

A
CONTEMPLATION
ON THE
WILL AND DOMINION
OF
G O D,
ON HIS
DIGNITY AND PREROGATIVES,
AND ON THE
AFFECTIONS OF GOD.

A C O N T E M P L A T I O N
O N T H E
W I L L A N D D O M I N I O N
O F
G O D.

VII. **T**HE will of God is a power of self-determination, or free choice to do a thing, or to let it alone.

There is the most perfect liberty in God. Liberty in him reigns in its full glory and perfection. He is so free that he can do whatever he pleases: but he is so holy and just that he will never please to do a sinful or unjust action.

The will of God is distinguished into secret and revealed.*

His secret will becomes revealed by events in providence every hour of our lives, and in every part of the world. His secret will becomes revealed by prophecy: a large series of which prophecies we have given in ten classes, from p. 41, to p. 176, of this volume.

The will of God, which he would have done
by

* See Dr. Gill's Body of Divinity, vol. 1. p. 131.

by men, is revealed in the law, which was originally inscribed on the heart of man, and is now written in the ten commands.---See the rules for understanding this holy law, p. 259--261.

The secret will of God is revealed in the gospel in a most wonderful and glorious manner. Here we have the deepest depths of God's gracious heart laid open to the lost world; and all his gracious intentions concerning our salvation are fully made known.

The most accurate distinction of the will of God is into that of the will of his DECREES and the will of his COMMANDS.

God's will of PRECEPT, or his commanding will, is the rule of men's duty, which consists in the most intense love to God, and love to our fellow-creatures as ourselves. This law we shall explain and enforce in another part of our work.

God's will of DECREE is the primary, original, and proper will of God. This is the rule of all his own actions. He does all things in heaven, earth, and hell, according to the will of his purpose. This will is always done: it cannot be resisted and made void by devils or men. And this will we should always attentively regard in all we purpose and perform; saying, if the Lord will, we will do this or that, Jam. iv. 13--15.
1 Cor.

1 Cor. iv. 19. This will we should own and submit to in every thing that concerns us in life and in death. Thy WILL be DONE in all that befalls us, should be our temper and language to our last breath.

I. The OBJECTS of GOD'S WILL.

HIMSELF. He hath made all things for himself, that is, for his own glory. He wills his own glory in all he does. He is the efficient cause of all---the wise disposer of all---and the final cause, and the last end of all. And this he wills necessarily, because he cannot but will his own glory. He cannot will his glory to another person, for that would be to deny himself: and it is horrid to think, 'tis blasphemy to say, that GOD can deny himself, he can despise himself, he can conceal himself, or give away his dearest rights and interests to another.

All THINGS without himself, whether good or evil, are the objects of his will. There is a difference between the objects of GOD'S knowledge and power, and the objects of his will. He knows all things knowable in his understanding; and his power reaches to all that is possible. Yet he wills not all things that he knows possible, or that might be willed: therefore, though GOD is all-knowing and all-powerful, yet he doth
not

not will all things that are possible, but his will is governed by his understanding and wisdom.

All GOOD THINGS are the object of his will. All things in nature were made very good---all things in providence, even to a sparrow, and the hairs of our head---all things in grace---all blessings of grace and consolation, are exactly according to the will of God. All our salvation, and all our desire, are according to the good pleasure of his will. His will chose us, Eph. i. 4. He called us according to the will of his purpose, 2 Tim. i. 9. Of his own will begat he us---his will was the cause of our regeneration, Jam. i. 18. This is the will of God, even our sanctification, 1 Thes. iv. 3.

The EVIL of AFFLICTIONS is the object of the divine will, whether they come in a way of CHASTISEMENT OR PUNISHMENT.

The CHASTISEMENT of TRUE BELIEVERS is from GOD. Every affliction of a good man is by the will, order, and appointment of GOD, As to the *quality* or kind of the affliction, as to the *quantity* and degree of pressure and pain in the affliction, as to the *duration* or continuance of the trial, and as to the *uses* and *ends* of the affliction, which are designed to improve our graces, to embitter sin, and make the Lord Jesus more precious to our souls. These afflictions of the righteous are consistent with the
justice,

justice, holiness, wisdom, goodness, and love of GOD to his people.

The PUNISHMENT of the WICKED is the object of GOD's will.---All the judgments, calamities, and distresses, which come upon empires, kingdoms, nations, cities, towns, villages, and particular persons, are all of GOD, and according to his will. Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Amos iii. 6. All the present bloody and ruinous wars in Europe and America are by the order of the holy and just GOD, for the punishment of pride, luxury, and infidelity in all the contending parties: and these dreadful plagues are for the glory of his eternal and immutable JUSTICE.

The EVIL of FAULT or BLAME, i. e. SIN, is the object of the divine will.---In sin there are three things always to be considered, The ACT, the GUILT, the PUNISHMENT. The only difficulty is concerning the act of sin. As to the act of sin, it may be considered as it is a natural or a moral act: or the act and the disorder, irregularity, and vitiosity of that act. As a natural act, we are all dependent upon GOD every moment: in him we live, and move, and have our being. This natural and incessant dependence on GOD is clearly demonstrated by Dr. Doddridge, in his Lectures, prop. xxxii. p. 71; by the great Andrew Baxter, in the Appendix to his Enquiry into the
Nature

Nature of the Human Soul, 8vo. 1750; and by Dr. Gill, in his Body of Divinity, vol. 1. p. 135. But the most clear, masculine, and convincing demonstration of the immediate dependence of all creatures on the concurring volition of the omnipresent God, I ever read, is to be found in the excellent Dr. Witfius's Œconomy of the Covenants, book 1. chap. viii. sect. xii.--xxx. If this is not reasoning of the brightest kind, I profess I never saw it, and never expect to see it. ---We may lay down the following considerations as clear and undoubted truth to every man of common sense.

1. All the creatures of God, whether they be corporeal or incorporeal, sensible or spiritual, owe their efficacy for producing any effect to the divine power in and upon them, at the very time when such effect is produced.

2. Every creature is derived from God, and it does not necessarily exist in the first moment of its being.

3. Whatever does not necessarily exist in the first moment of its existence, cannot necessarily exist in the second, or in any following moment, but must owe its continued existence to the will of God, by whom it was first produced.

4. All the creatures of God, in all worlds, do every moment depend upon God for the continuance of their existence. The powers of action
imply

imply more than continued existence---the good qualities of a rational being imply a greater degree of dependence on GOD---and the comforts and happiness of a rational creature imply a still higher degree of dependence.---We may then safely and surely establish this conclusion, That whatever is created by GOD, depends continually upon him for its existence, active powers, good qualities, and real happiness: and without his continual and immediate volitions, no creature whatever can possibly exist for one moment.

With respect to *sinful* ACTIONS, There are two ideas to be set down, for certain and eternal truths, whether we are capable of reconciling them to our own satisfaction, and that of other men, or no. The first is,

A X I O M 1.

That GOD is not, and cannot be, the author of sin.

A X I O M 2.

That the providence of GOD has a concern with all sinful actions, in some sense or another. For GOD is the fountain and source of all action and motion; but the vitiosity, deformity, and impurity of sin, as it is a departure from the order of the divine law, is of men only, and not of GOD.

GOD cannot will it as sin, or for the sake of
itself;

itself; but for the sake of some astonishing good to be brought about through it.

GOD wills SIN in a different way than he wills that which is GOOD. He does not will to do it himself, nor to do it by others; but permits it to be done, not as a law-giver and governor, but as a sovereign. And it is expressed by GOD's *giving* up men to their own hearts lust, Pf. lxxxii. 12. and by *suffering* them to walk in their own sinful ways, Acts xiv. 16. Δια τουτο παρεδωκεν αυτοις ο θεος εις παθη ατιμιας, Rom. i. 26. He wills it not by his effective will, but by his permissive will; and therefore he cannot be chargeable with being the author of sin, for that is eternally impossible for him to be; and it is no less than infinite absurdity and horrid blasphemy so much as to imagine it. Let us therefore have the utmost zeal for the eternal dignity of the moral character of GOD.

II. THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES of the WILL of GOD.

1. It is natural and essential---it is his very nature and essence---his will is himself willing; and there can be but one will in GOD---there may be different objects of his will, and various effects produced; yet it is by one single act of his will, that he wills all things.

2. The will of GOD is eternal. He is eternal, and therefore his will must be eternal, since it is his
his

his nature and essence. His will is prior to the existence of the world and all things in it, and prior to all time, and therefore it must be eternal as the existence of God.

3. The will of God is immutable. Thus we read of the immutability of his counsel, Heb. vi. 17. As God is unchangeable, his will must be the same, since it is his nature and essence. God may change his external conduct, but he never changes his will. Repentance, when ascribed to God, only signifies a change in his outward dispensations; or it shews how odious and abominable sin and sinners are to God.--- Even our prayers make no alteration in the will of God. He has established a connexion between his will, our prayers, and the events of his providence; and thus prayer appears to be exceedingly important and useful to the souls of all true christians in the world.

4. The will of God is invincible, and always efficacious to produce the event designed. There are no feeble wishes in God. His will is never made void---'tis omnipotent and victorious. If God's will was conquered or disappointed, it must make him the most disgraced and unhappy being in the universe---his superiour capacities must only make him more miserable. But what an absurd and horrid idea of God is this!

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5. The will of GOD has no CAUSE out of himself; for then there would be something prior to GOD---this is absurd and impossible. There is in GOD no passive power to work upon. There can be no impulsive cause out of GOD; nor is there any final cause of what he wills and does, but his own GLORY; and it would be madness to seek for a cause of his willing that. From this glorious property of the will of GOD, it may be clearly seen, that faith, holiness, and good works, cannot be the cause of GOD's will to love us, and give us eternal happiness. GOD could foresee no holiness or good works in us, but what he, by a prior purpose of his will, had determined to work effectually in our precious and immortal souls, as the fruit of his absolute and invincible grace.

6. The will of GOD is not CONDITIONAL; for then it would be dependent on the condition to be performed, and not on the will of GOD; but the performance of the condition would be the first and chief in the attainment of the end. If GOD willed to save all men conditionally, that is, on condition of faith and repentance, either men must be able for the performance of these conditions, or GOD must give them. Where are the men that are able to perform these conditions? No man is to be found in the whole world. How can these conditions be had? No way but by GOD's free gift. Consequently GOD's general
love,

love, general redemption, and universal grace, comes to nothing; it vanishes into smoke; 'tis a bubble; 'tis moon-shine; 'tis a dream; 'tis the baseless fabric of a vision, that dissolves, and leaves nothing but the wrecks of ruined souls behind!

7. The will of God is most free and sovereign, as appears from the creation, and all things in it---it appears from providence, and all the various events of it---and the will of God appears to be sovereign in things sacred, spiritual, and religious, both with respect to angels and men. Thus far on the will and dominion of God I am exceedingly indebted to the very learned and judicious Dr. Gill. No man has treated better on this very arduous and delicate subject.---See his *Body of Divinity*, vol. 1. p. 130--140.

VIII. On the DOMINION of GOD,

The greatest writer on the Sublime DOMINION of God I ever read, is the great, the good, the excellent, the incomparable CHARNOCK; who, in a discourse the most masculine in the world, and in the space of fifty-two pages, in folio, has displayed the grandeur and eternity of the divine dominion.

The next author to Charnock is the serious, the judicious, and experimental ELISHA COLES, in his excellent *Treatise on God's Sovereignty*, 8vo.

edit. 15. We must only give a few short hints from these excellent discourses.

The DOMINION of GOD consists in his right to make what creatures he pleases---in his right to possess all the creatures he has made---and in his right to dispose of all the creatures he doth possess.----Charnock, p. 424.

This great man gives general preliminaries to clear and confirm GOD's supreme dominion---he then shews wherein the dominion of GOD is founded---he treats of the nature and properties of the dominion of GOD, and shews that it is independent, absolute, wise and prudent, extensive and eternal. He then shews the different manners in which the dominion of GOD is displayed to mankind, as he is creator, law-giver, governor, proprietor, and owner; and lastly, as redeemer. He concludes with many glorious uses of information, terror, comfort, and exhortation. Vol. 1. p. 420--472.

EVIDENCES of the DOMINION of GOD.

The first grand act of dominion was GOD's decree, for making the whole frame and structure of the universe; and of doing, or permitting to be done, whatsoever should take place, even to the most minute affair, to the consummation of all things, and the decision of all the states of men in a vast eternity.

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His giving the world an actual existence, matter, form, laws, and final causes, according to the eternal idea in the mind of GOD---his preserving and governing all things, and suspending, or controuling, or acting above the laws of nature at his pleasure---the assent and consent of the wisest and best of men in all ages---the wise and mighty angels obey the dominion of GOD, without a moment's delay---and even the malignant devils are so over-awed, that they durst not answer again, when the Son of GOD pronounced the curse on them in Paradise; and when he drove out legions from the souls and bodies of men, they crouched like spaniels at his feet, and durst not answer a word.---GOD himself proclaims his transcendent dominion in the most sublime language. I have raised thee up, for this very purpose, to shew my power, Exod. ix. 16. Who made the blind, or the seeing? have not I, the Lord? Exod. iv. 11. I kill, and I make alive, Deut. xxxii. 39. My counsel shall stand: I will do all my pleasure, Isai. xlvi. 10.---Many actions of GOD in Scripture shew his sovereign dominion. His constantly over-ruling the designs and actions of men, to bring to pass his own councils and designs, is a striking proof of his dominion over all the affairs of mankind---and his innumerable victories of grace in regeneration, effectual calling, and conversion, are a most sublime triumph
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of sovereign grace over his rational, immortal creatures---his eternal disposal of the souls of all mankind, on the footing of justice and grace, is the highest act of sovereign power and dominion that ever was displayed concerning his reasonable creatures.---But the most astonishing act of dominion, and which rises to the most amazing and transcendent degree, consists in his ordaining his own eternal Son to assume human nature, and to be the mediator between God and sinners; to obey the law in the form of a covenant of works, to offer his very soul as a sacrifice, to pay his blood as a price of redemption, and to endure the utmost punishment, to make satisfaction to divine justice! This! this is the highest act of the infinite, eternal, absolute, and independent dominion of God, that ever was exerted, or ever will be displayed to eternity.

USES of the WILL and DOMINION of GOD.

1. Dare not to make God the author of sin, by charging his will and decrees with men's bad actions. Men sin as freely as though there were no decrees or purposes in God at all.

2. Do not extenuate or lessen your sins by arguments drawn from God's will, decrees, and dominion. This is the highest impudence, and the most rank and abominable Antinomianism!

3. God's dominion is a most instructive doctrine. It is our great duty, advantage, and pleasure,

pleasure, to study this truth with the utmost attention, reverence, and delight.

4. Give GOD the full glory of his dominion, by a real and practical owning our eternal obligation to obedience; and which binds every rational creature in the universe. Bow down your soul to his LAWS; attend on his ORDINANCES; submit to all his PROVIDENCES with deep humility. In a special manner our faith should obey GOD's dominion, touching our highest interest and everlasting condition. Submit your immortal soul, and its eternal state, to the absolute dominion of GOD: humbly submit to sovereign mercy in Christ, and you will be eternally safe. Sovereign mercy can and will make your SECURITY greater than your INTEREST. O! what a thought full of infinite consolation is this! Therefore,

5. How happy are you who have a deep and eternal interest in this sovereign GOD. His pardoning mercy carries in it an everlasting exemption from all obligation to punishment, and his everlasting arm will protect you from all possible evils, temporal and eternal.

6. In all our trials and afflictions, GOD intends to bring our hearts to a submissive, practical acknowledgment of his sovereign dominion over us and all our concerns in life and death.---Let us not fret against GOD in any event or trial which befalls us; but seek, above all things, for

a deeply-humble submission to the will of God. Yea, we should go farther still, and be even cheerful in our resignation to the pleasure of our heavenly father. It was a noble expression of the great FENELON, when his pupil the duke of Burgundy died:---“ If the moving of a straw would bring him back to life, I would not do it, seeing the divine pleasure is otherwise.” Let us imitate this great man on every new occasion of temporal or spiritual trouble which befalls our persons or relations!

7. Do not dare to intrench on the dominion, or invade the sovereignty of God, by seeking a reason for his decrees beyond his will. 'Tis folly, 'tis absurdity, 'tis rebellion and madness, to make the attempt: it will be so far from doing you any good, that it will only increase your affliction, and multiply misery; and therefore dare not to persist in such detestable insolence.

8. You see clearly the reason why many learned and philosophical men oppose and reject the sublime and glorious doctrines of the gospel! The truth is, they are not subdued to the eternal and absolute dominion of God, although an intire subjection to the wise and holy will of our maker is the fittest temper in the world for a rational creature, dependent every moment on his CREATOR; yet there is nothing that men have a greater enmity to than the dominion of God. O! that

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we may be truly subdued in our wills to his sovereign power.

9. GOD's absolute dominion over all creatures clears off all the rubbish of imaginary free-will in the affair of salvation; and shews us that all the glory of it, from first to last, must be ascribed eternally to GOD.

IX. The DIGNITY of GOD,

Is a state of settled honour in the highest degree, arising from the consciousness of being possessed of all possible perfections, and of his infinite superiority in the qualities of his heart to all his creatures in heaven and earth, attended with the most unbounded delight in his own worth, beauty of mind, and purity of character; and these qualities inspire him with the most ardent self-valuation, and give him to feel the most dignified dispositions, powers, and affections; and carry him into the most honourable actions and conduct, worthy of a GOD.*

X. The

* DIGNITY in MAN is a state of settled honour in the mind: 'tis a divine nature and a new life infused into the soul: it includes an amplitude of the understanding, attended with self-possession, self-dominion, and happiness: it excites a man to aim at being like GOD, in order to enjoy him: it produces a lively feeling of deep peace of conscience, pure serenity of mind, and holy boldness to converse with GOD, and to possess the tenderest friendship with Christ.---This temper and disposition leads us to spiritualize the structure and beauty of the whole creation---to give attention to divine providence---to advance in resemblance to GOD---being generously impelled forwards by a divine instinct to our utmost end, rest, and blessedness in GOD himself, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

X. The PREROGATIVE of GOD.

A prerogative is something that is required or demanded before, or in preference to all others.

The grand prerogative of GOD is that special pre-eminence which he hath above all persons in his universal empire, in right of his regal dignity.

Prerogatives are either DIRECT, or incidental, and additional.---GOD's glorious prerogatives are direct in the highest degree; and they are likewise incidental and additional, by reason of his infinite benefits bestowed on his creatures.

The direct prerogatives of GOD are such positive, essential parts of the royal character, justice, and power of GOD, as are rooted in, and spring from the existence, nature, and dignity of GOD, considered in itself, without reference to any extrinsic circumstance; as creation, preservation, and benefits bestowed on creatures.

The direct prerogatives of GOD are such as regard his dignity, or royal character, including the most sublime and astonishing attributes of personal sovereignty, absolute perfection, and perpetuity of empire over all worlds.

The prerogatives of GOD likewise regard his authority, or royal power, in the executive part of his government---and his revenue, or royal income of love, obedience, and praise, which he
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has a right to demand of all his reasonable creatures---and this revenue of praise consists in adoration of his perfections, admiration of his works, and gratitude for his benefits.

XI. The TASTE of GOD,

Consists in his infinitely-distinct knowledge of beauty; and taking pleasure in beauty in all the kinds, degrees, and variations of which it is susceptible in the grand system of the universe.*

GOD has an exquisite sense of the beautiful, the good, and the true in all his works of creation in heaven and earth.

He had a vivid perception and delight in the beautiful soul and body of man, when he rose up under his creating hand---and when he surveyed his new world, he took a pleasure in the whole as beautiful and good.

He takes a pleasure in the holy tempers and actions of true christians on earth, and is delighted with holiness and beauty in all the millions of his saints and angels in heaven.

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* TASTE in MAN consists in a distinct knowledge of beauty, joined to the most exquisite sense of it, with a power to receive pleasure from all the kinds, degrees, and variations of which beauty is susceptible in the system of the universe; taking the greatest pleasure in the highest kinds of beauty in wise and holy men, the angels and saints in glory, the beautiful soul of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the moral perfections and beauty of God.

He feels an infinite pleasure in surveying the most beautiful soul and body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is the material and immaterial nature raised to the highest degree of beauty and perfection of which matter and spirit are susceptible.

AS BEAUTY is that quality in objects which excites love; so deformity, or ugliness, is that quality in persons or things which excites hatred, or aversion, and opposition.

And as taste is a power of receiving pleasure from beauty; so the same faculty of taste feels pain and disgust on the perception of objects of deformity and ugliness.

And as the supreme taste of God is the infinitely-distinct knowledge of beauty in general, and of all the determinations and variations of which the beautiful is susceptible, and which it receives in the system of the universe; so the same taste in God includes his infinitely-distinct knowledge of deformity and ugliness: and as God has an infinite power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of holiness, so he feels an infinite aversion, disgust, and hatred to the deformity and ugliness of sin in men and devils; and all sin, in all its gradations, is the object of his keenest indignation and wrath, and will be so to eternity.

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The USE we ought to make of this view of the supreme TASTE of GOD, is this:---we should seek of the Holy Spirit a refined, spiritual, holy taste ---we should earnestly desire to have a distinct knowledge of the beauty of holiness and vital virtue in all its gradations and appearances in men and angels, in the soul of Christ, and in the nature of GOD---we should covet to have the most exquisite sense of beauty and deformity, and to feel the most pure pleasure in the beauty of holiness and virtue---and we should equally desire a clear and distinct knowledge of the deformity of sin, its infinite ugliness, and detestable qualities; and we ought to feel the utmost aversion and opposition to sin, and the greatest desire to be disunited from it for ever. In a word, as love is a delightful union with holiness, the object beloved: so hatred is a keen desire to be disunited from sin, which is the object hated. And here, as our love to holiness cannot be excessive; so our hatred of sin ought to be, if possible, infinite upon infinite through an eternal duration.---See Mr. Halyburton, on the Evil of Sin, in his admirable book against the Deists, 4to. 1714; and the judicious Mr. John Brine, on the infinite Evil of Sin, in his Letter to the Monthly Reviewers, 1755.

XII. The AFFECTIONS of GOD.

Affections in the soul of man are sensible emotions

tions towards objects considered as good or evil; and these sensible emotions arise from a view of those objects in their various kinds and circumstances. As to their KINDS, an object appearing good, excites love---if it appear evil, it excites hatred. As to the CIRCUMSTANCES of good or evil: if good be present, it excites joy---if evil is present, it excites sorrow---if good be absent, and yet possible to be obtained, it excites hope---if evil be absent, yet likely to come upon us, it produces fear. Thus love and hatred, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, are the six grand passions of the soul of man: all the others are but different modifications, or combinations of those original affections.

The Scripture ascribes various affections to GOD, because there are many things said and acted by GOD, which are similar to affections found in the human soul: and we lose a great part of the beauty of GOD's character, if we do not always conceive of him as cloathed with such affections as are ascribed to him. Many of our divines, who have written learned and valuable Treatises and Bodies of Divinity, have greatly failed in this point. They have represented GOD in a dry metaphysical manner; and thus multitudes of students and other christians, who have read those books, have lost a most beautiful part of the divine character. The affections of GOD
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ought not, for one moment, to be left out of our conceptions and thoughts of God, because those affections, viewed in a scripture light, have the fittest tendency to produce the best affections in us towards God.

But let us be wise in forming our conceptions of the divine affections: let us avoid all ideas of painful commotion, or uneasy perturbation in the mind of God. In a word, all that is carnal and sensual in our passions, every thing that favours of weakness and imperfection in the exercise of affections in us, must be intirely removed out of our conceptions of the affections of God. And, with this caution, let us proceed to consider a most striking and venerable part of the glorious and divine character.

The affections that are principally ascribed to God, are LOVE and HATRED. His LOVE includes grace, joy, mercy, compassion, pity. His HATRED includes anger and wrath; and from a combination of love and anger arises the ZEAL of God.

I. L O V E

Is that passionate affection with which God regards himself and his people in heaven and earth. Love is the most beautiful attribute of the immortal God. Love stands the first and fairest in all God's affections. It enters so deeply into the nature of God, that it is said God is
love,

love, 1 Joh. iv. 8---16. Self-love is essential to all rational beings: it exists in angels: it exists in all the happy souls in heaven: it is essential to our happiness in both worlds: it is then only criminal when it carries a creature off from God, as it doth in the fallen angels and depraved man.

God first and chiefly loves himself in the tenderest manner, and with the greatest ardour: hence he has made himself the ultimate end of all his thoughts and works of creation, providence, and redemption.

God's love to man consists in his will to raise him to honour and happiness, by the blessings of special goodness, i. e. of grace here, and glory hereafter. This is the love which shines with such beauty and lustre all through the gospel of Christ---this is the love that reigns over and beautifies all the divine perfections---this is that affection which renders God so lovely to all repenting sinners. He tenderly esteems his people; he desires to have their company; he bears the most ardent good-will to them; and viewing them as washed in Christ's blood, i. e. clear of guilt, cloathed with Christ's righteousness, adorned with his grace, and made happy in him, he feels the most intense delight in their persons, graces, and services. *

This

* A Sermon on God's Delight in his People, by the judicious Mr. Brine, deserves to be read ten thousand times.