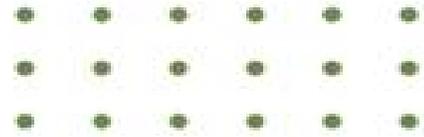


Monergism



# THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD



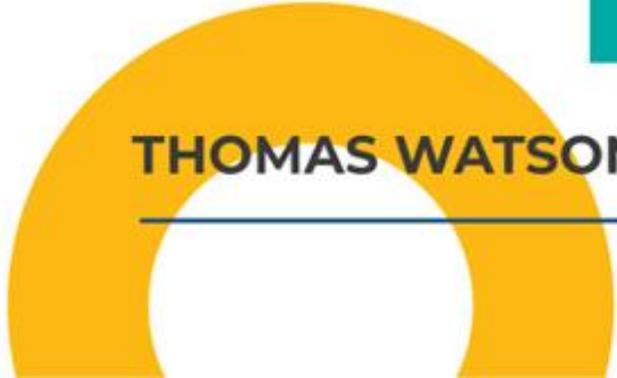
THOMAS WATSON



Monergism



# THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD



THOMAS WATSON

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# The Attributes of God

by Thomas Watson

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## **The Being of God**

### **Question 3. What do the scriptures principally teach?**

Answer: The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

### **Question 4. What is God?**

Answer: God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Here is,

1. Something **implied**. That there is a God.
2. Something **expressed**. That he is a Spirit.
3. What kind of Spirit?

### **I. Something IMPLIED. That there is a God.**

The question, "What is God?" takes for granted that there is a God. The belief of God's existence, is the foundation of all religious worship. "He who comes to God must believe that he is." There must be a first cause, which gives being to all things besides.

**[1] We know that there is a God by the book of NATURE.**  
The notion of a Deity is engraved on man's heart; it is demonstrable

by the light of nature. It hard for a man to be a natural atheist; he may *wish* there were no God, he may *dispute* against a Deity—but he cannot in his judgment believe there is no God, unless by accumulated sin his conscience be seared, and he has such a lethargy upon him, that he has sinned away his very sense and reason!

**[2] We know that there is a God by his WORKS**, and this is so evident a demonstration of a Godhead, that the most atheistic spirits, when they have considered these works, have been forced to acknowledge some wise and supreme maker of these things. We will begin with the **creation** of the glorious fabric of heaven and earth. Surely, there must be some architect or first cause. The world could not make itself. Who could hang the earth on nothing, but the great God? Who could provide such rich furniture for the heavens, the glorious constellations, the skies bespangled with such glittering lights? We see God's glory blazing in the sun, twinkling in the stars. Who could give the earth its clothing, cover it with grass and corn, adorn it with flowers, enrich it with gold? God alone. Job 38:8. Who but God could make the sweet music in the heavens, cause the angels to join in concert, and sound forth the praises of their Maker? "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

If a man should go into a far country, and see stately edifices there, he would never imagine that these built themselves—but that some greater power had built them. To imagine that the work of the creation was not framed by God, is as if we should conceive an intricate landscape to be drawn by a pencil, without the hand of an artist. "God who *made* the world, and all things therein." To *create* is proper to the Deity.

The wise **government** of all things evinces there is a God. God is the great superintendent of the world, he holds the golden reins of government in his hand, guiding all things most regularly and harmoniously to their proper end. Who that eyes Providence, but must be forced to acknowledge there is a God? Providence is the queen and governess of the world, it is the hand which turns the

wheel of the whole creation; it sets the sun its race, the sea its bounds. If God did not guide the world, things would run into disorder and confusion. When one looks on a clock, and sees the motion of the wheels, the striking of the hammer, the hanging of the plummets—he would conclude that some artificer made it. Just so, when we see the excellent order and harmony in the universe, the sun, that great luminary, dispensing its light and heat to the world, without which the world were but a grave or a prison; the rivers sending forth their silver streams to refresh the bodies of men, and prevent a drought; and every creature acting within its sphere, and keeping its due bounds—we must needs acknowledge there is a God, who wisely orders and governs all these things.

Who could set this great multitude of the creatures in their several ranks and squadrons, and keep them in their constant march—but HE, whose name is the Lord Almighty? And as God does wisely **dispose** all things in the whole regiment of the creatures, so, by his power, he **supports** them. Did God suspend and withdraw his influence ever so little, the wheels of the creation would unpin, and the axle break asunder! All motion, the philosophers say, is from something that is unmoveable. As for example, the elements are moved by the influence and motion of the heavenly bodies; the sun and moon, and these planets, are moved by the highest orb, called Primum Mobile; now, if one should ask, Who moves that highest orb, or is the first mover of the planets? It can be no other than God himself!

Man is a microcosm or lesser world. The excellent context and frame of his body is wrought as meticulously as needlework. "You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb." This body is endowed with a noble **soul**. Who but God could make such a union of different substances as flesh and spirit? In him we live, and move, and have our being. The living motion of every part of the body shows there is a God. We may see something of him in the sparkling of the eye; and if the cabinet of the *body* be so curiously wrought, what is the jewel—the *soul*? The soul

has a celestial brightness in it; as one says, "It is a diamond set in a ring of clay." What noble faculties is the soul endowed with! Understanding, Will, Affections—are a mirror of the Trinity, as Plato speaks. The matter of the soul is spiritual, it is a divine spark lighted from heaven; and being spiritual, is immortal, as Scaliger notes; "the soul does not wax old," it lives forever. Who could create a soul ennobled with such rare angelic properties, but God? We must needs say as the Psalmist, "It is he who has made us, and not we ourselves."

**[3] We may prove a Deity by our CONSCIENCE.** Conscience is God's deputy or viceregent. Conscience is a witness of a Deity. If there were no Bible to tell us there is a God—yet conscience would. Conscience, as the apostle says, either "accuses" or "excuses." Rom 2:15. It acts in order to a higher judicatory. Natural conscience, being kept free from gross sin, excuses. When a man does virtuous actions, lives soberly and righteously, observes the golden maxim—doing to others as he would have them do to him—then conscience approves, and says, "Well done!" Like a bee it gives honey. Natural conscience in the wicked accuses. When men go against its light they feel the worm of conscience. "Alas! What scorpion lurks within?" -Seneca. Conscience, being sinned against, spits fire in men's faces, and fills them with shame and horror. When the sinner sees a handwriting on the wall of conscience, his countenance is changed!

Many have hanged themselves to quiet their conscience. Tiberius the emperor, a bloody man, felt the lashes of his conscience; he was so haunted with that fury, that he told the senate, he suffered death daily. What could put a man's conscience into such an agony, but the impression of a Deity, and the thoughts of coming before his just tribunal? Those who are above human laws, are subject to the checks of their own conscience. And it is observable, the nearer the wicked approach to death, the more they are terrified. Whence is this but from the apprehension of approaching judgement? The soul, being sensible of its immortal nature, trembles at him who never ceases to live, and therefore will never cease to punish!

**[4] That there is a God, appears by the consent and universal suffrage of all men.** "There is no nation so barbarous," says Tully, "as not to believe there is a God." Though the heathen did not worship the *true* God—yet they worshiped *a god*. They set up an altar, "To the unknown God." Acts 17:23. They knew a God should be worshiped, though they knew not the God whom they ought to worship. Some worshiped Jupiter, some Neptune, some Mars. Rather than not worship something, they would worship anything.

**[5] That there is a God, appears his prediction of future things—that is, by fulfilled prophecy.** He who can foretell things which shall surely come to pass, is the true God. God foretold, that a virgin should conceive; he prefixed the time when the Messiah should be cut off. He foretold the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, and who would be their deliverer. God himself uses this argument to prove he is the true God, and that all the gods of the heathens are fictions and nullities. To foretell things contingent, which depend upon no natural causes, is peculiar to Deity.

**[6] That there is a God, appears by his unlimited POWER and SOVEREIGNTY.** He who can work, and none can hinder—is the true God. Only God can do so. "I will work—and who shall hinder it?" Nothing can hinder action but some superior power; but there is no power above God! All power that is, is by him, therefore all power is under him. He has a "mighty arm." He sees the designs which men drive at against him, and plucks off their chariot wheels; he makes the diviners mad. He cuts off the spirit of princes; he bridles the sea, gives check to the leviathan, and binds the devil in chains. He acts according to his pleasure, he does what he will. "I will work, and who shall hinder it?"

**[7] There are devils, therefore there is a God.** Atheists cannot deny but there are devils, and then they must grant there is a God. We read of many possessed of the devil. The devils are called in Scripture "hairy ones", because they often appeared in the form of goats or satyrs. Now, if there is a devil, there is a God. Socrates, a

heathen, when accused at his death, confessed, that, as he thought there was an evil spirit, so he thought there was a good spirit.

**Use one: Seeing there is a God—it reproves such atheistic fools as deny it.** Epicurus denied there was a Providence, saying that all things happened by chance. He who says there is no God is the wickedest creature that is—he is worse than a thief. The thief takes away *our* goods—but the atheist would take away our *God* from us! "They have taken away my Lord." So we may say of atheists, they would take away our God from us, in whom all our hope and comfort is laid up. "The fool has said in his *heart*, There is no God." He dared not speak it with his tongue—but says it in his heart—he wishes it. Surely, none can be *speculative* atheists. "The devils believe and tremble."

I have read of one Arthur—a professed atheist—who, when he came to die, cried out that he was damned. Though there are few found who *say*, "There is no God!" yet many deny him in their *practices*. "In works they deny him." The world is full of *practical* atheism; most people live as if they did not believe there was a God. Would they dare they lie, defraud, be immoral—if they believed there were a God who would call them to account? If a heathen who never heard of a God should come among us, and have no other means to convince him of a Deity—but the lives of men in our age, surely he would question whether there were a God!

**Use two: Seeing there is a God—he will deal righteously, and give just rewards to men.** Things seem to be carried on in the world, very unequally; the wicked flourish. Those who tempt God are delivered. The ripe cluster of grapes is squeezed into their cup. In the meanwhile, the godly, who wept for sin, and served God—are afflicted. "I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping." Evil men enjoy all the good—and godly men endure all the evil. But seeing there is a God—he will deal righteously with men. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Offenders must come to punishment. The sinner's death-day, and dooms-day is coming.

"The Lord sees that his day is coming." While there is a hell, the wicked shall be scourged enough; and while there is eternity, they shall lie there long enough! And God will abundantly compensate the faithful service of his people. They shall have their white robes and crowns. "Truly there is a reward for the righteous: truly he is a God who judges in the earth." Because God is God, he will give glorious rewards to his people.

**Use three: Seeing there is a God, woe to all such as have this God against them. He lives forever to be avenged upon them.** "Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with you?" Such as oppose his saints, trampling these jewels in the dust, and such as live in contradiction to God's Word—engage the Infinite Majesty of heaven against them! How dismal will their case be! "As surely as I live, when I sharpen my flashing sword and begin to carry out justice, I will bring vengeance on my enemies and repay those who hate me!" if it be so terrible to hear the lion *roar*, what must it be when he begins to *tear* his prey? "Consider this, you that forget God, *lest I tear you in pieces!*" Oh that men would think of this, who go on in sin! Shall we engage the great God against us? **God strikes slow—but heavy!** "Have you an arm like God?" Can you strike such a blow? **God is the best friend—but the worst enemy!** If he can *look* men into their grave, how far can he throw them? "Who knows the power of his wrath?" What fools are they, who, for a drop of pleasure—drink a sea of wrath! Paracelsus speaks of a craze some have, which will make them die dancing; so sinners go dancing to hell.

**Use four: Seeing there is a God, let us firmly believe this great article of our Creed.** What true religion can there be in men, if they do not believe a Deity? "He who comes to God must believe that he is." To worship God, and pray to him, and *not believe* there is a God—is to put a high scorn and contempt upon him. Believe that God is the only true God—such a God as he has revealed himself in his Word, "A lover of righteousness, and hater of wickedness." The real belief of a Deity gives life to all pious worship;

the more we believe the truth and infiniteness of God—the more holy and angelic we are in our lives. Whether we are alone, or in company—God sees us! He is the heart-searcher! The belief of this would make us live always under God's eye. "I have set the Lord always before me."

The belief of a Deity would be a *bridle to sin*—and a *spur to duty*. It would add wings to prayer, and oil to the lamp of our devotion. The belief of a Deity would cause dependence upon God in all our straits and exigencies. "I am God all-sufficient!" I am a God who can supply all your needs, scatter all your fears, resolve all your doubts, conquer all your temptations! The *arm of God's power* can never be shrunk! He can create mercy for us, and therefore can help, and not be beholden to the creature. Did we believe there is a God, we would so depend on his providence as not to use any indirect means; we should not run ourselves into sin, to rid ourselves out of trouble. "Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that you go to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron?" When men run to sinful shifts—it is because they either do not believe there is a God—or that he is all-sufficient!

**Use five: Seeing there is a God, let us labor to get a saving interest in him.** "This God is *our* God." Since the fall we have lost likeness to God, and communion with God; let us labor to recover this lost interest, and pronounce this Shibboleth, "*My* God." It is little comfort to know there is a God—unless he be ours! God offers himself to be our God. "I will be their God." Faith catches hold of the offer, it appropriates God, and makes all that is in him—over to us to be ours! His wisdom to be ours—to teach us; his holiness ours—to sanctify us; his Spirit ours—to comfort us; his mercy ours—to save us. **To be able to say, "God is mine!" is more than to have all the mines of gold and silver!**

**Use six: Seeing there is a God, let us serve and WORSHIP him as God.** It was an indictment brought against some, "They glorified him not as God."

Let us **pray** to him as to God. Pray with fervency. "An effectual fervent prayer avails much." *Fervency* is both the *fire* and the *incense*; without fervency it is no prayer.

Let us **love** him as God. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." To love him with all the heart, is to give him precedence in our love, to let him have the cream of our affections; to love him not only appreciatively, but intensively, as much as we can. As the sunbeams united in a *magnifying glass* burn the hotter—so all our affections should be united, that our love to God may be more ardent.

Let us **obey** him as God. All other creatures obey him! The *stars* fight his battles; the *wind* and *sea* obey him. How much more should man obey God, whom he has endued with a principle of reason. He is God, and has a sovereignty over us; therefore, as we received *life* from him, so we must receive a *law* from him, and submit to his will in all things. This is to kiss him with a kiss of loyalty, and it is to glorify him as God.

**II. Something EXPRESSED.** John 4:24. "God is a **Spirit**." "God is essentially, spirit." Zanchius.

### **What do you mean when you say, God is a Spirit?**

By a spirit I mean, God is an immaterial substance, of a pure, unmixed essence, not compounded of body and soul, without all extension of parts. The body is a dreggish thing. The more spiritual God's essence, the more noble and excellent it is. The spirits are the more refined part of the wine.

### **Wherein does God differ from *other* spirits?**

**[1] The ANGELS are spirits.** We must distinguish spirits. The angels are created; God is an *uncreated* Spirit. The angels are finite, and capable of being annihilated; the same power which made them

is able to reduce them to their first nothing; but God is an *infinite* Spirit. The angels are confined spirits, they are confined to a place; but God is an *immense* Spirit, and in all places at once. The angels, though spirits, are but ministering spirits. Though they are spirits, they are servants. God is a super-excellent Spirit, the Father of spirits.

**[2] The SOUL is a spirit.** "The spirit shall return to God who gave it."

### **How does God, being a Spirit, differ from the soul?**

Servetus and Osiander thought, that the soul being infused, conveyed into man the very spirit and substance of God. This is an absurd opinion, for the essence of God is incommunicable.

When it is said the soul is a spirit, it means that God has made it intelligible, and stamped upon it his *likeness*, not his *essence*.

### **But is it not said, that we are made partakers of the divine nature?**

By divine nature there, is meant divine qualities. 2 Pet 1:1. We are made partakers of the divine nature, not by identity or union with the divine *essence*—but by a transformation into the divine *likeness*. Thus you see how God differs from other spirits—angels and souls of men. He is a Spirit of transcendent excellence, the "*Father* of spirits."

Against this Vorstius and the *Anthropomorphites* object, that, in Scripture, a human shape and figure is given to God; he is said to have eyes and hands.

It is contrary to the nature of a spirit to have a corporeal substance. "Handle me, and see me: for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have." *Bodily* members are ascribed to God, not properly—but *metaphorically*, and in a borrowed sense. By the *right hand* of the Lord is meant his power; by the *eyes* of the Lord is meant his

wisdom. Now that God is a Spirit, and is not capable of bodily shape or substance, is clear, for a body is visible—but God is invisible; therefore he is a Spirit. "Whom no man has seen, nor can see;" not by an eye of sense. A body is local, can be but in one place at once—but God is everywhere, in all places at once; therefore he is a Spirit. Psalm 139:9, 8. God's center is everywhere, and his circumference is nowhere. A body being compounded of integral parts may be dissolved; but the Godhead is not capable of dissolution. He can have no end—from whom all things have their beginning. So that it clearly appears that God is a Spirit, which adds to the perfection of his nature.

**Use one: If God is a Spirit, then he is *impenetrable*;** he is not capable of being hurt. Wicked men set up their banners, and bend their forces against God; they are said to *fight against God*. But what will this fighting avail? What hurt can they do to the Deity? God is a Spirit, and therefore cannot receive any hurtful impression. Wicked men may *imagine evil* against the Lord. "What do you imagine against the Lord?" But God being a Spirit is impenetrable. The wicked may eclipse his *glory*—but cannot touch his *essence*. God can hurt his enemies—but they cannot hurt him. Julian might throw up his dagger into the air against Heaven—but could not touch the Deity.

God is a Spirit, *invisible*. How can the wicked with all their forces hurt him, when they cannot see him? Hence all the attempts of the wicked against God are foolish, and prove abortive. "The kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord and against his anointed. He who sits in the heavens shall laugh." God is a Spirit, he can wound them—but they cannot touch him.

**Use two: If God is a Spirit, it shows the folly of the Papists, who worship him by pictures and images.** As a spirit, we cannot make any image to represent him. Deut 4:12, "The Lord spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice."

God being a Spirit is imperceptible, cannot be discerned; how then can there be any picture made of him? Isa 40:18, "To whom, then, can we compare God? What image might we find to resemble him?" How can you paint the Deity? Can we make an image of that which we never saw? You saw no image. God is a Spirit. It were folly to endeavor to make a picture of the soul, because it is a thing spiritual, or to paint the angels, because they are spirits.

God is also an *omnipresent* Spirit; he is present in all places "Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord." Therefore, being everywhere present, it is absurd to worship him by an image. Were it not a foolish thing to bow down to the king's picture, when the king is present? So it is to worship God's image, when God himself is present.

**How then shall we conceive of God as a Spirit, if we may make no image or resemblance of him?**

We must conceive of him *spiritually*. In his *attributes*; his holiness, justice, and goodness, which are the beams by which his divine nature shines forth. We must conceive of him as he is in Christ. "Christ is the image of the invisible God." Set the eyes of your faith on Christ as God-man. In Christ we see some sparklings of the divine glory; in him there is the exact resemblance of all his Father's excellencies. The wisdom, love, and holiness of God the Father, shine forth in Christ. "He who has seen me, has seen the Father."

**Use three: If God is a Spirit, it shows us that the more spiritual we grow, the more we grow like to God.** How do earth and spirit agree? Phil 3:19. Earthly ones may give for their insignia, the *mole* or *rat*, which live in the earth. What resemblance is there between an earthly heart, and him who is a Spirit? The more spiritual anyone is, the more like God.

**What is it to be spiritual?**

To be refined and holy, to have the heart still in heaven, to be thinking of God and glory, and to be carried up in a fiery chariot of love to God. Psalm 73:35. "Whom have I in heaven but you?" which Beza paraphrases thus, "Begone earth! Oh that I were in heaven with you!" A Christian, who is taken off from these earthly things, has a noble spiritual soul, and most resembles him who is a Spirit.

**Use four: It shows that the worship which God requires of us, and is most acceptable to him, is spiritual worship.**

"True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:23-24. Spiritual worship is pure worship. Though God will have the service of our bodies, our eyes and hands lifted up, to testify to others that reverence we have of his glory and majesty—yet he will chiefly have the worship of the soul. "Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit." God prizes spirit-worship, because it comes near to his own nature, which is a Spirit.

**What is it to worship God in spirit?**

(1.) To worship him without ceremonies. The ceremonies of the law, which God himself ordained, are now abrogated, and out of date. Christ the *substance* being come, the *shadows* fly away; and therefore the apostle calls the legal ceremonies, carnal rites. If we may not use those Jewish ceremonies which God once appointed, then we may not use those which he never appointed.

(2.) To worship God in spirit, is to worship him with faith in the blood of the Messiah. Heb 10:19. It is to worship him with the utmost zeal and intensesness of soul. This is to worship God in spirit. The more spiritual any service is, the nearer it comes to God, who is a Spirit, and the more excellent it is. The *spiritual* part of duty is the *fat* of the sacrifice: it is the soul and quintessence of true religion. The richest cordials are made of spirits, and the best duties are such

as are of a spiritual nature. God is a Spirit, and will be worshiped in spirit; it is not *pomp* of worship—but *purity*, which God accepts.

*Repentance* is not in the outward severities used to the body—such as penance, fasting, and chastising the body—but it consists in the sacrifice of a broken heart. *Thanksgiving* does not stand in church-music, the melody of an organ—but rather in making melody in the heart to the Lord. Eph 5:19. *Prayer* is not the tuning the voice into a heartless confession, or counting over a few prayer beads—but it consists in sighs and groans, Rom 8:26. When the *fire of fervency* is put to the incense of prayer—then it ascends as a sweet fragrance to God. The true *holy water* is not that which the pope sprinkles—but is distilled from the penitent eye. Spirit-worship best pleases that God who is a Spirit. John 4:23, "True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." See the great acceptance of such, and how God is delighted with spiritual worship. This is the savory meat which God loves. How few mind this! They give him more dregs than souls; they think it enough to bring their duties—but not their hearts; which makes God disclaim the very services he himself appointed. Isa 1:12. Ezek 33:31. Let us then give God spirit-worship, which best suits his nature.

A sovereign elixir full of virtue may be given in a few drops. So a *little* prayer, if it be with the heart and spirit, may have much virtue and efficacy in it. The publican made but a short prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner," but it was full of life and spirit; it came from the heart, therefore it was accepted by God.

**Use five: Let us pray to God, that as he is a Spirit, so he will give us of his Spirit.** The essence of God is incommunicable; but not the motions, the presence and influences of his Spirit. When the *sun* shines in a room, not the body of the sun is there—but the light, heat, and influence of the sun. God has made a promise of his Spirit. "I will put my Spirit within you." Turn *promises* into prayers. "O Lord, you who are a Spirit, give me of your Spirit; I beg your Spirit, your enlightening, sanctifying, quickening, Spirit." Melancthon

prayed, "Lord, inflame my soul with your Holy Spirit." How needful is his Spirit! We cannot do any duty without it, in a lively manner. When this *wind* blows upon our sails—we move swiftly towards heaven. Let us pray, therefore, that God would give us of the influence of his Spirit, that we may move more vigorously in the sphere of true religion.

**Use six: As God is a Spirit, so the REWARDS that he gives are spiritual.** As the chief blessings he gives us in this life are spiritual blessings, Eph 1:1, not gold and silver; as he gives Christ, his love; he fills us with grace; so the main rewards he gives us after this life are spiritual, "a crown of glory which does not fade away." Earthly crowns fade—but the believer's crown being spiritual, is immortal, a never-fading crown. "It is impossible," says one, "for that which is spiritual, to be subject to change or corruption." This may comfort a Christian in all his labors and sufferings; he lays out himself for God, and has little or no reward here; but remember, God, who is a Spirit, will give *spiritual* rewards—a sight of his face in heaven, white robes, an eternal weight of glory! Be not then weary of God's service; think of the spiritual reward, the crown of glory which does not fade away.

### **III. What kind of Spirit is God?**

Answer: God is **infinite**. All created beings are finite. Though infinity may be applied to all God's attributes—he is infinitely merciful, infinitely wise, infinitely holy—yet, if we take infinity it implies God's **omnipresence**.

## **The OMNIPRESENCE of God.**

The Greek word for "infinite" signifies "without bounds or limits." *God is not confined to any **place***. He is infinite, and so is present in all places at once. His center is everywhere. "In no place is God's Being either confined or excluded," Augustine. "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain you." The Turks build their temples open at the top, to show that God cannot be confined to them—but is in all places by his presence. God's essence is not limited either to the regions above, or to the terrestrial globe—but is everywhere. As philosophers say of the soul, "the soul is in every part of the body," in the eye, heart, foot; so we may say of God, his essence is everywhere; his circuit is in heaven, and in earth, and sea, and he is in all places of his circuit at once. "This is to be infinite." God, who bounds everything else, is himself without bounds. He sets bounds to the sea, "Hitherto shall you come, and no further!" He sets bounds to the angels; they, like the cherubim, move and stand at his appointment, but he is infinite, without bounds. He who can span the heavens, and weigh the earth in scales, must needs be infinite!

Vorstius maintains that God is in all places at once—but not in regard of his essence; but by his virtue and influence: as the body of the sun is in heaven, it only sends forth its beams and influences to the earth; or as a king, who is in all places of his kingdom *authoritatively*, by his power and authority—but he is personally on his throne.

God, who is infinite, is in all places at once, not only by his *influence*—but by his *essence*; for, if his essence fills all places, then he must needs be there in person. Jer 23:34. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?"

But does not God say that heaven is his throne? Isa 66:6.

It is also said, that a humble heart is his throne. The humble heart is his throne, in regard to his *gracious* presence; and heaven is his throne, in regard to his *glorious* presence; and yet neither of these thrones will hold him, for the heaven of heavens cannot contain him.

But if God is infinite in all places—he is in *impure* places, and mingles with impurity.

Though God is in all places, in the *heart of a sinner* by his inspection, and in *hell* by his justice—yet he does not mingle with the impurity, or receive the least tincture of evil. "The divine nature does not intermix with created matter, nor is contaminated by its impurities," Augustine. No more than the sun shining on a dunghill is defiled, or its beauty spotted; or than Christ going among sinners was defiled, whose Godhead was a sufficient antidote against infection.

God must needs be infinite in all places at once, not only in regard to the simplicity and purity of his nature—but in regard to his power, which being so glorious, who can set bounds to him, or prescribe him a circuit to walk in? It is as if the drop should limit the ocean, or a candle set bounds to the sun.

**Use one: If God is infinite, present in all places at once, then it is certain he governs all things in his own person,** and needs no proxies or deputies to help him to carry on his government. He is in all places in an instant, and manages all affairs both in the earth and heaven. A king cannot be in all places of his kingdom in his own person, therefore he is forced to govern by deputies and viceregents, and they often pervert justice. But God, being infinite, needs no deputies, he is present in all places, he sees all with his own eyes, and hears all with his own ears; he is everywhere in his own person, therefore is fit to be the judge of the world; he will do everyone right.

**Use two: If God is infinite by his omnipresence, then see the greatness and immenseness of the divine majesty!** What a great God do we serve! "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the glory, and the majesty, and you are exalted as head above all." Well may the Scripture display the greatness of his glory, who is infinite in all places. He transcends our weak conceptions; how can our finite understanding comprehend him who is infinite? He is infinitely

above all our praises. "Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise." Oh what a poor nothing is man, when we think of God's infiniteness! As the stars disappear at the rising of the sun, oh, how does a man shrink into nothing, when infinite majesty shines forth in its glory! "The *nations* are as a drop in the bucket, or the small dust of the balance!" Oh, what a little of that drop are we individuals! The heathen thought they had sufficiently praised Jupiter when they called him *great Jupiter*. Of what immense majesty is God, who fills all places at once!

**Use three: If God is infinite, filling heaven and earth, see what a full portion the saints have. They have him who is infinite for their portion!** His fullness is an infinite fullness; and he is infinitely sweet, as well as infinitely full. If a cup is filled with wine, there is a sweet fullness—but still it is finite; but God is a sweet fullness, and it is infinite. He is infinitely full of beauty and of love. His riches are called *unsearchable*, because they are infinite, Eph 3:8. Stretch your thoughts as much as you can, there is that in God which exceeds; it is an infinite fullness. He is said to do abundantly for us, above all that we can ask. "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us," Ephesians 3:20. What can an ambitious person ask? He can ask crowns and kingdoms, millions of worlds; but God can give more than we can *ask*, nay, more than we can *imagine*, because he is infinite!

We can imagine—what if all the dust were turned to silver—what if every flower were a ruby—what if every sand in the sea a diamond; yet God can give more than we can imagine, because he is infinite. **Oh how rich are they who have the infinite God for their portion!** Well might David say, "Surely I have a delightful inheritance!" Psalm 16:6.

We may go with the bee from flower to flower—but we shall never have full satisfaction until we come to the infinite God! Jacob said: "I have enough!" In the Hebrew it is, "I have all!" because he had the

infinite God for his portion! Gen 33:11. God being an infinite fullness, there is no fear of lack for any of the heirs of heaven. Though there are millions of saints and angels, who have a share in God's riches—yet he has enough for them all, because he is infinite! Though a thousand men behold the sun—there is light enough for them all. Put ever so many buckets into the sea—there is water enough to fill them. Though an innumerable company of saints and angels are to be filled out of God's fullness—yet God, being infinite, has enough to satisfy them. God has land enough to give to all his heirs. There can be no lack, in that which is infinite.

**Use four: If God is infinite, he fills all places, and is everywhere present.** This is dreadful to the wicked. God is their enemy, and they cannot escape him, nor flee from him, for he is everywhere present! They are never out of his eye, nor out of his reach. "Your hand shall find out all your enemies." What caves or thickets can men hide in—that God cannot find them? Go where they will, he is present. "Where shall I flee from your presence?" If a man owes a debt to another he may make his escape, and flee into another land, where the creditor cannot find him. "But where shall I flee from *your* presence?" God is infinite, he is in all places; so that he will find out his enemies and punish them!

But is it not said that "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord?" Gen 4:16.

The meaning is, he went out from the church of God, where the visible signs of God's presence were, and where God in a special manner manifested his sweet presence to his people; but Cain could not go out of God's sight; for God being infinite is everywhere present. Sinners can escape from neither an accusing conscience, nor from a revenging God!

**Use five: If God is everywhere present, then for a Christian to walk with God is not impossible.** God is not only in heaven—but he is in earth too. Heaven is his throne, there he sits; the earth is

his footstool, there he stands. He is everywhere present, therefore we may come to walk with God. "Enoch walked with God." If God was confined to heaven, a trembling soul might think, "How can I converse with God, how can I walk with him who lives above the upper region?" But God is not confined to heaven; he is omnipresent; he is *above* us—yet he is *about* us, he is *near* to us. "He is not far from each one of us." Acts 17:27. He is not far from the assembly of the saints, "God has taken His place in the divine assembly," Psalm 82:1. He is present with us, God is in everyone of us; so that here on earth we may walk with God.

In heaven the saints *rest* with him, on earth they *walk* with him. To walk with God is to walk by faith. We are said to "draw near to God," Heb 10:22, and to see him, Heb 11:27, "As seeing him who is invisible," and to have fellowship with him. 1 John 1:3, "Our fellowship is with the Father." Thus we may take a turn with him every day by faith. It is slighting God not to walk with him. If a king was in our presence, it would be slighting him to neglect him, and play with the pet. There is no walk in the world so sweet as to walk with God. "They shall walk in the light of your countenance." "Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord." It is like walking among beds of spices, which send forth a fragrant perfume.

**Use six: If God is infinite in his glorious essence, learn to admire—where you cannot fathom.** The angels wear a veil, they cover their faces, as adoring this infinite majesty. Isa 6:6. Elijah wrapped himself in a mantle when God's glory passed by. Admire—where you cannot fathom. "Can you by searching find out God?" Here on earth, we see some beams of his glory, we see him in the looking-glass of the creation; we see him in his picture—his image shines in the saints. But who can search out all his essential glory? What angel can measure these pyramids? "Can you by searching find out God?" He is infinite. We can no more search out his infinite perfections, than a man upon the top of the highest mountain can take a star in his hand! Oh, have God-admiring thoughts! Adore where you cannot fathom!

There are many mysteries in nature which we cannot fathom; why the sea should be higher than the earth—yet not drown it; why the Nile should overflow in summer, when, by the course of nature, the waters are lowest. "As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things." Ecclesiastes 11:5. If these things perplex us, how may the infinite mystery of the Deity transcend our most raised intellectuals! Ask the geometrician, if he can, with a ruler, measure the heavens. Just so—we are unable to measure the infinite perfections of God. In heaven we shall see God *clearly*—but not *fully*, for he is infinite. He will communicate himself to us, according to the capacity of our vessel—but not the immenseness of his nature. Adore then where you cannot fathom!

If God is infinite in all places, let us not limit him. "They limited the Holy One of Israel." *It is limiting God to confine him within the narrow compass of our reason.* Reason thinks God must go such a way to work, or the business will never be effected. This is to limit God to our reason; whereas he is infinite, and his ways are past finding out. In the deliverance of the church, it is limiting God, either to set him a time, or prescribe him a method for deliverance. God will deliver Zion—but he will be left to his own liberty; he will not be tied to a place, to a time, or to an instrument, which were to limit him, and then he would not be infinite. God will go his own way, he will confound human reason, he will work by improbabilities, he will save in such a way, as we think would destroy. Now he acts like himself, like an infinite wonder-working God. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" Romans 11:33.

## **The OMNISCIENCE of God.**

"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." Hebrews 4:13. "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." Glorious things are spoken of God; he transcends our thoughts, and the praises of angels. *God's glory lies chiefly in his **attributes**, which are the several beams by which the divine nature shines forth.* Among other of his orient excellencies, this is not the least—"the Lord is a God of knowledge;" or as the Hebrew word is, "A God of knowledges." He has a full idea and cognisance of all things; the world is to him a transparent body. He makes a heart-anatomy. "I am he who searches the thoughts and the heart." The clouds are no canopy, the night is no curtain—to draw between us and his sight. "Even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are both alike to you."

There is not a **word** we whisper but God hears it. "There is not a word in my tongue—but lo, O Lord, you know it altogether." There is not the most subtle **thought** that comes into our mind—but God perceives it. "I know their thoughts." Thoughts speak as loud in God's ears—as words do in ours. All our **actions**, though ever so subtly contrived, and secretly conducted, are visible to the eye of Omniscience. "I know their works." Achan hid the Babylonish garment in the earth—but God brought it to light. Minerva was drawn in such curious colors, and so lively pencilled, that whichever way one turned, Minerva's eyes were upon him. Just so, whichever way we turn ourselves, God's eye is upon us!

*"Him who is perfect in knowledge."* God knows whatever is knowable; he knows future contingencies. He foretold Israel's coming out of Babylon, and the virgin's conceiving. By this the Lord proves the truth of his Godhead, against idol gods. "Tell us the coming events, then we will know that you are gods." The perfection of God's knowledge is primary. He is the original, the pattern, and prototype of all knowledge; others borrow their knowledge of him; the angels light their lamps at this glorious sun.

God's knowledge is **pure**. It is not contaminated with the object. Though God knows sin—yet it is to hate and punish it. No evil can mix or incorporate with his knowledge, any more than the sun can be defiled with the vapors which arise from the earth. God's knowledge is facile; it is without any difficulty. We study and search for knowledge. Prov 2:2. "If you *seek* for her as for silver." The lamp of God's knowledge is so infinitely bright, that all things are intelligible to him.

God's knowledge is **infallible**; there is no mistake in His knowledge. Human knowledge is subject to error. A physician may mistake the treatment of a disease; but God's knowledge is unerring. He can neither deceive, nor be deceived. He cannot deceive--because he is truth; nor be deceived—because He has infinite wisdom.

God's knowledge is **instantaneous**. Our knowledge is successive, one thing after another. We argue from the effect to the cause. God knows things past, present, and to come—at once; they are all before him in one entire prospect.

God's knowledge is **retentive**; he never loses any of his knowledge; he *remembers* as well as *understands*. Many things elapse out of our minds—but God's knowledge is eternalized. Things transacted a thousand years ago, are as fresh to him as if they were done but the last minute. Thus he is perfect in knowledge.

But is it not said, "I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. Then I will know."

It could not be that God was ignorant; because there is mention made of a cry; but the Lord speaks there *after the manner of a judge*, who will first examine the cause before he passes the sentence. When he is upon a work of justice he is not in a hurry, as if he did not care where he hits; but he goes straight against offenders. "He lays judgement to the line, and righteousness to the plummet."

Hos 13:12, "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is hid." ("The guilt of Ephraim is stored up, his sins are kept on record." *NIV translation*.)

Not that his sin is hid from God—but his sin is hid; that is—*the sins of Ephraim have been collected and stored away for punishment*. That this is the meaning, is clear by the foregoing words, his iniquity is *collected*. As the clerk of the court binds up the indictments of malefactors in a bundle, and at the trial brings out the indictments and reads them in court; so God binds up men's sins in a bundle, and, at the day of judgment, this bundle shall be opened, and all their sins brought to light before men and angels!

God is **infinite** in knowledge. He cannot but be so; for he who gives being to things, must needs have a clear inspection of them. "He who planted the ear, shall he not hear? He who formed the eye, shall he not see?" He who makes a watch or engine, knows all the workmanship in it. God, who made the heart, knows all its movements. He is full of eyes, like Ezekiel's wheels, and, as Austin says, *Totus oculus*, "All eye." It ought to be so; for he is the "Judge of all the world." There are so many causes to be brought before him, and so many people to be tried, that he must have a perfect knowledge, or he could not do justice. A human judge cannot proceed without a jury, the jury must search the cause, and give in the verdict; but God can judge without a jury. He knows all things in and of himself, and needs no witnesses to inform him. A human judge judges only matters of *fact*—but God judges the *heart*. He not only judges wicked *actions*—but wicked *designs*. He sees the treason of the heart, and punishes it.

**Use one:** Is God infinite in knowledge? Is he light, and in him is there no darkness? **Then how unlike are they to God who are darkness, and in whom is no light, who are destitute of knowledge, such as the heathen who never heard of God!** And are there not many among us, who are no better than *baptized heathen*? who need to seek the first principles of the oracles of God.

It is sad, that after the *sun of the gospel* has shined so long in our horizon, that the veil should still be upon their heart. Such as are enveloped in ignorance cannot give God a reasonable service. Rom 12:2. **Ignorance is the nurse of impiety.** The schoolmen say, "Every sin is founded upon ignorance". Jer 9:3, "They proceed from one evil to another, and they do not take Me into account." Where ignorance reigns in the understanding, lust rages in the affections. Prov 19:2, "That the mind be without knowledge, it is not good." Such have neither faith nor fear: no faith; for knowledge carries the torch before faith. "Those who know your name shall put their trust in you." A man can no more believe without knowledge, than the eye can see without light. He can have no fear of God; for how can they fear him whom they do not know? The covering of Haman's face was a sad presage of death. When people's minds are covered with ignorance, it is a covering of the face, which is a fatal forerunner of destruction. "The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's feeding-trough, but Israel does not know; My people do not understand." Isaiah 1:3

**Use two: If God is a God of infinite knowledge, then see the folly of hypocrisy.** "Hypocrites do not actually *do* good, they merely make a *show* of it," Melanchthon. They carry it fair with men—but care not how bad their hearts are; they live in secret sin. "They say—How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" Psalm 73:11. "What does God know? Can He judge through thick darkness?" Job 22:13 "God has forgotten, he hides his face, he will never see it." But, "His understanding is infinite!" He has a window to look into men's hearts! He has a key to open up the heart; he beholds all the sinful workings of men's spirits, as in a glass bee-hive we can see the bees working in their combs. Matt 6:6, "Your Father who sees in secret." God sees in secret. As a merchant enters debts in his book, so God has his debt-book, in which he enters every sin. Jeroboam's wife disguised herself, so that the prophet would not know her; but he discerned her. "When Ahijah heard her footsteps at the door, he called out—Come in, wife of Jeroboam! Why are you pretending to be someone else? I have bad news for you!" 1 Kings

14:6. The hypocrite thinks to disguise and juggle with God—but God will unmask him. "God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing." "For they have done outrageous things in Israel; they have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives and in my name have spoken lies, which I did not tell them to do. **I know it and am a witness to it**—declares the Lord." Jeremiah 29:23

Ay—but the hypocrite hopes he shall color over his sin, and make it look very good. Absalom masks over his treason with the pretense of a religious vow. Judas cloaks his envy at Christ, and his covetousness, with the pretense of "charity to the poor." Jehu makes religion a cloak for his selfish design. But God sees through these fig-leaves! You may see a jade under his gilt trappings. "My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes. Jeremiah 16:17. **He who has an eye to see—will find a hand to punish!**

**Use three: Is God so infinite in knowledge? Then we should always feel as under his omniscient eye.** "We ought to live as if always in full view of God," Seneca. Let us place David's prospect before our eye, "I have set the Lord always before me." Seneca counseled Lucilius, that whatever he was doing, he should imagine some of the Roman nobles stood before him, and then he would do nothing dishonorable. The consideration of God's omniscience would be preventive of much sin. The eye of *man* will restrain from sin; and will not *God's eyes* much more? "Will he even assault the queen right here in the palace, *before my very eyes?*" the king roared." Esther 7:8. Will we sin when our Judge looks on? Would men speak so vainly, if they considered God overheard them?

Latimer took heed to every word in his examination, when he heard the pen write behind the curtains. Just so, what care would people have of their words, if they remembered that God heard, and his pen was writing everything down in heaven? Would people commit immorality, if they believed God was a spectator of their wickedness, and would make them do penance in hell for it? Would they defraud

in their dealings, and use false weights, if they knew God saw them, and for making their weights lighter would make their damnation heavier?

Viewing ourselves as under the eye of God's omniscience, would cause reverence in the worship of God. God sees the frame and demeanor of our hearts, when we come before him. How would this call in our straggling thoughts? How would it animate and invigorate duty? It would make us put *fire* to the incense. We must worship God with the utmost zeal and intenseness of spirit. To think that *God is in this place* would add *wings* to prayer, and *oil* to the flame of our devotion!

**Use four: Is God's knowledge infinite? Study sincerity, be what you seem.** "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7. **Men judge the heart by the actions. God judges the actions by the heart.** If the heart is sincere, God will see the *faith* and bear with the *failing*. Asa had his blemishes—but his heart was right with God. God saw his *sincerity*, and pardoned his *infirmity*. Sincerity in a Christian is like chastity in a wife, which excuses many failings. Sincerity makes our duties acceptable, like musk among linen, which perfumes it. As Jehu said to Jehonadab, "Is your heart right with me? And he said, It is. If it is—give me your hand; and he took him up into the chariot." Just so, if God sees that our heart is right, that we love him, and aim at his glory—he says, "Give me your prayers and tears; now you shall come up with me into the chariot of glory!" Sincerity makes our services to be golden, and God will not cast away the gold, though it may lack some weight. Is God omniscient, and his eye chiefly upon the heart? Wear the *belt of truth* about you, and never leave it off.

**Use five: Is God a God of infinite knowledge? Then there is comfort,** (1.) To the saints in particular. (2.) To the church in general.

**(1.) Comfort to SAINTS in particular.** In case of private devotion. Christian, you set hours apart for God, your thoughts run upon him as your treasure; God takes notice of every good thought. "He had a book of remembrance written for those who thought upon his name." You enter into your closet, and pray to your Father in secret; he hears every sigh and groan! "My groaning is not hidden from you." You water the seed of your prayer with tears—God bottles every tear! "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book!" Psalm 56:8. When the secrets of all hearts shall be opened, God will make an honorable mention of the zeal and devotion of his people, and he himself will be the herald of their praises. "Then shall every man have praise of God."

The infiniteness of God's knowledge is a comfort, in the case of saints who have not a clear knowledge of themselves. They find so much corruption, that they judge they have no grace. "If it is so--why am I thus? If I have grace, why is my heart in so dead and earthly a frame?" Oh remember, God is of infinite knowledge—he can spy grace where you cannot; he can see grace hidden under corruption, as the stars may be hidden behind a cloud. God can see that holiness in you, which you can not discern in yourself. He can spy *the flower of grace* in you, though overtopped with weeds. "Because there is some good thing in him." God sees some good thing in His people--when they can see no good in themselves; and though they judge themselves harshly, He will forgive their sins and infirmities!

It is comfort in respect of personal injuries. It is the saints' lot to suffer. The *head* being crowned with thorns, the *feet* must not tread upon roses. If saints find a real purgatory, it is in this life; but this is their comfort—that God sees the wrong which is done to them; the pupil of his eye is touched, and is he not sensible of it? Paul was scourged by cruel hands. "Thrice was I beaten with rods;" as if you should see a slave whip the king's son! God beholds it. "I know their sorrows." The wicked make wounds in the backs of the saints, and then pour in vinegar; but God writes down their cruelty. Believers

are a part of Christ's mystical body; and for every drop of a saint's blood spilt—God puts a drop of wrath in his vial!

**(2.) Comfort to the CHURCH of God in general.** If God is a God of knowledge, he sees all the plots of the enemies against Zion, and can make them abortive. The wicked are treacherous, having borrowed their skill from the old serpent! They dig deep, to hide their counsels from God—but he sees them, and can easily counterwork them. The dragon is described with *seven heads*—to show how he plots against the church; but God is described with *seven eyes*—to show that he sees all the plots and stratagems of the enemies; and when they deal treacherously, he can easily confound them. "Come," says Pharaoh, "let us deal wisely." But he never more played the fool, than when he thought to deal wisely. "During the last watch of the night the Lord *looked* down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army, and threw it into confusion." Exodus 14:24. How may this, like sap in the vine, comfort the church of God in her earthly state! The Lord has an eye in all the councils and machinations of the enemy; he sees them in their efforts, and can blow them up in their own mine!

## **The ETERNITY of God.**

The next attribute is, "God is eternal." "From everlasting to everlasting, you are God."

**There are three kinds of beings:**

1. Such beings as had a *beginning*—and shall have an *end*. Such as all animate creatures—the animals, birds, fish—which at death are destroyed and return to dust. Their being ends with their life.

2. Such beings as had a *beginning*—but shall have *no end*. Such as angels and the souls of men, which are eternal once they are brought into existence—they abide forever.

3. Such as is *without beginning*—and *without ending*. This is proper only to God. He is *from* everlasting—*to* everlasting. This is God's title, a jewel of his crown. He is called "the King eternal." *Jehovah* is a word that properly sets forth God's eternity. It is a word so dreadful, that the Jews trembled to name or read it; and used *Adonai*, 'Lord,' in its place. *Jehovah* contains in it time past, present, and to come. "I am the Alpha and the Omega—says the Lord God—who **is**, and who **was**, and who **is to come**, the Almighty." Revelation 1:8. This verse illustrates the word *Jehovah*; (who *is*) he subsists of himself, having a pure and independent being; (who *was*) God alone, was before time; there is no searching into the records of eternity; (who *is to come*).

"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever!" Psalm 45:6. The doubling of the word ratifies the certainty of it, as the doubling of Pharaoh's dream. His *kingdom* has no end; his *crown* has no successors.

I shall prove that God alone could be eternal—without *beginning*. *Angels* could not be eternal; they are but creatures, and though spirits—they were created. Therefore their beginning may be known; their antiquity may be searched into. If you ask, *when were they created?* Some think before the world was; but not so: for what was before time was eternal. The first origin of angels reaches back no further, than the beginning of the world. It is thought by the learned, that the angels were made on the day on which the heavens were made. "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Jerome, Gregory, and venerable Bede understand it, that when God laid the foundation-stone of the world, the angels being then created, sang anthems of joy and praise.

It is proper to God only to be eternal, without beginning. He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. No creature can write itself *Alpha*, that is only a flower of the crown of heaven. Exod 3:14. "I am who I am," that is, "I am the one who always is. I am he who exists *from*, and *to* eternity!" "The Lord will reign forever and ever!" Exodus 15:18. "The Lord is King forever and ever!" Psalm 10:16.

**Use one: Here is thunder and lightning to the WICKED.**

"Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever!" Revelation 15:7. God is eternal, therefore the torments of the wicked are eternal! God lives forever; and as long as God lives, he will be punishing the damned! This should be as the handwriting upon the wall, which should have this effect— "and his face turned pale with fear. Such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him." Daniel 5:6. The sinner takes liberty to sin; he breaks God's laws, like a wild beast that breaks over the hedge, and leaps into forbidden pasture; he sins with greediness, as if he thought he could not sin fast enough. "They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed." Ephesians 4:19. But remember, one of God's names is *Eternal*, and as long as God is eternal he has time enough to reckon with all his enemies. To make sinners tremble, let them think of these three things: the torments of the damned are without intermission, without mixture, and eternal.

**(1.) Without intermission.** Their pains shall be acute and sharp, and no relaxation; the fire shall not be slackened or abated. "They have no rest day nor night;" like one who has his joints stretched continually on the rack, and has no ease. The wrath of God is compared to a *stream* of brimstone. Isa 30:33. Why to a stream? Because a stream runs without intermission; so God's wrath runs like a stream, and pours out without intermission. In the pains of this present life, there is some abatement and intermission; the fever abates; after a fit of the stone, the patient has some ease; but the

pains of hell are intense and violent. The damned soul never says, "I am now more at ease."

**(2.) Without mixture.** Hell is a place of pure justice. In this life, God in anger remembers mercy, he mixes compassion with suffering. Asher's shoe was of iron—but his foot was dipped in oil. Affliction is the iron shoe—but mercy is mixed with it; the foot is dipped in oil. But the torments of the damned have no mixture. "They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out *without mixture*." No mixture of mercy.

How is the cup of wrath said to be *mixed*? "For the Lord holds a cup in his hand; it is full of foaming wine *mixed* with spices. He pours the wine out in judgment, and all the wicked must drink it, draining it to the dregs!" Psalm 75:8. Yet in the Revelation it is said to be *without mixture*. It is mixed, that is, it is full of all the ingredients that may make it bitter; the worm, the fire, the curse of God, all these are bitter ingredients. It is a mixed cup—yet it is without mixture; there shall be nothing to afford the least comfort, no mixture of mercy, and so without mixture. In the *sacrifice of jealousy*, Numb 5:15, no oil was put to it; so, in the torments of the damned, there is no oil of mercy to abate their sufferings.

**(3.) Without cessation, eternal. The pleasures of sin are but for a season—but the torments of the wicked are forever!** Sinners have a short feast—but a long reckoning! Origen erroneously thought, that after a thousand years, the damned would be released out of their misery; but the worm, the fire, the prison—are all eternal. "The smoke of their torment rises forever and ever, and they will have no relief day or night." Revelation 14:11. "The torments of hell keep on punishing, they never end," Prosper. *Eternity* is a sea without bottom and banks. After millions of years, there is not one minute in eternity spent; and the damned must be ever burning—but never consumed, always dying—but never dead. "They shall seek death—but shall not find it."

The fire of hell is such, as multitudes of tears will not quench it; and length of time will not finish it! The vial of God's wrath will be always dropping upon the sinner! As long as God is eternal, he lives to be avenged upon the wicked. Oh eternity! eternity! who can fathom it? Mariners have their plummets to measure the depths of the sea; but what line or plummet shall we use to fathom the depth of eternity? The breath of the Lord kindles the infernal lake, Isa 30:33; where shall we have buckets to quench *that* fire?

Oh eternity! If all the body of the earth and sea were turned to sand, and all the air up to the starry heaven were nothing but sand, and *a little bird* should come every thousand years, and fetch away in her bill but the tenth part of a grain of all that heap of sand; what numberless years would be spent before that vast heap of sand would be fetched away! Yet, if at the end of all that time, the sinner might come out of hell, there would be some *hope*. But that word "Forever" breaks the heart. "The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever." What a terror is this to the wicked--enough to put them into a cold sweat, to think, as long as God is eternal, he lives forever to be avenged upon them!

Here the question may be asked—**Why should sin that is committed in a short time, be punished eternally?**

We must hold with Augustine, "that God's judgments on the wicked, may be *secret*—but never *unjust*." The reason why sin committed in a short time is eternally punished, is, because every sin is committed against an infinite essence, which nothing less than eternity of punishment can satisfy. Why is treason punished with death—but because it is against the king's person, which is sacred; much more that offence which is against God's crown and dignity is of a heinous and infinite nature, and cannot be satisfied with less than eternal punishment.

**Use two: Of comfort to the GODLY.** God is eternal, therefore he lives forever to reward the godly. "To those who seek for glory and

honor, eternal life." The people of God are now in a suffering condition. "Bonds and afflictions await me." The wicked are clad in purple, and fare deliciously, while the godly suffer. The *goats* climb upon high mountains, while Christ's *sheep* are in the valley of slaughter. But here is the comfort—God is eternal, and he has appointed eternal recompenses for the saints. In heaven are fresh delights, and sweetness without excess. That which is the crown and zenith of heaven's happiness, is—that it is "eternal." Were there but the least suspicion that this glory must cease, it would much eclipse, yes, embitter it; but it is eternal. "An eternal weight of glory."

What angel can span eternity? The saints shall bathe themselves in the *rivers* of divine pleasure; and these rivers can never be dried up. "At your right hand are pleasures for evermore." This is the highest strain in the apostle's rhetoric, "Forever with the Lord!" In heaven, there is peace without trouble, ease without pain, glory without end; "forever with the Lord!"

Let this comfort the saints in all their troubles; their sufferings are but short—but their reward is eternal! Eternity makes heaven to be heaven! Eternity is the diamond in the ring! Oh blessed *day*, which shall have *no night*! The *sunlight of glory* shall rise upon the soul, and never set! Oh blessed *spring*, that shall have no autumn, or fall of the leaf. The Roman emperors have three crowns set upon their heads—the first of iron, the second of silver, the third of gold; so the Lord sets three crowns on his children—grace, comfort, and glory. The saints' crown is eternal, "You shall receive a crown of glory which never fades away!" The wicked have a never-dying worm; and the godly a never-fading crown! Oh how should this be a spur to virtue! How willing should we be to work for God! Though we have nothing here on earth, God has time enough to reward his people. The crown of eternity shall be set upon their head!

**Use three: Of exhortation.** *Study* eternity. Our thoughts should chiefly run upon eternity. We all wish for something that may delight our mind. If we could have lived, as Augustine says, from the infancy

of the world to the world's old age, what is this—compared to eternity? What is time, measured with eternity? As the earth is but a small point, compared to the heavens. Just so, **time** is scarcely a moment—compared to eternity! And then, what is this poor life which crumbles away so fast? *Oh, think of eternity!*

Brethren, we are every day *traveling to eternity*; and whether we wake or sleep—we are going our journey. Some of us are upon the *borders* of eternity. Oh study the shortness of life—and length of eternity!

More particularly think of *God's* eternity and the *soul's* eternity. Think of **God's** eternity. He is the *Ancient of Days*, who was before all time. There is a figurative description of God, "As I kept watching, thrones were set in place, and *the Ancient of Days* took His seat. His *clothing* was white like snow, and the *hair* of His head like whitest wool. His throne was flaming fire; its wheels were blazing fire. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from His presence. Thousands upon thousands served Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was convened, and the books were opened." Daniel 7:9-10. His clothing was white like snow, which signifies his majesty. His hair, like the pure wool, signifies his holiness. His title, *the Ancient of Days*, signifies his eternity.

The thought of God's eternity should make us have high adoring thoughts of God. We are apt to have low, irreverent thoughts of him. "You thought I was such a one as yourself," weak and mortal. But if we would think of God's eternity, when all our power ceases—he is King eternal, his crown flourishes forever, he can make us happy or miserable forever—this would make us have adoring thoughts of God. "The twenty-four elders *fall down* before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne." Revelation 4:10. The saints *fall down*, to signify by that humble posture, that they are not worthy to sit in God's presence. They fall down and they worship him who lives forever and ever; they do as it were, kiss his feet. They cast their

crowns before the throne, they lay all their honor at his feet; thus they show humble adoration to the eternal essence. Study God's eternity, it will make us adore him—where we cannot fathom him.

Think of the **soul's** eternity. As God is eternal, so he has made *us* eternal. We are never-dying creatures; we are shortly entering upon our eternal state—either of eternal happiness or eternal misery. Have serious thoughts of this. Say, "O my soul, which of these two eternities is likely to be your portion? I must shortly depart hence, and where then shall I go—to which of these eternities, either of glory or misery shall I go?" The serious meditation on the eternal state we are to pass into, would work strongly with us.

**(1.) Thoughts of eternal torments, are a good antidote against sin.** Sin tempts with its pleasure; but when we think of eternity, it may cool the intemperate heat of lust. Shall I, for the pleasure of sin for a season—endure eternal pain? Sin, like those locusts, Rev 9:7, seems to have on its head a crown like gold—but it has in it a tail like a scorpion, verse 10, and a sting in its tail; and this sting can never be plucked out. Shall I venture eternal wrath? Is sin committed so sweet—as lying in hell forever is bitter? This thought would make us flee from sin, as Moses fled from the serpent!

**(2.) The serious thoughts of eternal happiness would very much take us off from worldly things.** What are these sublunary things, compared to eternity! They are quickly gone. They greet us—and then take their farewell. But I am to enter upon an *everlasting* estate; I hope to live with him who is eternal. What then, is the present fleeting world to me? To those who stand upon the top of the Alps—the great cities below are small things in their eyes. Just so, to him who has his thoughts fixed on his eternal state after this life—all these earthly things seem as nothing in his eye. What is the glory of this world? How poor and contemptible, compared with an eternal weight of glory!

**(3.) The serious thoughts of an eternal state, either of happiness or misery, should have a powerful influence upon whatever we take in hand.** Every work we do promotes either a *blessed* eternity, or a *cursed* eternity. Every *good* action sets us a step nearer to an eternity of happiness. Every *bad* action sets us a step nearer to an eternity of misery. Oh what influence should the thoughts of eternity have upon our pious duties! It should make us do them with all our might. Duty well performed, lifts a Christian higher towards heaven, and sets a Christian a step nearer to a blessed eternity!

## **The IMMUTABILITY of God.**

The next attribute is God's **unchangeableness**.

"I am the Lord, and **I do not change**." Malachi 3:6

God is unchangeable in his **nature**, and in his **decree**.

### **I. God is unchangeable in his NATURE.**

1. There is no eclipse of his **brightness**.

2. No end put to his **being**.

**[1] There is no eclipse of his brightness.** His essence shines with a fixed luster. "Who does not *change* like shifting shadows," James 1:17. "You remain the same, and your years will never end," Psalm 102:27. All *created* things are full of vicissitudes. Princes and emperors are subject to change. Sesostris, an Egyptian prince, having subdued many *kings* in war, made them draw his chariot, like horses, as if he intended them to eat grass, as God did King Nebuchadnezzar. The crown has many successors. *Kingdoms* have their eclipses and convulsions. What has become of the glory of Athens? The pomp of

Troy? [Now corn grows, where the great city of Troy once stood]. Though kingdoms have a *head of gold*, they have *feet of clay*.

The *heavens* change. "They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end." Psalm 102:26-27. The heavens are the most ancient records, where God has written his glory with a sunbeam—yet these shall change. Though I do not think they shall be destroyed as to their substance—yet they shall be changed as to their qualities; they shall melt with fervent heat, and so be more refined and purified. 2 Peter 3:12. Thus the heavens shall be changed—but not *he* who dwells in heaven. "I am the Lord, and **I do not change.**"

The best *saints* have their eclipses and changes. Look upon a Christian in his spiritual estate, and he is full of variation. Though the *seed of grace* does not *die*—yet its beauty and activity often *wither*. A Christian has his *anguish fits* in piety. Sometimes his faith is at a high tide—and sometimes low ebb; sometimes his love flames—and at another time is like fire in the embers, and he has lost his first love. How strong was David's grace at one time! "God is my rock, in him will I trust." At another time he says, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." What Christian can say he does not find a change in his *graces*; that the bow of his faith never unbends, the strings of his violin never slacken? Surely we shall never meet with such Christians until we meet them in heaven! But God is without any shadow of change.

The *angels* were subject to change; they were created holy—but mutable. "The angels which kept not their first estate." Jude 6. These *morning* stars of heaven were *falling* stars. But God's glory shines with a fixed brightness. In God there is nothing which can change, for better or worse. He cannot change for the *better*—because then he would not now be perfect. He cannot change for the *worse*—for then he would cease to be perfect. He is immutably holy, immutably good; there is no shadow of change in him.

But when Christ, who is God, assumed the human nature—was there a change in God?

If the divine nature had been converted into the human, or the human into the divine, there would have been a change—but they were not. The human nature was distinct from the divine nature. Therefore there was no change. A cloud over the sun makes no change in the sun. Just so, though the divine nature is covered with the human nature, it makes no change in the divine nature.

**[2] There is no end put to his being.** "Who alone has immortality." The Godhead cannot die. An infinite essence cannot be changed into finite; and God is infinite. He is eternal, consequently he is not mortal. To be eternal and mortal is a contradiction.

**Use one: See the excellence of the divine nature in its immutability.** This is the glory of the Godhead. Mutableness denotes *weakness*, and is not in God, who is "the *same*, yesterday, and today, and forever." *Men* are fickle and mutable, like Reuben, "unstable as water." Men are changeable in their *principles*. If their faces altered as fast as their opinions—we would not recognize them. Men are changeable in their *resolutions*; just as the wind that blows in the east, presently turns about to the west. They resolve to be virtuous—but quickly give up of their resolutions. Their minds are like a sick man's pulse, which alters every half hour. The apostle Jude compares them to *waves of the sea*, and *wandering stars*. They are not *pillars* in God's temple—but *reeds* shaken by the wind. Others are changeable in their *friendship*. They quickly *love*—and quickly *hate*. Sometimes they will press you to their bosom; later they will excommunicate you out of their favor. They change as the chameleon, into several colors. But God is immutable—he does not change.

**Use two: See the vanity of the creature.** There are changes in everything, but in God. "Lowborn men are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie; if weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they

are only a breath." Psalm 62:9. We look for more from the creature, than God has put in it. The creature has two evils in it—it promises more than we find—and it fails us when we most need it. A man desires to have his corn harvested—but the rain falls; the mariner is for a voyage—but the wind does not blow, or is contrary; one depends upon another for the payment of a promise, and he fails, and is like a foot out of joint. Who can find a fixed stability in the vain creature? It is as if one should build houses on the sand, where the sea comes in and overflows. The creature is true to nothing but deceit—and is constant only in its disappointments. It is no more astonishing to see changes in the creature, than to see the moon dressing itself in a new shape and figure. Expect to meet with changes in everything, but God.

### **Use three: Comfort to the godly.**

**(1.) In case of losses.** If an estate, you are almost boiled away to nothing, and if you lose friends by death—there is a double eclipse. But the comfort is—God is unchangeable. I may lose these things—but I cannot lose my God; he never dies. When the fig-tree and olive-tree failed, God did not fail. "I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." Flowers in the garden die—but a man's portion remains. Just so, outward things die and change—but "you are the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."

**(2.) In case of sadness of spirit.** God seems to cast off the soul in desertion. "My Beloved had withdrawn himself." Yet, God is unchangeable. He is immutable in his love; he may change his *countenance*—but not his *heart!* "I have loved you with an *everlasting* love." Jer 31:1. Hebrew—a *love of eternity*. If once God's electing love rises upon the soul—it never sets. "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed—says the Lord, who has compassion on you." Isaiah 54:10. God's love stands firmer than the mountains. His love to Christ is

unchangeable; and he will no more cease loving believers, than he will cease loving Christ.

**Use four: Of exhortation.** Get a saving interest in the unchangeable God, then you are as a rock in the sea—immoveable in the midst of all changes.

### **How shall I get a part in the unchangeable God?**

By having a change wrought in you. "But you are washed—but you are sanctified." By this change we are savingly interested in the unchangeable God.

Trust to that God, who alone is unchangeable. "Cease from man," stop trusting to the *reed*—but trust to the *Rock* of ages. He who is by faith engarrisoned in God, is safe in all changes; he is like a boat that is tied to an immoveable rock. He who trusts in God, trusts in that which cannot fail him; for God is unchangeable. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." *Health* may leave us, *riches*, *friends* may leave us; "but," says God, "I will never leave you; my *power* shall support you; my *Spirit* shall sanctify you; my *mercy* shall save you! I will never leave you!" Oh trust in this unchangeable God!

God is jealous of two things; of our *love*, and of our *trust*. He is jealous of our **love**, lest we love the creature more than him; therefore he makes it prove bitter. God is jealous of our **trust**, lest we should place more confidence in the creature, than in him, therefore he makes it prove unfaithful. Outward comforts are given us as food along the way—to refresh us, not as crutches to lean on. If we make the creature an idol, what we make our *trust*, God will make our *shame*. Oh trust in the immortal God! Like Noah's dove, we have no footing for our souls, until we get into *the ark of God's unchangeableness*. "Those who trust in the Lord shall be like mount Zion, which cannot be removed."

**II. God is unchangeable in his DECREE.** What he has decreed from eternity is unalterable. "My purpose will stand, and I will do all

that I please." Isaiah 46:10. God's eternal counsel or decree, is immutable. If he changed his decree, it must be from some defect of wisdom or foresight, for that is the reason why men change their purposes; they see something afterwards, which they did not see before. But this cannot be the cause why God should alter his decree, because his knowledge is perfect—he sees all things in one entire prospect before him.

But is not God said to **repent**? This seems to be a change in his decree? "The Lord repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them."

Repentance is attributed to God, *figuratively*. "He is not a man, that he should repent." There may be a change in God's *work*—but not in his *will*. He may will a change—but not change his will. "God may change his sentence—but not his decree." A king may cause sentence to be passed upon a malefactor whom he intends to save; so God threatened destruction to Nineveh—but the people of Nineveh repenting, God spared them. Here God changed his sentence—but not his decree; it was what had lain in the womb of his purpose from eternity.

But if God's decree is unchangeable, and cannot be reversed, then to what purpose should we use the **means**? Our endeavors towards salvation cannot alter his decree.

The decree of God does not affect my endeavor; for he who decreed my salvation, decreed it in the use of means; and if I neglect the means I reprobate myself. No man argues thus: "God has decreed how long I shall live, therefore I will not use any means to preserve my life, I will not eat and drink." As God has decreed the length of my life, in the use of means—so God has decreed my salvation in the use of the Word and of prayer. As a man who refuses food murders himself—just so, he who refuses to work out his salvation destroys himself. The vessels of mercy are said to be *prepared* unto glory. How are they prepared, but by being sanctified? and that cannot be,

but in the use of means. Therefore let not God's decree, take you off from holy endeavors. It is a good saying of Preston, "Have you a heart to pray to God? it is a sign that no decree of wrath has passed against you."

**Use one: If God's decree is eternal and unchangeable, then God does not elect upon our *foreseen* faith, as the Arminians maintain.** "The children being not yet born, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, it was said, Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated." Romans 9:11, 13. We are not elected *for* our holiness—but *to* holiness. Eph 1:1. If we are not *justified* for our faith, much less are we *elected* for our faith. We are said to be justified *through* faith as an instrument—but not *for* faith as a cause; and, if not justified *for* faith, then much less elected *for* faith. God's decree of election, is eternal and unchangeable, and therefore depends not upon foreseen faith. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." They were not elected because they believed—but they believed because they were elected.

**Use two: If God's decree is unchangeable, it gives comfort in two cases.**

**(1.) Concerning God's providence towards his church.** We are ready to quarrel with Providence, if everything does not accord with our desire. Remember God's work goes on, and nothing happens, but what he has decreed from eternity.

**(2.) God has decreed troubles for the church's good.** The *troubles* of God's church, are like the angel's troubling the water, which made way for *healing* his people. God has decreed troubles in the church. "His fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem." The wheels in a watch move contrary to one another—but they all carry on the motion of the watch. Just so, the wheels of Providence often move contrary to our desires—but still they carry on God's unchangeable decree. "Many shall be made white." God lets the *waters of affliction* be poured on his people—to make them white.

Therefore, do not murmur at God's dealings! His work goes on; nothing happens, but what he has wisely decreed from eternity. Everything shall promote God's design, and fulfill his decree.

**Use three: Comfort to the GODLY in regard of their salvation.** "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal—The Lord knows those who are his." God's counsel of election is unchangeable. Once elected—forever elected. "I will not blot his name out of the book of life." The book of God's decree has no *errata* in it, no blottings out. Once justified, never unjustified. "Repentance shall be hid from my eyes." Hos 13:14. God never repents of his electing love. "He loved them to the end." Therefore, if you are a believer, comfort yourself with this—the immutability of God's decree.

**Use four: To conclude with a word to the WICKED, who march furiously against God and his people—let them know that God's decree is unchangeable.** God will not alter it, nor can they break it! While they resist God's will, they fulfill it. There is a two-fold will of God—the will of God's *precept*, and the will of his *decree*. While the wicked resist the will of God's precept, they fulfill the will of his permissive decree. Judas betrays Christ, Pilate condemns him, the soldiers crucify him; while they resist the will of God's precepts, they fulfill the will of his permissive decree. "For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, assembled together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place." Acts 4:27-28.

God commands one thing, they do the contrary. While they disobey his command, they fulfill his permissive decree. If a man sets up two nets, one of silk, the other of iron, the silken net may be broken, not the iron one. Just so, while men break the silken net of God's command, they are taken in the iron net of his decree; while they sit backward to God's precepts, they row forward to his decrees. God

decrees to *permit* their sin, and then to *punish* them for their sin permitted.

## The WISDOM of God.

The next attribute is God's wisdom, which is one of the brightest beams of the Godhead. "He is wise in heart." The heart is the seat of wisdom. Among the Hebrews, the heart is put for wisdom. "Men of understanding," Job 34:34. The Hebrew is "Men of heart." God is wise in heart, that is, he is most wise.

God **alone** is wise—he solely and wholly possesses all wisdom; therefore he is called, "the only wise God." All the treasures of wisdom are locked up in him, and no creature can have any wisdom but as God is pleased to give it out of his treasury.

God is **perfectly** wise; there is no defect in his wisdom. Men may be wise in some things—but in other things they show imprudence and weakness. But God is the exemplar and pattern of wisdom, and the pattern must be perfect. "As your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew 5:48. God's wisdom appears in two things:

I. His infinite intelligence.

II. His exact working.

**I. His infinite INTELLIGENCE.** He knows the most profound secrets. "Our Lord is great, vast in power; **His understanding is infinite.**" Psalm 147:5. "There is a God in heaven who *reveals secrets*, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what *will happen in the future.*" Daniel 2:28. He knows the thoughts, which are the most intricate subtle things. "I know full well what you are thinking." Job 21:27. "The Lord knows the thoughts of man." Psalm 94:11. Let sin be contrived ever so secretly, God will pull off all masks and disguises,

and make a heart-anatomy. He knows all future contingencies; all things are before him in one clear prospect.

**II. His exact and meticulous WORKING.** He is wise in heart; his wisdom lies in his **works**. These works of God are bound up in three great volumes, where we may read his wisdom.

**[1] The work of CREATION.** The creation is both a monument of God's power, and a looking-glass in which we may see his wisdom. None but a wise God could so meticulously contrive the world. Behold the earth decked with variety of *flowers*, which are both for beauty and fragrance. Behold the heaven bespangled with *lights*. We may see the glorious wisdom of God blazing in the sun, twinkling in the stars. His wisdom is seen in marshaling and *ordering everything in its proper place and sphere*. If the sun had been set lower, it would have burnt us; if higher, it would not have warmed us with its beams. God's wisdom is seen in appointing the *seasons* of the year. "You have made summer and winter." If it had been all summer, the heat would have scorched us; if all winter, the cold would have killed us. The wisdom of God is seen in *chequering the dark and the light*. If it had been all night, there would have been no labor; if all day, there would have been no rest. Wisdom is seen in *mixing the elements*, as the earth with the sea. If it had been all sea, we would have lacked bread; if it had been all earth, we would have lacked water. The wisdom of God is seen in *preparing and ripening the fruits* of the earth, in the wind and frost which prepare the fruits, and in the sun and rain which ripen the fruits. God's wisdom is seen in setting bounds to the *sea*, and so wisely contriving it, that though the sea is higher than many parts of the earth—yet it should not overflow the earth. We may cry out with the Psalmist, "O Lord, how manifold are your works! in wisdom have you made them all." There is nothing to be seen in this world, but *miracles of God's wisdom*.

God's wisdom is seen in ordering *social* things, that one shall have need of another. The poor need the rich man's money, and the rich need the poor man's labor. God makes one trade depend upon

another—that one may be helpful to another, and that mutual love may be preserved.

**[2] The second work wherein God's wisdom shines forth is the work of REDEMPTION.**

**(1.) Redemption is the masterpiece of divine wisdom.** God has contrived a way for happiness for sinful man—and still uphold his justice! We may cry out with the apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" This has astonished men and angels. If God had left *us* to find out a way of salvation when we were lost—we could neither have had a head to devise, nor a heart to desire—what God's infinite wisdom had planned for us.

*Mercy* had a mind to save sinners, and was loath that the justice of God should be wronged. "It is a pity," says *Mercy*, "that such a noble creature as man should be eternally undone; and yet God's justice must not be a loser. What way then shall be found out? Angels cannot satisfy for the wrong done to God's justice; nor is it fit that one nature should sin—and another nature suffer. What then? Shall man be forever lost?" Now, while *Mercy* was thus debating with itself, what to do for the recovery of fallen man, the *Wisdom* of God stepped in—and thus the oracle spoke: "Let God become man; let the Second Person in the Trinity become incarnate, and suffer; and so for fitness he shall be man, and for ability he shall be God! Thus justice may be satisfied, and man saved!" O the depth of the riches of the wisdom of God—thus to make *justice* and *mercy* to kiss each other! Great is this mystery, "God manifest in the flesh." What wisdom was this—that Christ should be made sin—yet know no sin; that God should condemn the sin—yet save the sinner! Here was wisdom—to find out the way of salvation.

**(2.) The means by which salvation is applied—sets forth God's wisdom**—that salvation should be by faith, not by works. Faith is a humble grace—it gives all to Christ; it is an adorer of free

grace. And free grace being advanced here, God has his glory; and it is his highest wisdom to exalt his own glory.

**(3.) The way of working faith—declares God's wisdom.** It is wrought by the word preached. "Faith comes by hearing." What is the *weak breath of a man*—to convert a soul? It is like whispering in the ears of a dead man. This is foolishness in the eye of the world; but the Lord loves to show his wisdom by that which seems folly. "He has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." Why so? "So that no one can ever boast in the presence of God."

If God were to convert by the ministry of *angels*—then we would be ready to glory in angels, and give that honor to them which is due to God; but when God works by weak tools, makes use of men who are of like passions with ourselves, and by them converts, then the power is plainly seen to be of God. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us!" Herein is God's wisdom seen, that no flesh may glory in his Presence.

**[3] The wisdom of God wonderfully appears in the works of his PROVIDENCE.** Every providence has a *mercy* or a *wonder* enrap't up in it. The wisdom of God, in his works of providence, appears:

**(1.) By effecting great things—by small contemptible means.** He cured the stung Israelites, by a brazen serpent. If some sovereign antidote had been used, if the balm of Gilead had been brought, there would have been some likelihood of a cure; but what was there in a brazen serpent? It was a mere *model*—and not a *real* serpent; and it was not physically applied to him who was wounded; he was only to *look* upon it; yet this wrought a cure! The less probability in the *instrument*—the more is God's wisdom seen!

**(2.) The wisdom of God is seen in doing his work, by that which to the eye of flesh seems quite contrary.** God intended

to advance Joseph, and to make all his brethren's sheaves bow to his sheaf. Now, what way does he take? First **Joseph** is thrown into the pit; then sold into Egypt; then after that put in prison. But by his imprisonment God made way for his advancement. For God to save in an *ordinary* way—would not so much display his wisdom. But when he goes *strangely* to work, and *saves* in that very way in which we think he will *destroy*—his wisdom shines forth in a most conspicuous manner!

God would make **Israel** victorious, and what way does he take? He *lessens* Gideon's army. "The people that are with you are too many." He reduces the army of thirty-two thousand, to three hundred; and by taking away the *means* of victory, makes Israel victorious.

God had a design to bring his people out of **Egypt**, and a strange course he takes to effect it! He stirred up the hearts of the Egyptians to hate them. "He turned their heart to hate his people." The more they hated and oppressed Israel, the more God plagued the Egyptians, and the more glad they were to let Israel go. The Egyptians were urgent that they might send them out of the land in haste.

God had a mind to save **Jonah** when he was cast into the sea—so he let the fish swallow him up, and so brought him to the shore.

God would save **Paul**, and all who were in the ship with him—but the ship must be wrecked, so that they could all come safely to land upon the broken pieces of the ship. Acts 27:74.

In reference to the **church**, God often goes by *contrary* means, and makes the enemy do his work. God can make a straight stroke, with a crooked stick. He has often made his church *grow* and *flourish* by *persecution*. "The showers of blood have made her more fruitful," says Julian. Exod 1:10. "Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous." But the way the Egyptians took to suppress them, made them multiply. Verse 12. "But the more

they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites." Just like the soil—the more it is *harrowed*, the better crop it bears. The apostles were scattered by persecution, and their scattering was like the scattering of seed. They went up and down, and preached the gospel, and brought daily converts. Paul was put in prison, and his chains were the means of spreading the gospel. "Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has actually resulted in the advancement of the gospel." Philippians 1:12.

**(3.) The wisdom of God is seen in making the most desperate evils, to work to the good of his children.** As several poisonous ingredients, wisely tempered by the skill of the apothecary, make a sovereign medicine—so God makes the most deadly afflictions work together for the good of his children. He uses severe afflictions to purify them, and prepare them for heaven. "For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory!" 2 Corinthians 4:17. These *hard frosts* hasten the spring flowers of glory! The wise God, by a *divine chemistry*, turns our afflictions into cordials. He makes his people *gainers* by *losses*; and turns their *crosses* into *blessings*.

**(4.) The wisdom of God is seen in this—that the sins of men shall carry on God's work; yet he himself should have no hand in their sin.** The Lord *permits* sin—but does not *approve* it. He has a hand in the *action* in which sin is—but not in the *sin* of the action. As in the crucifying of Christ, so far as it was a natural action, God concurred; if he had not given the Jews life and breath, they could not have done it; but as it was a sinful action, so God abhorred it. A musician plays upon a violin which is out of tune; the musician is the cause of the sound—but the jarring and discord is from the violin itself. Just so, men's *natural* motion is from God—but their *sinful* motion is from themselves. When a man rides on a lame horse, his riding is the cause why the horse goes—but the lameness is from the horse itself. Herein is God's wisdom—that the sins of men carry on his work—yet he has no hand in them!

**(5.) The wisdom of God is seen in helping in desperate cases.** God loves to show his wisdom—when human help and wisdom fail. Exquisite lawyers love to wrestle with difficult law cases, as this more shows their skill. God's wisdom is never at a loss; but when providences are darkest, then the *morning star of deliverance* appears. "He remembered us in our *low estate*." Sometimes God melts away the spirits of his enemies. "The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us." Joshua 2:24. Sometimes he finds them other work to do, and sounds a retreat to them, as he did to Saul when he was pursuing David. "The Philistines are in the land." When the church seems to be upon destruction, and her peace and liberty ready to be sacrificed, then the deliverance comes.

**(6.) God's wisdom is seen in befooling wise men, and in making their wisdom the means of their overthrow.** Ahithophel had deep understanding. "The counsel Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God;" but he consulted his own shame. "The Lord turned his counsel into foolishness." "God takes the wise in their own craftiness;" that is, when they think to deal wisely, he not only *disappoints* them—but *ensnares* them. The snares they lay for others, catch themselves! "They have fallen into the pit they dug for others. They have been caught in their own trap." God loves to counterplot politicians; he makes use of their own wit to undo them. He hangs Haman up on his own gallows.

**Use one: Adore the wisdom of God.** It is an infinite deep; the angels cannot search into it. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways!" Romans 11:33. As we should *adore* the wisdom of God—so we should *rest* in the wisdom of God. God sees what condition is best for us. Did we believe the wisdom of God, it would keep us from murmuring. **Rest** in God's wisdom.

**(1.) Rest in God's wisdom—in lack of spiritual comfort.** God is wise; he sometimes sees it good, that we should be without

comfort. Perhaps we would be lifted up in pride if we had spiritual enlargements; as Paul, with his revelations. "Especially because of the extraordinary revelations. Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so I would not exalt myself." 2 Corinthians 12:7. It is hard to have the heart low—when comfort is high. God sees *humility* to be better for us than *joy*. It is better to lack comfort, and be humble—than to have it, and be proud!

**(2.) Rest in God's wisdom—in lack of bodily strength**, rest in God's wisdom. He sees what is best. Perhaps the less health—the more grace. Perhaps the weaker in body—the stronger in faith. "Though our outward man is perishing—yet the inward man is renewed day by day." At Rome there were two laurel trees; when the one withered, the other flourished. When God shakes the *tree* of the body, he is gathering the *fruits* of righteousness. "No *discipline* seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the fruit of peace and righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11. **Sickness is God's lance—to let out the poison of sin.** "The Lord did this to purge away Israel's sin." Isaiah 27:9.

**(3.) Rest in God's wisdom—in case of God's providences to his church.** When we wonder what God is doing with us, and are ready to kill ourselves with worry—let us rest in God's wisdom. He knows best what he has to do. "Your way went through the sea, and Your path through the great waters, but *Your footprints were unseen.*" Psalms 77:19. **Trust his heart—where you cannot trace his hand.** God is most in his way, when we think he is most out of the way. When we think God's church is, as it were, in the grave, and there is a tombstone laid upon her, his wisdom can roll away the stone from the sepulcher. "Christ comes leaping over *mountains.*" Either his *power* can remove the mountain, or his *wisdom* knows how to leap over it!

**(4.) Rest in God's wisdom—in case we are low in the world, or have but little oil in our cruse**—let us rest in God's wisdom. He sees that this condition is best for us. *Perhaps it is to cure us from pride or worldliness.* God knew if your *estate* had not been lost—your *soul* would have been lost. God saw that *riches* would be a snare unto you. "But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains." 1 Timothy 6:9-10. Are you troubled that God has prevented a snare? God will make you rich in faith. What you lack in temporals, shall be made up in spirituals. God will give you more of his love. You are weak in estate—but God will make you strong in assurance. Oh rest in God's wisdom! He will carve the choicest piece for you!

**(5.) Rest in God's wisdom—in case of the loss of dear friends, a wife, or child, or husband,** let us rest satisfied in God's wisdom. God takes away these, because he would have more of our love; he breaks these *crutches*, that we may live more upon him by faith. God would have us learn to go without crutches.

**Use two: If God is infinitely wise—let us go to him for wisdom.** Solomon prayed, "So give your servant a *discerning heart* . . . The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this." 1 Kings 3:9-10. Here is encouragement for us; "If any one lacks wisdom, let him *ask* of God, who gives liberally, and upbraids not." Wisdom is in God—as water is in the fountain. That is, his wisdom is *imparted*, but not *impaired*—his stock is not spent by giving it. Go then to God. "Lord, give me wisdom, to know the fallacy of my heart; the subtleties of the old serpent; to walk carefully towards myself; piously towards you, prudently towards others; guide me by your counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."

## The OMNIPOTENCE of God.

The next attribute is God's power. "If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong." In this chapter is a magnificent description of God's power. "Lo, he is strong." The Hebrew word for *strong* signifies a *conquering, prevailing strength*. "He is strong." The superlative degree is intended here; namely, He is *most* strong. He is called *El-shaddai*, 'God Almighty'. His almightiness lies in this—that he can do whatever is feasible. Divines distinguish between authority and power. God has both.

**I. He has a sovereign right and AUTHORITY over man.** He can do with his creatures as he pleases. Who shall dispute with God? who shall ask him a reason of his doings? "All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. He has the power to do as he pleases among the angels of heaven and with those who live on earth. No one can stop him or challenge him, saying—What do you mean by doing these things?" Daniel 4:35. God sits as judge in the highest court; he calls the monarchs of the earth to the bar, and is not bound to give a reason of his proceedings. "He puts down one, and raises up another." He has *salvation* and *damnation* in his power. He has the *key of justice* in his hand, to lock up whomever he will, in the fiery prison of hell! And he has the *key of mercy* in his hand, to open heaven's gate to whomever he pleases! The name engraved upon his vesture is, "King of kings, and Lord of lords!" He sits Lord paramount, and who can call him to account? The world is *God's house*, and shall not he do what desires will in his own house? "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy." Romans 9:15-16. "My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please!" Isaiah 46:10. "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns!" Revelation 19:6. "Our God is in heaven and does whatever He pleases." Psalm 115:3. "The

Lord does whatever He pleases in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the depths." Psalm 135:6.

It was God who made King Nebuchadnezzar to eat grass; and who threw the angels to hell when they sinned. "How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning! You have been thrown down to the earth." Isa 14:12. "He sets bounds to the sea, and bridles the proud waves." God is the supreme monarch, all power is seated originally in him. "The powers that be, are ordained of God." Kings hold their crowns of him. "By me kings reign."

**II. As God has authority, so he has infinite POWER.** What is authority without power? "He is mighty in strength." This power of God is seen.

**[1] In the CREATION.** To create requires infinite power. All the world cannot make a fly. God's power in creating is evident; because he needs *no instruments* to work with; he can work without tools; because he needs *no matter* to work upon; he creates matter, and then works upon it; and because he works *without labor*; "He spoke, and it was done."

**[2] The power of God is seen in the CONVERSION of souls.** The same power draws a sinner to God, which drew Christ out of the grave to heaven. Eph 1:19. Greater power is put forth in *conversion*, than in *creation*. When God made the world, he met with no opposition; as he had nothing to *help* him, so he had nothing to *hinder* him. But when he converts a sinner, he meets with *opposition*. *Satan* opposes him, and the sinner's *heart* opposes him; a sinner is angry with converting grace. The world was the "work of God's *fingers*." Conversion is the "work of God's *arm*." In the creation, God wrought but one miracle, he only *spoke* the word. But, in conversion, he works many miracles; the *blind* man is made to see, the *dead* man is raised, the *deaf* man hears the voice of the Son of God. Oh, the infinite power of Jehovah! Before his scepter, angels veil and prostrate themselves, and kings cast their crowns at his feet!

"He touches the land, and it shall melt." "He removes the earth out of her place." An earthquake makes the earth tremble upon her pillars—but God shakes it out of its place; he can remove the earth from its center. He can do what he will; his *power* is as large as his *will*. Were men's power as large as their will, what work would they make in the world! God's power is of equal extent with his will. He with a word can unpin the wheels, and break the axle of the creation. He can do "more than we can think." He can suspend natural agents. He sealed up the lions' mouths; he made the fire not to burn; he made the waters to stand up on a heap; he caused the sun to go ten degrees backward in the dial of Ahaz. What can overcome Omnipotence? "He humbles the spirit of leaders; He is feared by the kings of the earth." Psalm 76:12.

He counter-works his enemies; he pulls down their flags and banners of pride, frustrates their counsels, breaks their forces; and he does it with ease, with the turning of his hand; "with his breath," a look, a glance of his eye is all it needs cost God to destroy his enemies. "The Lord *looked* down on the Egyptian army from the pillar of fire and cloud, and he threw them into confusion." Exod 14:24. Who shall stop him in his march? God commands, and all creatures in heaven and earth obey him.

Xerxes, the Persian monarch, threw fetters into the sea, when its waves swelled, as if he would have chained the waters; but when God *speaks*, the wind and sea obey him. If he says but the word, the stars fight in their courses against Sisera; if he stamps with his foot, an army of angels shall presently be in battalia. What can omnipotent power not do? "The Lord is a man of war." "He has a mighty arm." "God's power is a glorious power."

It is an **irresistible** power. "Who has resisted his will?" To contest with him, is as if the thorns should set themselves in battle array against the fire; or, as if an infirm child should fight with an archangel. If the sinner is once taken in God's iron net, there is no escape. "There is none who can deliver out of my hand."

God's power is **inexhaustible**; it is never spent or wasted. Men, while they exercise their strength, weaken it; but God has an everlasting spring of strength in himself. Though he spends his arrows upon his enemies—yet he does not spend his strength. "I will heap calamities upon them and spend my arrows against them." Deut 32:23. "Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know that the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary." Isaiah 40:28.

God cannot do all things, because he cannot deny himself.

Though God can do all things, he cannot do that which stains the glory of his Godhead. He cannot sin; he cannot do that which implies a contradiction. To be a God of truth, and yet deny himself, is a contradiction.

**Use one: If God is infinite in power, let us FEAR him.** We fear such as are in power. "Do you not fear Me? Do you not tremble before Me?" Jer 5:52. He has power to cast our souls and bodies into hell. "Who knows the power of his wrath?" The same breath that made us—can dissolve us! "His fury is poured out like fire; the rocks are thrown down by him." Solomon says, "The *king's* command is backed by great power. No one can resist or question it;" how much more is the command of God! Oh let us fear this mighty God! The fear of God will drive out all other base fear.

**Use two: See the deplorable condition of WICKED men.** (1.) This power of God is not for them. (2.) This power of God is against the wicked.

**(1.) This power of God is not for them.** They have no union with God, therefore they have no warrant to lay claim to his power. His power is no relief to them. He has power to forgive sins—but he will not put forth his power towards an impenitent sinner. God's power is an eagle's wing, to carry the saints to heaven; but what privilege is that to the wicked? Though a man will carry his *child* in

his arms over a dangerous stream—yet he will not carry an *enemy*. God's power is not engaged to help those who fight against him. Let miseries come upon the wicked, they have none to help them; they are like a ship in a storm without a pilot, and driven upon the rocks.

**(2.) This power of God is against the wicked.** God's power will not be the sinner's *shield* to defend him—but a *sword* to wound him! God's power will bind the sinner in chains. His power serves to revenge the wrong done to his mercy. He will be Almighty to damn the sinner. Now, in what a dreadful condition is every unbeliever? God's power is engaged against him! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

**Use three: It reproves such as do not BELIEVE the power of God.** We say we do not doubt of God's power—but his will. But indeed it is his power that we question. "Is anything too hard for God?" We stagger through unbelief, as if the arm of God's power were shrunk, and he could not help in desperate cases. Take away a king's power, and we unking him; take away the Lord's power, and we ungod him. Yet how guilty of this are we! Did not *Israel* question God's power? "Can he prepare a table in the wilderness?" They thought the wilderness was a fitter place for making graves, than spreading a table. Did not *Martha* doubt Christ's power? "He has been dead *four* days." If Christ had been there while Lazarus was sick, or when he had just died, Martha did not question but he could have raised him; but he had lain in the grave *four* days, and now she seemed to question his power. Christ had as much to do, to raise her faith as to raise her dead brother.

*Moses*, though a holy man, limited God's power through unbelief. "But Moses said, "There are 600,000 foot soldiers here with me, and yet you promise them meat for a whole month! Even if we butchered all our flocks and herds, would that satisfy them? Even if we caught all the fish in the sea, would that be enough?" Then the Lord said to Moses, "Is there any limit to my power? Now you will see whether or not my word comes true!" Numbers 11:21-23. This is a great affront

to God, to deny his power. That men doubt of God's power, appears by their taking indirect courses; for they would not defraud in their dealings, and use false weights, if they believed the power of God could provide for them; and by depending more upon second causes than upon God. "Even when the disease became life threatening, he did not seek the Lord's help but sought help only from his physicians." 2 Chronicles 16:12.

**Use four: If God is infinite in power, let us take heed of hardening our hearts against him.** "Who has hardened himself against him and prospered?" Job sends a challenge to all creatures in heaven and earth. Who ever took up the sword against God, and came off conqueror? For a person to go on daringly in any sin, is to harden his heart against God, and to raise a war against heaven. Let him remember God is *El-Shaddai*, almighty; he will be too hard for those who oppose him. "Have you an arm like God?" Such as will not bow to his *golden scepter*, shall be broken with his *iron rod*.

Julian hardened his heart against God, he opposed him to his face; but what did he get at last? Did he prosper? Being wounded in battle, he threw up his blood into the air, and said to Christ, "O Galilean, you have overcome! I acknowledge your power, whose name and truth I have opposed." Will *folly* contend with wisdom; *weakness* with power; the *finite* with the infinite? Oh take heed of hardening your heart against God! He can send legions of angels to avenge his quarrel. It is better to meet God with tears in your eyes—than weapons in your hand. You may overcome him sooner by repentance—than by resistance.

**Use five: Get a saving interest in God, and then this glorious power is engaged for you.** He promises under oath, that he will put forth the whole power of his Godhead for the good of his people. "The Lord Almighty is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel." This almightiness of God's power is a wonderful support and comfort to the believer. It was Samson's riddle. "Out of the strong

came forth sweetness;" so out of the attribute of God's power, out of this strong, comes forth sweetness. It is COMFORT in several cases.

**(1.) In case of strong corruption.** "My sins," says a child of God, "are potent. I have no power against this army that comes against me. I pray, and humble my soul by fasting; but my sins return upon me!" Ay, but do you believe the power of God? The strong God can conquer your strong corruption; though sin is too hard for *you*—yet not for *him!* He can soften hard hearts, and quicken the dead. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Set his power to work, by faith and prayer. Say, "Lord! it is not for your honor that the devil should be so prevalent within me; oh, break the head of this leviathan! Abba, Father, all things are possible to you!"

**(2.) In case of strong temptation.** Satan is called the strong man; but remember the power of God. Christ is called, "The *Lion* of the tribe of Judah," he has broken the serpent's head upon the cross. Satan is a *chained* enemy, and a *conquered* enemy. Our *Michael* is stronger than the dragon.

**(3.) Comfort in case of weakness of grace, and fear of falling away.** "I pray—but I cannot send out strong cries. I believe—but the hand of my faith shakes and trembles." Cannot God strengthen weak grace?" "My strength is made perfect in weakness: most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "I fear I shall not hold out!" Christian, do you believe the power of God? Has not God preserved your grace thus far? May you not set up your Ebenezer? God has kept your grace hitherto—as a spark in the midst of the ocean; and is not he able still to keep it? "God, in his mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation." 1 Peter 1:5. God's *mercy* pardons us—but his *power* preserves us. He who by his power keeps the stars, that they do not fall from their orbs—keeps our grace that it does not fail.

**(4.) Comfort in case of deficiency in your estate.** God can multiply the oil in the cruse; miraculously he can raise up supplies. Cannot he who provides for the *birds* of the air, provide for his *children*? Cannot he who clothes the *lilies* clothe his *lambs*?

**(5.) Comfort in regard of the resurrection.** It seems difficult to believe, that the bodies of men, after being eaten up by worms, devoured by beasts and fish, or burned to ashes, should be raised the same bodies; but if we believe the power of God, it is no great wonder. Which is harder—to create, or raise the dead? He who can *make* a body of nothing, can *restore* it to its parts when mingled and blended with other substances. "With God all things are possible." If we believe the first article of the creed—that God is almighty; we may quickly believe the other article—the resurrection of the body. God can raise the dead because of his *power*, and he cannot but raise them because of his *truth*.

**(6.) It is comfort in reference to the church of God.** He can save and deliver it when it is brought low. The enemies have power in their hand—but God will restrain them. He can either *confine* the enemy's power, or *confound* it. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" God can create rejoicing in Jerusalem. The church in Ezekiel is compared to dry bones—but God made breath to enter into them, and they lived. The *ship of the church* may be tossed, because sin is in it—but it shall not be overwhelmed, because Christ is in it. All the church's pangs shall help forward her deliverance. "God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear, even if earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!" Psalm 46:1-3.

## The HOLINESS of God

The next attribute is God's holiness. "Glorious in holiness." Holiness is the most sparkling jewel of his crown; it is the name by which God is known. "Holy and reverend is his name." He is "the holy One." Seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory." His *power* makes him mighty; his *holiness* makes him glorious. God's holiness consists in his perfect love of righteousness, and perfect abhorrence of evil. He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity."

**I. God is holy INTRINSICALLY.** He is holy in his **nature**; his very being is made up of holiness, as light is of the essence of the sun. He is holy in his **Word**. The Word bears a stamp of his holiness upon it, as the wax bears an impression of the seal. "Your Word is very pure." It is compared to silver refined seven times. Every line in the Word breathes sanctity, it encourages nothing but holiness. God is holy in his **works**. All he does is holy; he cannot act but like himself; he can no more do an unrighteous action, than the sun can darken. "The Lord is holy in all his works."

**II. God is holy PRIMARILY.** He is the original and pattern of holiness. Holiness began with him who is the Ancient of Days.

**III. God is holy EFFICIENTLY.** He is the cause of all that is holiness in others. "Every good and perfect gift comes from above." He made the *angels* holy. He infused all holiness into Christ's human nature. All the holiness *we* have, is but a crystal stream from this fountain. We borrow all our holiness from God. As the lights of the sanctuary were lighted from the middle lamp, so all the holiness of others is a lamp lighted from heaven. "I am the Lord who makes you holy." God is not only a *pattern* of holiness—but he is a *principle* of holiness. His spring feeds all our cisterns; he drops his holy oil of grace upon us.

**IV. God is holy TRANSCENDENTLY.** "There is none as holy as the Lord." No angel in heaven can measure the dimensions of God's

holiness. The highest seraphim is too low of stature to measure these pyramids; holiness in God is far above holiness in saints or angels.

**[1] The holiness of God is above holiness in SAINTS.** It is a pure holiness. The saints' holiness is like gold in the ore, imperfect; their humility is stained with pride; he who has most faith needs pray, "Lord, help my unbelief!" But the holiness of God is pure, like wine from the grape; it has not the least dash or tincture of impurity mixed with it. It is an unchangeable holiness. Though the saints cannot lose the *principle* of holiness (for the seed of God remains in them)—yet they may lose some *degrees* of their holiness. "You have left your first love." Grace cannot die—yet the flame of it may burn very dim. Holiness in the saints is subject to ebbing—but holiness in God is unchangeable; he never lost a drop of his holiness. As he cannot have *more* holiness, because he is perfectly holy; so he cannot have *less* holiness, because he is unchangeably holy.

**[2] The holiness of God is above the holiness of ANGELS.** Holiness in the angels is only a quality, which may be lost, as we see in the fallen angels; but holiness in God is his essence, he is all over holy, and he can as well lose his Godhead as his holiness.

But is he not privy to all the sins of men? How can he behold their impurities, and not be defiled?

God sees all the sins of men—but is no more defiled with them than the sun is defiled with the vapors which rise from the earth. God sees sin, not as a *patron* to approve it—but as a *judge* to punish it.

**Use one:** Is God so infinitely holy? **Then see how unlike to God, sin is.** Sin is an unclean thing, it is hyperbolically evil. Sin is called an abomination. *God* has no mixture of evil in him; *sin* has no mixture of good. Sin is the quintessence of evil, it turns good into evil. Sin has deflowered the virgin soul, made it red with guilt, and black with filth. Sin is called the accursed thing. No wonder, therefore, that God hates sin, being so unlike to him; nay, so contrary

to him. Sin strikes at his holiness; it does all it can to spite God; if sin could help it—God would be God no longer.

**Use two:** Is God the Holy One, and is holiness his glory? **How impious are those who are HATERS of holiness!** As the vulture hates perfumes, so they hate the sweet perfume of holiness in the saints; their hearts rise in antipathy against holiness. There is not a greater sign of a person devoted to hell, than to hate one for the thing wherein he is most like God.

Others are **despisers** of holiness. They despise the glory of the Godhead. "Glorious in holiness." The despising holiness is seen in deriding it; and is it not sad that men should deride that which should save them? Surely, that patient will die who derides the only remedy. Deriding the grace of the Spirit comes near to despising the Spirit of grace. Scoffing Ishmael was cast out of Abraham's house. Such as scoff at holiness, shall be cast out of heaven.

**Use three:** Is God so infinitely holy? **Then let us endeavor to imitate God in holiness.** "Be holy, for I am holy." There is a twofold holiness; a holiness of *equality*, and a holiness of *similitude*. A holiness of *equality*, no man or angel can reach to. Who can be equally holy with God? Who can parallel him in sanctity? But there is a holiness of similitude, and that we must aspire after—to have some analogy and resemblance of God's holiness in us—to be as like him in holiness as much as we can. Though a candle does not give so much light as the sun—yet it resembles it. We must imitate God in holiness.

**If we must be like God in holiness, wherein does our holiness consist?**

In two things. In our suitability to God's nature, and in our subjection to his will.

Our holiness consists in our **suitableness to the nature of God**. Hence the saints are said to partake of the divine nature, which is not partaking of his essence—but his image. Herein is the saints'

holiness, when they are the lively pictures of God. That is—when they bear the image of God's meekness, mercifulness, heavenliness; when they are of the same judgment with God, of the same disposition; when they love what he loves, and hate what he hates.

Our holiness consists also in our **subjection to the will of God**. As God's *nature* is the pattern of holiness; so his *will* is the rule of holiness. It is our holiness, when we do his will; when we bear his will; when what he inflicts wisely we suffer willingly. Our great care should be, to be like God in holiness. Our holiness should be like God's; as his is a *real* holiness, ours should be. "Righteousness and *true* holiness." It should not be the *paint* of holiness—but the *reality* of holiness. It should not be like the Egyptian temples, beautified on the outside merely—but like Solomon's temple, gold within, Psalm 45:13. "The king's daughter is all glorious within." That I may press you to resemble God in holiness consider,

**(1.) How illustrious every holy person is.** He is a mirror in which some of the beams of God's holiness shine forth. We read that Aaron put on his garments for glory and beauty. When we wear the *embroidered garment of holiness*, it is for glory and beauty. A good Christian is ruddy, being sprinkled with Christ's blood; and white, being adorned with holiness. As the diamond to a ring, so is holiness to the soul. Those who oppose our holiness, cannot but admire it.

**(2.) It is the great design God carries on in the world, to make a people like himself in holiness.** What are all the showers of *ordinances* for—but to rain down righteousness upon us, and make us holy? What are the *promises* for—but to encourage holiness? What is the sending of the *Holy Spirit* into the world for—but to anoint us with the holy unction? What are all *afflictions* for—but to make us partakers of God's holiness? What are *mercies* for—but magnets to draw us to holiness? What is the end of Christ's dying—but that his blood might wash away our unholiness? "Who gave himself for us—to purify unto himself a peculiar people." So that if we are not holy—we cross God's great design in the world.

**(3.) Our holiness draws God's heart to us.** Holiness is God's image; and God cannot choose but love his image where he sees it. A king loves to see his effigies upon coins. "You love righteousness." And where does righteousness grow—but in a holy heart? "You shall be called Hephzibah, for the Lord delights in you." It was her holiness that drew God's love to her. "They shall call them the holy people." God does not value any for their high birth—but only for their holiness.

**(4.) Holiness is the only thing that distinguishes us from the reprobate part of the world.** God's people have his seal upon them. "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, the Lord knows those who are his. And let all who name the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The people of God are sealed with a double seal. Election, "The Lord knows who are his;" and Sanctification, "Let every one depart from iniquity." As a virtuous woman is distinguished from a harlot by her chastity; so holiness distinguishes between the believer and the unbeliever. All who are of God, have Christ for their captain, and holiness is the white color they wear. Heb 2:20.

**(5.) Holiness is our honor.** Holiness and honor are put together. I Thess 4:4. Dignity goes along with sanctification. "He has *washed* us from our sins in his blood, and has made us *kings* unto God." When we are washed and made holy, then we are kings and priests to God. The saints are called vessels of honor; they are called jewels, for the sparkling of their holiness, because filled with wine of the Spirit. This makes them earthly angels.

**(6.) Holiness gives us boldness with God.** "You shall put away iniquity far from your tabernacles, and shall lift up your face unto God." Lifting up the face is an emblem of boldness. Nothing can make us so ashamed to go to God, as sin. A wicked man in prayer may lift up his hands—but he cannot lift up his face. When Adam had lost his holiness, he lost his confidence with God; he hid himself. But the holy person goes to God as a child to its father; his conscience

does not upbraid him with allowing any sin, therefore he can go boldly to the throne of grace, and have mercy to help in time of need.

**(7.) Holiness gives peace.** Sin raises a storm in the conscience; where there is sin, there is tumult. "There is no peace to the wicked." Righteousness and peace are put together. Holiness is the root which bears this sweet fruit of peace; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

**(8.) Holiness leads to heaven.** It is the King of heaven's highway. "An highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness." At Rome there were temples of virtue and honor, and all were to go through the temple of *virtue*—to the temple of honor. Just so, we must go through the temple of *holiness* to the temple of *heaven*. Glory begins in virtue. "Who has called us to glory and virtue." Happiness is nothing else but the quintessence of holiness; holiness is glory militant, and happiness holiness triumphant.

### **What shall we do to resemble God in holiness?**

**(1.) Have recourse to Christ's blood by faith.** This is the washing of the soul. Legal purifications were types and emblems of it. *The Scripture is a mirror to show us our sins; Christ's blood is a fountain to wash them away.*

**(2.) Pray for a holy heart.** "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Lay your heart before the Lord, and say, "Lord, my heart is full of leprosy; it defiles all that it touches! Lord, I am not fit to live with such a heart, for I cannot honor you; nor die with such a heart, for I cannot see you. Oh create in me a clean heart; send your Spirit into me, to refine and purify me, that I may be a temple fit for you, the holy God to inhabit!"

**(3.) Walk with those who are holy.** "He who walks with the wise shall be wise." Be among the spices—and you will absorb their fragrance. Association begets assimilation. Nothing has a greater power and energy to effect holiness, than the communion of saints.

# The JUSTICE of God

The next attribute is God's justice. All God's attributes are in unity, and are the same with his essence. Though he has several attributes whereby he is made known to us—yet he has but one essence. A cedar tree may have several branches—yet it is but one cedar. So there are several attributes of God whereby we conceive of him—but only one entire essence. Well, then, concerning God's justice. "Just and righteous is he." "His justice and great righteousness." God is said to dwell in justice. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne." Psalm 89:14. In God, *power* and *justice* meet. Power holds the scepter, and justice holds the balance.

## I. What is God's justice?

"Justice is to give everyone his due." God's justice is the rectitude of his nature, whereby he is carried to the doing of that which is righteous and equal. "Shall not he render to every man according to his works?" God is an impartial judge. He judges the cause. Men often judge the person—but not the cause; which is not justice—but malice. "I will go down and *see* whether they have done according to the cry which is come up unto me." When the Lord is upon a punitive act, he weighs things in the balance; he does not punish rashly. Concerning God's justice, I shall lay down these six positions:

**[1] God cannot but be just.** His holiness is the cause of his justice. Holiness will not allow him to do anything but what is righteous. He can no more be unjust, than he can be unholy.

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

**[3] God does justice, *naturally*.** Justice flows from his nature. Men may act unjustly, because they are bribed or forced to. But God will not be *bribed*, because of his justice; he cannot be *forced*, because of his power. He does justice out of love to justice. "You love righteousness."

**[4] Justice is the perfection of the divine nature.** Aristotle says, "Justice comprehends in it all virtues." To say God is just, is to say, he is all that is excellent; all perfections meet in him, as lines in a center. He is not only just—but justice itself.

**[5] God never did nor can do the least wrong to his creatures.** God's justice has been wronged—but his justice never did any wrong. God may not act according to the rigor of the law; he abates something of his severity. He might inflict heavier penalties than he does. "You have punished us less than our iniquities deserve." *Our mercies are more than we deserve, and our punishments less.*

**[6] God's justice is such that it is not fit for any man or angel to expostulate with him, or demand a reason of his actions.** God has not only authority on his side—but equity. "I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line." Isa 28:17. It is below him to give an account to us, of his proceedings. Which of these two should prevail—God's justice or man's reason? "Who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it—Why did you make me like this?" Romans 9:20. The plumb line of our reason is too short—to fathom the depth of God's justice. Rom 11:33. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways!" We are to adore God's justice, where we cannot see the reason of it.

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

**[1] In rewarding the virtuous.** "Truly there is a reward for the righteous." The saints shall not serve him for nothing; though they may be losers *for* him, they shall not be losers *by* him. "God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed to his name." He gives a reward, not because we have *deserved* it—but because he has *promised* it.

**[2] He is just in punishing offenders.** He is just. (1.) Because he punishes sinners by a law. "Where there is no law, there is no transgression." But God has given men a law, and they break it, therefore he punishes them justly. (2.) God is just in punishing the wicked, because he never punished them, but upon full proof and evidence. What greater evidence than for a man's own conscience to be witness against him! There is nothing God charges upon a sinner but conscience sets its seal to the truth of it.

**Use one: See here another flower of God's crown—he is just and righteous.** He is the exemplar and pattern of justice.

**How can it be consistent with God's justice, that the wicked should prosper in the world?** "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do the treacherous live at ease?" Jeremiah 12:1. Such as are highest in sin--are often highest in prosperity. This has led many to question God's justice. Diogenes seeing a thief live on affluently, said, "Surely God has cast off the government of the world, and does not care how things go on here below."

(1.) The wicked may be sometimes instruments to do God's work. Though they do not *design* his glory—yet they may *promote* it. Cyrus was instrumental in the building of God's temple in Jerusalem. There is some kind of justice, that they should have a temporal reward. God lets those prosper under whose wing his people are sheltered. *God will not be in any man's debt.* "Who has kindled a fire on my altar for nothing?"

(2.) God lets men go on in sin, and prosper, that he may leave them more inexcusable. "I gave her space to repent of her fornication." God adjourns the sessions, spins out his mercies towards sinners; and if they repent not, his patience will be a witness against them, and his justice will be more cleared in their condemnation. "That you might be justified when you speak, and be clear when you judge."

(3.) God does not always let the wicked prosper in their sin. Some he punishes openly, that his justice may be taken notice of. "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executes;" that is, his justice is seen by striking men dead in the very act of sin. Thus he struck Zimri and Cozbi in the act of uncleanness.

(4.) If God lets men prosper a while in their sin, his vial of wrath is all this while filling; his sword is all this time sharpening. Though God may forbear with men a while—yet long forbearance is no forgiveness. *The longer God is in taking his blow, the heavier it will be at last! As long as there is eternity, God has time enough to reckon with his enemies!*

God's justice may be as a sleeping lion—but the lion will awake at last, and roar upon the sinner! Do not Nero, and Julian, and Cain, now meet with God's justice?

**But God's own people often suffer great afflictions;** they are injured and persecuted. "This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. For I am afflicted all day long, and punished every morning." Psalm 73:12-14. How can this be consistent with God's justice?

(I,) That is a true rule of Austin, "*God's ways of judgment are sometimes **secret**—but never **unjust!***" The Lord never afflicts his people without a cause; he cannot be unjust towards them. There is some good in the godly, therefore the wicked afflict them; there is some evil in them, therefore God afflicts them. God's own children

have their blemishes. "But aren't you also guilty of sins against the Lord your God?" 2 Chronicles 28:10. These spiritual diamonds—have they no *flaws*? Do we not read of the *spots* of God's children? Are not they guilty of much pride, censoriousness, passion, worldliness? Though, by their profession, they should resemble the birds of paradise, to fly above, and feed upon the dew of heaven; yet, as the serpent, they lick the dust. These sins of God's people, do more provoke God than the sins of others. "The Lord saw this and was filled with loathing. He was provoked to anger by his own sons and daughters." Deut 32:19. The sins of others pierce Christ's side; the sins of His people wound his heart. Therefore is not God just in all the afflictions which befall them? "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins." Amos 3:2. I will punish you sooner, surer, sorer, than others.

(2.) The trials and sufferings of the godly, are to refine and purify them. God's furnace is in Zion. Is it any injustice in God to put his gold into the furnace to purify it? Is it any injustice in God, by afflicting his people, to make them partakers of his holiness? What more proclaims God's faithfulness, than to take such a course with them as may make them better? "In faithfulness you have afflicted me."

(3.) What injustice is it in God to inflict a less punishment; in order to prevent a greater punishment? The best of God's children have that in them which is meritorious of hell. Does God do them any wrong, if he uses only the *rod*, where they have deserved the *scorpion*? Is the father unjust, if he only *corrects* his child, who has deserved to be *disinherited*? If God deals so favorably with his children, he only puts *wormwood* in their cup, whereas he might put *fire* and *brimstone*! They should rather admire his mercy than complain of his injustice.

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

"Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." "Does the Almighty pervert justice?"

(1.) God is not bound to give an account of his actions to his creatures. If none may question a king, much less God. It is sufficient that God is Lord paramount; he has a sovereign power over his creatures, therefore can do no injustice. "Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor?" God has liberty in his own bosom, to save one, and not another; and his justice is not at all impeached or blemished. If two men owe you money, you may, without any injustice, remit the debt to one, and exact it of the other. If two malefactors are condemned to die, the king may pardon the one and not the other: he is not unjust if he lets one suffer, because he offended the law; nor if he saves the other, because he will make use of his prerogative as he is king.

(2.) Though some are saved and others perish—yet there is no unrighteousness in God; because, whoever perishes, his destruction is of himself. "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." God offers grace— and the sinner refuses it. Is God bound to give grace? If a surgeon comes to heal a man's wound, and he will not be healed—is the surgeon bound to heal him? "I have called—and you refused." "Israel would not submit to me." Psalm 81:11. God is not bound to *force* his mercies upon men. If they willfully oppose the offer of grace, their sin is to be regarded as the cause of their perishing, and not God's justice.

**Use two: See the difference between God and a great part of the world.**

(1.) They are unjust in their courts of law—they pervert justice. "They decree unrighteous decrees." The Hebrew word for a judge's *robe* signifies prevarication, deceit, or injustice, which is more often true of the judge than of the robe. What is a good law without a good

judge? *Injustice* lies in two things—either not to punish where there is a fault, or, to punish where there is no fault.

(2.) Men are unjust in their dealings. This is, [1] In using false weights. "The balances of deceit are in his hand." It is sad to have the Bible in one hand, and false weights in the other. Or, [2] In adulterating commodities. "Your wine is *mixed* with water," or when bad grain is mixed with good, and sold for pure grain. I can never believe he is good in the first table of the law—who is not good in the second. He cannot be godly, who is not just. Though God does not bid you be as omnipotent as he is—yet he bids you be as just as he is.

**Use three: Imitate God in justice.** Let Christ's golden maxim be observed, "in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." Matt 7:12. You would not have them wrong you—neither must you wrong them; rather *suffer* wrong—than *do* wrong. "Why do you not rather *be* wronged?" Oh be exemplary for justice! Let justice be your ornament. "I put on righteousness (namely, justice) as a robe and a diadem." A robe for its graceful beauty; and I put it on, [and I was clothed in righteousness]. A judge puts on his robe, and takes it off again at *night*; but Job did so put on justice, as he did not take it off until *death*. We must not lay off this robe of justice until we lay down our bodies in the grave. If you have anything of God in you, you will be like him. By every *unjust* action, you deny yourselves to be Christians, you stain the glory of your profession. Heathen will rise up in judgement against you. The sun might sooner alter his course, than God could be turned from doing justice.

**Use four: If God is just, there will be a day of judgement.** Now things are out of course; sin is rampant, saints are wronged, they are often defeated in a righteous cause, they can meet with no justice here, justice is turned into wormwood. But there is a day coming, when God will set things right; he will do every man justice; he will crown the righteous, and condemn the wicked. "He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world" If God is a just God, he will take vengeance. God has given men a law to live by, and

they break it. There must be a day for the execution of offenders. A law not executed is but like a wooden dagger—for a show. At the last day, God's sword shall be drawn out against offenders; then his justice shall be revealed before all the world. "God will judge the world in righteousness." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" **The wicked shall drink a sea of wrath—but not sip one drop of injustice!** At that day shall all mouths be stopped, and God's justice shall be fully vindicated from all the cavils and clamors of unjust men.

**Use five: Comfort to the true penitent.** As God is a just God, he will pardon him. If man acknowledges his sin—God spares him. "If we confess our sins (that is confess and forsake), he is *just* to forgive us our sins." God is not only *merciful*, but *just*. Why just? Because he has promised to forgive such. "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." Proverbs 28:13. If your heart has been broken *for* and *from* sin—you may not only plead God's *mercy*—but his *justice* for the pardoning of your sin. Show him his promise, and he cannot deny himself.

## The MERCY of God.

The next attribute is God's goodness or mercy. *Mercy* is the result and effect—of God's *goodness*. So then this is the next attribute, God's goodness or mercy. The most learned of the heathens thought they gave their God Jupiter two golden characters when they styled him *good* and *great*. Both these meet in God, *goodness* and *greatness*; *mercy* and *majesty*. God is essentially good *in* himself, and relatively good *to* us. "You *are* good, and *do* good." This relative goodness is nothing else but his mercy, which is an innate propensity in God to pity and support such as are in misery.

## **I. Concerning God's mercy, I shall lay down these twelve positions.**

**[1] It is the great design of the Scripture to represent God as merciful.** This is a loadstone to draw sinners to him. "I am the Lord, I am the Lord, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness. I show this unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so I do not leave sin unpunished." Exodus 34:6-7. Here are six expressions to set forth God's mercy, and but one to set forth his justice. "God's mercy is far above the heavens." God is represented as a king, with a *rainbow* about his throne. Rev 4:4. The rainbow was an emblem of mercy. The Scripture represents God in *white robes of mercy*—more often than with garments rolled in blood; with his *golden scepter*—more often than his iron rod.

**[2] God is more inclined to mercy, than wrath.** Mercy is his *darling* attribute, which he most delights in. "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy." Micah 7:18. Mercy pleases him. "It is delightful to the mother," says Chrysostom, "to have her breasts drawn; so it is to God to have the breasts of his mercy drawn." "Fury is not in me," that is, I do not delight in it. Acts of severity are rather *forced* from God; he does not afflict willingly. "For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men." Lamentations 3:33.

The bee naturally gives honey, it stings only when it is provoked. Just so, God does not punish until he can bear no longer. "So that the Lord could bear no longer, because of the evil of your doings." Mercy is God's right hand that he is most used to; inflicting punishment is called his "strange work." He is not used to it. When the Lord would shave off the pride of a nation, he is said to use a *hired* razor, as if he had none of his own. "On that day the Lord will use a *razor hired* from beyond the Euphrates River—the king of Assyria—to shave the

head, the hair on the legs, and to remove the beard as well." Isaiah 7:20. "He is *slow* to anger," but "*ready* to forgive."

**[3] There is no condition—but we may spy mercy in it.** When the church was in captivity, she cried out, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." Geographers write of Syracuse in Sicily, that it is so situated that the sun is never out of sight. In all afflictions we may see some *sunshine of mercy*. That *outward* and *inward* troubles do not come together is mercy.

**[4] Mercy sweetens all God's other attributes.** God's holiness without mercy, and his justice without mercy—would be dreadful. When the water was bitter, and Israel could not drink, Moses cast a tree into the waters, and then they were made sweet. How bitter and dreadful were the other attributes of God—did not mercy sweeten them! Mercy sets God's power on work to help us; it makes his justice become our friend.

**[5] God's mercy is one of the most orient pearls of his crown; it makes his Godhead appear amiable and lovely.** When Moses said to God, "I beseech you—show me your *glory*;" the Lord answered him, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before you, and I will show you *mercy*." God's mercy is his glory. His holiness makes him illustrious; his mercy makes him endearing.

**[6] Even the worst people taste God's mercy.** Such as fight against God's mercy, taste of it; the wicked have some *crumbs* from *mercy's table*. "The Lord is good to *all*." Sweet dewdrops are on the *thistle*, as well as on the *rose*. The diocese where mercy visits is very large. Pharaoh's *head* was crowned, though his *heart* was hardened.

**[7] Mercy coming to us in salvation, is sweetest.** It was mercy that God would give Israel rain, and bread to the full, and peace, and victory over their enemies—but it was a greater mercy that God would be their God. To have *health* is a mercy—but to have *Christ*

and salvation is a greater mercy. Saving mercy, is like the diamond in the ring, which casts a more sparkling luster.

**[8] One act of mercy engages God to another.** Men argue thus, "I have shown you kindness already, therefore trouble me no more." But, because God has shown saving mercy, he is more ready still to show mercy. His mercy in election makes him justify, adopt, glorify; one act of mercy engages God to more. A parent's love to his child makes him always giving.

**[9] All the mercy in the creature is derived from God, and is but a drop from this ocean.** The mercy and pity a mother has to her child, is from God; he who puts the milk in her breast puts the compassion in her heart. God is called, "The *Father* of mercies," because he begets all the mercies in the world. If God has put any kindness into the creature, how much kindness is in him who is the Father of mercy!

**[10] As God's mercy makes the saints *happy*—so it should make them *humble*.** Mercy is not the fruit of *our* goodness—but the fruit of *God's* goodness. Mercy is a gift which God bestows. They have no cause to be proud, who live upon the alms of God's mercy. "If I am righteous—yet will I not lift up my head." That is, all my righteousness is the effect of God's mercy, therefore I will be humble and will not lift up my head.

**[11] Mercy *stays* the speedy execution of God's justice.** Sinners continually provoke God, and make "the fury come up in his face." Why is it, that God does not immediately arrest and condemn them? It is not that God *cannot* do it, for he is armed with omnipotence—but it is from his mercy. Mercy gets a reprieve for the sinner—and stops the speedy process of justice. God would, by his goodness, lead sinners to repentance.

**[12] It is dreadful to have mercy as a witness against any one.** It was sad with Haman, when the *queen* herself accused him.

So will it be when this *queen of mercy* shall stand up against a person and accuse him! It is only mercy that saves a sinner; how sad then to have mercy become an enemy! If mercy is an accuser, who shall be our advocate? The sinner never escapes hell, when *mercy* draws up the indictment.

I might show you several **kinds** of mercy—as preventing mercy, sparing mercy, supplying mercy, guiding mercy, accepting mercy, healing mercy, quickening mercy, supporting mercy, forgiving mercy, correcting mercy, comforting mercy, delivering mercy, crowning mercy; but I shall speak of,

## **II. The qualifications or PROPERTIES of God's mercy.**

**[1] God's mercy is FREE.** To set up *merit*—is to destroy mercy. We cannot *deserve* mercy, because we are polluted in our blood; nor can we *force* God to show mercy—for then it would not be mercy. We may force God to *punish* us—but not to *love* us. "I will love them *freely*." Every link in the chain of salvation is wrought and interwoven with free grace. Election is free. "He has *chosen* us in him, according to the good pleasure of his will." Justification is free. "Being *justified* freely by his grace." Salvation is free. "According to his mercy he *saved* us." Do not say, "I am *unworthy*, therefore I cannot be saved;" for mercy is *free*. If God would show mercy to such only as are worthy—he would show no mercy at all.

**[2] God's mercy is an overflowing mercy; it is INFINITE.** "Plenteous in mercy." "Rich in mercy." "Multitude of mercies." The vial of wrath *drops*—but the fountain of mercy runs in *streams*. The sun is not so full of light—as God is of mercy. God has *morning* mercies. "His mercies are new every morning." He has *night* mercies. "In the night his song shall be with me." God has mercies *under* heaven, which we taste; and *in* heaven, which we hope for.

**[3] God's mercy is ETERNAL.** "The mercy of the Lord is from eternity to eternity." Psalm 103:17. "His mercy endures forever," is

repeated twenty-six times in Psalm 136. The souls of the blessed shall be ever bathing themselves in this sweet and pleasant ocean of God's mercy! God's anger to his children lasts but a while, "but his mercy lasts forever." As long as he is God, he will be showing mercy. As his mercy is *overflowing*, so it is *ever-flowing*.

**Use one: We are to look upon God in PRAYER, not in his judgment robes—but clothed with a rainbow full of mercy and clemency.** Add wings to prayer. When Jesus Christ ascended up to heaven, that which made him go up there with joy was, "I go to my *Father!*" Just so, that which should make our hearts ascend with joy in prayer, is, "We are going to the *Father* of mercy, who sits upon the throne of grace!" Go to prayer with confidence in God's mercy; as a cold person goes to a fire, saying, "it will *warm* me, not *burn* me."

**Use two: BELIEVE in his mercy.** "I will trust in the mercy of God forever." God's mercy is an *open fountain*. Let down the *bucket of faith*—and you may drink of this fountain of salvation. What greater encouragement to believe—than God's mercy? God counts it his glory to be *scattering pardons*; he is desirous that sinners should touch the golden scepter of his mercy, and live. **This willingness in God to show mercy appears two ways:**

(1.) By *entreating* sinners to come and lay hold on his mercy. "Whoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely." Mercy woos sinners, it even kneels down to beg them. It would be strange for a prince to beg a condemned man to accept of pardon. God says, "Poor sinner, allow me to love you, be willing to let me save you."

(2.) By his joyfulness when sinners lay hold on his mercy. What is God the better, whether we receive his mercy or not? What is the *fountain* profited that others drink of it? Yet such is God's goodness, that he rejoices at the salvation of sinners, and is glad when his mercy is accepted! When the prodigal son came home the father was glad, and made a feast to express his joy; so, God rejoices when a poor sinner comes in, and lays hold of his mercy. What an

encouragement is here to believe in God! He is a God of pardons. "You are a God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and *full of unfailing love and mercy.*" Neh 9:17. Mercy pleases him. "Where is another God like you, who pardons the sins of the survivors among his people? You cannot stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing mercy." Micah 7:18.

Nothing harms us but unbelief. Unbelief stops the current of God's mercy from running. It shuts up God's affections, closes the orifice of Christ's wounds, so that no healing virtue will come out. "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." Why do you not believe in God's mercy? Do your *sins* discourage you? God's mercy can pardon great sins, nay, because they are great. "For the sake of your name, O Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is *great.*" Psalm 25:11. The sea covers the *rocks* as well as the *sands*. Some who had a hand in crucifying Christ, found mercy. As far as the heavens are above the earth, so far is God's mercy above our sins! What will entice us to believe, if not the *mercy* of God?

**Use three: Take heed of ABUSING the mercy of God.** Do not suck poison, out of the sweet flower of God's mercy. Do not think that because God is merciful, you may go on in sin; this is to make God's mercy your enemy. None might touch the ark but the *priests*, who by their office were more holy. Just so, none may touch the ark of God's mercy, but such as are resolved to be holy. To sin because God's mercy abounds—is the devil's logic! He who sins because of God's mercy—is like one who wounds his head because he has a plaster. He who sins because of God's mercy—shall have judgement without mercy. Mercy *abused*, turns to *fury*. "Let none of those who hear the warnings of this curse consider themselves immune, thinking, 'I am safe, even though I am walking in my own stubborn way.' This would lead to utter ruin! The Lord will not pardon such people. His anger and jealousy will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will come down on them!" Deuteronomy 29:19-20.

Nothing is colder than *lead* when taken out of the mine; and nothing more scalding when it is heated. Nothing is blunter than *iron*—yet nothing is sharper when it is whetted. Just so, nothing is sweeter than mercy—when it is *improved*; yet nothing is fiercer than mercy—when it is *abused*! "The mercy of the Lord is upon those who *fear* him." Mercy is not for those who sin and fear not—but for those who fear and sin not. God's mercy is a *holy* mercy; where it pardons it sanctifies.

### **What shall we do to be savingly interested in God's mercy?**

**(1.) Be sensible of your needs.** See how much you stand in need of pardoning, saving mercy. See yourselves as *orphans*. "In you, the fatherless find mercy." God bestows the *alms of mercy* only on such as are *indigent*. Be emptied of all opinion of self-worthiness. God pours the golden *oil of mercy* into *empty* vessels.

**(2.) Go to God for mercy.** "Have mercy upon me, O God!" "Do not put me off with *common* mercy, which reprobates may have! Give me not only *acorns* but pearls! Give me not only mercy to feed and clothe me—but mercy to *save* me! Give me the cream of your mercies! Lord! let me have *saving* mercy and loving-kindness. Give me such mercy as speaks your electing love to my soul."

"Who *crowns* you with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Oh pray for mercy! God has *treasures* of mercy! Prayer is the key which opens these treasures; and in prayer, *be sure to carry Christ in your arms*, for all the mercy comes through Christ! "So Samuel took a young *lamb* and offered it to the Lord as a whole burnt offering. He pleaded with the Lord to help Israel—and the Lord answered." 1 Samuel 7:9. Carry the *lamb Christ* in your arms, go in his name, present his merits; say, "Lord! here is Christ's blood, which is the price of my pardon! Lord! show me mercy, because Christ has purchased it!" Though God may refuse us when we come for mercy in our *own* name—yet he will not when we come in *Christ's* name.

Plead Christ's atonement; this is an argument which God cannot deny.

**Use four: Such as have found mercy are exhorted to three things—**

**(1.) To be upon Gerizim—the mount of blessing and praising.** They have not only *heard* the King of heaven is merciful—but they have *found* it so! The honeycomb of God's mercy has dropped upon them! When in needs, mercy supplied them; when they were near unto death, mercy raised them from the sick-bed; when covered with guilt, mercy pardoned them. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" Oh, how should the vessels of mercy run over with praise! "I used to scoff at the name of Christ. I hunted down his people, harming them in every way I could. But God had mercy on me." 1 Timothy 1:13. "I am a miracle of mercy! As the sea overflows and breaks down the banks, so the mercy of God broke down the banks of my sin, and mercy sweetly flowed into my soul!"

You who have been *monuments of God's mercy*—should be *trumpets of praise!* You who have tasted the Lord is gracious, tell others what experiences you have had of God's mercy, that you may encourage them to seek to him, for mercy. "I will tell you what God has done for my soul." "When I found my heart dead, God's Spirit came upon me mightily, and the blowing of that wind made the withering flowers of my grace revive!" Oh tell others of God's goodness, that you may set others blessing him, and that you may make God's praises live when you are dead.

**(2.) To love God.** Mercy should be the attraction of love. "I will love you, O Lord, my strength." The Hebrew word for love signifies, *to love out of the inward affections.* God's *justice* may make us fear him, his *mercy* makes us love him. If God's mercy will not produce love, what will? We are to love God for giving us our *food*, much more for giving us *grace*. We are to love God for *sparing* mercy,

much more for *saving* mercy. Surely, that heart is made of marble, which the mercy of God will not dissolve into love. "I would hate my own soul," says Augustine, "if I did not find it loving God."

**(3.) To imitate God in showing mercy.** As God is the Father of mercy, show yourselves to be his children—by being like him. Ambrose says, "The sum and definition of true religion is—Be rich in works of mercy, be helpful to the bodies and souls of others. Scatter your golden seeds; let the lamp of your profession be filled with the *oil of love*. Be merciful in giving and forgiving." "Be merciful—as your heavenly Father is merciful."

## The TRUTH of God.

The next attribute is God's truth. "A God of truth and without iniquity; just and righteous is he." "For your mercy is great unto the heavens, and your truth unto the clouds." "Plenteous in truth."

**God is the truth.** He is true in a physical sense; true in his being: he has a real subsistence, and gives a being to others. He is true in a moral sense; he is truth without error; truth without deceit. God is *prima veritas*, the pattern and prototype of truth. There is nothing true but what is *in* God—or comes *from* God.

I shall speak of God's truth, as it is taken from his veracity in making good his promises. "There has not failed one word of all his good promise." The promise is God's pledge; God's truth is the seal set to his pledge.

**There are two things to be observed in the promises of God to comfort us.**

**[1] Observe the POWER of God, whereby he is *able* to fulfill the promise.** God has promised to subdue our corruption. "He will

subdue our iniquities." Oh, says a believer, my corruption is so strong, that I am sure I shall never get the mastery of it. Abraham looked at God's power. "Being fully persuaded that what God had promised he was *able* to perform." He believed that God, who could make a world, could make Sarah's dry breasts give suck. It is faith's support—that there is nothing too hard for God. He who could bring water out of a rock, is able to bring to pass his promises.

**[2] Observe the TRUTH of God, in the promises.** God's truth is the seal set to the promise. "In hope of eternal life, which God, *who cannot lie* has promised." 'Eternal life'—there is the *sweetness* of the promise. 'God which cannot lie'—there is the *certainty* of it. Mercy *makes* the promise; truth *fulfills* the promise. God's *providences* are uncertain—but his *promises* are the 'sure mercies of David.'" "God is not a man who he should change." The word of a *prince* cannot always be taken—but *God's* promise is inviolable. God's truth is one of the richest jewels of his crown, and he has pawned it in a promise. "Although my house be not so with God—yet he has made with me an *everlasting* covenant, ordered in all things and *sure*." 'Although my house be not so,' that is, though I fail much of that exact purity the Lord requires—yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, that he will pardon, adopt, and glorify me; and this covenant is ordered in all things and sure.

"The elements shall melt with fervent heat;" but God's covenant abides firm and inviolable, being sealed with the *truth* of God. Nay, God has added to his word his *oath*—wherein he pawns his being, life, and righteousness to make good the promise. If as often as we break *our* vows with God, he would break promise with us, it would be very deplorable. But his truth is engaged in his promise, therefore it is like the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be altered. "We are not," says Chrysostom, "to believe our *senses* so much as we are to believe the *promises*." Our senses may fail us—but the promise cannot, being built upon the truth of God. God *will* not deceive the faith of his people; nay, he *cannot*. "God, who cannot lie, has promised." He can as well part with his *Deity*—as his *verity*. God is

said to be *abundant in truth*. Exod 34:6. What does that signify? If God has made a promise of mercy to his people, he will be so far from coming *short* of his word—that he will be *better* than his word. He often does *more* than he has said—but never *less*. He is *abundant* in truth.

**(1.) The Lord may sometimes delay a promise—but he will never *deny* a promise.** He may *delay* a promise. God's promise may lie a good while, as seed under ground—but at last it will spring up into a crop. He promised to deliver Israel from the iron furnace—but this promise was over four hundred years in travail, before it gave birth. Simeon had a promise that he should not depart, "until he had seen the Lord's Christ." But it was a long time coming. But a little before his death—he did see Christ. Though God *delays* the promise—he will never *deny* a promise. Having given his bond—in due time the money will be paid.

**(2.) God may change his promise—but he will not *break* it.** Sometimes God changes a temporal promise, into a spiritual promise. "The Lord shall give that which is *good*." This may not be fulfilled in a *temporal* sense—but a *spiritual* sense. God may let a Christian be cut short in temporals—but he makes it up in spirituals. If he does not increase the basket and the store, he gives increase of faith, and inward peace. Here he *changes* his promise—but he does not *break* it; he gives that which is *better*. If a man promises to pay me in farthings, and he pays me in a better coin, as in gold, he does not break his promise. "I will not allow my faithfulness to *fail*." In the Hebrew it is, "I will not allow my faithfulness to *lie*."

**How does it consist with the truth of God, that he "wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"—and yet some still perish?**

Augustine understands it, not of every *individual* person—but some of all kinds of people shall be saved. As in the ark, God saved all the living creatures; not every *individual* bird or fish was saved, for

many perished in the flood; but *all*, that is, *some of every kind* were saved. In this sense, God will have *all* to be saved, that is—some out of each of nations.

It is said, **Christ died for all.** "He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the *world*." How does this consist with God's truth, when some are vessels of wrath? Rom 9:92.

(1.) We must qualify the term **world**. The world is taken either in a limited sense, for the world of the elect; or in a larger sense, for both elect and reprobates. "Christ takes away the sins of the world," that is, the world of the elect.

(2.) We must qualify also Christ's dying for the world. Christ died *sufficiently* for all, not *effectually*. There is the *value* of Christ's blood, and the *virtue* of Christ's blood. Christ's blood has **value** enough to redeem the whole world—but the **virtue** of it is applied only to such as believe. Christ's blood has the value to save all, but it is not efficacious for all. All are not saved, because some put away salvation from them, "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you *reject* it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles." Acts 13:46. Others *vilify* Christ's blood, counting it an unholy thing.

**Use one: The truth of God, is a great pillar for our faith.** Were he not a God of truth—we could not believe him—our faith would be an empty dream. But he is truth itself, and not a word which he has spoken shall fall to the ground.

The truth of God, is the object of trust. The truth of God is an immovable rock, on which we may venture our salvation. Isa 59:15, "Truth fails," that is—truth on earth fails—but not truth in heaven. God can as well cease to be God, as cease to be true. Has God said, he "will do good to the soul who seeks him," and he will "give rest to the weary." Here is a safe anchor-hold, he will not alter the thing which has gone out of his lips. The truth of the God of heaven is engaged for

believers. Can we have better security? The whole earth hangs upon the word of God's power—and shall not our faith hang upon the word of God's truth? Where can we rest our faith, but upon God's faithfulness? There is nothing else we can securely believe in, but the truth of God. To trust in *ourselves* is to build upon quick sands; but the truth of God is a golden pillar for faith to rest upon. God cannot deny himself. "If we believe not—yet he abides faithful; he cannot deny himself." Not to believe God's veracity, is to affront God. "He who believes not, has made God a liar." A person of honor cannot be more affronted or provoked, than when he is not believed, and called a liar. He who denies God's truth, says that God's promise is no better than a forged deed. Can there be a greater affront offered to God?

**Use two: If God is a God of truth, he is true to his THREATENINGS.** The threatenings are a *flying scroll* against sinners. God has threatened, "*Surely* God will crush the heads of his enemies, the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins." Psalm 68:21. He has threatened to judge adulterers. Heb 13:3. To be avenged upon the malicious. Psalm 10:14, "You behold mischief and spite, to requite it with your own hand;" and to "rain fire and brimstone upon the sinner." God is as true to his *threatenings* as to his *promises*. To show his truth, he has executed his threatenings, and let his thunderbolts of judgment fall upon sinners in *this* life. He struck *Herod* in the act of his pride. He has punished blasphemers. Olympius, an Arian bishop, reproached and blasphemed the blessed Trinity, and immediately lightning fell down from the heaven upon him and consumed him. Let us fear the threatening that we may not feel it.

**Use three: Is God a God of truth? Let us be like God in truth.**

**(1.) We must be true in our WORDS.** Pythagoras being asked what made men like God, answered, "When they speak truth." It is

the distinction of a man who shall go to heaven, that "He speaks the truth in his heart."

**Truth in our words, is opposed to all LYING.** "Putting away lying, speak everyone truth to his neighbor." Lying is when one speaks that as truth, which he knows to be false. A liar is most opposite to the God of truth. There are, as Augustine says, two sorts of lies. There is an **officious** lie—when a man tells a lie for his profit; as, when a tradesman says his commodity cost him so much, when perhaps it did not cost him half so much. He who will lie in his trade—shall lie in hell. There is a *jesting* lie—when a man tells a lie in sport, to make others merry—and goes laughing to hell. He who tells a lie makes himself like the devil. "The devil is a liar, and the father of lies." John 8:44. He deceived our first parents by a lie. Some are so wicked, that they will not only speak an untruth—but will swear to it; nay, they will wish a curse upon themselves, if that untruth is not true.

I have read of a woman, one Anne Avarie, who in 1575, being in a shop, wished that she might die, if she had not paid for the wares she took, and fell down speechless immediately and died. A liar is not fit to live in a commonwealth. Lying takes away all society and converse with men. How can you converse with a man—when you cannot believe what he says? Lying shuts men out of heaven. "Outside are dogs, and whoever loves and makes a lie."

As it is a great sin to *tell* a lie—so it is a worse sin to *teach* a lie. "The prophet that *teaches* lies." He who teaches error, teaches lies. He spreads the plague; he not only damns himself—but helps to damn others!

**Truth in our words, is opposed to all DECEIT.** The heart and tongue should go together, as the dial goes exactly with the sun. To speak fair to one's face, and not to mean what one speaks, is no better than a lie. "His words were smoother than oil—but war was in his heart." Some have an art to flatter and deceive. Jerome, speaking

of the Arians, says, "they pretended friendship, they kissed my hands—but plotted mischief against me." "A man who flatters his neighbor, spreads a net for his feet." Deadly poison can be hidden under sweet honey. Falsehood in friendship, is a lie. Counterfeiting friendship, is worse than counterfeiting money.

**(2.) We must be true in our PROFESSION of religion.** Let *practice* go along with *profession*. "Righteousness and true holiness." Hypocrisy in religion is a lie. The hypocrite is like a face in a mirror, which is the 'show of a face'—but no true face. He makes *show* of holiness—but has no *truth* in it. Ephraim pretended to be that which he was not; and what does God say of him? "Ephraim compasses me about with *lies*." By a lie in our *words*, we deny the truth; by a lie in our *profession*, we disgrace the truth. Not to be to God what we profess to others—is telling a lie; and the Scripture makes it little better than blasphemy. "I know the blasphemy of those who *say* they are Jews—and are not."

Oh! I beseech you, labor to be like God. He is a God of truth. He can as well part with his Deity—as his verity. Be like God, be true in your *words*, be true in your *profession*. God's children are children that will not lie. When God sees "truth in the inward parts," and "lips in which is no deceit," he sees his own image—which draws his heart towards us. *Likeness* produces *love*.

## **The UNITY of God.**

**Question 5: Are there more Gods than one?**

**Answer: There is but one only, the living and true God.**

That there is a God has been proved; and those who will not believe the unity of his essence, shall feel the severity of his wrath. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." He is "the only God." "Know therefore this day, and consider it in your heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath, there is none else." "A just God and a Savior; there is none beside me." There are many *ceremonial* gods. *Kings* represent God; their regal scepter is an emblem of his power and authority. *Judges* are called gods. "I have said, You are gods," Psalm 82:6, namely, "set in God's place to do justice; but these are dying gods. "But in death you are mere men. You will fall as any prince, for all must die." Verse 7. "There are those who are called gods—but to us there is but one God."

**I. There is but one First Cause that has its Being of itself, and on which all other beings depend.** As in the heavens, the *primum mobile* moves all the other orbs; so God gives life and motion to everything that exists. There can be but one God, because there is but one First Cause.

**II. There is but one infinite Being, therefore there is but one God.** There cannot be two infinities. "Do not I fill heaven and earth, says the Lord?" Jer 23:34. If there is one *infinite*, filling all places at once—how can there be any room for another infinite to subsist?

**III. There is but one Omnipotent Power.** If there be two Omnipotents, then we must always suppose a contest between these two: that which one would do, the other power, being equal, would oppose, and so all things would be brought into confusion. If a ship should have two pilots of equal power, one would be ever crossing the other; when one would sail, the other would cast anchor; there would be confusion, and the ship must perish. The order and harmony in the world, or the constant and uniform government of all things—is a clear argument that there is but one Omnipotent, one God who rules all. "I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God."

## **Use one: INFORMATION.**

### **(1.) If there be but one God, then it excludes all other gods.**

Some have imagined that there were two gods; others, that there were many gods; as the Polytheists. The Persians worshiped the sun; the Egyptians the lion and elephant; the Grecians worshiped Jupiter. These "are in error, not knowing the Scriptures." Their faith is a fable. "God has given them up to strong delusions, to believe a lie, that they may be damned."

### **(2.) If there be but one God, then there can be but one true true religion in the world.**

"One Lord, one *faith*." If there were many gods, then there might be many religions, and every God would be worshiped in his way; but if there is but one God, there is but one true religion; one Lord, one faith. Some say, we may be saved in any religion; but it is absurd to imagine that God who is One in essence, should appoint many different religions in which he will be worshiped. It is as dangerous to set up a false religion, as to set up a false God. There are many ways to hell; men may go there whichever way their fancy leads them; but there is only one true road to heaven, namely, faith and holiness. There is no way to be saved, but this. As there is but one God, so there is but one true religion.

### **(3.) If there be but one God, then there is but One whom you need chiefly to study to please—and that is God.**

If there were many gods, we would be hard put to it to please them all. One would command one thing, another the contrary; and to please two contrary masters is impossible; but there is only one God. Therefore you have but One to please. As in a kingdom there is but one king, therefore everyone seeks to ingratiate himself into his favor. Just so, there is but one true God; therefore our main work is to please him. Be sure to please God, whoever else you displease. This was Enoch's wisdom. He had this testimony before he died, that "he pleased God."

**What does this pleasing God imply?**

(1.) We please God when we comply with his **will**. It was Christ's food and drink to do his Father's will, John 4:44, and so he pleased him, A voice came from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." "It is the will of God that we should be holy." Now, when we are bespangled with holiness, our lives are walking Bibles. This is according to God's will, and it pleases him.

(2.) We please God when we do the **work** that he sets us about. "I have finished the work which you gave me to do," namely, my mediatorial work. Many finish their lives—but do not finish their work. The work God has cut out for us is, to observe the first and second tables of the law. In the *first* is set down our duty towards God; in the *second* our duty towards man. Such as make morality the chief and sole part of true religion, set the second table above the first; nay, they take away the first table; for, if prudence, justice, temperance, is enough to save, then what need do we have for the first table? Thus our worship towards God will be quite left out; but those two tables which God has joined together, let no man put asunder.

(3.) We please God when we dedicate our **hearts** to give him the best of everything. Abel gave God the fat of the offering. Gen 4:4. Domitian would not have his image carved in wood, or iron—but in *gold*. We please God when we serve him with love, fervency, and alacrity. These are *golden* services. There is but one God, therefore there is but One whom we have chiefly to please, namely, God.

(4.) If there is but one God, then we must **pray** to none but God. The Papists pray to saints and angels.

(a.) The Papists pray to **saints**. A Popish writer says, "when we pray to the departed saints, they being touched with compassion, say the same prayer to God for us. The saints above know not our needs; even if they did, we have no warrant to pray to them. "Abraham is ignorant of us." Prayer is a part of divine worship, which must be given to God alone.

(b.) The Papists pray to **angels**. Angel-worship is forbidden. Col 2:18, 19. That we may not pray to angels is clear from Rom 10:14. "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" We may not pray to any, but whom we may believe in; but we may not believe in any angel, therefore we may not pray to him. There is but one God, and it is a sin to invoke any but God.

(5.) If there be but one God, who is "above all," then he must be **loved** above all. We must love him with a love of **appreciation**. This is to set the highest estimate on him, who is the only fountain of being and bliss. We must love him with a love of **delight**. "The lover's effort to please the beloved, this is love." Aquinas. Our love to other things must be more indifferent. Some *drops* of love may run to the creature—but the *full* stream must run towards God. The creature may have the *milk* of our love—but we must keep the *cream* for God. He who is above all, must be loved above all. "Whom do I have in heaven but You? And I desire nothing on earth but You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever." Psalms 73:25-26.

**Use two: CAUTION.** If there be but one God, then let us take heed of setting up more gods than one. "Those who chase after other gods will be filled with sorrow. I will not take part in their sacrifices or even speak the names of their gods." Psalm 16:4. God is a jealous God, and he will not endure that we should have other gods. It is easy to commit **idolatry** with the creature.

(1.) Some make a god of **pleasure**. "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." Whatever we love more than God we make a God.

(2.) Others make **money** their god. The covetous man worships the image of gold, therefore he is called an idolater. Eph 5:5. That which a man trusts to, he makes his God; but he makes the wedge of gold his hope; he makes money his creator, redeemer, and comforter. Money is his *creator*; if he has money, he thinks he is made. Money is his *redeemer*; if he be in danger, he trusts in his money to redeem

him. Money is his *comforter*; if at any time he is sad, the golden harp drives away the evil spirit. It is clear that money is his God. *God made man out of the dust of the earth; and man makes a god out of the dust of the earth.*

(3.) Another makes a god of his **child**, sets his child in God's place, and so provokes God to take it away. If you lean too hard upon glass it will break, so many break their children by leaning too hard upon them.

(4.) Others make a god of their **belly**. "Whose god is their belly." Phil 3:19. Clement of Alexandria writes of a fish that has its heart in its belly; this is a fit emblem of epicures—their heart is in their belly; they mind nothing but indulging the sensual appetite; their belly is their God, and to this they pour drink-offerings.

Thus men make many gods. The apostle names the wicked man's trinity, "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," 1 John 2:16. The lust of the flesh is pleasure; the lust of the eye is money; the pride of life is honor. Oh take heed of this! Whatever you deify beside God, will prove a bramble—and fire will come out of it and devour you! Judg 9:15.

**Use three: REPROOF.** If the Lord Jehovah is the only true God, it reproves those who renounce the true God, I mean such as seek to familiar spirits, which is too much practiced among those who call themselves Christians. It is a sin condemned by the law of God. "And do not let your people practice fortune-telling or sorcery, or allow them to interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead. Anyone who does these things is an object of horror and disgust to the Lord." Deuteronomy 18:10-12. How common is this! If people have lost any of their goods, they send to wizards to know how they may obtain them again. What is this but consulting with the devil! What! because you have lost your goods, will you lose your souls too? "Thus says the Lord, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel,

that you send to enquire of Beelzebub?" So, is it not because you think there is not a God in heaven, that you ask counsel of the devil? If any here are guilty, be deeply humbled, you have renounced the true God. Better be without the goods you have lost, than have the devil help you to them again!

**Use four: EXHORTATION.**

**(1.) If there be but one God, as God is one, so let those who serve him be one.** This is what Christ prayed so heartily for. "That they all may be one." Christians should be—

(a.) One in **judgment**. The apostle exhorts to be all of one mind. "Now, dear brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won't be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose." 1 Corinthians 1:10. How sad is it to see true religion wearing a coat of many colors; to see Christians of so many opinions, and going so many different ways! It is Satan who has sown these *tares of division*. "The enemy who planted the weeds among the wheat is the Devil" Matthew 13:39. He first divided men from God, and then one man from another.

(b.) One in **affection**. They should have one heart. "The multitude of those who believed were of one heart, and of one soul." As in music, though there are several strings of a violin—yet all make one sweet harmony; so, though there are several Christians—yet there should be one sweet harmony of affection among them. There is but one God, and those who serve him should be one. There is nothing that would render the true true religion more lovely, or make more proselytes to it, than to see its professors tied together with the *heart-strings of love*. "Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is, to see brethren live together in unity!" It is as the sweet dew on Hermon, and the fragrant ointment poured on Aaron's head. If God is one, let all who profess him be of one mind, and one heart—and thus fulfill Christ's prayer, "that they all may be one."

**(2.) If there be but one God, let us labor to make clear the title that this God is ours.** "This God is our God." What comfort can it be to hear that there is a God, and that he is the *only* God—unless he is *our* God? What is Deity—without property in him? Oh let us labor to make clear the title! Beg the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works by faith. By faith we are one with Christ, and through Christ we come to have God for our God, and thus all his glorious fullness is made over to us by a deed of gift.

**Use five: GRATITUDE.** What cause have we to be thankful—that we have the knowledge of the only true God! How many are brought up in blindness! Some worship Mahomet. Many of the Indians worship the devil; they light a candle to him, that he may not hurt them. Such as know not the true God—must needs stumble into hell in the dark! Oh let us be thankful that we are born in such a land, where the light of the gospel has shone. To have the knowledge of the true God is more than if we had mines of gold, rocks of diamonds, islands of spices; especially if God has savingly revealed himself to us; if he has given us eyes to see the light; if we so know God as to be known of him, to love him, and believe in him. "Blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear." Matthew 13:16. We can never be thankful enough to God—that he has hidden the knowledge of himself from the wise and prudent of the world, and has revealed it unto us! "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure." Matthew 11:25-26.

## **The TRINITY.**

**Question 6. How many Persons are there in the Godhead?**

**Answer: Three persons—yet but one God.**

"There are three who bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one."

God is but one—yet are there *three distinct persons* subsisting in one Godhead. This is a sacred mystery, which the light within man could never have discovered. As the two natures in Christ—yet but one person, is a wonder; so there are three persons—yet but one Godhead. Here is a great deep—the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God—yet not three Gods, but one God. The three persons in the blessed Trinity are *distinguished*—but not *divided*; three *substances*—but one *essence*. This is a divine riddle where one makes three, and three make one. Our narrow thoughts can no more comprehend the Trinity in Unity, than a nut-shell will hold all the water in the sea. Let me shadow it out by a similitude.

In the body of the sun, there are—  
the *substance* of the sun,  
the *beams*,  
and the *heat*.

The beams are begotten by the sun, the heat proceeds both from the sun and the beams; but these three, though different, are not divided; they all three make but one sun. Just so in the blessed Trinity—the Son is begotten of the Father, the Holy Spirit proceeds from both; yet though they are three distinct persons, they are but one God. First, let me speak of the Unity in Trinity; then of the Trinity in Unity.

**I. Of the Unity in Trinity.** The Unity of the persons in the Godhead consists of two things.

[1] The identity of essence. In the Trinity there is a oneness in essence. The three persons are of the same divine nature and substance; so that there are no degrees in the Godhead; one person is not God more than another.

[2] The Unity of the persons in the Godhead consists in the mutual inbeing of them, or their being in one together. The three persons are so united that one person is in another, and with another. "You, Father, are in me, and I in you."

## **II. Let me speak of the Trinity in Unity.**

[1] The **first** person in the Trinity is God the **Father**. He is called the first person, in respect of order, not dignity: for God the Father has no essential perfection which the other persons have not; he is not more wise, more holy, more powerful than the other persons are. There is a priority—not a *superiority*.

[2] The **second** person in the Trinity is **Jesus Christ**, who is begotten of the Father before all time. "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before ever the earth was. When there were no depths I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth." This Scripture declares the eternal generation of the Son of God. This second person in the Trinity, who is Jehovah, has become our Jesus. The Scripture calls him the branch of David, and I may call him the flower of our nature. "By him all that believe are justified."

[3] The **third** person in the Trinity is the **Holy Spirit**, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, whose work is to illuminate the mind, and enkindle sacred motions. The essence of the Spirit is in heaven, and everywhere; but his influence is in the hearts of believers. This is that blessed Spirit who gives us the holy unction. "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth." 1 John 2:20. Though Christ merits grace for us, it is the Holy Spirit who works it in us. Though Christ makes the purchase, it is the Holy Spirit that makes the assurance, and seals us to the day of redemption.

Thus I have spoken of all the three persons. The Trinity of persons may be proved, "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:16-17. Here are three names given to the three persons. He who spoke with a voice from heaven was God the Father; he who was baptized in Jordan was God the Son; he who descended in the likeness of a dove was God the Holy Spirit. Thus I have shown you the Unity of essence, and the Trinity of persons.

**Use one: For confutation.**

**(1.) This confutes the Jews and Turks, who believe only the first person in the Godhead.** Take away the distinction of the persons in the Trinity, and you overthrow man's redemption; for God the Father being offended with man for sin, how shall he be pacified without a mediator? This mediator is Christ, who makes our peace. Christ having died, and shed his blood, how shall this blood be applied, but by the Holy Spirit? Therefore, if there are not three persons in the Godhead, man's salvation cannot be wrought out; if there is no second person in the Trinity, there is no redeemer; if no third person, there is no comforter. Thus the plank is taken away by which we get to heaven.

**(2.) It confutes the execrable opinion of the Socinians, who deny the Divinity of the Lord Jesus,** and make him to be a creature only—but of a higher rank. As the Papists blot out the second commandment, so the Socinians blot out the second person in the Trinity. If to oppose Christ's members is a sin, what is it to oppose Christ himself? Jesus Christ is co-equal with God the Father. He thought it no robbery to be equal with God. He is co-eternal with God the Father: "I was from the beginning," if not, there was a time when God was without a Son, and so he would be no Father; nay, there was a time when God was without his glory, for Christ is "the brightness of his Father's glory." Jesus is co-essential with God the

Father. The Godhead subsists in Christ. "In whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." It is said, not only that Christ was with God before the beginning—but that he was God. John 1:1, and 1 Tim 3:16. "God manifest in the flesh." The title of *Lord*, so often given to Christ, in the New Testament, answers to the title of *Jehovah* in the Old. Christ has a co-eternity, and co-substantiality with his Father. "I and my Father are one." It were blasphemy for a mere *angel* to speak thus. Yet further to prove Christ's Godhead, consider:

(a.) The glorious incommunicable attributes belonging to God the Father, are ascribed to Christ. Is God the Father omnipotent? So is Jesus Christ. He is the almighty, Rev 1:1, and he creates, Col 1:16. Is God the Father infinitely immense, filling all places? So is Jesus Christ. While Christ was on the earth by his bodily presence, he was at the same time in the bosom of the Father by his divine presence.

(b.) The same royal prerogatives, which belong to God the Father, belong also to Christ. Does God the Father seal pardons? This is a flower of Christ's crown. "Your sins are forgiven." Nor does Christ remit sin as ministers do, by virtue of a power *delegated* to them from God; but he does it by his own power and authority. Is God the Father the adequate object of faith? Is he to be believed in? So is his Son. "Trust in God; trust also in me." John 14:1 Does adoration belong to God the Father? So it does to the Son. "Let all the angels of God worship him." How sacrilegious therefore is the Socinian, who would rob Christ of his Godhead, the best flower of his crown. They who deny Christ to be God, must greatly *twist*, or else *deny* the Scripture to be the Word of God.

**(3.) It confutes the Arians, who deny the Holy Spirit to be God.** The eternal Godhead subsists in the Holy Spirit. "He shall guide you into all truth." Christ speaks not there of an attribute—but of a person. That the Godhead subsists in the person of the Holy Spirit appears in this; that the Spirit, who gives diversity of gifts, is said to be the same Lord, and the same God. The black and

unpardonable sin is said, in a special manner, to be committed against the Godhead subsisting in the Holy Spirit. "And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." Matthew 12:31-32.

The mighty power of God is made manifest by the Holy Spirit; for he changes the hearts of men. The devil would have Christ prove himself to be God, by turning stones into bread; but the Holy Spirit shows his Godhead by turning stones into flesh. "I will take away the stony heart; and give you a heart of flesh." Yet further, the power and Godhead of the Holy Spirit appeared in effecting the glorious conception of our Lord Jesus Christ. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the holy One to be born will be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35.

The Holy Spirit works miracles, which transcend the sphere of nature; such as raising the dead. To him belongs divine worship; our souls and bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, in which temples he is to be worshiped. We are baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit; therefore we must believe his Godhead, or renounce our baptism in his name. Methinks it were better for such men not to have so much as heard whether there is any Holy Spirit, than to deny his Deity. They who would wittingly and willingly blot out the third person—shall have their names blotted out of the book of life!

### **Use two: For exhortation.**

(1.) **Believe** this doctrine of the Trinity of persons in the unity of essence. The Trinity is solely an object of *faith*; the plumbline of *reason* is too short to fathom this mystery. But *where reason cannot wade—there faith may swim!* There are some truths in religion that may be demonstrated by reason; as that there is a God. But the Trinity of persons in the Unity of essence, is wholly supernatural,

and must be believed by faith. This sacred doctrine is not *against* reason—but *above* it. Those illuminated philosophers, who could find out the causes of things, and discourse of the magnitude and influence of the stars, the nature of minerals; could never, by their deepest search, find out the mystery of the Trinity. This is of divine revelation, and must be adored with humble faith. We cannot be good Christians, without the firm belief of the Trinity. How can we pray to God the Father but in the name of Christ, and through the help of the Spirit?

How are the Quakers to be abhorred, who go under the name of Christians, and yet undervalue and renounce Jesus Christ! I have read of some Quakers who speak thus: "We deny the person of him whom you call Christ, and affirm, That they who expect to be saved by that Christ without works, will be damned in that faith!" Could the devil himself speak worse blasphemy? They would pull up all true religion by the roots, and take away that corner stone, on which the hope of our salvation is built.

(2.) If there be one God subsisting in three persons, then let us give equal **reverence** to all the persons in the Trinity. There is not one who is more or less in the Trinity; the Father is not more God than the Son and Holy Spirit. There is an *order* in the Godhead—but no *degrees*; one person has not a majority or supereminence above another; therefore we must give equal *worship* to all the persons. "That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." *Adore* Unity in Trinity.

(3.) **Obey** all the persons in the blessed Trinity; for all of them are God. Obey God the FATHER. Christ himself, as man, obeyed God the Father, much more must we.

Obey God the SON. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry." Kiss him with a kiss of obedience. Christ's commands are not grievous. Whatever he commands, is for our interest and benefit. Oh then kiss the Son! Why do the elders throw down their crowns at the feet of Christ, and fall

down before the Lamb? To testify their subjection, and to profess their readiness to serve and obey him.

Obey God the HOLY SPIRIT. Our souls are breathed into us by the glorious Spirit. "The Spirit of God has made me." Our souls are adorned by the blessed Spirit. Every grace is a divine spark lighted in the soul, by the Holy Spirit. Nay, more, the Spirit sanctified Christ's human nature; he united it with the divine, and fitted the man Christ to be our Mediator. Well then does this third person in the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, deserve to be obeyed; for he is God, and this tribute of homage and obedience is due to him from us.

## **The Creation.**

### **Question 7: What are the DECREES of God?**

Answer: The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he has foreordained whatever shall come to pass.

I have already spoken something concerning the decrees of God under the attribute of his immutability. God is unchangeable in his essence, and he is unchangeable in his decrees; his counsel shall stand. He decrees the outcome of all things, and carries them on to their accomplishment by his providence. I shall proceed therefore to **the execution of his decrees.**

### **Question 8: What is the work of CREATION?**

Answer: It is God's making all things from nothing, by the word of his power. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

The creation is glorious to *behold*, and it is a pleasant and profitable *study*. Some think that when Isaac went abroad into the fields to

meditate, it was in the *book of creation*.

Creation is the heathen's Bible, the ploughman's primer, and the traveler's map, through which they receive a representation of the infinite excellencies which are in God. The creation is a large volume, in which God's works are bound up; and this volume has three great pages in it—heaven, earth, and sea.

The **author** of the creation is God, as it is in the text, "God created." The world was created in time, and could not be from eternity. The world must have a maker, and could not make itself. If one should go into a far country, and see stately edifices, he would never imagine that they could build themselves—but that there had been some *artificer* to raise such majestic structures. Just so, this great fabric of the world could not create itself, it must have some builder or maker, and that is God. "In the beginning God created." To imagine that the work of the creation was not framed by the Lord Jehovah, is as if we should conceive a beautiful painting to be drawn without the hand of an artist. "God made the world and all things therein."

In the work of creation there are two things to be considered:

1. The making.
2. The adorning.

**I. The MAKING of the world.** Here consider,

**[1] God made the world without any pre-existent matter.** This is the difference between generation and creation. In generation there is suitable material at hand, some matter to work upon; but in creation there is no pre-existent matter. God brought all this glorious fabric of the world, out of the *womb of nothing*. Our beginning was of nothing. Some brag of their birth and ancestry; but how little cause have they to boast, who came from nothing.

**[2] God made the world with a word.** When Solomon had to build a temple he needed many workmen, and they all had tools to work with—but God wrought without tools. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made." Psalm 33:3. The disciples wondered that Christ could *calm* the sea with a word; but it was more to *make* the sea with a word.

**[3] God made all things at first very good, without any defect or deformity.** The creation came out of God's hands as a pure piece; it was a spotless copy, without any blot, written with God's own fingers. His work was perfect.

**II. The ADORNING of the world.** God made this great lump and mass, with neither shape nor order; and then beautified it. He divided the sea and the earth, he decked the earth with flowers, the trees with fruit. But what is beauty when it is masked over? Therefore, that we might behold this glory, God made the *light*. The heavens were bespangled with the sun, moon, and stars—so that the world's beauty might be beheld and admired. God, in the creation, began with things less noble and excellent, rocks and vegetables; and then the rational creatures, angels and men. Man is the most exquisite piece in the creation. He is a microcosm, or little world. Man was made with deliberation and counsel. "Let us make man." It is the manner of artificers to be more than ordinarily accurate when they are about their masterpieces. Man was to be the masterpiece of this visible world, therefore God consulted about making so rare a piece. A solemn council of the sacred persons in the Trinity was called. "Let us make man, and let us make him in our own image." On the king's coin, his own image is stamped; so God stamped his image on man, and made him partaker of many divine qualities.

**[1] I shall speak of the parts of man's BODY.**

(1.) The **head**, the most excellent architectural part, is the fountain of thought, and the seat of reason. In nature the head is the best piece—but in grace the heart excels.

(2.) The **eye** is the beauty of the face; it shines and sparkles like a lesser sun in the body. The eye occasions much sin, and therefore we may well have tears in it.

(3.) The **ear** is the conduit-pipe through which knowledge is conveyed. Better lose our seeing than our hearing, for "faith comes by hearing." To have an ear open to God is the best *jewel* on the ear.

(4.) The **tongue**. David calls the tongue his glory, because it is an instrument to set forth the glory of God. The soul at first was a violin in tune to praise God, and the tongue made the music. God has given us two ears—but one tongue, to show that we should be swift to hear—but slow to speak. God has set a double fence before the tongue—the teeth, and the lips—to teach us to be wary that we do not sin with our tongue.

(5.) The **heart** is a noble part, and the seat of life.

**[2] I shall speak of the SOUL of man.** This is the *man* of the man. Man, in regard of his soul, partakes with the angels. The understanding, will, and conscience, are a looking-glass which resembles the Trinity. The soul is the diamond in the ring, it is a vessel of honor; God himself is served in this vessel. It is a spark of celestial brightness, says Damascene. David admired the rare context and workmanship of his body. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. Psalms 139:13-14. If the *cabinet of the body* is so wonderfully made, what is the *jewel of the soul*? How richly is the soul embroidered! Thus you see how glorious a work the creation is, and man especially, who is the epitome of the world.

### **But why did God make the world?**

(1.) **Negatively.** Not for himself; for he did not need it, being infinite. He was happy in reflecting upon his own sublime excellencies and perfections before the world was.

God did not make the world to be a mansion for us, since we are not to abide here forever. Heaven is our mansion house. The world is only a passage-room to eternity; the world is to us as the wilderness was to Israel, not to rest in—but to travel through to the glorious Canaan. The world is a dressing-room to dress our souls in, not a place where we are to stay forever. The apostle tells us of the world's funeral. "The elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." 2 Pet 3:10.

**(2.) Positively.** God made the world to demonstrate his own glory. The world is a looking glass, in which we may see the power and goodness of God shine forth. "The heavens declare the glory of God." The world is like a wonderful piece of tapestry, in which we may see the skill and wisdom of him who made it.

### **Use one: Did God create this world?**

**(1.) This convinces us of the truth of his Godhead.** To create is proper to a Deity. Plato was convinced of a Deity when he saw that not all the people in the world could not make a fly. Thus God proves himself to be the true God, and distinguishes himself from idols. "Say this to those who worship other gods: Your so-called gods, who did not make the heavens and earth, will vanish from the earth." Jeremiah 10:11. Who but God can create? The creation is enough to convince the heathen, that there is a God. There are two books out of which God will judge and condemn the heathen, namely, the book of *Conscience*, "Which shows the work of the law written in their hearts," and the book of the *Creation*, "From the *creation* of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse." Romans 1:20. The world is full of divine emblems and hieroglyphics. Every star in the sky, every bird that flies in the air, is a witness against the heathen. A creature could not make itself.

**(2.) It is a mighty support of faith, that God creates.** He who made all things with a word, what can he not do? He can create strength in weakness; he can create a supply of our needs. What a foolish question was that, "Can he prepare a table in the wilderness?" Cannot he who made the world do much more? "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Rest on this God who made heaven and earth, for help. As the work of creation is a monument of God's power, so it is a support to faith. Is your heart *hard*? He can with a word create softness. Is it *unclean*? He can create purity. "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Is the church of God low? He can create Jerusalem a praise. There is no such golden pillar for faith to rest upon, as a creating power.

**(3.) Did God make this world full of beauty and glory, everything very good? Then, what an evil thing is SIN, which has put out of frame the whole creation!** Sin has much eclipsed the beauty, soured the sweetness, and marred the harmony of the world. How bitter is that gall, a drop whereof can embitter a whole sea! Sin has brought vanity and vexation into the world, yes, a curse. God cursed the ground because of man's sin. There were several fruits of the curse—

"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life." By painful toil is to be understood all the troubles and cares of this life.

"By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food." In innocence Adam tilled the ground, for he must not live idly; but it was rather a delight than a labor. That tilling was without toiling. The eating in sorrow, and the sweat of the brow, came in after sin.

"Thorns and thistles shall the ground bring forth." Did the earth in a state of innocence bear thorns, though they were afterwards threatened as a punishment? It is likely it did bear thorns; for, when God had done creating, he made no new species or kinds of things; but the meaning is—Now, after sin, the earth should bring forth

more plentifully of thorns, and now those thorns should be hurtful, and choke the corn, which hurtful quality was not in them before. Ever since the fall, all the comforts of this life have a thorn and a thistle in them!

The fourth fruit of the curse was the driving of man out of paradise. "So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden." God at first brought Adam into paradise as into a house ready furnished, or as a king into his palace. "Have dominion over every living thing that moves." God's driving Adam out of paradise signified his dethroning and banishing him, that he might look after a heavenly and a better paradise.

A fifth fruit of the curse was death. "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Death was not natural to Adam—but came in after sin. As the apostle says. "By sin came death." See then how cursed a thing sin is, which has brought so many curses upon the creation. If we will not hate sin for its *deformity*, let us hate it for the curse it brings!

**(4.) Did God make this glorious world? Did he make everything good? Was there in the creature so much beauty and sweetness? Oh! then what sweetness is there in God?** The cause is always more noble than the effect. Think with yourselves—is there so much excellence in house and lands? Then how much more is there in God, who made them! Is there beauty in a rose? What beauty then is there in Christ, the Rose of Sharon! Does oil make the face shine? How will the light of God's countenance make it shine! Does wine cheer the heart? Oh! what virtue is there in the true vine! How does the blood of this grape cheer the heart! Is the fruit of the garden sweet? How delicious are the fruits of the Spirit! Is a gold mine so precious? How precious is he who founded this mine! What is Christ, in whom are hid all treasures?

*We should ascend from the creature to the Creator.* If there is any comfort below, how much more is there in God, who made all these things! How unreasonable is it that we should delight in the world, and not much more in him who made it! How should our hearts be set on God, and how should we long to be with God—who has infinitely more sweetness in him than any creature!

**Use two: Of EXHORTATION.**

(1.) Did God create the world? **Let us wisely observe the works of creation.** God has given us not only the book of the Scriptures to read in—but the book of the creation. Look up to the heavens, for they show much of God's glory. The *sun* gilds the world with its bright beams. Behold the *stars*, their regular motion in their orbs, their magnitude, their light and their influence. We may see God's glory blazing in the sun and twinkling in the stars. Look into the *sea*, and see the wonders of God in the deep. Psalm 107:74. Look into the air, there the birds make melody, and sing forth the praises of their Creator. Look into the *earth*, there we may wonder at the nature of minerals, the power of the loadstone, the virtue of herbs. See the earth decked as a bride with flowers. All these are the glorious effects of God's power. God has wrought the creation as with curious needlework, that we may observe his wisdom and goodness, and give him the praise due to him. "O Lord, how manifold are your works! in wisdom have you made them all!"

(2.) Did God create all things? **Let us obey our Maker.** We are his by right of creation, we owe ourselves to him. If another gives us our *maintenance*, we think ourselves bound to serve him; much more should we serve and obey God who gives us our *life*. "In him we live and move and have our being." God has made everything for man's service; the grain for nourishment, the animals for usefulness, the birds for music, that man should be for God's service. The rivers come from the sea—and they run into the sea again. All we have is from God. Let us honor our Creator, and live to him who made us.

(3.) Did God make our bodies out of the dust, and that dust out of nothing? **Let this keep down pride.** When God would humble Adam he uses this expression, "Out of the *dust* were you taken." Why are you proud, O dust and ashes? You are made but of dirt. "Since you are humble, why do you not walk humbly?" Bernard. David says, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." Your being wonderfully made, may make you *thankful*; but being made of the dust, may keep you *humble*. If you have **beauty**, it is but well-colored dirt! Your body is but air and dust mingled together, and this dust will deteriorate back into the dust. When the Lord had said of the judges, they were gods, Psalm 82:6, lest they should grow proud he told them they were dying gods. "But you will die like mere men." Verse 7.

(4.) Did God create our souls after his image—but we lost it? **Let us never rest until we are restored to God's image again.** We have now got the *devil's image* in pride, malice, and envy. Let us get *God's image* restored, which consists in knowledge and righteousness. Grace is our best beauty, it makes us like God and angels. As the sun is to the world, so is holiness to the soul. Let us go to God to restore his image in us. "Lord! you have once made me, make me anew; sin has defaced your image in me, oh draw it again by the pencil of the Holy Spirit!"

## **The PROVIDENCE of God.**

Question 11: What are God's works of Providence?

Answer: God's works of providence are the acts of his most holy, wise, and powerful **government** of his creatures, and of their actions.

Of the work of God's providence Christ says, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." God has rested from the works of *creation*, he does not create any new species of things. "He rested from all his works;" and therefore it must needs be meant of his works of *providence*: "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." "His kingdom rules over all;" that is, his providential kingdom. Now, for the clearing of this point, I shall—

I. Show you that there is a providence.

2. What that providence is.

3. Lay down some maxims or propositions concerning the providence of God.

**I. That there is a providence.** There is no such thing as *chance* or *blind fate*—but there is a providence which guides and governs the world. "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord." Prov 16:33.

**II. What this providence is.** I answer, Providence is God's ordering all outcomes and events of things, after the counsel of his will, to his own glory.

[1] I call providence—God's ordering things, to distinguish it from his decrees. God's *decree* ordains things that shall happens, God's *providence* orders them.

[2] I call providence the ordering of things after the counsel of God's will.

[3] God orders all events of things, after the counsel of his will, to his own glory; his glory being the ultimate end of all his actings, and the center where all the lines of providence meet. The providence of God is "the queen and governess of the world." It is the eye which sees, and the hand which turns all the wheels in the universe. God is not

like an artificer who builds a house, and then leaves it—but like a pilot, he steers the ship of the whole creation.

### **III. Propositions about God's providence.**

#### **[1] God's providence reaches to all places, persons, and affairs.**

**(1.) God's providence reaches to all PLACES.** "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off?" The diocese where Providence visits, is very large; it reaches to heaven, earth, and sea. "I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the place of the dead, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me." Psalm 139:7-10. Now, that the sea, which is higher than the earth, should not drown the earth, is a wonder of Providence. The prophet Jonah saw the wonders of God in the deep, when the very fish which devoured him and swallowed him brought him safe to shore.

**(2.) God's providence reaches to all PERSONS,** especially the persons of the godly, who in a special manner are taken notice of. God takes care of every saint in particular, as if he had none else to care for. "He cares for you," that is, God cares for the elect in a special manner. "The Lord watches over those who fear him, those who rely on his unfailing love. He rescues them from death and keeps them alive in times of famine." Psalm 33:18-19. God by his providential care shields off dangers from his people, and sets a life-guard of angels about them. "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them." Psalm 34:7. God's providence keeps the very bones of the saints. "The righteous face many troubles, but the Lord rescues them from each and every one. For the Lord protects them from harm— not one of their bones will be broken! Psalms 34:19-20. It bottles their tears. "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You

have recorded each one in your book." Psalm 56:8. It strengthens the saints in their weakness. Heb 11:34. It supplies all their needs out of its alms basket. "You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies." Psalm 23:5. Thus Providence wonderfully supplies the needs of the elect.

When the Protestants in Rochelle were besieged by the French king, God by his providence sent a great number of small fish to feed them, such as were never seen before in that haven. So the raven, that unnatural creature (that will hardly feed its own young), providentially brought sustenance to the prophet Elijah. The Virgin Mary, through bearing and bringing forth the Messiah, helped to make the world rich—yet she herself was very poor; and now, being warned of the angel to go into Egypt, she had scarce enough to bear her expenses there; but see how God provides for her beforehand. By his providence he sends wise men from the east, who bring costly gifts, gold, myrrh, and frankincense, and present them to Christ; and now she has enough to defray her expenses into Egypt. God's children sometimes scarce know how they are fed, except that providence feeds them. "Truly you shall be fed." Psalm 37:3. If God will give his people a *kingdom* when they die, he will not deny them *daily bread* while they live.

**(3.) God's providence reaches to all AFFAIRS and occurrences in the world.** There is nothing that stirs in the world but God has, by his providence, the over-ruling of it. Is it the raising of a man to honor? "But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another." Psalm 75:7. Success and victory in battle is the result of providence. *Saul* had the victory—but God wrought the salvation. That among all virgins brought before the king, *Esther* should find favor in the eyes of the king, was not without God's special providence; for, by this means, the Lord saved the Jews alive, who were destined to destruction.

Providence reaches to the least of things, to birds and ants. Providence feeds the young raven, when the mother bird forsakes it,

and will give it no food. "He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call." Psalms 147:9. Providence reaches to the very hairs of our head. "The hairs of your head are all numbered." Matt 10:30. Surely if providence reaches to our hairs, much more to our souls. Thus you have seen that God's providence reaches to all places, to all persons, to all occurrences and affairs. Now there are two objections against this doctrine.

Some say, **There are many things done in the world which are very *disorderly* and *irregular*; and surely God's providence is not in these things.**

Yes, the things that seem to us *irregular*, God makes use of to his own glory. Suppose you were in a smith's shop, and should see there several sorts of tools, some crooked, some bowed, others hooked, would you condemn all these things, because they do not look handsome? The smith makes use of them all for doing his work. Thus it is with the providences of God; they seem to us to be very crooked and strange—yet they all carry on God's work. I shall make this clear to you in two particular cases.

God's people are sometimes in a low condition. It seems to be out of order, that those who are best, should be in the lowest condition; but there is much wisdom in this providence, as appears thus:

1. Perhaps the hearts of the godly were lifted up with riches, or with success; now God comes with a humbling providence to afflict them and fleece them. Better is the loss that makes them humble, than the success that makes them proud. Again,
2. If the godly were not sometimes afflicted, and given an eclipse in their outward comforts, how could their graces be seen, especially their faith and patience? If it were always *sunshine* we would see no stars; so if we should have always *prosperity*, it would be hard to see the acting of men's faith. Thus you see God's providences are wise and regular, though to us they seem very strange and crooked.

Here is another case. The wicked flourish. This seems to be very much out of order; but God, in his providence, sometimes sees it good, that the worst of men should be exalted; that they may do some work for God, though it be against their will. "But this is not what he intends, this is not what he has in mind; his purpose is to destroy, to put an end to many nations." Isaiah 10:7. *God will be in no man's debt.* He makes use of the wicked sometimes to protect and shield his church; and sometimes to refine and purify it. "O Lord, you have appointed them to execute judgment; O Rock, you have ordained them to punish." Hab 1:12. As if the prophet had said, "You have ordained the wicked to correct your children." Indeed, as Augustine says well, "We are indebted to wicked men, who against their wills do us good," As the corn is indebted to the flail to thresh off its husks, or as the iron is indebted to the file to brighten it; just so, the godly are indebted to the wicked, though it be against their will, to brighten and refine their graces. Now, then, if the wicked do God's own work, though against their will, he will not let them be losers by it; he will raise them in the world, and give them a full cup of earthly comforts. Thus you see those *providences are wise and regular, which to us seem strange and crooked.*

**But, some may say, "if God has a hand in ordering all things that fall out, he has a hand in the sins of men."**

I answer, No, by no means, he has no hand in any man's sin. God cannot go contrary to his own nature, he cannot do any unholy action, any more than the sun can be said to be darkened. Here you must take heed of two things:

you must take heed of making God ignorant of men's sins;

you must take heed of making God to have a hand in men's sins.

Is it likely that God is both the *author* of sin, and the *avenger* of sin? Is it a likely thing that God should make a law against sin, and then have a hand in breaking his own law? God in his providence *permits*

men's sins. "He allowed all nations to walk in their own ways." Acts 14:16. God permitted their sin, which he never would, if he could not bring good out of it. Had not sin been permitted—God's *justice* in punishing sin, and his mercy in pardoning sin, had not been so well manifested. The Lord is pleased to permit sin—but he has no hand in sin.

But is it not said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart? Here is more than barely permitting sin.

God does not infuse evil into men, he withdraws the influence of his graces, and then the heart hardens of itself; even as the light being withdrawn, darkness presently follows in the air? But it would be absurd to say, that therefore the light darkens the air; and therefore you will observe, that Pharaoh is said to harden his own heart. Exod 8:85. God is the cause of no man's sin. It is true God has a hand in the *action* where sin is—but no hand in the *sin* of the action. A man may play upon a jarring instrument—but the jarring is from itself. Just so here—the actions of men, so far as they are *natural*, are from God; but so far as they are *sinful*, they are from the men themselves, and God has no hand at all in them. So much for the first position, that God's providence reaches to all places, to all persons, and to all occurrences.

**[2] A second proposition is, that providences, which are casual and accidental to us, are pre-determined by the Lord.** The falling of a tile upon one's head, the breaking out of a fire, is casual to us—but it is ordered by a providence of God. You have a clear instance of this in I Kings 22:34. "An Aramean soldier, however, *randomly* shot an arrow at the Israelite troops, and the arrow hit the king of Israel between the joints of his armor." This accident was casual as to the man who drew the bow; but it was divinely ordered by the providence of God. God's providence directed the arrow to hit the mark. Things that seem to happen casually, and by chance, are the outcome of God's decrees, and the interpretation of his will.

**[3] God's providence is greatly to be observed—but we are not to make it the rule of our actions.** "Whoever is wise will observe these things." It is good to observe providence—but we must not make it our rule to walk by. **Providence is a Christian's diary—but not his Bible.** Sometimes a bad cause prevails and gets ground; but it is not to be liked because it prevails. We must not think the better of what is sinful, because it is successful. Providence no rule for our actions to be directed by.

**[4] Divine providence is irresistible.** There is no standing in the way of God's providence, to hinder it. When God's time was come for Joseph's release, the prison could hold him no longer. "The king sent and loosed him." When God would indulge the Jews with liberty in their religion, Cyrus, by a providence, puts forth a proclamation to encourage the Jews to go and build their temple at Jerusalem, and worship God. If God will shield and protect Jeremiah's person in captivity, the very king of Babylon shall nurse up the prophet, and give charge concerning him, that he lack nothing. Jer 39:11, 12.

**[5] God is to be trusted when his providences seem to run contrary to his promises.** God promised to give David the crown, to make him king; but providence ran contrary to his promise. David was pursued by Saul, and was in danger of his life—but all this while it was David's duty to trust God. Pray observe, that the Lord by cross providences, often brings to pass his promise. God promised Paul the lives of all who were with him in the ship; but the providence of God seemed to run quite contrary to his promise, for the winds blew, the ship split and broke in pieces. Thus God fulfilled his promise—upon the broken pieces of the ship they all came safe to shore. Trust God when *providences* seem to run quite contrary to *promises*.

**[6] The providences of God are chequer-work, they are intermingled.** In the life to come, there shall be no more mixture; in hell there will be nothing but bitter; in heaven nothing but sweet. But in this life the providences of God are *mixed*, there is something of the sweet in them, and something of the bitter. Providences are

just like Israel's pillar of cloud, which conducted them in their march, which was dark on one side and light on the other. In the ark were laid up the *rod* and *manna*, so are God's providences to his children; there is something of the *rod* and something of the *manna*; so that we may say with David, "I will sing of *mercy* and *judgement*." When Joseph was in prison, there was the *dark* side of the cloud; but God was with Joseph, there was the *light* side of the cloud. Asher's shoes were of brass—but his feet were dipped in oil. So affliction is the shoe of *brass* which pinches; but there is mercy mingled with the affliction, for there is the foot dipped in oil.

**[7] The same action, as it comes from God's providence, may be good; and as it comes from men, may be evil.** For instance, Joseph being sold into Egypt by his brethren was evil, very wicked, for it was the fruit of their envy. But as it was an act of God's providence it was good; for by this means Jacob and all his family were preserved alive in Egypt. Another instance is in Shimei's cursing David. Shimei cursed David, it was wicked and sinful, for it was the fruit of his malice. But as his cursing was ordered by God's providence, it was an act of God's justice to punish David, and to humble him for his adultery and murder. As the crucifying of Christ came from the Jews, it was an act of hatred and malice to Christ; and Judas's betraying him was an act of covetousness. But as each was an act of God's providence, so there was good in it; for it was an act of God's love in giving Christ to die for the world. Thus I have made clear to you, the doctrine of God's providence in these several positions. Let me now speak something by way of application.

**Use one: By way of exhortation in these particulars.**

**(1.) ADMIRE God's providence.** The providence of God keeps the whole creation upon the wheels, or else it would soon be dissolved, and the very axle of the world would break in pieces. If God's providence should be withdrawn but for a moment, creatures would be dissolved, and run into their first nothing. Without this wise providence of God, there would be anxiety and confusion in the

whole world, just like an army when it is routed and scattered. The providence of God infuses comfort and virtue into everything we enjoy. Our clothes would not warm us, our food would not nourish us, without the special providence of God. And does not all this deserve your admiration of providence?

**(2.) Learn quietly to SUBMIT to divine providence.** Do not murmur at things that are ordered by divine wisdom. We may no more find fault with the works of providence than we may with the works of creation. It is a sin as much to quarrel with God's providence, as to deny his providence. If other people do not act as *we* would have them act, they shall act as *God* would have them act. His providence is his master-wheel, which turns these lesser wheels, and God will bring his glory out of all at last. "I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for you are the one who has done this." Psalm 39:9. It may be, we think sometimes we could order things better, if *we* had the government of the world in our hands; but alas! should we be left to our own choice, we should choose those things that are hurtful for us! David earnestly desired the life of his child, which was the fruit of his sin—but had the child lived it would have been a perpetual monument of his shame. Let us be content that God should rule the world; learn to acquiesce in his will, and submit to his providence. Does any affliction befall you? Remember God sees it is that which is fit for you, or it would not come. Your clothes cannot be so fit for you as your crosses. God's providence may sometimes be secret—but it is always wise; and though we may not be silent under God's dishonor—yet we should learn to be silent under his displeasure.

**(3.) You who are Christians, believe that all God's providence shall conspire for your good at last.** The providences of God are sometimes dark, and our eyes dim, and we can hardly tell what to make of them; but when we cannot unriddle providence, let us believe that it will work together for the good of the elect. Rom 8:28. The wheels in a clock seem to move contrary one to the other—but they help forward the motion of the clock. Just

so, the providences of God seem to be cross wheels; but for all that, they shall carry on the good of the elect. The pricking of a vein is in itself evil and hurtful; but as it prevents a fever, and tends to the health of the patient, it is good. Just so, affliction in itself is not joyous—but grievous; but the Lord turns it to the good of his saints. *Poverty* shall starve their sins, and *afflictions* shall prepare them for a kingdom. Therefore, Christians, believe that God loves you, and that he will make the most cross providences to promote his glory and your good.

**(4.) Let it be an antidote against immoderate FEAR, that nothing comes to pass but what is ordained by God's decree, and ordered by his providence.** We sometimes fear what the outcome of things will be, when men grow high in their actings; but let us not make things worse by our fear. Men are limited in their power, and cannot go one hair's breadth further than God's providence permits. He might let Sennacherib's army march towards Jerusalem—but they shall not shoot one arrow against it. "Then the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning--there were all the dead bodies!" Isa 37:36. When Israel was encompassed between Pharaoh and the Red Sea, no question, some of their hearts began to tremble, and they looked upon themselves as dead men; but Providence so ordered it—that the sea was a *safe passage* to Israel, and a *sepulcher* to Pharaoh and all his host.

**(5.) Let the merciful providence of God cause THANKFULNESS.** We are kept alive by a wonderful-working Providence. Providence makes our clothes to warm us, and our food to nourish us. We are fed every day out of the alms-basket of God's providence. That we are in health, that we have an estate, is not by our diligence—but God's providence. "But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth." Deut 8:18. Especially if we go a step *higher*, we may see cause for thankfulness, that we were born and bred in a gospel land, and that

we live in such a place where the Sun of Righteousness shines, which is a signal providence. Why might we not have been born in such places where Paganism prevails? That Christ should make himself known to *us*, and touch *our* hearts with his Spirit, when he passes by others; whence is this but from the miraculous providence of God, which is the effect of his free grace?

**Use two: Comfort in respect of the church of God.** God's providence reaches in a more special manner to his church. "Sing about a fruitful vineyard: I the Lord, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it." Isa 27:2-3. God waters this vineyard with his blessings, and watches over it by his providence. Such as think totally to ruin the church, must do it in a time when it is neither day nor night, for the Lord keeps it by his providence night and day. What a miraculous conduct of Providence had Israel! God led them by a pillar of fire, gave them manna from heaven, and water from the rock.

God by his providence preserves his church in the midst of enemies; as a spark is kept alive in the ocean, or a flock of sheep are kept alive in the midst of wolves. God saves his church strangely.

**(1.) By giving unexpected mercies to his church, when she anticipated nothing but ruin.** "When the Lord restored his exiles to Jerusalem, it was like a dream! We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy. And the other nations said, 'What amazing things the Lord has done for them.' Yes, the Lord has done amazing things for us!" Psalm 126:1-3. How strangely did God raise up Queen Esther to preserve alive the Jews, when Haman had got a bloody warrant signed for their execution!

**(2.) Strangely, by saving in that very way in which we think he will destroy.** God works sometimes by contraries. He raises his church by bringing it low. The blood of the martyrs has watered the church, and made it more fruitful. Exod 1:12. "The more they

afflicted them—the more they multiplied." The church is like that plant which Gregory Nazianzen speaks of—it grows by *cutting*.

**(3.) Strangely, in that he makes the enemy to do his work.**

When the people of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir came against Judah, God set the enemy one against another. "The Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves. The armies of Moab and Ammon turned against their allies from Mount Seir and killed every one of them. After they had finished off the army of Seir, they turned on each other. So when the army of Judah arrived at the lookout point in the wilderness, there were dead bodies lying on the ground for as far as they could see. Not a single one of the enemy had escaped." 2 Chronicles 20:22-24. God made the traitors to be their own betrayers. God can do his work by the enemy's hand. God made the Egyptians send away the people of Israel laden with jewels. The church is the pupil of God's eye, and the *eyelid of his providence* daily covers and defends it.

**Use three: See here, that which may make us long for the time when the great *mystery* of God's providence shall be fully unfolded to us.** Now we scarcely know what to make of God's providence, and are ready to censure what we do not understand; but in heaven we shall see how all his providences (sickness, losses, sufferings) contributed to our salvation. Here we see but some dark pieces of God's providence, and it is impossible to judge of his works by *pieces*; but when we come to heaven, and see the full body and portrait of his providence drawn out into its living colors—it will be glorious to behold. Then we shall see how all God's *providences* helped to fulfill his *promises*. There is no providence, but we shall see a wonder or a *mercy* in it!

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