses and dartings from God.‡ An hour therefore of sincere prayer may do more in this case, than the prayerless inquiries of a life longer extended than Methuselah's. If, therefore, we are to implore the assistance of God in the works of our daily callings, much more ought we to seek to him for this treasure, the keys whereof he keeps in his own hands. Now there is a double act of God in this, which makes prayer more necessary than in any other case that is not of the like concern. There is to be the unveiling his face, and the unsealing our eyes; the removing the clouds from his majesty, and the darkness from our minds; a clearing the object, and discharging the faculty of its blindness. The heathens considered this, when they apprehended God to be the *intellectus agens*, purifying the *phantasmata* for our understanding. A human understanding, without outward revelation and inward eye-salve, is and will be a miserable blind creature.

(1.) God only can open the mind. A lost eye can never be restored by a created power, nor the blind understanding opened but by Christ's touch, Luke iv. 18. The first Adam's sin put out the candle, the second Adam's grace relights it. There is a faculty, a 'spirit in man,' in miserable fallen

* τῆς ψυχῆς νόσημα ἵσται τὸ κακῶς καὶ περιέργως ζητεῖν περὶ Θεοῦ.—Basil.

† Reynolds.

‡ Fucin. in Dionys. de divin. nomin. cap. xx.

man, but 'the inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding,' Job xxxii. 8. 'Since our understanding is corrupted by sin, and filled with error, it is not sufficient to understand the things of God without an internal illumination, as well as an external revelation. All our sufficiency for intellection, as well as action, is of God. We are 'not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought,' 2 Cor. iii. 5. Can we then have quickening apprehensions and lively thoughts of God without God? We can no more understand the gospel without grace, than we can understand God without the gospel; for those things in the gospel which may conduct us to him, are foolishness in the judgment of the most elevated corrupt nature, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Why were the Israelites, that had seen more miraculous providences of God, ignorant of him, but because 'God gave them not an heart to perceive'? Deut. xxix. 4. We may indeed by study find a proposition so clear as to engage our assent, but not without supernatural influence have such a knowledge of God as to change our souls. We cannot ascend to that which is infinite, without the power of that infinite; nor make ourselves like to an infinite being, without the communication of that infinite strength. If Christ as God had not opened the disciples' understanding, his teaching them as man would have been labour in vain, and made as little entrance into their hearts as into those of the obstinate pharisees, Luke xxiv. 45. He discoursed to them the true sense of Scripture as man, but imprinted the power of it upon their hearts as God. There must be an inward light in the eye, the instrument of sight, as well as in the air, the medium of vision; and inward air in the ear, to hear the sound, as well as outward air to produce and convey the sound. God is not known by us without an operation of God in us. David evinceth this, who though he had an enlightened mind, pretends not a power of further enlarging it, but calls upon God for a supernatural virtue: 'Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things.'

(2.) God only can reveal the object. God only can make himself known. We see not the sun but by the sun; we see other things by the sun, but we see not the sun by any other light than its own. True notions of God spring from grace upon the soul, as light from the sun upon the eyes. And as the sun, so God and Christ appear most ravishing in their own light. As none can know God perfectly but himself, so none can make him known to us but himself. The discovery of himself is his own free act and motion. What creature is able to force the veil from before his face against his mind? The first spark and the succeeding additions are from him. Moses had the first revelation of God from God, and when his heart breathed after more, he hath recourse to God for satisfaction: Exod. xxxiii. 18, 'I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.' Christ appropriates this to the Father: Mat. xi. 25, 'Father, thou hast revealed them.' The title of *Father of lights* belongs only to him. What the sun is in regard of natural, that is God in regard of spiritual light. The disciples own Christ the author of his own manifestation, in that question wherein they admire the riches of his grace: John xiv 22, 'How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?' Light cannot break out without his pleasure, and none can stop it when he is pleased to dart it. Indeed, all knowledge, under what title soever, is from God, as well as our being, and the beings of all creatures. As our faculties are the products of his power, so every endowment of them is the fruit of his bounty. Other knowledge is from him as an indulgent Creator, this from him as a merciful Redeemer; that, by the Spirit brooding over the world by a common work of inspiration (as he brought the creatures at the first creation into form and beauty), this by a more particular energy, as a special gift upon the Mediator's account, teaching all

things necessary to be known of God, and breathing immediately upon the spirit of man.

If it be, then, God's gift upon both accounts, it must be sought at his hands. Holy men have always done so. David got most of his divine learning upon his knees. How often do you find him with his bended knee, elevated eyes, and strong cries : Ps. cxix., 'Teach me thy statutes,' 'open mine eyes,' 'give me understanding,' 'teach me thy judgments and knowledge,' 'make thy face to shine upon thy servant,' &c. Wisdom is attained by asking, James i. 5. This course will not want success. God is near to all that call upon him,' Ps. cxlv. 18, near them in his favour, clearing up their apprehensions of him, new stamping their minds and hearts. They see most of a thing who are nearest to it; prayer brings us before God upon his throne of grace in his majesty and mercy. It is a leaning upon Christ's bosom; and the disciple who enjoyed that familiarity with our Saviour on earth, knew most of his mind. Prayer will as it were bring down God to be our instructor, and one hour of God's teaching will be more fruitful than thousands of years of our own study. One appearance of the sun is better than a world full of torches. How soon can he flash a strong light upon our minds, command the scales from our eyes, as soon as he did darkness from the chaos; and as easily by a word create a new eye, as well as a mighty sun? He is a non-such for instruction: Job xxxvi. 22, 'Who teacheth like him?' *docet et imperat*.* None so clearly, none so pleasantly, none so speedily. But we must earnestly beg it, there must be a cry, a lifting up the voice, Prov. ii. 3, 5, 6, then shall we 'find the knowledge of God,' for 'out of his mouth comes understanding.' Our earnestness in desiring it cannot come near the pleasure of God in bestowing it, when he finds it longed for. And why should not the natural desire for knowledge, when terminated upon a right object, break forth into as strong prayer, as our natural desire for happiness; both appetites seeming to be with an equal force implanted in man; desire of felicity as the end, and desire of knowledge as the means to it? As our happiness, which is naturally desired, cannot be attained but from God, so the knowledge, which is the way to it, cannot come from any spring but the grace of God, who ought upon this account to be solicited by us. And truly, I think, the great reason why men come so short in this knowledge, is because they are negligent in this means, and depend upon their own inquiries and search more than upon God's inspirations.

2. Study the Scripture much. He that would gain knowledge, would pick out the choicest authors, and turn over the best books. The subject of the gospel is God, and God manifested in the flesh. The Scriptures 'testify of Christ,' John v. 39; they are the swaddling-bands wherein he hath been wrapped up since his first incarnation, as the seed of the woman in the promise. Other books may dart some light of human knowledge, but this is a beam of divine. It acquaints us with the most excellent truth, which makes us both wise and happy. It is the record of our Saviour's declarations of the name of God, which was a principal intent of his coming. Therein are discovered the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and a wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew, none of the great conquerors or learned philosophers. All spiritual discoveries drawn from thence have the seal and stamp of God upon them, and none else. God hath, as it were, shut up his Spirit in the gospel. It is 'the ministration of the Spirit,' 2 Cor. iii. 8, *i. e.* whereby the Spirit, who is to teach us all things, is conveyed to the soul. Knowledge built upon any other principle is nothing but a

* Castalio.

frame of delusions. It is a dangerous thing to think those things of God which are true, unless we are certain of the truth of them; and where can we have a convincing evidence, but from his own revelation? The gospel is called the face of Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,' *i. e.* as some interpret it, in the gospel. Indeed, he hath imprinted his own features, and the representations of God, in the gospel, that as in the Old Testament we may behold his glorious outgoings in creation and providence, the deliverances of his people, and punishing his enemies, so in the New we may view his glorious counsels of redeeming goodness; as the looking upon the picture of a friend preserves the memory of his features, and recalls to mind the memorable actions done by him, and preserves, if not increaseth, the knowledge of him. The word is a glass wherein we behold the reflections of God, James i. 23, and it is perfect, Ps. xix. 7. It discovers as much of the nature and amiableness of God as can be drawn in lines and letters, and presents the soul with such attractives in him as turns it fully to him; as it follows, 'converting the simple.' If the beauty of the Lord was seen in the legal sanctuary, Ps. xxvii. 4, much more in the evangelical transcript, so plain that he that is a student in it, when translated to heaven, may know God and Christ by what knowledge he had of their lineaments in the word, as the remembrance of the features in a picture will direct us to know the person when we meet him. The angels themselves seem to be put off to gather their knowledge of Christ from the flowers of the word as delivered to the church, and in the church: Eph. iii. 10, 'The wisdom of God is made known by the church to the principalities in heavenly places.' It is made known to the church by the word, to angels by the church, so that the knowledge of the angels is ultimately resolved into the word as the *medium* of it. As it is a means to gain it, so it is a means to increase it; there are new amazing wonders to be seen in it. Though many diamonds have been cut out of a rock, yet there are more still for the workman's skill and industry. While the powers in heaven are instructed by it, the most elevated understanding on earth cannot be above it. He that looks often into it will view more by an eye of faith than all the world can by their eyes of reason in conjunction. By this instrument, we shall behold the greatness, majesty, loveliness, and love of God, more than any rational discoveries can present to us; as a man by an instrument sees the magnitude and glory of the stars, which an ignorant man thinks to be little sparks of light, like those in his chimney. The ignorance among us may be charged upon the neglect of studying this, or the slight reading of it. Some will plead the intricacy of it for their neglect. Not to say that, as to the main design of it, it is plain in itself; let such that excuse themselves upon this account consider whether they are not conscious to themselves that they never spent the tenth part, nay, perhaps not a dram, of that industry, zeal, and desire in the searching that hidden mine of spiritual treasures, as they have spent in heaping up the perishing trifles of this world. I will appeal to those that do make it their business to inquire into the word, whether they find not themselves to have more lively apprehensions of God, and feel, and taste divine truths in another kind of manner, than they experiment in other books. Let the experiences of others move those that neglect it. Manna dropped from heaven was more relishing in itself than all the meat of the Israelites' cooking; it was angels' food. And for the manner of conversing with it, the laying down rules would be too copious. Consider well what you read; stay upon the descriptions you find of God and Christ, dig into them as into a mine; rest not till you find the satisfying importance of them, till you feel your hearts

stir, and rise up in an adoration of him. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,' Ps. xxv. 14, 'and he will shew them his covenant.' Consider the inward virtue and efficacy of it, as a wise man will the virtue of the flowers and plants, as well as their beauty and gay clothing. And while you study the history of the gospel, pray for the revelation of the Father. Flesh and blood may read it, but the Father only reveals it savingly. The eye may see the letters, the head may understand the sense, when the Spirit opens not the heart to feel the warmth.

3. Entertain with affection every spiritual motion. We can no more profit in divine knowledge without the breathing of the Spirit, and the dews of his grace, than the labour of an husbandman can come to any maturity without the warm irradiations of the sun, and the showers of rain. The more solemn discoveries of God and Christ to the heart were reserved for the appearance of the Spirit, upon which account Christ, while in the flesh, is said but to 'begin to teach,' Acts i. 1. The foundation was laid by Christ, but the consummation of this discovery, and the last line, was reserved for the Spirit. Christ declared the name of God, and his own commission, but the Spirit afterwards was to verify and confirm this commission as authentic in the minds of men. He is therefore called 'the Spirit of truth,' as testifying the authority of Christ: John xv. 26, 'The Spirit of truth shall testify of me;' and also, in regard of his conduct of men into truth: John xvi. 13, 'The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth.' He was first to demonstrate to their minds that Christ was authorised by God, and that his declarations of God were firm, true, and ratified in heaven, and then to guide them into those truths which were necessary for their comfort and practice; to open the secret resolves of eternity concerning the work of redemption, and draw the curtain from before those mysteries which the eye of nature was not able to reach. The first work of the Spirit is that of knowledge. He communicates himself to our understandings, before he makes impressions upon our wills, as the sun first enlightens the air before he warms it (knowledge is that in the mind, which light is in the air). For, as the Spirit dealt with Christ, so he deals with his members; he first rests upon them as a Spirit of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, Isa. xi. 2, 3, and acts in that order wherein Christ is presented to us by God, first wisdom, then righteousness and sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30. Whatsoever, therefore, the Spirit doth by virtue of his office, must be listened to; and every offer, every motion, he makes for our instruction, must be entertained; for though God hath appointed many outward instructors, yet there is but one internal teacher, viz. the Holy Ghost. And there is a resistance of the Spirit in this work of knowledge, as well as in the work of grace; and the resistance lies chiefly here, because the Spirit's first work is to rectify the judgment in the nature of God, and things belonging to God, and present the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; and when this is entertained, he reflects it upon the will and affections, that the faculties may regularly follow one another in the order of working, and the soul, in turning to God, may act, and be acted, as a rational creature; for while he is busy in reducing the soul to its original constitution and true nature, he would not move the soul against the primitive order of nature, but in such a manner as its return and obedience may be regular and becoming a rational creature. When, therefore, a man refuseth the motions of the Spirit, whereby his mind may be informed, the Spirit is resisted by him. Every motion is a beam from heaven: let us take heed of shutting our eyes against it, lest it be snatched away by the interposition of some dark cloud, and we never enjoy the like again, but lose the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and thereby the

most excellent wisdom in earth or heaven. If we neglect his motions, we put a slight upon that person, whereby only God reveals divine things to us: 1 Cor. ii. 10, 'God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit.' We contemn the only instructor that can acquaint us with God; 'the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God,' ver. 11, *i. e.* no man knows them but by the Spirit. It is exclusive of all men, though the strongest rationalists. If we listen not, then, to this Spirit, we shall receive a stronger ignorance as a reward of our frowardness. Would any man stop his ears, or shut his doors against an angel sent by God from heaven upon a happy errand? Behold in every divine motion a greater than an angel, yea, than all the illuminated blessed angels in heaven. Since it is, therefore, a beam from heaven shooting in upon the mind, follow it, and it will direct to a fuller prospect of light, as when a ray of the sun strikes through a cranny of a wall, the laying the eye close to the hole will help us to see more, and perhaps the body of the sun from whence it streamed. If we, therefore, give way to the motions of the Spirit, it may be with us as with the apostles, who were dull and ignorant in the time of their master, and, just before the ascension of Christ, betrayed their ignorance of his design in coming, in proposing to him the settling of an earthly kingdom, Acts i. 6. But when the Spirit came upon them, how did he refine their minds, burn up the chaff of their grosser conceits! How noble were their apprehensions of the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, and their souls filled with divine light! So may we, in our measures, if we wait for the Spirit, and observe his movings upon us. Let us, therefore, hereby give encouragement to the Spirit to inform us with delight, who is no less pleased than our Saviour was, when any received his instructions, and stretched out their souls to catch his gales. More is learned from such a teacher than from a multitude of ignorant men, if we were to live for ever with them. The neglect of those motions is the worm at the root of all our perfections, and continues the blindness of our minds, and the perversity of our hearts. It concerns us, therefore, to look to this.

4. Labour and long for new hearts. As there is an enmity to God in lapsed nature, so there is a disrelish of God in the knowledge of him, till the vitiated palate be cured by the removal of the infectious humour. The disease of the eye must be removed before we can discern things plainly and delightfully. Our natural eye while distempered is made worse by looking long or often upon an object, and can take no pleasure in the view of anything. That eye that would gaze upon the sun must be sun-like, of the nature of the sun: the soul must become divine before it can know the divinity. As no man can act, so no man can understand well divine things unless he be in a divine state; and therefore no unconverted person can in that state have this knowledge. Who can behold that which he turns his back upon? He that turns his back upon the sun may see the earth, but not the sun, in that posture. The knowledge of God, a relation to him as his people, and a covenant interest in him as their God, were all founded upon a turning to him with the whole heart: Jer. xxiv. 7, 'For they shall return unto me with their whole heart;' so Hosea vi. 1, 3. First let us return to the Lord, then shall we know. It is then that God pours out the Spirit as a living spring, and gives him to be our tutor and instructor in divine learning, to 'make known his words' to us when we 'turn at his reproof,' Prov. i. 23. Then shall we view everything with a new light, and see something more in God, his word and ways, than we did before; as men, when they begin to study some art, look upon all things in a new manner and form, according to the rules of that art they are engaged in. An unregenerate man cannot have lively and quick apprehensions of God, no more

than a blind man can frame a true and distinct conception of colours and light, notwithstanding his hearing several discourses about the essential properties of them. As sense only can perceive visible objects, and reason rational, so spiritual sense only can perceive spiritual objects. A natural man can no more judge of spiritual things as spiritual than a beast can judge of the excellency of moral virtue. Saving knowledge of God, in order of nature, follows regeneration, though the historical knowledge of God, the object, precedes it; for God being the object of religion and conversion must be known before any act can be exercised about them.

5. Obedience and purity of heart is the way to increase this knowledge. The freer the eye is from bad humours, the more able it is delightfully to behold the sun. In a full righteousness God's face is beheld hereafter: Ps. xvii. 17, 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness,' and according to imperfect measures of righteousness we behold his face here. Our Saviour makes purity to precede, and the sight of God to follow: Mat. v. 8, 'The pure in heart shall see God.' The more the heart is purified, the more the mind is cleared to have an insight into the things of God; whereas a defiled heart sends out streams to mud the understanding, as a foul stomach raiseth vapours to disturb the head. Purity prepares the soul for a more free and constant residence of the Spirit, the great instructor. He is a dove, and doves care not for foul and polluted places. As the foul spirit loves a polluted lodging, so doth the Holy Spirit a pure soul. He that fears God is the subject of God's teaching, Ps. xxv. 12, but to leave off to do good is to leave off to be wise, Ps. xxxvi. 3. 'Moses hid his face, and was afraid to look upon God,' Exod. iii. 6, which the Jews understand of a fear of reverence, and for that cause (they say) he was rewarded with a sight of the similitude of God, Num. xii. 8, 9; and indeed 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,' *i. e.* the first foundation divine wisdom lays in building her house in any soul. God required a three days' purification of the Israelites before he would dispense the law and admit them to a knowledge of his will, and is not a purity requisite to a knowledge of his nature? To think to see God, without purity in the soul, is as if we should imagine we could behold visible objects without a crystalline humour in the ball of the eye. 'He that doth God's will shall know the doctrine of Christ,' John vii. 17. As in practical arts the skill is increased more by working than studying, so is the knowledge of God increased by the practice of what we know.* God delights to be obeyed; and where he is obeyed, he delights to give greater discoveries of himself, both to encourage and direct to a further obedience. As Christ by his obedience had the communications of God to him, so shall we by our obedience have the communications of Christ to us, which he calls an 'abiding in his love,' John xv. 10. A purified soul is more capable of divine beams than a sharp wit. Plato could say that, after a walking with God, or a *τὸ συζῆσθαι*, a living with him, a certain light breaks out upon us as from fire, and falls upon our souls.

6. Humility. If grace be given to the humble, the grace of the best knowledge is not excluded from God's liberality; we gain it sooner by an humble contemplation than proud wranglings. As to obey God we must deny our wills, so to know him we must deny our reasons; will must submit to precept, and reason to revelation. Agur acknowledged himself brutish, who came behind none of his age, unless Solomon, in understanding, Prov. xxx. 2. The humble person will quickly be a scholar in this learning, when a pharisee shall remain as ignorant as he is proud. God reveals himself to babes, Mat. xi. 24, not to those that conceit themselves giants. Those that

* *Τήρησις τῶν ἐντολῶν γνῶσις τοῦ Θεοῦ.*—*Basil.*

hear Christ's voice must have the quality of sheep, John x. 4. The meek God acquaints with his choicest truths: Ps. xxv. 9, 'The meek will he teach his way.' As God 'knows the proud afar off,' Ps. cxxxviii. 6, so doth the proud man know God afar off. It is not possible, when God beholds him at a great distance, that he can behold God. A proud scholar and a dove-like teacher can never accord. God 'humbles himself,' Ps. cxliii. 6; we must be like him if we would understand him. Christ was meek and lowly; he is never like to be a learner who imitates not his master's pattern. Especially when in this humiliation of Christ the attributes of God shone out brighter than in creation or general providence. What God required in his son as a medium for the discovery of himself, he will require in us to make us capable of a communication of that knowledge. We are never fit to hear God till we hear with submission. Humility brings us into such a posture, it takes away the blocks which lie in the way of saving truth; it drives away inconsideration, silenceth contradictions against the truth, and stifles curiosity. If we will not, therefore, slight God's direction, we must 'be fools that we may be wise,' 1 Cor. iii. 18. Our dulness doth grieve Christ, but not so much as our conceitedness. Christ spake in parables to the arrogant pharisees, but he repeated his instructions to his humble disciples, though he reprov'd them for their dulness. The pride and curiosity of this age sets men back in the knowledge of God, but it is likely a sharp lance is not far off to cut the swelling.

7. Heavenly meditation. An heavenly mind hath brighter and more delightful apprehensions of God than all the carnal world. The purer the air we live in, the more active and strong is the body; the air of heaven quickens the understanding and clears the sight. By meditation we enter within the veil and behold his glory. He meets those that humbly aspire to him; frequent ascents of the mind to God is the way to attain the manifestations of him, Exod. xix. 3. When Moses went up to God (which the Jews* understand of an intellectual ascent, an ascent of meditation), the Lord called to him out of the mount; that they understand of his corporeal ascent. Abstraction is necessary to this best of sciences. If we are thus out of the body, we may with Paul hear and know things which are unutterable. The senses of the soul, which are as real and have as real operations about their proper objects, as the external senses of sight and taste have about sensible objects, are thus to be exercised; and when they are so, it makes us capable of stronger meat and more spiritual knowledge, Heb. v. 14. Without this we cannot come to a knowledge of God. Who can know the sun if he shuts his eyes, or understand music if he stop his ears? and know God if he never stirs up his understanding about him? We use the faculties and senses which are proper for the objects proposed.† If music be presented, we employ our ears; if the sun shine, we use our eyes, not our ears; if we would know God, we must employ our minds, they can only be conversant about him. By this ascent of meditation we may see more of God in a moment than otherwise we can do in an age, as a man may see more of London upon the top of the Exchange in half a quarter of an hour than he can by going about in many days, or standing in one street many years. But let our affections keep an equal pace with our meditations, that the heart may be inflamed with a divine love. Endeavour to have a savour of Christ's ointments. Cant. i. 3; we shall then profit more in the knowledge of God in a week, than, without blowing up our affections, we shall do in many years; for then God will communicate himself to us with a more cordial affection than we can embrace him.

* Maimon. More, part i. cap. xi.

† Maximus Tyrius, dis i. p. 11.

8. Communication of what knowledge of God we have upon occasion. Talents improved increase, Luke xix. 17; increase in the act and increase by a reward. Let not what knowledge you have lie bound up in a rotten napkin as a useless thing, but venture it, and you will find a quick return. What knowledge of God we have laid out is lent to God, as well as what we give out of our purses to the poor, and God is no insolvent or careless debtor to his own promise: he hath bound himself to pay the less, and so he will the greater. We gain by imparting, as the husbandman flings his grain into the ground with hopes of an increasing crop.

9. Affect Christian society. Every Christian is a king and priest to God, and why not also a prophet to his brother? If a man will converse with divine persons, light will break in upon him as flame from a sparkling fire. He that would gain knowledge would converse with the best company. The daughters of Jerusalem were asked by the spouse for her beloved, when she was upon the pursuit to find him, Cant. v. 8. The meanest Christian may be of use in this. The lower plants have more of medicine in them than many taller shrubs; nay, Apollos has learned more of Christ from Priscilla than from the apostles themselves. God often blesseth the weaker above the stronger means, to shew that he is not tied to any.

Let me conclude all with the speech of a heathen, *O quàm contempta res est homo, nisi supra humana se erexerit!** If we would have life eternal, the way, by our Saviour's prescription, is to 'know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.'

* Seneca, Præfat. ad Natural. Quest.