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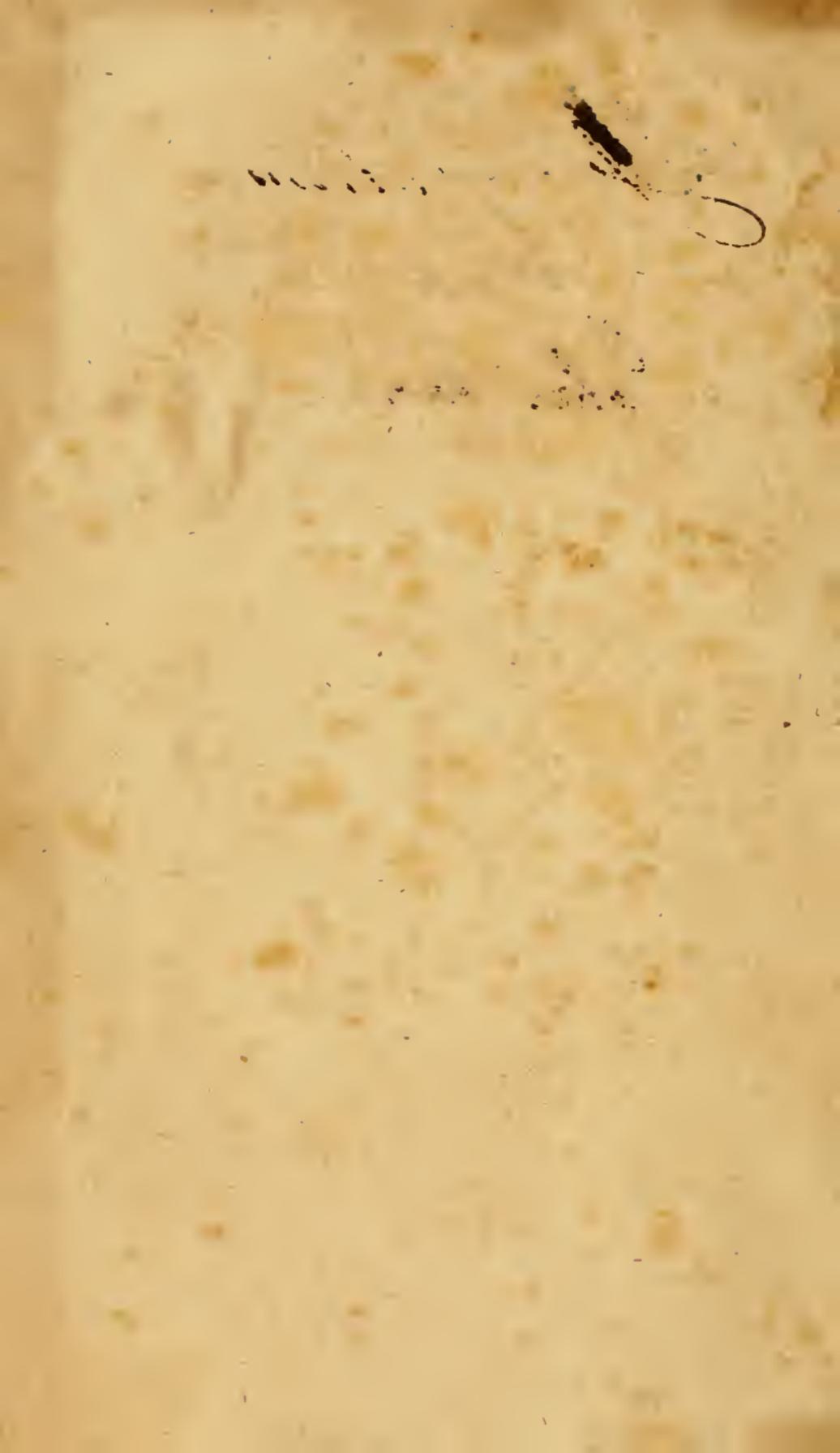
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Theological Seminary
Presented by
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June 1820



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THE
P R E F A C E.

WHAT the essence of Christianity, as a scheme of grace adapted to form mankind for happiness, consists not so much in right Knowledge as in a right Temper and Practice, is a Sentiment so plain and obvious, that 'tis not a little strange it should so generally escape the observation of Christians: or that when observ'd, it should so rarely engage their attention. To a want of this, I conceive, is chiefly owing that wide diversity of principles and pursuits, which we discern among the several sorts of Christians; who all profess to be conducted by the same infallible Rule of Faith and Manners.

The P R E F A C E.

A close and steady application of the mind to the original Design of the christian Institution (the perfection and happiness of our nature) and the subservience of all its principles and precepts to that Design, in a way suitable to the circumstances of deprav'd and imperfect Beings ; I say, a close and constant attention to this, would, I believe, in a good measure prevent those exorbitant excursions and wild conceits, which persons of a different tincture and turn are too apt to indulge ; not less at the expence of their own understanding, than to the dishonour of Christianity and its blessed Author. For sure it reflects no great honour on a man's Judgment, to give the reins to a warm and hasty Imagination, in affairs of the most important concern, and where a Mistake is extremely dangerous : and that without the least apparent apprehension of being led wrong by such a Guide.

But there is nothing of Mystery in all this. For an uncorrected Imagination always assumes the privilege of being sole Judge of its own sentiments and proceedings. And her Judgment is no less confident, than her Conduct precipitant. Which

The P R E F A C E.

v

accounts for that trite but just Observation,
' that they who are most mistaken are com-
' monly most assur'd; and least able to bear
' the liberty which others take to dispute or
' contradict their Decisions.'

A man of this sanguine make, I believe, would of all others be thought the least qualified for the *Chair* in any society; much less where the subjects of Debate are matters of the highest importance, and require the most calm and accurate Discussion: and whenever a Writer is pleas'd to assume it (as most Writers are apt to do) he ought however, if it be only to conciliate the respect due to his place, to preserve the external decorum, modesty and moderation of a *Chair-man*.

It is to be fear'd that the productions of some of our religious Writers, by too much indulging their native warmth in support of their favourite Sentiments, are more fitted to make and establish Infidels than Christians. And it is really a melancholy consideration, that not only the sons of Bigottry and Ignorance, by fathering their most absurd notions on the christian Revelation, but men of sense and learning, by stripping it of some

The P R E F A C E.

of its most essential excellences, should so inadvertently disfigure the religion they mean to defend: and by paring off its superfluities with too hasty a hand, wound it to the quick.

By crowding too much sail, when the Ballast is light, men are in danger of running upon the shelves, and of making shipwreck of their Faith, Judgment, and Charity.

If we presume to differ from a man of this complexion, who is incapable of Self-diffidence, he will, without the least compassion to our prejudices, immediately pronounce us *blind Believers* (a), who *absurdly misapply* the holy Scriptures (b): whilst he is all the while entirely unconscious that he stands in any need of that candor which he denies to others.

The Author of a late celebrated performance, who attempts to revive the long exploded Notion of *Bardisanes* and *Origen**, tells us absolutely, that *there is no such expression to be found in any of the Writers of the*

(a) *Bourn's Discourses*, Vol. I. p. 282..

(b) *Id.* p. 278.

* See the Hist. of the Apostles Creed, p. 399, &c.

The P R E F A C E.

vii

the new Testament, as a Resurrection of the Body, or of the Flesh (c). How then must we understand the Apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 53? *this corruptible (το φθαρτον τετο) must put on incorruption; and this mortal (το θνητον τετο) must put on immortality.* And ver. 44. *It is sown a natural Body; it is raised a spiritual Body.* But if these expressions be not thought sufficiently strong, there is another place wherein the Apostle asserts what this Gentleman denies, in the most plain and absolute terms that can be. It is Rom. viii. 11. *If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead (ζωοποιησει και τα θνητα σωματα υμων) SHALL MAKE EVEN YOUR DEAD BODIES LIVE.* — How could our author then so peremptorily assert, that *there is no such expression in any of the Writers of the new Testament, as a Resurrection of the Body or of the Flesh?*

A wise man, to be sure, will never embrace the opinions that are commonly receiv'd, purely because they are so; however, he will take care that in the hurry of

A 4

his

(c) *Burn's Discourses, Advertisement, p. xxx.*

his Zeal to depart from them, he does not leave Scripture behind him.

Again, this Author tells us (V. I. p. 352.) that *the Reformation of mankind in this world, is not represented in the writings of the new Testament, as being the principal end and design of our Saviour's Enterprize.* — And yet the Apostle *John* tells us, that *for this purpose the Son of GOD was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil* (1 John iii. 8.) and that *he was manifested to take away our sins* (ver. 5.) And the Apostle *Peter*, that *Christ his own self bare our sins in his own Body on the tree; that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness* (1 Pet. ii. 24.)—And the Apostle *Paul*, that *the Grace of GOD* (or the Gospel) *which bringeth salvation to all men* (σωτηριος πασι ανθρωποις) *hath appear'd; teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* And that *Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity; and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,* (Tit. ii. 11, 12.) Which declarations of these inspired Penmen, with many others to the same purpose, I am extremely

tremely at a loss to reconcile with this Proposition; that *the Reformation of mankind in this world, is not represented in the writings of the new Testament, as being the principal end and design of our Saviour's Enterprize.*

But this Writer lays us under another difficulty: and that is, not only to reconcile him to scripture, but to reconcile him to himself.—In the first paragraph of his *Advertisement to the Reader*, he tells us that *the writers of the new Testament ALWAYS mean by the term αναστασις or Resurrection, a restoration to life; or that operation or event, by which the person who dies passes from death to life.*—Well, let us suppose this to be true.—But he tells us afterwards, (Vol. I. p. 274.) that *the term Resurrection in Scripture ALWAYS means a future state.*—What must we do now? *The action or operation of passing from death to life, and the future state in which the soul exists, after this action of passing from death to life, are plainly two different Ideas.* But if the scripture by the word *αναστασις* always means the former, how can it, *always* mean the latter? so *vice versa*. Both these propositions cannot be true. But many of his Readers, I believe, know

The P R E F A C E.

know them both to be false. And that the word *αναστασις* is used by the writers of the new Testament, sometimes in one of those senses and sometimes in the other. — The former, *viz. the action of passing from death unto life*, is without doubt the most common sense; and that in which the word *Resurrection* is us'd by the Apostle Paul, *1 Cor. xv.* But in the latter sense, in which it denotes the *future state* in general, or the state of the soul after death, it is no less evidently us'd in other places, e. g. *Mat. xxii. 28. Therefore in the Resurrection (εν τη εν αναστασει) i. e. in the future state, whose wife shall she be of the seven?* So in our Saviour's Answer to this Cavil of the Sadducees, *ver. 30. (εν τη αναστασει) in the Resurrection, or future state, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage.* And that our Lord here intended by the word (*αναστασις*) to denote the *future state* in general, or the future state of the Blessed in particular, appears from the Argument he makes use of to prove the reality of that state against the Sadducees, who denied it. *Ver. 31, 32. But as touching the Resurrection of the dead (or a state of existence after death) have you not read that which was spoken unto*

unto

The P R E F A C E.

xi

unto you by GOD, saying, *I am the GOD of Abraham, and the GOD of Isaac, and the GOD of Jacob; GOD is not the GOD of the dead, but of the living.* And therefore *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* are now living, or existing in another state. Nor shall we find it an easy matter to prove our Saviour's reasoning to be clear and conclusive against the *Sadducees*, if we take the word (*αναστασις*) in any other sense.

Again, he tells us (Vol. I. p. 351.) that *in reality a general reformation of mankind, in any high degree, seems to be impracticable by any means whatsoever.*—And yet in a few pages after, (p. 362.) he says, *We have indeed ground to hope, that the Gospel will have in some future ages, more extensive and beneficial effects, than it hath hitherto obtain'd: because the same spirit of prophecy which predicted, in so strong and remarkable terms, the infatuation, corruption and slavery of the christian nations, hath foretold also as clearly their Deliverance and REFORMATION: a Reformation which hath already taken place in a considerable degree in some nations, as we have the happiness to experience: and all wise christians are waiting the conduct of Providence,*
in

The P R E F A C E.

in order to the accomplishment of the whole, in a universal change of the christian world, and the CONVERSION of the Jews and other nations: and this will be in a RELIGIOUS sense, the Kingdom and Glory of our Saviour on earth.—Sure, then, a general reformation of mankind, in a high degree, is NOT impracticable BY ANY MEANS WHATSOEVER.

I am not writing a *critique* upon this Author; or I would animadvert upon his extraordinary definition of a *Miracle*: which, he says, *is in other words, a manifest effect and demonstration of the power and providence of GOD (d)*. Which makes every thing we see a *Miracle*.—And his definition of *Antichrist*: to which he tells us *the title of Christ's vicar or substitute on earth EXACTLY answers (e)*.

I have nothing to do here with the peculiarities of Mr. B—'s theological *tenets*: but am inclin'd to think that such marks of Temerity and Precipitance, will be no advantage to him in making Profelytes; especially among thinking, solid and judicious Readers.

These

(d) Vol. II. p. 17.

(e) Vol. I. p. 346.

The P R E F A C E.

xiii

These short strictures are by no means intended to give the least offence to this ingenious Writer; to many of whose sentiments I most heartily subscribe; and to none more freely, than to that excellent and judicious Observation of his — that *How much soever persons may ascribe to their own enlarged understandings, and superiority of mind to vulgar customs and prejudices; yet in fact it is the same LITTLENESS OF MIND and PRECIPITANCE OF TEMPER, the same want of ATTENTION, and of an IMPARTIAL and COMPREHENSIVE judgment, which disposes men to reject or despise what is true and useful, as to embrace what is false and hurtful: and it is equally the part of every honest and judicious person, to support the true principles of Religion and the rational Worship of GOD, as to reject the extravagances of Credulity and Superstition (g).*

But while some are lopping off the main *Branches* of Christianity, others are striking at its *Root*; by depreciating moral virtue and good works, and substituting in their room that Faith which *without them is dead*:

OR

(g) *Bourn's Discourses, &c.* Vol. II. p. 126, 127.

or by strenuously insisting on our total Inability to perform them, or the danger of trusting to them. While others pay a greater regard to the *Leaves* of a fair profession and an outward show of sanctity, than to the substantial *Fruits* of a holy Life.

The good sense and learning of some in the latitudinarian way, confirm their friends in *that*, while the serious temper and piety of others in the narrow and rigid scheme, render their followers inflexible in *this*. — Alas, that good sense and seriousness, learning and piety, charity and orthodoxy, should ever be separated! or that when separated, should be prostituted to such unworthy ends! — O, when will a wrong Zeal cease to mislead some of the best minds into the most dangerous extremes! — Never, till that Zeal be corrected by Grace and Wisdom; and the foundation of Religion be laid in *Humility*, and the true *Knowledge of GOD and ourselves*.

‘ It is much to be desir’d, said the late
 ‘ pious and ingenious Mr. *Hervey*, (speaking
 ‘ of a well meaning and *most pious* man,
 ‘ but in one particular very *injudicious*; ‘ it is
 ‘ much to be desir’d, says he) that religious
 ‘ per-

‘ persons may have *Wisdom* with their *Zeal* ;
 ‘ *Eyes in their Wings* : that as far as is con-
 ‘ sistent with the exercise of Integrity, and
 ‘ discharge of Duty, we may give no offence,
 ‘ neither to the Jew, nor to the Greek, nor to
 ‘ the church of G O D’ (b).

I don’t mean by this Quotation any oblique Retort on that worthy Author, whom I much admire. For though some of his peculiar sentiments may be verging to an indefensible extreme, and have a worse tendency than he apprehended, yet he has a right to all our Candor, who was himself so bright a pattern of it. And his unaffected Humility, Modesty, and Piety, will contribute no less than his native Elegance, fine Imagination, and polite Learning, to rank him among the most useful and amiable Writers.—Of the former of which Qualities, we have a striking specimen in one of his Letters : where speaking of a new edition of his *Dialogues between Theron and Aspasio*, he says to his friend — ‘ If they re-
 ‘ cede a Hair’s Breadth from the unerring
 ‘ Standard, if they differ one jot or tittle
 ‘ from G O D’s holy Word ; in that jot or
 ‘ tittle,

(b) See his Letters, Vol. II. Letter 31.

The P R E F A C E.

‘ tittle, I most earnestly wish, the world may
 ‘ not receive them; and that I my self may
 ‘ have Grace to retract them.’ Vol. II. Let-
 ter 55. — Again, ‘ O my dear Friend,
 ‘ what need have we for Prayer, to be gui-
 ‘ ded aright amidst so many different opi-
 ‘ nions ! even of great and good men. *Ar-*
 ‘ *minius, Calvin, Baxter*, all excellent men
 ‘ in their way ! yet how divided in their no-
 ‘ tions ! — G O D of his unerring Wisdom
 ‘ assist us in all our Determinations ! G O D
 ‘ of his infinite Mercy defend us from all
 ‘ error !’ Id. Vol. II. Let. 129.

I have always thought that the best way to moderate the Zeal of Christians for their several party distinctions, is to divert it : and to recall their attention to the acknowledged importance of those undisputed principles, without the practical influence of which no man can be a christian indeed : and all the good sense, and all the orthodoxy in the world, will avail nothing. And herein I am supported by an authority which every christian owns to be infallible.

O, did deep Humility, divine Love, fervent Faith, and heart-felt Charity, (the respective sources of all the *human, divine, chris-*

christian, and *social* Virtues) but once shed their heavenly Influence in our souls; how soon should we learn to despise (*argutias illas et minutias theologicas*) that light chaff of mystic or minute subtleties in divinity, which some are so fond of; and to bend all our care and efforts; in dependance on Divine Grace, to cultivate in our selves those holy dispositions, which constitute all our Happiness, both in this world and for ever!

To contribute somewhat to this great end, I have once more cast in my mite: as what I judg'd to be the greatest piece of service (by the Blessing of G O D) I am capable of doing the Cause and Gospel of Christ, whilst I live.

And if I have done any sort of Justice to my Subjects, in endeavouring to delineate the several parts of the Christian Temper, the Reader, upon a serious, and candid perusal of the whole, I believe will not fail to draw these two conclusions, *viz.* that the person in whose heart these various virtues continue to have their reigning influence, must be for ever happy. – And the Religion that so fervently enforces these holy and exalted principles, must be Divine.

If it be ask'd, why I chuse to tread in so beaten a path; and resume those Subjects which have already been so well manag'd and even exhausted by others; and on which it cannot be supposed I can say any thing *new*. I answer, — that since the revival of letters every Subject in the whole *Cyclopædia* has been so thoroughly canvass'd, that were none permitted to write, but those who had something *new* to produce, the Press would be open to almost none but Journalists, Travellers, Biographers, and the Fellows of the Royal Society. And yet I have known some, with a true *Athenian* Taste, censure even a piece on Divinity, purely because there was nothing *new* in it. But serious Christians, I believe, desire to read Sermons with the same view with which they come to hear them: not so much to be inform'd of what they did not know, as to be remind'd of, and impress'd with, the Importance of what they are too apt to forget.

Far be it from me to depreciate those worthy Writers who have gone before me in the track of *Christian Morals*: with whom I have no pretence to a competition. However I cannot but think, that in general their

Plan

The P R E F A C E.

xix

Plan hath been too much confin'd, or their Scheme not regularly digested, or their Disquisitions too abstracted, or the moral Obligations not presented in that light, nor urg'd with that force, that was requisite to command the attention and impress the hearts of *common Christians*. Which I have endeavour'd to keep in view throughout this Work.

These Sermons are chiefly intended for the use of Families, as a Sequel to the *Lord's Day Evening Entertainment*: I thought proper therefore to affix to each of them (as I did to those of a preceding Volume) a suitable Hymn; extracted mostly from some of our Poets who have consecrated the Muse to the service of Religion: with a view to encourage those who read them in their Families, to introduce Psalmody into their social Worship; and to facilitate that delightful Duty to those who practise it.

The funeral Discourse for the late King was never design'd for publick View. But by the repeated instances of several who heard it preach'd, I was determin'd at length to

The P R E F A C E.

annex it to this Collection : notwithstanding so many better on the same occasion have appear'd before it. That it comes out so unseasonably late, is owing to the unexpected Delay of the Press.

Finally, that these plain and practical Discourses may be a means to awaken and fix the attention of all who read them, to the undoubted importance of their several Subjects, to form the solid and consistent Christian, was the sincere Intention, and that God would please to bless them to this end, is the earnest prayer of the Author.





T H E
C O N T E N T S.

I. The Human Virtues.

S E R M O N I.

Of Humility.

I P E T. v. 5.

— *be ye clothed with Humility.* Page 1

S E R M O N II.

Of Contentment.

H E B. xiii. 5.

— *Be content with such things as ye have ;
for he hath said, I will never leave thee,
nor forsake thee.* 28

S E R-

The CONTENTS.

SERMON III.

Of Patience.

JAMES i. 4.

But let patience have her perfect work; that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. 55

SERMON IV.

Of Prudence.

PROV. xiv. 15.

A prudent man looketh well to his going. 79

SERMON V.

Of Christian Fortitude.

I COR. xvi. 13.

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. 106

SERMON VI.

Of Self-Government.

PROV. vi. 23.

Keep thy heart with all diligence. 131

The CONTENTS.

2. The Divine Virtues.

S E R M O N VII.

The Knowledge of G O D the first principle
of Piety.

J O H N xvii. 3.

*And this is life eternal that they might know
thee, the only true G O D, and Jesus Christ
whom thou hast sent.* 154

S E R M O N VIII.

Our Love to G O D.

M A T. xxii. 37.

— *Thou shalt love the Lord thy G O D with
all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and
with all thy mind.* 179

S E R M O N IX.

The Fear of G O D.

G E N. xlii. 18.

— *I fear G O D.* 201

S E R M O N X.

Of Trust in G O D.

P R O V. iii. 5.

*Trust in the L O R D with all thine heart;
and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

The CONTENTS.

SERMON XI.

Of living to the Will of GOD.

I PET. iv. 2.

— *that he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of GOD.* 247

SERMON XII.

Of Communion with GOD.

I JOHN i. 3.

— *our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son JESUS CHRIST.* 271

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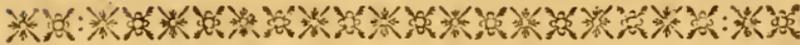
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SERMON



S E R M O N I.

Of H U M I L I T Y.



I P E T. V. 5.

----- *Be ye clothed with Humility.*

R I G H T Faith, right Temper, and right Practice, compleat the Christian. The first comprehends what we are to *believe*; the next, what we are to *be*; the last, what we are to *do*.

SERM.
I.

'Tho' the first be subservient to the two last, yet it may consist without them. A man may have very sound Sentiments of Religion, and yet betray an unchristian temper, and lead an ungodly Life.

SERM.

I.

The Temper and Practice of a christian consist in the regular and uniform exercise of all the *human, divine, christian* and *social* Virtues; under the influence of christian principles: or in a steady practical regard to all the Duties we owe to ourselves, to GOD, to our Redeemer, and to our Fellow-creatures.

The design of the following discourses, is to explain and recommend the several christian virtues compriz'd under each of these heads; in order to give you a distinct view and brief scheme of *christian Morals*.

The first Class contains the *Human* Virtues; or the duties we owe to our selves.

And of these, and indeed of all the virtues that form the christian Life and Temper, *Humility* is the chief: the first round of that Ladder by which the Soul ascends to GOD. Humility is the Basis on which all the other virtues are built; and without which they cannot subsist. It is therefore most fit we should begin with this.

And in discoursing upon this fundamental principle of practical Christianity, I propose,

I. To shew you what it is.

II.

Of Humility.

3

SERM.¹

I.



II. I shall offer to your consideration some general Reflections tending more particularly to illustrate it's true nature and excellence.

III. Consider the peculiar fruits and advantages that arise from it. And
Lastly, Shew you how to attain it.

I. I am to shew you what this Virtue of Humility is.

Humility is a *lowliness of mind*, founded on a conscious sense of our own imperfections, guilt and wants. So the original word (*ταπεινοφροσυνη*) properly signifies, and so it is render'd, *Phil. ii. 3. In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than himself.* *Eph. iv. 2. Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all Lowliness and Meekness.* In both which places the Greek word is the same with that which in the text is translated *Humility*.

Humility then is *Lowly-mindedness*: as *Pride* is *High-mindedness*.

But let it be remember'd, that this notion of humility infers nothing mean, abject and servile. There is a wide difference between a *Lowliness* and a *Littleness* of mind; for

SERM.

I.

christian humility is the truest magnanimity: tho' it lies low, it looks high: and is not only consistent with, but conducive to, the noblest elevation of sentiment. It shews an uncommon Greatness of mind, solid sense, and a sound understanding: and sets but little Value upon those accidental and contingent advantages of Fortune, Fame, Birth, Beauty, Power and worldly Influence, which little minds are so full and fond of.

II. I proceed now to lay before you some general observations that tend to illustrate more particularly the true nature and excellence of this christian virtue.

1. It is a Document peculiar to the School of Christ; and not to be found (as I remember) in any system of mere pagan morals. *

Whether this virtue of Humility was discoverable to the philosophic world by the mere

* Which shews the great defect of that kind of morality. The *Stoics* were so far from discovering the least notice of it, that no set of men were more assuming, or ever betray'd more ridiculous Vanity: calling their wise man self-sufficient, equal to the Gods; nay, superior to them; since they were virtuous out of necessity, he out of choice. As

Of Humility.

5

SERM.

I.

mere light of unassisted reason, I will not pretend to say; but 'tis very evident that that pride of science, so natural to weak and un-inlighten'd minds, prevented them from discerning it.

2. It is the *first* Lesson that is taught in the School of Christ, the first rudiment of Christian Knowledge: the first thing to be learn'd in order to be a Christian; as the knowledge of letters, is in order to be a scholar: which is not more necessary to the acquisition of science, than Humility is to a right Religious character. And therefore it was one of the first things recommended by our Saviour to his Disciples: which he taught them by the Emblem of a Child that he set before them; declaring, that unless they discover'd the same meek, humble, teachable, tractable, unprejudic'd and dispassionate temper which they saw in that Infant, they were not fit to become his Disciples (a):

B 3

and

to *Socrates* indeed, there was some appearance of Humility in his declaring that he *knew nothing*; if it proceeded not from an affectation of being esteem'd wiser than all other men on that very account; or from a view to expose the vanity and presumption of the Dogmatists more effectually thereby.

(a) Matt. xviii. 3.

SERM.

I.

and that whoever discover'd most of that temper should stand highest in his Esteem (b).

And 'tis with great reason that this is requir'd as the first qualification of Disciples, because nothing is a greater spur to diligence than a sense of Ignorance, or a greater hindrance to proficiency than a conceit of Knowledge. And whence it is that many who pretend to a superior penetration into the true nature of the Christian Doctrines, *know nothing yet as they ought to know (c)*; and while they imagine they are fit to be Teachers of others have need that one should teach them again what be the first principles of the Oracles of God (d); who think themselves to be something, when they are nothing (e); and desiring to be teachers of the Gospel, understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm (f); but being proud, know nothing; but doating about Questions and Strife of words (g).

3. Tho' Humility is the most lowly, 'tis the most lovely of the Christian Virtues, and throws an amiable Lustre on all the rest.

'Tis

(b) Matt. xviii. 4. (c) 1 Cor. viii. 2. (d) Heb. v. 12.
 (e) Gal. vi. 3. (f) 1 Tim. i. 7. (g) 1 Tim. vi. 4.

Of Humility.

7

SERM.

I.

'Tis in the christian Life the same as the well disposed shades in a Picture, which set it off to advantage; and tho' they are not striking of themselves, yet give an inexpressible Beauty to the whole Piece. There is no Virtue that sooner attracts the regard of the wise and good, or that is more agreeable to all. Modesty with little merit renders a man belov'd and esteem'd, while the highest attainments with a haughty heart are universally disgustful and odious.

4. Humility is always attended with her sister Grace, *Meekness*; with whom she walks hand in hand, preceded by Wisdom, and followed by her genuine off-spring, Patience, Peace, Contentment and Gratitude. These two sister Graces indeed are so much alike that they are not easily to be distinguish'd, the one from the other, unless they are seen together, or carefully compar'd with their opposites. Humility is oppos'd to pride, Meekness to passion; the one supports us under the afflicting hand of God, the other keeps us calm under the Provocations we meet with from men. Humility disposes us to bear with patience the sorrows we suffer; and Meekness to forgive the Injuries we receive.

SERM.

I.



receive. They are both of the same sweet, amiable and gentle disposition; but in the one it flows from a consciousness of it's own Infirmities; in the other, from benevolence and Love: the one results from self-acquaintance, the other from fervent and universal Charity; and both stand in need of Wisdom to conduct them to their proper Objects; and of Prudence to regulate their Exercise.

5. Humility, like all other Virtues, has its counterfeits. That which is most commonly taken for it is false modesty: from which therefore we should be the more careful to distinguish it. Humility is no enemy to a just and laudable Ambition; a false Modesty is often a friend to a low and culpable one. The former with all its lowliness cannot condescend to any thing mean or unworthy; the latter with all it's creeping will seek to rise by Dissimulation and Flattery. The one complies only when it should, the other often does so when it should not. The one resists the influence of bad customs with dignity and firmness, the other submits to them for want of power to oppose them.

In

Of Humility.

9

SERM.

I.

In a word, the one is a virtuous Habit, the other a faulty Temper.

Sometimes a fullen reserv'd spirit with neglected mien and sordid attire may pass for Humility: but this lowly Virtue, guided by Decorum, may in certain circumstances appear in elegant array, while Pride is often seen in Rags.

Neither is an abject, cringing, dastardly spirit, Humility. They are both inoffensive and condescending: but the former is excited and influenc'd by the fear of men, the latter by the fear of God.

Good nature and politeness join'd, bear the nearest resemblance to this Virtue: but the former is only a happy Instinct, the latter an artificial Condescension.

And 'tis for want of distinguishing it, from these its counterfeits, that the true nature and excellence of this Virtue are so little understood, and so generally disregarded.

But who would imagine that *that* which of all things in the world is most contrary to it, should affect to pass for it? and that pride itself should assume the air and garb of Humility? yet so it sometimes happens. The proud man can descend on certain occasions

SERM.

I.



casions to put on the appearance of this Virtue; either from an ambition of that respect that is universally paid it, or from an extorted reverence of that excellence which he cannot imitate.

But what appears something extraordinary in this case is, that the artifice should succeed even after it is detected, and that he who puts it on should be still deem'd an humble man; but *somewhat proud of his Humility*. Which is little less than a contradiction in terms: for an humble man can no more be proud of his Humility, than a proud man can be humble for his pride. True Humility can never produce any thing so contrary to its nature. A man may be proud of the outward show and appearance of Humility; but if he had the thing itself, he could no more be proud of it than he can rejoice that he is griev'd, or mourn that he is glad. Contraries, instead of producing, always destroy each other. All those vile and self-reproaching expressions which some so liberally use may proceed only from affectation, or custom, or a latent vanity of heart; and are no more a sign of Humility than Flattery is of Friendship. Humility
shews

Of Humility.

II

shews itself not in words, but in it's behaviour.—But I proceed now

SERM,
I.



III. To lay before you some of the peculiar fruits and advantages that arise from this christian virtue of Humility: which I shall briefly compare with the effects of Pride as I proceed. And

1. Humility is the source of Contentment, and the most solid peace of mind. It is the Christian's best Defence against the Shafts of Envy and Defamation; which, through the advantage of his lowly situation, fly mostly over his head, or else fall harmless at his feet. Obloquy and Contempt, which sting a proud man to the heart, give the humble Christian no pain at all. Popular applause was never his Ambition, and therefore the want of it is no mortification; and if instead of it he meets with Slander and Reproach, conscious of his Integrity he commits himself and his reputation to that GOD who knows his heart, and *judgeth rightcously*. If he hears that any one has revil'd him, he is ready to say with the philosopher, ' had he known
& me better he would have said worse things
' of

SERM.

I.

'of me than that;' or with the Apostle Paul, *It is a small thing to be judg'd of man's judgment, he that judgeth me is the LORD.*

The fiercest storms of adversity blow over him. Humility gives a pliancy to his mind, which saves it by yielding to the force it cannot resist. So the weak and bending Reed weathers out the Tempest that fells the tall and sturdy Oak.

The proud man seldom finds that respect and deference paid him which he thinks his due, and therefore is fretful, dissatisfied and peevish: the humble man meets with more of this than he knows he deserves, and therefore is content, well-pleas'd and thankful. For whatever ill nature there may be in that pleasure which the world commonly takes in mortifying a proud man, they have still good nature enough left to give countenance to modest and self-diffident merit.

But under the afflicting visitations of Providence the difference between these two characters is most apparent. The one looks at nothing but second causes, and lays all the blame upon the Instruments of his Misfortune: the other (by whatever means his trouble befell him) devoutly eyes the hand
of

Of Humility.

13

SERM.

I.

of GOD in it, and submits to it. The one by Impatience and Fretfulness doubles his Burden; the other by a meek Resignation takes off more than half the weight of it. And finally, one comes out of his trouble harden'd and unreclaim'd; the other, softned and greatly improv'd in a pious, thankful spirit.

2. Humility puts the mind into the best disposition it can be in, to acquire the most important Knowledge, and to improve that which it has already attain'd. Nothing more obstructs our progress in wisdom than Pride; nothing promotes it more than Humility. A vain man is intent on displaying the little Knowledge he has; a wise man on getting more; not with a view to make a parade of it, but to improve himself by it: and therefore he is open to Instruction, from whatever quarter it comes, or by whatever means convey'd.

The self-emptying Soul is most receptive of the Treasures of Divine Wisdom; whilst the mind that is full of itself, or of the little Knowledge it has, excludes the entrance of further Light and Instruction.

*Knowledge (the Apostle observeth) puffeth
up:*

SERM.

I.

up: that is, when lodg'd in a proud, un-sanctified heart; but the poinancy of those reflections which Humility suggests, pricks the Bubble and shews it's Emptiness.

The vanity of Science, the confidence of Error, the bad effects of that *Knowledge that is falsely so called*, and the difficulty of coming at the Truth, would almost discourage us from the prosecution of it. *

But now Humility corrects all this: directs us to the most useful and substantial Knowledge; makes us cautious as well as diligent in the prosecution of it; modest in our researches, open to conviction, and willing to retract our Errors.

As no disposition is more decent in Disciples, or more conducive to their proficiency, it was therefore the first thing that Christ requir'd of his: and propos'd himself to them as their Pattern. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly.*

Besides, the lowly heart is the Temple in which the Spirit of GOD delights to dwell,

- * ' We crowd about a little Spark,
 ' Learnedly labouring in the Dark;
 ' Never more bold than when most blind,
 ' And fastest run, when Truth's behind.' BAXTER.

Of Humility.

15

SERM.

I.

as a Spirit of Illumination and Wisdom. *With that man (saith he) will I dwell who is of a broken and contrite spirit. The meek will be guide in judgment, and the meek will be teach his way (b).*

3. Humility is a disposition of mind that is most pleasing in the sight of GOD, and never fails to secure his special Favour. *Whilst he resisteth the proud, he giveth grace to the humble. Surely he scorneth the scorner, but giveth grace to the lowly (i).* And to the same purpose see that well known Promise, *Isai. lxvi. 1, 2. Thus saith the Lord, the Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my footstool, where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my Rest? for all these things my hands made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.*

4. Humility conciliates not only the favour of GOD, but the esteem of men: that is, of all wise and good men, whose esteem is worth our wish. There is no character in life more generally odious and disgusting

(b) Psal. xxv. 9. (i) Prov. iii. 34.

SERM.

I.

gusting than that of a vain, high-minded, self-assuming man. The proud hate him as their Rival, and are shock'd at that indecency of Temper and Conduct in him, which they cannot see in themselves. The wise and modest shun him; not only because he always aims to shine above them (for that they can bear) but because they are afraid of being insulted by that pride and petulance which holds their modesty in sovereign contempt. The proud man is belov'd by none, because he is not willing to be upon a level with any: but the humble man, by shewing himself a friend to every body, makes every one a friend to him; by opening his heart in Love to all, he makes his way to theirs. — And how nearly allied Humility is to Charity appears from hence, because the description which the Apostle gives of the *latter*, is in all it's particulars, exactly applicable to the *former*; for Humility, like Charity, *suffereth long and is kind: Humility envyeth not: Humility vaunteth not itself: is not puffed up: doth not behave itself unseemly: seeketh not her own: is not easily provok'd: thinketh no evil: rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth: beareth all*

Of Humility.

17

all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things (k).

SERM.

I.

Humility is the valley in which Benevolence delights to grow. ‘ For whatever professions of Benevolence proud men may make, Pride and Benevolence are utterly inconsistent. He who is big with the sentiments of his own dignity, must have an aversion to those who do not seem to have as exalted an opinion of him as he has of himself. Now, as none can think as extravagantly of a proud man, as he thinks of himself; the consequence is, that he must hate all mankind, except a few flatterers. He must be angry with those who do not proportion their regard to his *imaginary deserts*; which it is impossible to do. For tho’ it be no difficult matter to discern how much merit a man *really* has; it is not quite so easy to determine how much he may *imagine* himself to have. Therefore no proud man can be a benevolent or moral man’.*

5. As humility is on all accounts the most fit and decent Disposition and Tem-

VOL. I.

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per

(k) 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7.

* *Seed's Discourses*, Vol. II. p. 357.

SERM.

I.

per in such weak dependant creatures as we are, so it leads to the most decent and becoming Conduct and Behaviour in every situation of Life. In a high station it shines conspicuously beautiful; and looks down with a sweet and smiling Benevolence on all below it: and in a low station it charms us with that innocent Cheerfulness and Contentment which are its inseparable attendants; and as its constant guards defend it from the insults of Pride and Power. It gives the mind an unshaken stability in every varying scene of Life, and leads it to a right Conduct in all. By the hand of Faith it lays fast hold of Heaven; and thus fixt, all the most rapid revolutions of the earth under its feet can never move it; whilst the light and empty mind, blown up with vanity is perpetually tofs'd about, like a Bubble, the sport of every wind, till it suddenly bursts into nothing, and disappears for ever.

6. Gratitude is another fruit of Humility. A proud man is thankful for nothing, a humble man for every thing: because the one thinks he never has so much as he deserves, the other that he has more. You
never

never see the proud man so thankful in the highest prosperity, as you do the humble man in the deepest adversity. He understands and practices that precept of the Apostle, which to a haughty mind appears so great a Paradox, *in every thing give thanks.*

7. Humility is the only way to true Honour : and finds that without seeking, which ambition seeks and labours for in vain. For Honour like a shadow (its proper Emblem) flies from those that pursue, and follows them that shun it. That dignity indeed that consists in external parade or pomp of Equipage may be commanded by Wealth and Power : but all the outward glare of Title and trappings of State can no more make a man honourable than they can make him healthy. They may attract the Gaze of the populace, but they can never of themselves engage the Esteem and Respect of wise and good men. But the man of solid Wisdom, Modesty, substantial and unaffected Virtue, attracts the inward regard, confidence and veneration of all around him ; and especially of the most judicious and discerning part of mankind. And the reason is plain, because true Humi-

SERM.

I.

lity is always attended with strong Benevolence and approv'd Integrity; and therefore is the object of every man's Love, Esteem and Confidence: which is real Honour.

And this consequence is so obvious that we often meet with it in the reflections and observations which Solomon makes on human Life. *Before Honour is Humility (l). Before Destruction the heart of man is haughty, but before Honour is Humility (m). By Humility and the Fear of the LORD, are Riches and Honour and Life (n). A man's Pride shall bring him low, but Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit (o):* and to the same purpose and for the same reason our Saviour tells us, *that whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted (p).*

Lastly, Humility will render our Prayers acceptable to GOD, and insure a gracious Answer to them. *The sacrifices of GOD are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart He will not despise (q). He forgetteth not the Cry*

(l) Prov. xv. 33. (m) Prov. xviii. 12. (n) Prov. xxii. 41. (o) Prov. xxix. 23. (p) Matt. xxiii. 12. (q) Psal. li. 17.

Of Humility.

21

SERM.
I.

Cry of the humble, saith the Psalmist (r). In which words much more is implied than express'd. Forgetteth it! no, far from it: he delights to hear it, and will be sure to answer it; for the prayer of the upright is his Delight (s). And with such he has promis'd to dwell; for thus saith the high and lofty one who inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one (t).

These are some of the most beneficial fruits of Humility; of that first and fundamental virtue of Christianity, which in our text we are commanded to *be clothed* or invested with: which we are to put on and carry about us continually; as no less necessary for the Comfort, Defence and Ornament of our Souls, than our Clothes are for our Bodies.

And to excite us hereunto and assist us herein, I am now

Lastly, To lay before you a few Directions: which are proper to shew at once
C 3 how

(r) Psal. ix. 12. (s) Prov. xv. 8. (t) Isai. lvii. 15.

SERM. how this excellent Disposition is to be *at-*
 I. *tain'd* and *improv'd*. And

I. Let us often think of GOD; and the glorious and infinite excellencies of his nature, as display'd to us in his Word and Works. In whose Eye the whole Ocean is but *as a Drop in the Bucket*, and the whole Earth but as a *small Dust in the Balance*: who made all things out of nothing, and before whom all things are as nothing; or less *than nothing and vanity*: whose power is without Limit, whose purity is without Spot, whose wisdom without Defect, and whose goodness knows no end: who call'd us into Being but yesterday, and can reduce us into nothing in an Instant: upon whom we depend every moment we live, for every mercy we have: and to eternity shall do the same for all the Blessedness we hope for, Such exalted Thoughts of the great GOD seriously revolv'd and often entertain'd, cannot fail to lay us low in the Dust, and make us cry out with *Job, behold I am vile (u)*.

2. Let

(u) This will sink us to the bottom of our Beings, and make us appear as nothing in our own sight; when beheld from so vast a height. And this is really the greatest elevation of the soul:

and

2. Let us often view and review our own Guilt, Imperfections and Wants.—
 Let us often survey our Guilt: what we have done, and what we have deserv'd: how often and how greatly we have offended our gracious God, and provok'd his almighty Justice.—But we are so immers'd in Guilt that we have lost the sense of it. Hence our security in the greatest danger.—But Repentance awakens us, brings us to our senses, to a right way of thinking, and therefore the first good symptom the Penitent discovers, is Humility. He is exceeding vile in his own eyes, because he knows that sin hath made him so in the eyes of God.

SERM.
 I.
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Again, let us view our Imperfections and Frailties, both of body and mind. In every faculty of Body, some or other of the mere animal creation excell us, except in our erect posture; which is our constant Reproach and Shame, whilst our hearts are still bowing down toward the earth; and our minds as *prone* as the Bodies of those Brutes that were made to serve us.—And if we look in-

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and there is nothing in the world so noble and excellent, as the sublimity of humble minds.

Scougal's Life of God, &c. p. 95.

SERM.

I.



to our Souls, ah, what woful disorders do we find there! in the ravage of our passions, the foolishness of our Thoughts, the power of Prejudice, the rage of Appetites, the perverseness of our Wills, the darkness of our Understanding, the hardness of our Heart, its alienation from GOD, its propension to Evil, the force of our inward corruptions, and the imbecility of Reason to controul them; and, what is worst of all, the total insensibility of the greatest part of mankind to all these miserable Disorders of their mind, and the dreadful consequence of them when they prevail. And how much of this is found in the best of us, he knows best who is most acquainted with his own heart.

And how many are our Wants? both natural and spiritual: none of which 'tis in our own power to supply. How many things do we constantly stand in need of for the health, support and comfort of the Body; and the peace and happiness of our souls! which of ourselves we cannot provide. Were but one passion of the mind, or one humour of the body let loose, or permitted to break forth unrestrain'd, what misery would instantly insue! which would soon
bring

Of Humility.

25

SERM.

I.

bring on a Distraction of mind or a Dissolution of the whole frame.—And is it for creatures so guilty, so frail, so needy, so totally dependant as we are, to be proud! sure, *pride was never made for man.*

3. Let us often think how many of our fellow-creatures we see around us that surpass us in every valuable excellence, and we shall soon come to have meaner Thoughts of our selves. Especially when we observe (as every day we may) many, whom providence has plac'd in a station of life below us, more eminent for some or other of the Christian virtues than we are, who have enjoy'd greater advantages to attain them.

4. Let us be frequent and very devout in prayer. This will often bring our Wants and our Sins to remembrance, and lay us in the Dust before GOD. And let us earnestly pray for the Grace of Humility; and especially that every afflicting providence may be sanctified to this purpose; that we may have a humble heart under humbling Dispensations.

5. Let us keep the Example of our great Lord and Master always before our Eyes: *who made himself of no reputation, took upon him*

SERM.

I.

him the form of a servant, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death; who though he was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.

And what admirable Humility and Meekness did he discover towards all, and upon all occasions, when he was here on earth!—A proud Disciple of the humble Jesus!—What a folicism! how inconsistent the character!

Lastly, Let us often think how much the great GOD himself condescends from his Infinite Dignity for our sakes. He who humbles himself to take notice of what is done in Heaven, how low does he stoop to hearken to our sinful Prayers, to provide for our numerous Wants, and to entreat us to be reconciled to him! And shall a poor worm of the earth refuse to be humble, when the great GOD of Heaven so much humbles himself for his sake! This, if any thing, must for ever put all Pride out of countenance.

But if after all you say, ‘I cannot bring ‘this proud heart to be humble’,—then be humble for *that*: and never entertain a favourable Thought of your self, till you are,

The

The H Y M N.

I.

‘ Come hither all ye weary Souls,
‘ To me (says our Redeemer) come :
‘ I’ll give you rest from all your toils,
‘ And raise you to my heavenly home.

II.

‘ They shall find rest that learn of me ;
‘ I’m of a meek and lowly mind :
‘ But passion rages like the sea,
‘ And pride is restless as the wind.

III.

‘ Blest is the man whose shoulders take
‘ My yoke, and bear it with delight ;
‘ My yoke is easy to his neck,
‘ My grace shall make the burden light.’

IV.

Jesus, we come at thy command,
With faith, and hope and humble zeal
Resign our spirits to thy hand,
To mould and guide us at thy will.



S E R M O N II.

Of CONTENTMENT.



H E B. xiii. 5.

*Be content with such things as ye have ;
for he hath said, I will never leave
thee, nor forsake thee.*

SERM.
II.

THE first of the human virtues is *Humility*; which I consider'd in the former Discourse: the second is *Contentment*, which is the subject of this.—Contentment flows as naturally from Humility, as Happiness doth from *that*. A humble man is content with every thing, because he knows he hath more than he deserves; a proud man with nothing, because he thinks he hath less. In treating this part of the Christian temper, I propose to consider,

I. What

Of Contentment.

29

SERM.

II.

- I. What this virtue of Contentment is.
- II. Whence it springs.
- III. How it is to be acquired.

I. What this christian virtue of Contentment is.

Contentment is a peaceful and complacental acquiescence in all the dispositions of Providence, with regard to our worldly state and condition; looking upon that which GOD sends as fully sufficient, and best for us. So the original phrase in the text properly signifies (a): *be sufficed with present things*; that is, be satisfied with your present circumstances and supplies; because they are such as GOD hath appointed, and knows to be best for you. So that true Contentment, as a Christian virtue, flows from Piety, and is something essentially different from indolence and insensibility.

As a Christian virtue it differs much from that which sometimes resembles it in a natural Temper, Tho' it must be owned, that some by the sweet equipoise of their Passions,

(a) ἀρκυμένοι τοῖς παρῶντιν.

SERM. Passions, are born with a more happy disposition to it than others.

II.

Contentment by no means gives any countenance to Idleness, but is very consistent with the most diligent endeavours, by all proper means, to mend our circumstances. But if we cannot bring our condition to our mind, it teaches us to submit our minds to our condition : and is opposite to a peevish, anxious, fretful, repining Temper.

Contentment arises not from a man's outward condition, but from his inward disposition : so that if he is not content with that state of life he is in, he would not be content in any state of life he would be in. This perhaps may seem a paradox : but nothing is more true ; and for this plain reason, because a change of circumstances would not change his Temper : and that restless and unsatisfied disposition which gives him so much vexation *now*, would make him no less uneasy *then*. So that a discontented mind renders a man equally unhappy in every state of life.

Perhaps it is needless to observe to you, that the precept in the Text only requires



us to be well pleased and satisfied with the good things which providence allots us, as transient and temporary accommodations; and not to be so content with them, as to think them fully sufficient for our happiness, or to take up with them as our portion.

II. Having thus briefly open'd to you the true nature of this Christian virtue, let us now consider its proper source from whence it springs: that we may better know where to seek it, and how to distinguish it from its counterfeits. And

I. As I have just observ'd, Contentment is the genuine offspring of Humility: or the second degree in the scale of Christian perfection. The man who knows he deserves nothing, is content with any thing, and thankful for every thing: and can easily comply with the Apostle's Injunction, which the proud man never can (*1 Tim. vi: 8.*) *having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.* Would we secure to ourselves this invaluable Prize of Contentment, wherein the Happiness of the present Life is universally allowed to consist, let us endeavour then by all means to cultivate that humble and lowly

ly

SERM. ly spirit, which I explained and recommend-
 II. ed to you in the foregoing Discourse.

If we are in search after Contentment we must put ourselves under the guidance of Humility, which will lead us directly to the place where this inestimable Jewel is to be found: a Jewel that far surpasses the imaginary virtues of the philosopher's stone; because it turns every thing into that which is much more precious than gold.

2. Another source of contentment is a deep, fixed habitual sense of God's particular Providence, that directs and presides over all our affairs and concerns. For let us think thus with ourselves; ' That Being whose
 ' power condescended to make me, can ne-
 ' ver think it below his providence to take
 ' care of me. That every thing that relates
 ' to me, or concerns either my inward or
 ' outward man, is the object of his Provi-
 ' dence, or order'd by him, his own Word
 ' does not permit me to doubt. He not only
 ' fixes the bounds of my habitation, but ap-
 ' points my Lot: and every circumstance of
 ' comfort or trouble that befalls me, is sent
 ' by him: and as his Wisdom and Goodness
 ' are infinite, so he knows, better than I do,
 what

‘ what condition is fittest for me ; and will
 ‘ be sure to appoint me what he sees to be
 ‘ so. That very state and condition of life I
 ‘ now am in, as it was appointed by him
 ‘ (whatever I may think) is for certain best
 ‘ for me ; and therefore I have all the rea-
 ‘ son in the world to be content and thank-
 ‘ ful.’

We are ready to think, that if we had it in our power to chuse our own Condition we could make ourselves happy. Whereas the truth is, that in *that* case we should soon make ourselves miserable. For we little consider how many greater dangers and difficulties, snares and temptations, we should meet with in that higher state of Life we affect, than we do in that we are in ; and how soon those dangers and temptations would prove fatal to our peace and interest. So that, next to the providence of G O D, we may ascribe our own safety to our Impotence ; and are only happy, because we have it not in our power, by changing our state, to make ourselves miserable. G O D hath a perfect knowledge of the capacities and inclinations of his Creatures ; and what effect every condition will have upon them.

SERM.

II.

He sees what miseries we should be plung'd into, if we were suffer'd to chuse for ourselves; what Rocks we should run upon, if we were allowed to steer our own course. And therefore in pure mercy he restrains us from so dangerous a freedom; denies our fatal wishes, and makes us happy, as it were, against our Wills. Since then the disposal of our earthly Lot is safer and much better for us, in the hand of God than it would be in our own, we have the greatest reason to be content with our present condition; as that which (all things consider'd) is safer and better for us than any we could chuse for ourselves. Because in consulting our good, God does not confine his views (as we are apt to do) to present things, but looks forward to our future and eternal Interest.

3. Another spring of Contentment is, the experience we have had of the divine Bounty and Goodness to us in all the past scenes of Life. Are our worldly circumstances worse than they have been? still we have enough; and much more than many others. That hand of providence that resumes some of our earthly blessings and comforts, might have taken away more: and if it had, it would

would still have been our duty to be content. GOD hath left us more than we deserve; and perhaps hath taken away some of them only because he saw we should do more good to others, and less hurt to ourselves, with what remains.

But are our worldly circumstances better than they were? we have then great reason not only to be content but thankful. And that providence which hath provided for us all our days, and doth so well provide for us still, is a better security to us of future provision, than the richest stores we could lay up for ourselves.

4. Contentment arises in a good measure from a just Estimate of the true nature of all earthly things. Men generally set too great a value upon the blessings they have not, and too little upon those they have. The reason of this is; the Blessings we enjoy, we have exhausted; gone to the bottom of them; and have not found so much in them, as we expected from them: and therefore are ready to imagine there is something better, and more substantial in those we have never tasted. But that is a mistake: the nature of all sensual satisfactions is the

SERM.
II.

same: they soon grow vapid and lose their relish. The pleasure lies more in the expectation than enjoyment. For possession always diminishes the pleasure the Imagination magnified.

Such is the Bounty of our Creator, that the most valuable and substantial of all earthly Blessings he hath scattered with a most liberal hand: *viz.* those that are necessary for the health of the Body, and the support of Life: but more sparingly, those which contribute only to the vanity and luxury of it; which many are miserable with, and all may be happy without. And if Providence then hath bestowed upon us those things that are most necessary and most safe, instead of those things that are unnecessary but most dangerous, have we not great reason to be thankful? Our real wants are few, and soon supplied; and those supplies near at hand. A sufficient foundation of Content: for *nature wants but little, nor that little long.* We should learn to estimate the value of our mercies by the want of them. Is a man necessarily miserable because he hath not Wealth, and Honour and Equipage? by no means; we every day see the contrary. But
if

Of Contentment.

37

SERM.

II.



if he hath not Food and Raiment, nor Health, nor Friends, nor Peace of mind, he is really wretched. These then are by far the most substantial Blessings. Having these then let us be well pleased and thankful; and not repine that we have not those less solid, but more splendid Advantages which but few possess and fewer still enjoy.

In point of earthly Enjoyments, I believe men are more upon a Level than is generally imagined: or that upon the whole, and all things consider'd, there is not that disparity between the happiness of the rich and the poor man, which is commonly thought. And it is a kind provision of our all-Bountiful Creator, that to compensate the disadvantages of the poor, he commonly bestows upon them the greatest share of the most substantial Comforts of Life (Health and Peace and Quiet, with Love, Friendship, Innocence and Contentment) and a sweeter relish of its common blessings, than those in higher stations ordinarily have. So that were we but justly to estimate the true value of our earthy Blessings, we should see that we have abundant reason to be content with that portion of them

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SERM.

II.

which the divine Bounty hath been pleas'd to allot us.

5. Let us consider the mutability of all earthly things, and the uncertainty of human Life. Are our circumstances very depressed? they cannot be so long. All things under the moon are as variable as herself. Nature, in the revolution of the seasons, exhibits to us a constant succession of dark and lucid scenes: comfort soon returns after trouble, and joy after sorrow; as the day succeeds the night, and the summer the winter. Not to say that the pinching Frosts of adversity contribute no less to the health of our Souls, than the coldness of the winter does to the vigour and fertility of the Earth.

Lastly, Let us often think of Eternity: in the view of which our present transient state on Earth is but a moment, and dwindles into a Point. This sentiment, render'd habitual, will soon rectify our mistaken notions of Life, and make us more indifferent to all the short transitory scenes of it. It will raise the mind superior to all its momentary Joys and sorrows, and make us look upon any condition of Life as happy,
that

that is connected with the hopes of everlasting Blifs.

These are the several Springs from whence Contentment usually flows. I proceed now to consider

III. What we must do to attain it.

Now in order to this, there are two general directions laid down in the Text, of very singular and extensive influence in this case; which I shall therefore more particularly consider. And they are these

1. That we take care to root out of our Hearts all the Seeds of Covetousness.

2. That we cultivate a firm Belief of, and a steady dependance on the divine Promises. *Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

1. That we take care to root out of our Hearts all the seeds of Covetousness.

Covetousness doth not consist in the Possession of wealth, but in the inordinate Love of it. And this excessive Love of money (the Apostle tell us) *is the root of all evil.* There are few vices but what may either

SERM.

II.

immediately or remotely be traced up to this bitter Source. And none more visibly than that of Discontent; of which it is the immediate Parent. And how it comes to pass that this vice, so big with guilt, and so fruitful of every other iniquity should pass for a venial transgression, and escape the just odium due to its nature, and meet with a more partial indulgence than many others of much less Guilt, is, one of the greatest mysteries in Morals. The reason I apprehend, is, because it lies concealed both from our own eye, and that of others: and when any Symptoms of it appear, they are readily palliated by false or fictitious names. But the following Criteria or marks will presently discover it.

A man is then covetous when he has no heart to enjoy the Bounties of providence, or to furnish himself with conveniences suitable to his Condition.

When he has no heart to do good with them, or to relieve the necessities of the indigent in proportion to his plenty.

When he hath recourse to unworthy or unlawful means to mend his circumstances; or violates the obligations of Conscience for the
fake

Of Contentment.

41

SERM.

II.

fake of worldly advantage. This shows that he sets too great a value upon his money by far; because he prefers it to his own Soul.

When his Heart is tortured and tormented at any worldly disappointment or loss: or when any such detriment to his secular affairs robs him of his peace of mind, and renders him incapable of injoying the Comforts, or attending the Duties of Life.

When he puts his confidence in, and sets his heart upon his wealth, as his happiness; and finds a greater pleasure in amassing it, than applying it to laudable and beneficent purposes.

Lastly. When he is proud of his wealth; and despises others purely for the want of that share of it which he possesses. These are all sure signs of Avarice; the Streams that flow directly from that corrupt fountain.

Now from these genuine effects of Covetousness, and the opposition in which it stands to Contentment in the Text, we learn these three things.

1. That 'ere we can obtain this great happiness of Christian Contentment, we must root out all the seeds of Covetousness from
from

SERM. from our Hearts: for they will certainly
 II. spring up into anxiety, trouble and dis-
 content.

2. That all this arises from setting too great a value on our earthly Comforts or worldly Blessings. We desire them more than we ought, because we rate them at more than they are worth.

3. That the true ground of contentment is to moderate our desires and aversions with regard to all earthly things: to form a right estimate of them; not to dread the evil, or desire the good things of the present Life too much; but to rectify the mistakes of imagination and custom by looking into the true nature of these things; stripping them of their false appearances; viewing them in their genuine emptiness; and considering their confessed insufficiency and disadvantages in a thousand circumstances of Life; bringing them to the Touchstone of mortality, and comparing them with eternal things. And unless we do this, and make these kind of contemplations habitual to us, we shall never long retain our self-possession, but often find our inward peace interrupted. So necessary is it that *our conversation*

Of Contentment.

43

SERM.

II.



sation in this world be without Covetousness, if we would be content with such things as we have. Since nothing is a more certain and fruitful source of discontent than worldly-mindedness.

2. The next thing our Text directs us to, in order to attain this great blessing of a contented mind is to cultivate a firm belief of, and a steady Dependence on the divine Promises.

To one of these the Apostle especially directs our thoughts; *for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* A more comprehensive promise is not to be found in the whole Book of GOD. Nor can there be conceived a more solid ground of content and thankfulness: for what can that man want, or what distress and danger in Life can terrify or discontent him, that hath this full assurance of the present support and favour of almighty GOD? And to encourage our trust in this Promise, it is delivered with the strongest asseveration that can be expressed in so few words: for in the Greek there is no less than five negatives, the force of which is intirely lost in our translation, which may be rendered more agreeably to the

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SERM.

II.



the emphasis of the original thus ; *No, I will not leave thee, no, no, I will never forsake thee (a).*

This promise was originally made to *Joshua*, when upon the death of *Moses* he succeeded to the command and conduct of the *Israelites*; and was given him for his encouragement at his entering upon that difficult office (*b*). But that its reference was not confined to him, but extended to all the people and servants of *God* in similar circumstances, appears from hence; because the *Apostle* in the *Text* directs the *Christians* to whom he writes, to apply it to themselves for the support of their faith, and a motive to contentment in every state of *Life*. And if it was their *Duty* to apply it to this purpose, it is no less ours.

And this is a circumstance that is well worth our attention. The great difficulty which *Christians* meet with in this case (the proper use of the *Promises*) lies here: ‘ How do I know that they
‘ belong to me; or that I have a right
‘ to apply them for my comfort? did I
‘ know that I had a title to them, I could
‘ act

(a) ἐ μή σε ἀνῶ ἑυδ’ ἐ μή σε ἐγκαταλίπω :

(b) *Josh.* i. 5.

‘act faith upon them; and admit the consolation they are designed to convey: but if they are not made to me (as I am not sure they are) that belief is presumption.’

—Now to this I answer; They are not made to the obstinate and impenitently wicked, to be sure; but to all the Servants and Children of GOD in general, and for the support and comfort of weak, feeble, and doubting Christians in particular: and therefore they do in a more especial manner belong to you.

The Apostle tells the *Hebrew* Christians, that this gracious Promise did belong to them: and exhorts them to apply it to themselves, as the greatest motive and encouragement to contentment; though some of them were very weak, both in grace and knowledge. Now can you suppose you have not as good a right to it as they had? And therefore to apply it to yourselves, is so far from being Presumption, that not to do so is Unbelief. And when by an active Faith on this and such like Promises, you attain an habitual dependance on the Care and Providence of your heavenly Father, you will never want any other motive to Contentment.

Having

SERM.
II.

Having thus consider'd the two directions in the Text, in order to attain this happiness of a contented spirit, I proceed now to add to them a few more. And

3. Frequently repair to those sources from whence Contentment springs. Endeavour therefore by all means to cultivate the virtue of Humility ; a constant sense of GOD's particular Providence, that directs and overrules all your concerns and interests : often recollect the divine bounty and goodness to you, in all the past scenes and stages of Life : look into the true nature of things, and suffer not your judgment to be biased by prejudice and custom : and often think of the uncertainty of Life, the near approach of Death, and the awfulness of Eternity.

4. Recollect how many mercies you enjoy, both temporal and spiritual ; and set a just value upon them ; and consider how miserable you would think yourself without them.

One great ground of discontent is, that men are more apt to look at what they have not, than at what they have. Not considering, that He who distributes these things in the wisest manner, knows that those things
they

they have, are better for them than those they would have; and more conducive to their true interest.

As for spiritual mercies, Providence has cast your Lot in a christian Country: you are born in a Protestant land, where you are permitted to worship God according to your consciences; you have the Bible, the Records of eternal truth open to you, in your own Language; have been early taught to read it, and have many Helps to understand it: you are permitted stately to attend the publick Ordinances of God, that you may be further instructed in the Christian Faith, directed in the christian walk, improved in the christian Temper, and established in the christian Hope. And, more than all this, you have the gracious aids and influence of the holy Spirit; to warn you of Sin, assist you in Duty, comfort your Minds, strengthen your Souls, and be your *present help in every time of need*. Now reverse these privileges. Should you not have been really unhappy had you been born a blinded *Jew*, a deluded *Turk*, a savage *Indian*, or a bigotted *Papist*?—Nay, even among Protestants, do you not look upon them as very miserable

SERM.
II.

rable, who have been brought up in a total Ignorance of GOD, Religion, and a future State; educated under the influence of the worst Examples, and thereby seduced into the greatest Vices, and a fatal security in them, hardned by a long course of Sin? And take the whole collective Body of mankind, and the greatest part of them by far belong to one or other of those Classes I before mentioned. And few, very few in proportion, enjoy those singular and distinguishing advantages for their eternal happiness which you are favour'd with. O, what reason have you then, upon this view of things, to be not only content but thankful!

And as for temporal Mercies, how many do you see every day whose circumstances are streighter than yours, and who would be thankful for the blessings you are not content with? To learn Humility, we should be often looking at those who excell us: to learn Contentment, we should be often looking at those below us.—And if Providence hath appointed you a very small portion of some earthly Comforts, in comparison of what you see the rich enjoy, he hath
given

given you many others, for which perhaps the very persons you envy do as much envy you: *viz.* Health, Peace, Safety, and a quiet possession and sweet enjoyment of the little you have: which contribute more to the real Happiness of Life than all those extraneous advantages by which some may shine above you.

And if to a contented mind you can add the happiness of an approving Conscience, your condition is much preferable to that of those who possess the greatest outward affluence without this inward peace. Contentment itself is Gain, But *Godliness with contentment is great Gain (c)*.

I shall now conclude all with two reflections by way of application.

1. There is but one state of Life in which men ought not to be content: and yet that is the only one in which they generally are. You will easily imagine that what I here mean is a state of sin and guilt; while the soul is at enmity with, and unreconciled to GOD. This is that state in which, one would think, no one can be content; unless he is content to be for ever miserable. And

VOL. I.

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yet

(c) 1 Tim. vi. 6.

SERM.

II.

yet (it is dreadful to say) how many do we see who are not only content, but well pleased, satisfied, and in their own opinion happy, in this the most deplorable condition a human creature can be in, on this side Hell! To a serious and thinking mind there can scarce be exhibited a more melancholy and shocking scene than this: *viz.* a multitude of immortal Souls, without the least apprehension of danger, dancing, jocund and gay, on the very brink of the infernal Gulf! A number of blind and drunken men, reveling, fearless on the edge of a Precipice, from which they successively fall and perish, without leaving the least impression on those who but a little while survive the same fate, is not an Image of so much Horror. Contentment in this case, is founded in the utmost stupidity, and want of thought: and is indeed the height of madness. And, O, how often are we shocked with this sad sight in this mad World!

Such are the effects of sinful Habits, and a prevailing sensuality. They intoxicate like a dose of Opium, and make a man contented, no otherwise than that they deprive him of the power of right thought. So that
while

Of Contentment.

51

SERM.
II.

while he is under the most dangerous Dis-
temper he all the while thinks himself not
only well but happy. If there be any one
Soul here in this wretched condition, give
me leave to say, that it is yours *not* to be
content. You have no right to one easy,
peaceful, or pleasing thought, (whatever
your outward condition be) untill, by a sin-
cere repentance, and amendment of Life,
you have some good ground to hope that
GOD through *Jesus Christ* is your reconciled
Friend.

2. My other reflection is this, that as
there is no state of Life in which a wicked
man ought to be content, so there is no si-
tuation in which a good man may not. For
what cause can that man have for Discon-
tent, who hath good ground to hope that
his heaven is secure. It was this which
taught the Apostle *Paul* contentment in
whatever state he was (*d*); and not only so,
but rais'd his mind superior to all he suffer-
ed, and made him *rejoice in tribulation*. See
his Triumph in that well known passage,
*Rom. viii. 35. Who shall separate us from the
Love of Christ?* (the foundation of his eter-

E 2

nal

(d) Phil. iv. 2.

SERM.
II.

nal hope) *shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? nay in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.*

Those circumstances of Life in which men are most apt to be discontent are these; Bodily pains and afflictions long continued, poverty and distress, the malevolence and contempt of men, undeserved reproach and infamy, a situation of danger, or wherein we apprehend some great approaching and unavoidable difficulties, the loss of Friends, or disappointments in our worldly affairs. But now, put all these together, and throw them into the Ballance against the Christians *blessed Hope*, and how light do they appear! Under the united pressure of all these Calamities (which to a worldly mind are so unsupportably grievous) A Christian's well established Hope may make him not only content but joyful: while his Faith ardently looks at *that glory which shall be reveal'd; that far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*, with which all his sufferings on earth are not *worthy to be compared.*

The H Y M N.

I.

God is my portion, all my good
From his rich mercy flows ;
And his good providence secures
The blessings he bestows.

II.

I envy not the great man's state,
Nor pine to see his store ;
With what I have I'm pleas'd much
With what I hope for more.

III.

Then let me make the Lord my trust,
And practise all that's good ;
So shall I dwell among the just,
And He'll provide me food.

IV.

I charge my thoughts, be humble still,
And all my carriage mild,
Content, my father, with thy will,
And quiet as a child.

The meek at last the earth possess,
They are the Heirs of Heaven ;
True riches with abundant peace
To humble souls are given.





S E R M O N III.

Of P A T I E N C E.



J A M E S i. 4.

*But let patience have her perfect work;
that ye may be perfect and entire,
wanting nothing.*

THE third part of the Christian Temper, as it consists in the exercise of the human Virtues, is *Patience*. She is the daughter of Humility, and the sister of Contentment, whom she inseparably attends; and to both which she bears a near resemblance. She hath all the meekness of her Mother, and the sweetness of her Sister. She is often afflicted but never discomposed. Sorrow fits decently upon her: she gives a grace to her sufferings; and smiles in tears.

SERM.
III.

E 4

Like

SERM.
III.

Like the moon she is ever calm and serene,
and shines brightest in the night.*

In discoursing on this part of the Christian temper I shall

- I. Offer to you some general Observations relating to it. Then
- II. More particularly considered it in its various views and modifications.

I. I shall offer to you some general Observations relating to it.

1. Christian patience is essentially different from Insensibility; whether natural, artificial, or acquired. This sometimes passeth for patience, though it be really quite another thing: for *Patience* signifies *suffering*. Now if you inflict ever so much pain upon the Body of another, if he is not sensible of it, it is no pain to him: he suffers nothing, consequently calmness under it is no patience.

This Insensibility is sometimes *natural*. Some in the native temperament of their mind

* Her meek hands folded on her modest Bosom,
With mute submission, lifts the adoring Eye
Even to the storm that wrecks her. Ogilvie.

mind and body are much less susceptible of pain than others are. There are different degrees of insensibility in men, both in their animal and mental frame: so that the same event may be a great exercise of patience to one man, which is none at all to another: as the latter feels little or no pain from that wound, inflicted on the Body or mind, which gives the most exquisite anguish to the former. But it is our comfort that he who perfectly knows our Frame, knows what we feel; and will not *suffer us to be tempted, or tryed, above what we are able to bear.*

Again, there is an *artificial* Insensibility: such as is procured by opiates which blunt the edge of pain. And there is an *acquired* Insensibility, *viz.* that which is attained by the force of principles strongly inculcated, or by long custom. Such was the Apathy or Insensibility of the *Stoicks*; who obstinately maintained that pain was no evil, and therefore bore it with amazing firmness: which, however, was something very different from the virtue of Christian patience: as appears from the principles from which they

SERM.
III.

they respectively proceeded ; the one springing from Pride, the other from Humility.

Christian Patience then is something very different from all these. She is as sensible of pain or suffering as the most fretful Christian can be: but bears it with meekness and temper, without complaint or murmuring.

2. Patience, under its most grievous pressures, is greatly strengthened by Faith, and supported by Hope. Faith supports it on one side, and Hope on the other. Hope turns the Eye of the mind to future Good, and brighter Scenes: and Faith gives it a clearer and stronger view of that Glory which Hope turns its Eye to, and represents it as incomparably and infinitely greater than all the sufferings it can sustain for the sake of it, or in the way to it. *A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Without Faith and Hope there can be no Christian Patience; whose strength is always in proportion to that of its Supporters.

3. Patience is one of the most difficult parts of the Christian temper, or one of the most self-denying Virtues that Christianity requires. I know but one in the whole scheme of Christian Morals that is more hard

hard to be complied with ; i. e. forgiveness of Injuries, or loving our Enemies (a). But the difficulty arises not from any thing in the virtue itself, (for the most perfect minds practise it with ease) but from the imbecility and corruption of our nature. However, the practice of it is indispensably necessary to the quiet and peace of our minds, in the present circumstances of our Being. And the fruits and benefits of patience, in all its modifications and forms, will abundantly compensate the difficulties that attend its steady and uniform Practice.

4. There is no grace that we have more need of, or that we shall meet with more frequent occasions for in our present imperfect state, than this of Patience. There is not a day passes over our heads, but we meet with some events or occurrences which put it to the trial in one degree or other. And, like other habits, it is acquired by frequent exercise ; and rendered easy by custom.

(a) *Dion*, the disciple of *Plato*, upon a certain occasion said, ‘ that he thought it as great a weakness to revenge an Injury as to commit one.’ A marvellous sentiment in a Heathen, who liv’d long before the world was enlighten’d by the christian moral ! See *Rollin’s Belles Lettres*, Ed. 2. Vol. 3. p. 351.

SERM.
III.

tom. Hence it is that our Saviour so much insists upon self-denial, as a grand requisite and qualification in all them who would become his Disciples. Because it was so necessary to the regular practice of several of those Virtues in which the Christian temper doth essentially consist: and to none more than that of Patience. And hence also it is that in the present state of our nature, self-denial is so universally necessary to a settled peace of Mind: because it is so necessary to self-Government, without which there can be no lasting self-Enjoyment.

And not only our own imperfections, but the weaknesses and failings of others, with whom we have natural or social connexions, will furnish us with frequent occasions for the exercise of this most important passive virtue. And if in Education that Science ought to be especially cultivated, which we shall have the most need of in future life; in Religion that temper and disposition of mind should be most carefully acquired and preserved, which we are daily called to practise; and the practice of which will be attended with the
greatest

Of Patience.

61

greatest benefit and advantage in the religious Life and Conduct.

SERM.
III.

5. This grace of Patience, which I am now about to recommend to your diligent cultivation and practice, is a Divine as well as Human Virtue: and that of which the great God himself has set us the most perfect and amazing example, in his providential conduct towards us. And hence he is emphatically called *the GOD of patience* (b). O, if we did but consider how much patience the God of Heaven exercises towards us, every day and every hour we live; bearing with our ingratitude, provocations, and follies, surely we could want no other motive to bear with the infirmities, petulance and affronts of our fellow-Creatures and fellow-Sinners; who can never displease us so much we are every day offending him! how can' children be so thoughtless as to quarrel with one another, under the Eye of that gracious Father who forgives them all!

6. Though the greatest advantages accrue from the regular exercise of this Christian

(b) Rom xv. 5;

SERM.

III.

Christian Virtue, far superior to the pains which the habitual practice of it may require, yet they all depend upon a steady perseverance in it. If under any Tryal, either from the hand of GOD or man, our patience hath held out a considerable time, but is lost at last; and gives place to passion, peevishness, fretful and indecent resentments, we not only lose all the Benefit of our past self-denial and long-suffering, but incur all the bad effects and consequences of an unrestrained passion. And therefore you see the great stress in the Text is laid on perseverance in this Virtue: *let Patience have her perfect work.*

This is remarkably exemplified in the case of *Job*; who is recorded in scripture as a man of the greatest patience; and whom *St James* proposed to us as the most eminent pattern of it. *You have heard of the patience of Job.* And indeed under all the vast complication of distress by which that good man was overwhelmed, no one could act with more meekness, resignation and self-possession, than he did at first. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed*

blessed be the name of the Lord (a). But his patience had not its perfect work. We find him afterwards cursing the day of his birth, complaining of Life, and wishing for death, and charging God foolishly. And in short discovering almost as much passion and peevishness as his wife. So that though he was not so guilty as he appeared in the eyes of his three Friends, yet he was more so than he seemed to be in his own. Which when the divine Majesty condescended to make him sensible of, by a strong and awful remonstrance immediately from heaven, his Humility and Patience soon returned; not one more complaining word escaped him: But behold I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth; once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea twice, but I will proceed no further (b).

Lastly. I observe, that Patience (like Humility from whence it flows) notwithstanding the meaness of its Garb, is of a noble extract and a certain mark of true greatness of Mind: i. e. when considered as a virtue, and abstracted from those foreign aids, whether natural or artificial, I before mentioned.

II. I

(a) Job i. 21. (b) xl. 4, 5.

SERM.
III.

SERM.

III.



II. I am now more particularly to open to you the true nature of this virtue, Patience; in its several different views and modifications

Patience is a complex term; applicable to various circumstances and implying different operations of the mind. As patience in bearing; patience in forbearing; patience in waiting; and patience in persevering.

Patience in bearing, is called *Magnanimity*. Patience in forbearing, is *Equanimity*; patience in waiting, *Longanimity*; and patience in persevering, is *Constancy*. All instances of great self-command, and true fortitude of spirit. And as we shall have frequent occasion for the exercise of patience in each of these respects, I shall therefore give every one of them a distinct consideration; and suggest to you the proper means of supporting it, as I proceed. Which will give you a clear and comprehensive view of this Virtue, and at the same time prepare you for the Practice of it, as future occasions shall offer.

I. The

I. The first and most common sense of the word patience is *bearing* the afflictions we are under, with a submissive temper, so long as it shall please GOD to continue them. This is sometimes called *long-suffering*: and is opposed to inurmuring, fretfulness, or repining under the hand of GOD. In this sense the word is used in the Text; where the Apostle exhorts us to let patience *have its perfect work*. Thus it is used (*Rom. v. 3.*) *Tribulation worketh patience* (*Rom. xii. 12.*) *Be patient in tribulation*. This latter place explains the former. What is there asserted as a privilege, is here enjoined as a Duty. Our Troubles will never work Patience, unless we take care to behave in a right manner under them. They are the means which, by the blessing of GOD, often produce this effect; but then, like other means, they must be used in a proper manner. Patience in suffering, is known by a peaceful, quiet, composed, and contented frame of mind; and is otherwise called *Resignation*, or *Submission*. As a christian virtue it springs from Faith; which looks beyond the present dark scene, or brightens it with the beams of Hope and heavenly Joy: and

SERM.

III.

recurs to Prayer, and the consolations of Scripture for its sovereign support.

Those Trials in life which put this virtue to the most delicate proof are these. Acute pain, or long continued disorder of Body; Family Affliction, and especially the death of dear Friends; and great worldly Losses and Disappointments. — Now for the support of our Patience under such afflicting Visitations (besides the means just now mentioned) the following considerations may be very useful.

That in every one of these calamitous situations, a patient spirit alleviates, but impatience aggravates the Distress. The former takes off half the load, the latter doubles it. Most of the Tribulations of life, men may charge to the account of their own Folly: and there is no folly by which a man more frequently becomes his own Tormentor than this of Impatience and Fretfulness.

Look upon every affliction (whatever it be) as coming by the direct appointment of God; as sent by him: and not only so, but as sent by him for your good. And if you are patient under it, you will soon have cause to be thankful for it. And

The

The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren which are upon the Earth. Yours is not a singular case: you have thousands that are your fellow-sufferers at the same instant: many of whom are pressed down with much heavier burdens than yours; and would count themselves comparatively happy, were they in your circumstances. And indeed what is the whole World, but one grand Hospital of diseased men? diseased either in Body or Mind? But we need not look beyond the Ward we are in (the place where providence hath fixed the bounds of our habitation) to be witnesses to miseries much greater than our own. But

2. We have need of patience, not only in bearing, but in forbearing. The former refers to the Afflictions we receive at the hand of GOD; this to the Injuries and Ill treatment we may meet with from the hands of men. This is called *Equanimity*; and is opposed to Passion or vindictive Resentment. But as in the other case, patience does not render us insensible of the afflictions we receive from the hand of GOD, so neither in this, does it make us regardless

SERM.
III.

of the Indignities we receive from men. As it does not torpify the flesh, so neither does it stupify the spirit: but keeps the mind even, composed, and calm, under both. In this sense the word is used, (1 *Thess.* v. 14.) *be patient towards all men.*

And not only the injustice and affronts of our enemies, but the follies, fickleness, and indiscretion of our Friends, may sometimes put this kind of Patience to a very painful proof. And especially the Misconduct of any who are intimately related to us, or connected with us.

Now to encourage and support this exercise of our Patience,

Let us often think of our own misconduct, imprudence, and follies; and how much we stand in need of the forgiveness and lenity of others. And, according to the golden rule, remember to mete out to others, that measure we should be glad to receive from them: and not be more severe upon their failings, than we would chuse they should be upon ours. Which is what our Saviour himself expressly requires of us, when he commands us *to do to others* (in all cases and in this more particularly)

cularly) *that which we would they should do to us.* SERM. III.

When we are moved or irritated by any just occasion of offence, let us give room to this Reflection; that however the offender is to blame, yet he is, for certain, not so guilty as we then imagine him to be. Because the mind, under such a ferment, is not capable of judging aright concerning the true nature of the offence. Anger and Resentment have thrown a strong Bias on the mind; that it can see things only in one light, look only on one side; and aggravates every circumstance that enhances the fault, and suppresses every thing that might diminish it. How is it possible then that, in such a temper and situation, it should be able to form a right judgment?

Again, Let us recollect our Christian obligations to this Duty of forbearance: and how necessarily our Saviour hath made the Forgiveness we expect from God, to depend upon that we extend to men: who expressly tells us, that his Father will on no other terms extend it to us. *If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father in Heaven forgive you your trespasses.*

SERM.

III.

Lastly. Let us think of the Patience of GOD; and how much he bears with us, who stand infinitely more in need of his Forgiveness, than any of our Fellow-creatures can of ours. To proceed

3. There is another branch of Patience, which consists in quietly waiting for any desired Blessing, until such a time as GOD shall please to send it. This is called *Longanimity*: and is opposed to that uneasy, discontented spirit, which we are apt to discover when some wished-for good is delay'd; or some ardent Hope disappointed. *Solomon* says, *Hope deferred makes the heart sick (c)*; i. e. creates an inward pain and anxiety. An effect it often has upon persons of a peevish spirit. In opposition to which, Patience (in this application of the word) signifies waiting with a quiet, calm, composed temper of mind, till the desired Blessing come. In this sense we often find the word used in the new Testament, *If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it (d)*. *For you have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of*
GOD,

(c) Prov. xiii. 12.

(d) Rom. vi. 25.

Of Patience.

71

SERM.

III.

GOD, ye might receive the promises (e). Be patient therefore, Brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the Husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the Earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain (f). The Lord direct your heart into the Love of GOD, and patient waiting for Christ. Which should rather be render'd, the *Patience of Christ* (g).

The exercise of this kind of Patience is necessary, both in waiting for a deliverance from some present Evil we mourn under, and for the possession of some future Good we hope for. And the trial of our Patience in each of these circumstances, will be in proportion to the greatness of the affliction we are under and desire to be deliver'd from ; and the value of the Blessing we want, and wait to be put in possession of. And to fortify your Patience, in waiting for the Blessing you so much desire, remember

The longer it is deferred, the sweeter it will be when it comes. Ardent Desire will heighten the Relish of it, and make you more thankful for it. Nay

F 4

This

(e) Heb. x. 36. (f) Jam. v. 7.

(g) εἰς ἰσπομονὴν τοῦ χριστοῦ. 2 Theff. iii. 5.

SERM.
III.

This patient waiting for it may anticipate it, and make it come the sooner. Whereas an Impatient Temper may be the reason it is so long delayed. The best way to have afflictions soon removed, is to be humble and submissive under them; and the best way to be put into the enjoyment of any desired Blessing, is to resign ourselves wholly to GOD; and to be perfectly easy and contented, till he is pleased to send it.

Lastly. Much Patience is sometimes required in persevering with steadiness and *Constancy* in the prosecution of some wise and good End, through the dangers that beset, or difficulties that obstruct us in it.—
Now this may refer either

To the great end of Life in general: which to a wise man is Religion, or a regular Improvement in grace and virtue; as the only thing that can establish his peace, and promote his Comfort and Usefulness in this world, and secure his Happiness in the other. Patience then, in this sense of the word, is a steady perseverance in the way of all known Duty, without being weary in it, diverted from it, or fainting under the difficulties we may meet with therein. Or
It

Of Patience.

73

SERM.

III.

It may refer to any particular Pursuit, or laudable Purpose in Life: which if it be considerable and important, can rarely be effected without much pains, patience and perseverance. For the most hopeful beginnings and the most vigorous efforts discontinued, will be unsuccessful. But pains, patience, and perseverance conquer all things.

To excite us to a patient perseverance in both these cases, let us recollect

That nothing can be brought to a happy Issue without it. A Traveller had as well never set forward on his Journey, as sit down and give out before he hath got to the end of it. A Soldier can never be victorious if, fatigued with two or three Skirmishes, he declines any further labour of watching and fighting, before he hath accomplished his warfare. So in the christian warfare, only they who, by a *patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory honour and immortality, shall receive eternal Life.* (b) Besides,

For want of patient perseverance, we not only fail of our End, but lose all our past Labour: all the care and pains and self-denial

(b) Rom. xi. 7.

SERM.
III.

nial we submitted to, and persevered so long in, are lost, unless by the help of patience we continue to persevere. And not to do so, is a folly that borders upon madness. So it appeared to Saint *Paul* who very warmly upbraided the backsliding *Galatians* with it. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitch'd you, that you should not obey the truth? ye did run well, who did hinder ye? are ye so foolish, having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh? have ye suffer'd so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain (c).* Besides

The longer we persevere in any good course, the less Exercise shall we have for our patience: because the fewer difficulties shall we meet with to try it. For Custom makes every difficult course easy, and every virtuous way delightful. So that the patience that is at first required to prosecute it, in time turns into pleasure; which more then compensates all the pains of perseverance.

With such considerations as these should we fortify and encourage our minds, that our persevering patience may *have its perfect work.*

And

(c) *Gal.* iii. 1.

And thus much for the third part of the Christian temper, *Patience*. Which I have now been endeavouring distinctly to illustrate, and recommend to you, in its several views and relations.

It is a Virtue in which our divine Master hath set us the most shining Example. Whose patience was invincible, and triumphed over all the malice of his Persecutors. I beseech you then (as the Apostle *Paul* did the *Corinthians*) by the meekness and gentleness of *Christ*, let us all endeavour to be like him, by imitating him more and more in this God-like quality. And thus shall we better adorn his Religion and our Characters as Christians, than we can by all the most shining acquisitions without it.

It is a Virtue peculiar to a state of suffering and imperfection; and which we shall have no more occasion for when we are got out of this World. But while we are in it, we shall have frequent need of this Christian temper to lighten our loads, compose our minds, and help us to behave with decency in, and derive lasting benefit and advantage from, the various sorrows, sufferings, pains,
and

SERM.
III.

and tribulations we must pass through *before we enter into the Kingdom of GOD.* The ensuing week will very probably furnish us with many a disagreeable Incident, wherein it will be necessary to call patience to our Aid. For few days pass over our heads, without some trial of it, in some kind and degree or other. Whenever we are called to the exercise of it then, let us see to it that it *have its perfect work*: and let us make that part of the Christian temper which hath been so particularly recommended to us this day, the object of our attention and practice every day the ensuing week. And thus *to be doers of the word* as we hear it, is the way to be wise and well-established Christians, and *blessed in our Deeds.*—But that I may not put the virtue I recommend to an unnecessary trial, I add no more; but my hearty prayer that the Blessing of God may attend what has now been said, and his Grace assist us all in the future Practice of it.

The H Y M N.

I.

God of my Life look gently down,
Behold the pains I feel ;
But I am dumb before thy throne,
Nor dare dispute thy will.

II.

Diseases are thy servants, Lord;
They come at thy command;
I'll not attempt a murmuring word
Against thy chastening hand.

III.

The patient soul, the lowly mind
Shall have a large reward :
Let faints in sorrow lie resign'd,
And trust a faithful God.

IV.

'Tis God that lifts my comforts high,
Or sinks 'em in the grave :
He gives, and (blessed be his name)
He takes but what he gave.

V. Peace

SERM.
III.

V.

Peace all my angry passions then
Let each rebellious sigh
Be silent at his sovereign will,
And every murmur die.

VI.

If smiling Mercy crown my life;
It's praises shall be spread;
And I'll adore the Justice too
That strikes my Comforts dead.

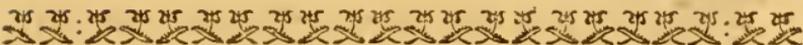


S E R-



S E R M O N IV.

O F P R U D E N C E.



P R O V. xiv. 15.

*A prudent man looketh well to his
Going.*

TH E next Christian virtue that falls SERM.
IV.
under our consideration is *Prudence*.
Let it not be thought strange that I reckon
Prudence in the rank of the Christian vir-
tues ; since Imprudence not only leads to,
but is of itself one of the greatest Vices :
which you will presently see if you carefully
attend to what will be deliver'd in the profe-
cution of this Subject. Wherein I shall

I. Particularly shew you what Prudence
is.

II. Open

SERM.

IV.



II. Open to you the Importance of it; relative to our social and religious Character. And then

Lastly. Inforce the practice of it from those Considerations;

I. I am particularly to shew you what prudence is.

Prudence is a conformity to the rules of Reason, Truth, and Decency; at all times, and in all circumstances. This is a general definition of Prudence, applicable to every case wherein we are called to the practice of it. A notorious and habitual transgression of those Rules; is downright Wickedness; small and occasional deviations from them is Imprudence: a constant habitual conformity to them, is wisdom; and a general practical regard to them, is Prudence.

From this definition of Prudence then we learn wherein it differs from Wisdom; (*viz*) only in degree: Wisdom being nothing but a higher degree or more confirmed habit of Prudence; and Prudence, a lower degree or weaker habit of Wisdom.

Hence

Hence Wisdom and Prudence are often put to signify the same thing ; or used as equivalent terms : as are also Imprudence and Folly ; which differ from each other just in the same manner.

Prudence appears hence not only to be a Virtue, but to be the most extensive of all Virtues ; for there can be no virtue without it. By this all the rest are to be regulated and directed. There are few Virtues but what, for want of prudence, may be carried to an excess ; by which means they change their nature, and degenerate into Vice. Hence the character of a certain romantick Prince, given by a no less romantick Writer, was, ‘That he had but one Vice ; and that was, his carrying all the virtues to an extreme (*b*)’

From this definition of prudence it further appears, that it lies chiefly in preserving a conduct consistent with our circumstances in Life ; and suitable to the character we do, or ought to maintain in it. For every one sees that a conduct inconsistent with character is in every man the height of Imprudence ;

(*b*) *Voltaire's Life of Charles xii.*

SERM.
IV.

dence ; *i. e.* downright Folly. The same Action may be prudent in one man, that is not so in another ; nay which would be very imprudent, very wrong, and foolish in another : because it may be suitable to the character and circumstances of the first, but not of the last.

Again, not only the difference of character and circumstances may render the same action prudent or imprudent in different persons ; but the difference of times and seasons may make the same action prudent or imprudent in the same person. For there are few things that are equally right, reasonable, and becoming at all times. Therefore the prudence or imprudence of an action does not arise so much from the action itself, as from the character of the person that does it, or from the circumstances that attend it.

These short strictures may serve to give us a general Idea of the nature and extent of this virtue of prudence. But to have a more full and distinct notion of it, it will be necessary to mention some of its general principles, or specify several instances of it, that are applicable both to the civil and religious Life, in order to shew its vast importance

tance in both. These will discover to us the various instances of folly that abound in the World, which I shall take notice of, as I proceed, for our caution. And

1. One of the first Principles of prudence is, for a man to secure his most important Interest first. Now in order to this three things are necessary.

1. To know what his most important Interest is ;

2. By what means it may be secured ;

3. A steady perseverance in the use of those means.

A deficiency in any one of these will defeat our End. For if a man doth not know wherein his true interest consists ; or if he knows it, does not know the means to attain it ; or if he does, will not use those means, it is impossible he should attain his end, if his true interest be what he aims at.

Now in this view how much folly appears to abound in the world ! Many mistake their true interest, and pursue that for it which is not only alien from, but opposite to it : as worldly and wicked men who seek their chief happiness from outward pleasures and animal gratifications. Others who know

SERM.
IV.

their true interest, mistake the means to secure it: as the superstitious man, who seeks to obtain the favour of GOD and final happiness, by means which have nothing of Religion in them. Others who know that the way to happiness is only by an habitual practice of Religion and Virtue, yet continue all their lives in the neglect of it: as Formalists and Hypocrites.

2. Prudence always directs us to dispatch the most important Business first. When we are urged and pressed by a multiplicity of affairs, and only one can be minded at a time, we should always begin with that which is most necessary: that whatever happens to be neglected or omitted, *that* may not. This is a good rule, applicable to our worldly affairs; and with equal propriety to our spiritual. Our most important Business every day, is doubtless the worship of GOD; or to pay the devotion of our hearts to the Author of our Being. With this then should every day begin; and with the same should it end. And if the Beginning and End of every day be sacred to GOD, it will have a very happy influence on the intermediate transactions of it.

By

Of Prudence.

85

SERM.

IV.

By this Principle of Prudence we detect another very fruitful source of folly, among the multitude who live without God in the world; and look upon their earthly affairs as what claim their first and chief concern.

3. *A prudent man looks well to his going.* (i. e.) Not only attends the Duties of his character and station with circumspection, but looks forward to the consequences of things; and particularly of the Conduct which he stately allows himself in: and not only to the immediate, but the remote consequences of his actions: not only to the certain, but probable consequences. O, how much mischief and misery might be avoided or prevented, by attending only to this single principle of prudence! for what are most of the calamities we see in the world owing to but this; that men will not look before them? will not look far enough before them; and model and govern their lives, by a steady view to the final Issue! To the want of this wise foresight *Moses* attributed all the rebellions and enormities of the Jewish people: and therefore breathed forth this ardent prayer on their behalf; O,

SERM. *that they were wise, that they understood this,*
 IV. *that they would consider their latter end (c).*

4. Another universal principle of Prudence is this, ever to prefer the dictates of Reason to those of Appetite. Or in other words, when Inclination and Fancy draw one way, and Judgment and Conscience another (as we too often find they do) steadily to pursue the Lead of the latter. This contrast of Inclination to Conscience, or this rebellion of Appetite against Reason, arises purely from the depravation of our nature, and is a standing monument of it. Were our minds under no moral Obliquity, we should have no bias to draw us out of the right way of Duty: but the dictates of Inclination and Judgment would be the same; would direct both one way; and that always the right. But as the contrary is too apparently the case, it is now become the most indispensable part of Prudence, to keep a constant guard over our Appetites and Inclinations; that we be not by an irregular, excessive, or unseasonable indulgence of them, drawn aside into transgression. And, O, what guilt and wretchedness do we see
 abound

abound among those men, who will not permit their Reason to lay the due restraint on Appetite !

5. Prudence teaches us to keep out of the way of Temptation. Because such is the inequality between the corrupt and virtuous principle in our heart, or such the disparity between the strength of our spiritual Enemies and our own, that it is much safer to decline than hazard a Battle. How many Sins and Follies arise from the contrary instance of imprudence ! from persons rushing secure and defenceless into the most dangerous temptations, and to the utmost verge of what they think is lawful ! when, perhaps, their corrupt imaginations may have already removed the Bounds of virtue far into the Borders of vice. Whereas it is always prudent to keep at a distance from, and to avoid the very appearance of Evil : *least the good we have, be evil spoken of.*

6. Another very important principle of Prudence is, meekly to bear with the mistakes, infirmities, and misconduct of others. Innumerable mischiefs arise from a sower, rigid, narrow, and censorious spirit : which discovers much Ignorance, more Malevolence,

SERM.

IV.

lence, but most Pride; and excites endless Animofities, and Discontent among those whose hearts ought to be *perfectly knit together in Love*. There is more prudence and virtue in Charity, and more folly and fin in a bigotted condemning temper than many are aware of: which evidently appears from the consequences of both. A prudent man will neither give nor take unnecessary offence. A Fool is ever full of confidence and conceit; and while he is blind to his own mistakes and failings, gives no quarter to those of others. I shall mention but one principle of Prudence more (viz.)

Lastly. To attend to the true nature of things, separate from their false appearances; and to proportion our regards to their intrinsic Importance. This is a universal Rule, and of most extensive influence; and to the neglect of it we may trace up almost all the Follies and absurdities that abound in the World. Men take up with false notions of things, and that engages them in wrong pursuits. And the reason their Judgments are so often imposed upon is, they either receive their Notions at second hand from others, or from the first outward and superficial

ficial appearance of things, or under the biaſs of paſſion, intereſt, or cuſtom; without taking the pains to examine into their true nature and conſequences. And hence it is that we are ſo apt to over-value earthly things, and under-rate thoſe that are eternal: only becauſe we ſee almoſt every body elſe do the ſame; and becauſe theſe things are preſent and ſubject to our ſenſes, but eternal things future and inviſible; and have nothing but their own undoubted importance to attract and engage our attention. But the importance of them is ſo great, that it is not only Imprudence, but the height of Madneſs to neglect and diſregard them.

He then that would *look well to his goings*, muſt be regularly influenced, and ſteadily governed, by theſe principles and rules of Prudence. Which when once wrought into a uniform Habit and Practice, will be of more eſſential ſervice to us than the moſt perfect acquaintance with the whole circle of Sciences without them.

II. I am now to lay before you the importance of this Virtue, both in the ſocial and religious character; or ſhew you the influence

SERM.
IV.

influence it hath both in the civil and spiritual Life.

1. In civil life. And here we find it diffuses a most happy and extensive influence. For

1. It renders a man, tho' of small abilities, one of the most useful and respectable Members of Society : while others of greater parts, for want of common prudence, become the bane and mischief of it. And, indeed, the more talents a proud and foolish man hath, the more harm he is capable of doing by the prostitution of them. There is not a worse Member of Society than a man of learning, wealth, and power, who hath no Prudence to direct those Talents to any useful purpose ; but a bad heart, that prompts him to pervert them to the injury of himself and others. This we have sometimes seen ourselves, and often read of. Unless Prudence have the direction of all our powers, our Passions will ; under whose guidance, they will soon grow as wild and rampant as themselves.

Whereas on the other hand, Prudence not only turns our Passions out of their precedence

cedence (for their place is to go behind and not before) but takes the Lead of them: and, like a General at the head of his Army, only calls them in as her troops, to enforce and vigorously execute the measures she has wisely concerted.

SERM.
IV.

Prudence first puts a man upon considering, in what manner he may be most useful in that station of life he is in; and how he may best employ the Powers he hath (be they more or less) to his own advantage, and the good of others. And thus by a wise and right application of a few Talents, he does much more good in the World, and becomes a more valuable member of Society, than another who hath much greater Abilities, but either neglects or misapplies them. Besides

2. Prudence is necessary to the successful management of our secular affairs. Providence indeed presides over all; and sometimes disappoints the Hopes of the most wise and industrious: but in general, it is the prudent man whose circumstances are the most comfortable: because Prudence leads him to all those methods which are most conducive to render them so; as diligence, frugality,

SERM.
IV.



frugality, caution, honesty, and the most valuable friendships; while an imprudent man, who is in the best way of raising an Estate, oftentimes either by Idleness, or Luxury, or Dissipation, or Rashness, or forfeiting his Credit by low dishonest Arts, is soon reduced to infamy and distress. A man must be a great stranger to the world, who has not often seen these principles verified in the practices of men, and in the consequences of their different Conduct.

3. A temper and conduct habitually govern'd by Prudence, greatly contributes to a man's Credit, Reputation, and Influence in life. It conciliates the Esteem and Confidence of others, and procures and establishes the most valuable and lasting Friendships. To such a one no man is an open Enemy, but at the expence of his own Judgment and Character. And though a man of prudence may sometimes be the Butt of envy and malevolence, yet the Shafts which are aimed at him (especially if very near and with a vigorous hand) rebound back in the face of him that throws them. Integrity, that seven-fold shield, defends his heart against all the pointed artillery of undeserved Abuse

Abuse and Defamation, much better than all the brags that impudence and self-conceit can oppose to them. *This* may perhaps for the present turn them aside, *that* perpetually repels them: *this* may sometimes blunt, *that* always breaks them.

4. A Life habitually governed by the rules of Prudence, is a source of perpetual Peace and Self-enjoyment. *A good man* (says Solomon) *is satisfied from himself*, (d) i. e. he finds a spring of secret satisfaction in his own mind, from the approbation of his own Conscience. And this is never more sensibly experienced, than under some adverse occurrence in Life, which unavoidably befalls him. He hath no additional pain in reflecting that he brought this evil upon himself; but the satisfaction to think, that though the most prudent conduct could not prevent it, yet a steady and undeviating Prudence may greatly alleviate the weight, and shorten the continuance of it: or however, that in this way he is sure that *that* Providence which sent it, will secure to him a happy Issue of it; or if he takes care that
it

(d) Prov. xiv. 14.

SERM.

IV.

it does him no harm, *that* will take care it shall do him much good.

Lastly. The Importance of this Virtue in the social Life, appears from the many inconveniencies and miseries which it prevents; and which every day beset a course of Imprudence, Dissipation and Folly. The unhappy consequences of a dissolute and un-governed conduct are innumerable, and often fatal: and none more than this, that it stupifies the understanding, and renders the Sinner insensible of his misery. Many a fair character and fair estate have been ruined, not only by a course of flagitious Iniquity, but by a train of those lesser follies called Imprudencies; which in their effects are no less detrimental to our worldly Interests. *e. g.* a prevailing propensity to vain and expensive pleasures, to Show and Equipage, or indulging to elegance of Taste in domestick life, beyond what our fortunes will support; launching out into a larger compass of Business, than our capacities, substance, or time will permit us to manage as it should be; inconsiderately giving large Credit to persons of suspected Characters; laying our selves under Bonds and Engagements for
others

others unnecessarily ; keeping bad Company ; continued negligence in accounts and oeconomy ; Indolence, and neglecting to improve Opportunities ; entering into dangerous and ensnaring Connexions in the younger part of Life ; and especially into the most close and intimate connexion and relation for Life, precipitantly, inconsiderately, and contrary to the advice of Friends : a wrong step, which we often see draws after it a long train of Miseries, not to be removed but by the hand of Death. Now all these evils and calamities, which are the necessary effects of these and such like follies and indiscretions, Prudence intirely prevents ; and not only so, but secures the contrary Blessings : which evidently shows of how much importance and influence it is, in the Social and Civil Life. But

2. Its importance is not less in the religious Life ; but much greater. For

1. Nothing dishonours Religion more than the want of it. O, how much hath Christianity suffer'd through the imprudence of its most forward and zealous Professors ! To go about to enumerate the several sorts of imprudences, whereby many who make high

SERM.

IV.

high pretensions to Religion vilify and dishonour it, would be to betray the very foible I condemn. For its appearances are as various, and its kinds as numerous as those of vice itself; from which it differs only in degree.

Without taking notice of those indiscretions of Conduct, by which Christians often injure the Religion they profess, I shall here only remark some of those Mistakes which they rashly and imprudently imbibe; whereby they often discredit Religion while they seek to promote it. *e. g.* It is great imprudence to pay a religious regard to things that have nothing of Religion in them; as human Ceremonies, external Rites of worship, particular modes of Dress, or some peculiar Terms and Phrases; the least deviation from which (though of no divine authority) is deemed by some a mark of impiety.—It is imprudent for a man to be so zealously attached to any particular scheme of Doctrines, as to disaffect, and censoriously condemn as Hereticks and unsound Christians, all those who do not believe them in the same sense, nor express the same zeal for them as he does: and especially if those
notions

notions are dark, deep, and mystical ; and have no tendency to direct the Life, or mend the Heart : and more especially, if they be of a dangerous nature ; may easily be mistaken and abused, and often have been so, to the great dishonour of GOD and the subversion of all Religion.

SERM.
IV.

Again, it is imprudent to lay a great stress upon little things. Because the Zeal that thus runs waste, is commonly wanted in matters of the highest Importance.

It is imprudent to prefer the means of Religion before the end ; and much more, to make the use of the means a plea to justify the neglect of the end : as they do, who because they diligently attend the outward exercises of Religion, think they are more excusable in the neglect of their moral Conduct.

Again, it is very imprudent (to say no worse) to make Religion an Engine of Covetousness, or a Stalking-horse to earthly Preferment. It is very imprudent to pay a greater regard to the authority of men than to that of Christ ; to chuse to be called by other names than his ; to found a religious Doctrine or Sentiment on one particular

SERM.

IV.



passage or two of Scripture, without comparing it with the general Tenor of Scripture; to be most positive in matters that are most dark and doubtful; and finally, to lay a greater stress on a right Faith than a holy Life.

These are all great imprudences; the Imputation of which we see many Christians inadvertently incur: whereby they greatly hurt the true interest of Religion, while they think to promote it; and at once grieve its Friends, and gratify its Enemies. But

2. Prudence as much adorns and recommends Religion, as Imprudence exposes it. Prudence presents it in all its native purity, efficacy and loveliness: makes a solid, regular, wise, consistent Christian: keeps every thing in right order, and due bounds: views them in their true light; adjusts the proper weight, surveys the whole extent, and attends to the natural Consequences of things; examines the original foundation of those Doctrines that are recommended as the objects of religious Faith; and so far as it sees them bear the stamp of divine authority, and the evident marks of high

high importance, it forms them into the temper of the mind, and the habit of Life; so far as it sees them to be matter of doubt and immaterial speculation, it treats them with a candid indifference; and so far as it sees them to be without authority, and of pernicious tendency, it rejects them with a determinate but charitable Resolution; abhorring the bad tendency and consequences of the Doctrines, while it makes the most kind and christian apology and allowance for those who are deceived by them.

And above all things, a prudent man will take care that the innocence and usefulness of his Life may have a practical influence on all, in favour of the Faith he professes. So much does Prudence adorn and recommend a Religious Character. Besides

3. Prudence is necessary not only to examine the foundation of every Doctrine, but to regulate every Virtue in Religion: without which, either by the unseasonable exercise, or an ostentatious display, or the excessive rigor of them, they would change their nature and become sinful; religious Zeal degenerate into malignant Fury; Humility into Meanness; Self-denial into un-

SERM.
IV.



necessary Austerities; Piety into Superstition; Faith into Fancy; Love of Truth into Libertinism; Charity into Licentiousness; Moderation into Lukewarmness; and Orthodoxy into Bigotry. And by this means not only give others a bad impression of those Virtues, but a favourable Opinion of the Vices that are concealed under the show of them: and thus lead some men to put good for evil, and tempt others to pursue evil for good. O, how much confusion hath been introduced into religious Schemes and Characters by these means! and all for want of a careful discernment or a little common Prudence.

Lastly. The importance of Prudence in Religion appears further from hence, that it not only strips off all the Disguises, but defends and fortifies the Foundation of it: guards every Pass by which its enemies may approach to the attack; and while it wards off, (by the solid shield of Faith) every weapon that is aim'd against it, by a strong rebound from evident fact and reason, it throws them back on the head of the Assailants; retires to the Fort, planted with the Artillery of Truth, to which the most furious
 Enemies

Of Prudence.

101

Enemies of Christianity are always fearful of making their approach. So that however they may triumph in the demolition of some new erected Outworks, they always find the Citadel impregnable—Of such vast importance is Prudence to the interest of Religion.

SERM.
IV.

And now to conclude with a few general Reflections. How happy were it if Piety and Prudence always went together! But, alas, how often do we see them separated! Meekness and Wisdom, Piety and Prudence, good sense and a serious spirit, Grace and Discretion, the *wisdom of the serpent* and the *innocence of the Dove*, united, form a most amiable Character indeed. But too often we have the mortification to see the Friends of religion, by great Indiscretions and Errors either in judgment or practice, do a greater injury to it than all its most avowed and open Enemies.

Let us henceforth learn then to lay a greater stress upon this part of the Christian temper than we hitherto have done. The beneficial effects of it, which have now been mention'd, are sufficient to recommend it to

SERM.
IV.

our Esteem and Practice; especially when compared with those of the contrary Character, as above specified.

And don't let us think that it is a matter of mere morality that hath now been recommended to us. It is one of the most amiable and essential branches of the Christian Temper: of which our blessed Lord and Master hath set us the most illustrious Example, in his life and character: and which, as his Disciples, we are bound to imitate.

The conspicuous lustre of this virtue in the Messiah's Conduct, was the subject of antient Prophecy; *Isa. lii. 13. My servant shall deal prudently.* And how many instances of his prudent and inoffensive, regular, and exact deportment, could I easily collect from the History of his life!—Once, to prevent giving offence, he wrought a miracle (e). When the most artful snares were laid for him by his subtle enemies the *Pharisees*, how often, by his wise and prudent answers, did he extricate himself to the confusion of his Adversaries, and the
admi-

(e) Mat. xvii. 27:

admiration of all! He never took nor gave unreasonable Offence. And when a just occasion of offence was once given by the rashness of one of his Disciples, he wrought a Miracle to prevent the bad effects of it: I mean the case and cure of *Malchus*. With how much patience and prudence did he bear with the weakness, petulance, and prejudice of his Disciples! with the cavils and insults of his Enemies! resolutely asserting the cause of Right and Truth, in the face of its most violent opposers: but with a meekness and gentleness, humility, constancy, resolution and wisdom, that daunted all their courage, or defeated all their craft. And finally, with what inimitable prudence and patience did he behave, under all the rude and inhuman indignities that were offered him, during his last Trial and Condemnation! Every action of his Life was a perfect conformity to all the rules of Reason, Truth, and Decency.

Thus he ordered his temper and conduct invariably, under every circumstance of Life; and thus he requires us to order ours. Let us *be followers of him then as*

*Of Prudence.*SERM.
IV.

dear Children, and walk with wisdom ; order our affairs with discretion ; look well to our goings ; prudently attend to the true nature and final issue of things : and thus shall we adorn Religion, and walk worthy of the holy name with which we are called.

The H Y M N.

I.

Father of lights, conduct my feet
Thro' life's dark, dangerous road ;
And, O, let every step still bring
Me nearer to my G O D.

II.

Let Heaven-ey'd *Prudence* be my guide,
And, when I go astray,
Recall my feet from folly's path,
Into a better way.

III.

Teach me thro' every various scene
To keep my end in view ;
And whilst I tread life's mazy track
Let wisdom be my clue.

IV. *That*

Of Prudence.

105

SERM.

IV.



IV.

That Wisdom which is from above
Abundantly impart ;
And let it guard, and guide, and warm,
And penetrate my heart ;

V.

Till it shall lead me to thy self,
Fountain of Bliss and Love :
And all my darkness be dispers'd
In endless light above.



S E R-



S E R M O N V.

Of CHRISTIAN FORTITUDE.



I COR. XVI. 13.

*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit
you like men, be strong.*

SERM.
V.

WHAT the Apostle recommends to us in the *latter* part of this verse, is christian Fortitude ; as necessary to that Vigilance and Stedfastness which he commands in the *former*. *Fortitude* then is that part of the christian temper to which we are this day to apply our attention : the *nature* and *necessity* whereof I shall now endeavour distinctly to lay before you.

I. Let us consider the true *nature* of christian Fortitude ; under the following particulars.

I. For-

1. Fortitude properly signifies a Strength of mind. So its Etymology imports ; and so it is expressed in the Text, *be strong*. When rightly governed and directed, it shews a great and manly spirit. When opposed to Lukewarmness, it is called Zeal : when opposed to Fear, Valour : and when opposed to Cowardice, Courage. It is a magnanimity or Greatness of mind, that dares to meet any danger and encounter any difficulty, at the Call of Conscience, Honour and Duty.

2. Fortitude is one of the greatest of all the military Virtues. And was in so high Esteem among the old *Romans* (a military people) that the same word with them expresses both Virtue and Valour. And as every Christian is in a militant state, and hath many spiritual Enemies to conflict with, Fortitude therefore stands in the foremost rank among the christian Virtues.

3. Fortitude is commonly divided into *active* and *passive*. The former consists in boldly attempting any great and good Design, and undauntedly persevering in the prosecution of it, through all opposition and ;
obstruct-

SERM: obstructions: the latter consists in suffering, with an equal and composed mind, the afflictions, pains, and trials that befall us, and patiently sustaining the Labour and Trouble we may meet with therein.

V.

Active Fortitude is called *Valour*; passive Fortitude, *Patience*: but as they equally discover a great and noble mind, they both go under the common name of *Magnanimity*:

4. Christian Fortitude is essentially different from a natural Courage. It is quite another thing; hath different Objects, and arises from different Principles. We often see a great deal of the one, where there is not the least Symptom of the other. Many, who were naturally of the most weak and timorous Spirits, have undauntedly despised the greatest dangers and sufferings, nay, even Death itself, in the cause of GOD and a good Conscience; when men of much natural courage, have not been able to stand the lowest sneer and ridicule, for the sake of Truth and Virtue.

5. Christian Fortitude is greatly assisted and supported by Faith. Faith, by fixing the

the



the Souls eye on heavenly and eternal things, and giving it a strong View of GOD and Glory, inspires it with Life and Strength and Spirit, to break down every Impediment, and rush through every danger, that intercepts her way to it What mighty Atchievements have been performed by the Fortitude of Faith, and how well it sustained the antient Worthies and Martyrs, under all the tortures inflicted upon them by their persecuting Enemies, see the catalogue of those Worthies given us by the Apostle *Heb. xi. who through faith subdued Kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the army of aliens: women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting the offered deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection.*

6. Fortitude, like every other Virtue, unless it be directed and governed by Prudence and Wisdom, loses its quality, and degenerates into a hurtful and mischievous Disposition. For unless it be kept under
the

SERM.

V.



the guard and conduct of Reason, it will be employed in a bad cause, or be carried to excess. In the former case, it is not Fortitude but Folly; and in the latter it is not true Valour but Rashness. Active Fortitude in a bold and enterprising mind (like that Zeal by which it is inspired) is of a fierce, and fiery nature; and if not tempered by the milder Virtues of Meekness, Peace, and Prudence, is apt to run into excesses that produce all the bad effects of Bigottry, and a blind ungoverned Passion.

Lastly. We hence see wherein a true christian Fortitude is characteristically distinguished, not only from a natural courage, but from that true Valour which is a mere moral Virtue. True Valour, as a moral Virtue, is different from a natural Courage, or mere mechanical Instinct, as it is always calm, composed and sedate; and neither fears nor despises the danger it is going to meet: but a christian Fortitude hath not only these properties, which distinguishes a virtuous Valour from a natural Courage, but moreover it is excited by greater Motives, governed by higher views, and animated with nobler Principles: not to say, that

Of Christian Fortitude.

III

SERM.

V.



that the Objects of it are more excellent and arduous, than those that ever put mere human Courage to its utmost proof. For it is more noble to vanquish inveterate habits of Sin, than to overthrow an hostile Host; more difficult to subdue our Corruptions, than to conquer Kingdoms; and indeed impossible, without the concurrence of Divine Auxiliaries. *He that is slow to anger* (says Solomon) *is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a City* (d). Better, that is, he is the better man, the greater Hero of the two.

These Hints may suffice to give you a right notion of that Christian Fortitude, which I am now about to recommend to you; from

II. The next thing I am to lay before you: viz. its vast *Importance* and extensive *Usefulness* in the Christian Life.

Now, the necessity and importance of this will plainly appear if we consider, that our present state is a state of warfare, in
which

(d) Prov. xvi. 32.

SERM.

V.

which the Subtilty and Policy of our Enemies require all our Vigilance ; their Implacability and Obstinacy demand all our Constancy and Perseverance ; and their Numbers and Strength call for all our Resolution, Self-denial, and unremitted Labour. But unless our Souls are armed and nerved with this christian grace of Fortitude, neither our Vigilance, Perseverance, nor Resolution can be durable or effectual.

1. It is necessary to a constant Vigilance. No less necessary than *this* is to our safety : for without the help of this christian Virtue of Fortitude, we shall soon grow weary of watching ; shall sleep on our Guard, and give our spiritual enemies all the advantage over us they can desire. It is an Instruction of vast importance, and enforced with a consideration of no less weight, which the Apostle *Peter* gives us *1 Pet. v. 8. be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.* Sobriety is mention'd first, as that which is indispensibly necessary to Vigilance. And that christian Fortitude is no less so appears from the verse where my text is: *watch ye* (says the Apostle)

stand

Of Christian Fortitude.

113

SERM.

V.

Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Where the last Duty is mentioned, not as resulting from, but as necessary to the former: for all our watchfulness will avail nothing, unless we have Courage to oppose the difficulties and dangers which our Vigilance detects. — And then

2. It is no less necessary to our Perseverance; or steadfastness in the faith. *Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men be strong.* Without Perseverance, a steady uniform Perseverance, in the use of those means which are most proper to attain any end proposed, we shall certainly fail of it. And if that end be distant and important, and the means to attain it difficult, much Courage, Patience and Fortitude are requisite; without which it can never be secured.

Now the chief end we all profess to aim at, is the greatest and most important that can be; nothing less than eternal Life, or everlasting Happiness when we quit this World. This end lies at a distance, and for that reason it is too often out of sight; and our way to it encumbered and embarrassed with many difficulties: some of the means necessary to attain it are very opposite to the Bent of our

SERM.

V.

natural Inclinations ; and therefore without this christian magnanimity we shall be discouraged, give out, and at once lose all our past Labour and future Hopes. It is in a *Patient continuance in well doing*, that we must seek for *Glory, Honour, and Immortality*, and a well established Hope of *eternal Life*

When I treated lately of *Patience*, you may remember I mentioned this steady perseverance in Duty among the instances of *passive* Courage ; but as it not only implies quietly bearing the troubles and difficulties we may meet with therein, but a vigorous effort of the mind to surmount them, it may with equal propriety be considered as an instance of *active* Fortitude : for those difficulties must not only be sustain'd but conquered, in order to a successful Perseverance.

(*Lastly*) The importance of this christian virtue of Fortitude, Resolution and Self-command will further appear, if we consider how necessary it is to the exercise of that Self-denial which Christ indispensably requires of all his Disciples. *If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me.* And though we have not so
much

much to fear from the avowed Enemies of our Christian profession as his first Disciples had, and are in no danger of being called to the same kind of Trials as they were, yet we have enemies of another nature that frequently beset us, and stick close to us ; which render all our self-denying Fortitude equally necessary. I mean our corrupt Habits, irregular Passions, sinful Appetites, and sensual Inclinations ; which not only call for all our Vigilance to detect, but all our Fortitude to oppose them.

A Christian's Life is not a life of Ease and Self-indulgence. A State of Warfare, Pilgrimage, Discipline, Education, and Trial, requires much resolution, self-denial, and fortitude : and such are the representations which the Scripture gives us of the Christian's life in this World. Were Religion only a matter of outward Form or external Service, it were no very hard matter : though even this cannot in some circumstances be complied with, without some self-denial, or putting a kind of force on our inclinations to attend the calls of Duty : but as it is an inward as well as an outward thing, and consists in the government of

SERM.
V.

the whole inward man, our thoughts, affections, dispositions and desires, it is a more extensive and important Business, and attended with greater difficulty, and calls for much more self-discipline, than persons who are addicted to a superficial way of thinking in this matter are able to conceive.

Thus much may serve for a general account of the Importance of this Christian grace of Fortitude. But as we commonly have a more clear and distinct view of a Subject by descending to particulars, it may be proper therefore to specify some cases, wherein this Virtue will be of the most essential service to us; or when the exercise of it becomes in a peculiar manner necessary. And

I. When we are called, by the providence of GOD, to any Duty wherein we foresee, or imagine we foresee, some particular difficulty or danger. I say, *imagine we foresee*; for there is hardly any case wherein the Imagination is more ready to deceive us than in this: either by mustering up Difficulties and Dangers that have no existence at all but in our own Fancy; or by magnifying those that are real, to an enormous degree.



gree. But the truth and bottom of the matter is, it is the corruption and carnality of our own wicked Hearts that set the imagination thus at work, to deter and dissuade us from a compliance with the directions of GOD and Conscience. This therefore we should remember, when we find any such indisposition and disinclination to a plain and positive Duty; and be assured, that whatever our Imaginations may suggest, the Difficulty is not near so great as it now appears: and this we seldom fail to find, upon resolutely setting about it.*

Cowardice and Timidity in this case, and an easy yielding to the dictates of Fancy and Inclination, will throw us into the greatest danger of making *shipwreck of a good Conscience*: and when once we have done that, the difficulty of purging it of the guilt we have contracted, in order to recover our inward peace, will be much greater than what was requisite to keep our Conscience clear. When we find ourselves then at any time

I 3

under

* *The wise and active conquer difficulties*

By daring to attempt them: sloth and folly

Shiver and shrink at sight of toil and danger;

And make the Impossibility they fear. ROWE.

SERM.

V.

under these double and contrary attractions of Inclination and Conscience, let us summon up all our courage, and say; 'The Duty to which I find my self so averse, is necessary and important: were it not so, my corrupt heart would not be so strongly set against it. It is the command of God, and must be done: and in his name and grace I will immediately set about it.' This will immediately break the spell, and rid us of our embarrassment: and in the Issue we always find, that the difficulty of any Duty, is more than recompensed by the pleasure of reflecting on the conscientious performance of it.

2. We stand in great need of Faith and christian Fortitude in an hour of Temptation; and in resisting those solicitations to sin which we often meet with from within, and from without.

Many such shall we meet with from within: from our own corrupt and evil-disposed Hearts; from the irregular workings of our passions, thoughts, and appetites: a strong propension to Vanity and Folly; or a criminal indisposition to Duty; and a proneness to Self-indulgence in both. For when

we

we are sensible of the danger and evil of them, it requires no small Self-denial and Resolution to conquer them.

SERM.

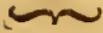
V.



And many more we shall meet with from the vain and sinful world we live in ; where we every day see the most wide and exorbitant deviations from the christian Rules, both in Life and Temper, Faith and Practice : and those who are most chargeable with them, to be most unconcerned about them, and most regardless of the consequence. And of this number we often see men of Birth, distinguished Parts, and Learning ; whose example hath the worst influence on their inferiors and dependants. And nothing is more infectious than evil examples, and especially to younger minds ; and more especially when daily set before their Eyes, by Persons who are superior to them in authority and station ; and perhaps dear to them by nature and friendship. — To resist such a Temptation, and in opposition to it, to persist stedfastly and uniformly in the paths of Virtue and Piety, in conformity to the christian Precepts, as laid down by Christ and his inspired Apostles, in Faith, Practice and Worship, what a strong con-

SERM.

V.



viction of truth and right, what a vast force and stability of mind does this require! which without the concurrence of a divine power, can never be exerted or maintain'd: and yet, unless it be, and this Tide of evil examples be stemm'd, we shall be carried down the Torrent of the general degeneracy, into the Ocean of everlasting misery and perdition.

It requires much christian Fortitude then to oppose the influence of evil examples; but much more to give a just and seasonable Reproof to those who set them: a duty which we are sometimes indispensably called to, and which it requires the greatest delicacy of Address and Wisdom, as well as Fortitude of mind, to execute with success. From the danger and difficulty of which Duty, we shall be strongly tempted to neglect it: especially when the persons we are called to reprove, appear not sensible that they deserve any Reproof; and by looking upon their Conduct and Temper in a different light from what we do, are far from thinking there is any harm in either. But to proceed

3. We shall have need of much Faith and Fortitude, in asserting and maintaining the important Truths, and genuine Spirit of Christianity, in a day when they are both so generally neglected or mistaken. When the plain important Doctrines of our holy Religion are boldly attacked and disavowed by some, and miserably perverted and disguised by others: when Infidels make a mock of our profession, and Bigots and Enthusiasts expose it, by a furious Zeal for the most unscriptural and dangerous notions; placing them in the same rank of importance with the most essential and fundamental parts of Christianity: and whilst others, shocked and chagrined at the appearance and consequence of such unchristian and unhallowed contentions about little things, degenerate into the utmost Indifference and Lukewarmness about the greatest: while some who have proper notions of the christian Faith, have none at all of the christian Spirit; and others are right in neither, who think themselves possessed of both:— in such a state of things (I say) when all are most confident of their own Tenets, and most assured of their own Way, what is to be

SERM.

V.



be

SERM.

V.

be done? but resolutely and firmly to adhere to the word of GOD in opposition to them all: take *that* for our only Test and Standard, and absolutely determine to form our Faith, Temper and Practice by that only; with humble prayer for, and dependance upon, divine illumination and strength; though we should incur the censure and condemnation of the whole World thereby. That this is right, that this is reasonable, every Christian allows, and Conscience demands it. But we must not only approve, but practise it; not only admit but dare to do it. And this, it must be owned, requires no small Firmness and Fortitude of mind. But without it, I do not see how we can keep our conscience clear.

Unreasonable singularity is without all doubt contemptible. But a resolute singularity, in defence of the plain important principles of Truth and Righteousness is necessary; and when necessary, is true christian *Heroism*.

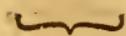
4. Christian Fortitude is in a special manner necessary in a time of Persecution. For this may possibly be the effect of exerting our zeal and steadfastness in the manner,
and

and upon the occasion before mentioned. So that one instance of Magnanimity, from the opposition it encounters, may sometimes create the necessity of a greater. Blessed be God this is a trial of christian Fortitude that we are at present in no apparent danger of. But though we are not like to be Confessors or Martyrs for the cause of Christianity, as the primitive Christians were, yet we may possibly fall into Company, where our determined adherence to Conscience, Truth and Religion, may be construed as an unreasonable and affected preciseness; and expose us to hard Censures, if not to Obloquy, Contempt and Ridicule. In such a situation (if our conscience acquit us of all indiscreet warmth and weakness) we should summon all our christian Courage, and with an Apostolick spirit of Martyrdom say, *It is a small matter to be judged of mens judgment, he that judgeth me is the Lord:* and account the shame we endure for the cause of Christ and his Gospel, our truest Glory.

When the Fear of man is like to unfit us for, or divert us from any plain important Duty, let us call to mind that nervous expostulation of the Prophet, *Who art thou that*

SERM.

V.



that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as Grass? and forgettest the Lord thy Maker; who stretched out the Heavens, and laid the foundation of the Earth (o).

Lastly, The time when we shall stand in the greatest need of all our christian Faith and Fortitude, is in the near approach of Death: when we stand trembling on the fatal Precipice, about to leap into the dark Gulf, unknowing what is beyond it: only that it is a world of Spirits, where our state is fixed for Eternity, and from whence we shall never return. The very Thought makes us shudder at a distance. What will it do, when but a few hours intercept this and the eternal World! No Fortitude but that of the Christian, and no christian Fortitude but that which is founded on a strong and lively Faith, in the gracious promises and discoveries of the Gospel, can give the Soul a rational Repose, and Self-possession then.

Thus have I endeavoured to open to you the true Nature, Extent, and Importance,
of

(o) Isa. li. 11. 12.

of this part of the Christian temper: a Resolution, Strength, and Firmness of mind, in stedfastly adhering at all times to the necessary and essential parts of the Christian Faith and Practice; in opposition to every thing that tends to discourage us in, or seduce us from it.

I shall now conclude with laying before you a few Motives, which may at once serve to excite us to, and assist us in the Exercise of it.

I. Let us consider how good a Cause we have. It is the cause of GOD we are called to stand up for; and he stands by to see in what manner we maintain it. Let us then *acquit ourselves like men, and be strong*. It is for our immortal Souls that we fight, against spiritual Wickednesses, and the powers of Hell which seek to ruin them. It is for an immortal Crown, *an eternal weight of Glory*, that we contend; and what demands the utmost efforts of our Zeal, Strength, Resolution and Magnanimity if this does not? Shall earthly Heroes readily submit to hardships, mortifications, and self-discipline, for the sake of a little temporal Honour and popular Fame; and shall we be afraid
to

SERM.

V.



to undergo much less for the sake of heavenly Recompences, and eternal Glory? *they do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, we an incorruptible (o).*

2. In a cause so just and glorious, we are strengthened by a divine power; furnished with all-sufficient grace. God himself is ever near at hand to help us; and to do for us *exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think*; and supported by such an almighty auxiliary, what enemy have we to fear? for infinitely stronger is he that is for us, than all those that are against us.

When the LORD devolved the Government and Conduct of the *Israelites* upon *Joshua*, after the death of *Moses*, he repeated and earnestly inculcated upon him the exercise of this Virtue which I am now recommending; and urged it by the very Motive I am now mentioning; (*viz.*) the assurance of his almighty Presence and Help. *Josh. i. 5, 6. As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Therefore be strong, and of good Courage, verse 7. only be thou strong, and very couragious; that thou*

(o) 1 Cor. ix. 25.

thou mayest observe to do according to all the Law which Moses my Servant commanded thee. SERM.
V.

Again ver. 9. have I not commanded thee? be strong, and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee, whither soever thou goest.

Besides,

3. Resolution and Fortitude in a good cause soon lessen those Difficulties, which to sloth and folly appear unsurmountable; and easily conquer those Enemies, which to indolence and cowardice seem invincible. As Fear turns mole-hills into mountains, Fortitude turns mountains into mole-hills; and as much diminishes the difficulty, as the other magnifies it.

It is always the property of little minds to misrepresent things according to their fears and fancies; to dread imaginary Evils as real, and possible ones as certain: whereas true Wisdom, Faith and Fortitude take a timely precaution against the Evil they foresee as probable; and thus prepared, boldly proceed to prevent or conquer it: by which means it either disappears, or is soon vanquished. For as we have often a greater pleasure in the expectation of a temporal
Good

SERM.
V.

Good than in the enjoyment, so we often feel a greater pain in the apprehension of a temporal Evil than in bearing it. Just the reverse is the nature of eternal Good and Evil: the pleasures of Heaven will infinitely transcend all the faints most exalted Hopes, and the pains of Hell the sinners greatest Fears.

Lastly, To excite our Fortitude in the cause and religion of Christ, let us set his great Example always before our eyes. O, what pains and perseverance did he endure in all his *Labours of love* for us! with what a well-govern'd wise and steady Zeal, did he stem the Torrent of vice, hypocrisy, and wickedness, that abounded in the age in which he appeared! In his whole Conduct how well was tempered the fortitude of the Lion with the meekness of the Lamb! Though he never gave unnecessary offence to any, yet he was not afraid to give the greatest, even to his most implacable Enemies, when the cause of Truth and Righteousness called him to expose the Hypocrisy and Villainy of the Scribes and Pharisees: which he laid open without reserve; and addressed the most pungent Reproofs to their

Con-

Consciences, with undismayed fidelity and freedom. He met, encountred and conquered all the powers of Hell, armed with infernal virulence and vengeance to oppose the salutary Designs he came into the World for; and triumphed over them, *leading captivity captive.*

SERM.
V.



And are we not his Followers? listed in the same service, and called to fight in the same cause? Let us then *endure Hardness as the good Soldiers of Jesus Christ*; and under his Banner, with the same Fortitude, *fight the good Fight of Faith*; and through him we shall ere long be *more than Conquerors, and receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.*

The H Y M N.

I.

Courage, my Soul; whilst GOD is near
What Enemy hast thou to fear?
How canst thou want a sure defence,
Whose refuge is omnipotence?

II.

Tho' thickest dangers croud my path,
 To terrify my feeble faith ;
 My feeble faith on God relies,
 And all those dangers still defies.

III.

Tho' billows after billows roul
 To overwhelm my sinking soul,
 Firm as a rock my soul shall stand,
 Upheld by an almighty hand

IV.

And when in death's dark vale I tread
 ' With gloomy horrors over-spread,
 ' My steadfast heart shall fear no ill,
 ' For thou, O Lord, art with me still.'

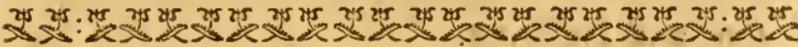
V.

Still shall thy presence be my aid,
 Guide me safe thro' the horrid shade,
 Chace all my rising fears away,
 And turn my darkness into day.



S E R M O N VI.

Of S E L F - G O V E R N M E N T .



P R O V . vi . 23 .

Keep thy Heart with all diligence.

THE last and most extensive of all the human Virtues is *Self-government* : which includes in it all the rest that are not comprehended in those I have before described ; as Self-denial, Chastity, Moderation, Meekness, Temperance, and the like : all which are but so many modes or regular acts of Self-government.

This is the plain Import of the Words I have read : for *to keep the heart with all diligence*, is carefully to observe and regulate all that passes in it, and springs from it ; in which the proper Government of our selves doth consist.

SERM.
VI.



SERM.

VI.

By self-government I mean, such a Command over our *Thoughts, Appetites, and Passions*, as to be able to repell, restrain, and subdue, those that are evil and hurtful ; and to retain, indulge and improve those that are good and useful : or in other words, to bring them all into subjection to Conscience, Reason, and Religion.

I shall speak to each of these distinctly.

I. The Government of our Thoughts.

In this there is more of Religion than most men conceive. And perhaps there cannot be a more certain mark that the Fear of God prevails in our heart than this, that we make conscience of our Thoughts. Because tho' they are hid from the world, yet we know they are all as manifest and open to his Eye as our most publick Actions are to the Eyes of men. And therefore the Fear of God can be the only motive to guard them.

It would be to little purpose, I apprehend, to trace out the source of those secret imaginations which so often steal imperceptibly into the heart, and which we are so apt to harbour there, before we consider whether

we

we ought or no. It will be more for our advantage, to be distinctly inform'd, what those Thoughts are (from whatever quarter they come) which ought to be immediately repell'd or rejected; and what are those which are to be carefully retain'd and improv'd (*d*). And

1. Let us consider what those Thoughts are which, as soon they enter, ought to be immediately dismiss'd. Of this kind are

(1.) All those Thoughts which give the mind unnecessary Pain and discomposure. I say, *unnecessary* Pain; because there are some painful and uneasy Thoughts, that are not only lawful, but beneficial; and improveable to pious purposes. For instance, the reflections of a guilty conscience, and the remembrance of our past sins, whether of omission or commission. These sentiments, tho' painful, are by no means to be stifled, but by all means to be indulg'd at certain seasons, to renew our repentance and keep us humble in our own Eyes. But those Thoughts which excite in the mind a needless disquietude ought not to be admitted,

K 3

much

(*d*) Vid. Treatise on *Self-Knowledge*, Part 1. Chap. 14. and *Seed's Discourses*, Vol. I. *Serm.* ix.

much less retain'd. This single Rule will be found to be of more service to the tranquillity of the mind than we can well imagine, and for want of a due attention to it, many persons for no cause become the most miserable Self-tormentors.

(2.) All sinful Thoughts, whether pleasing or painful, are to be immediately banish'd, as soon as they intrude.

Some of these the mind is apt to indulge for the sake of that false and vicious pleasure they give it for a moment; but which leave bad impressions behind, and cherish a criminal disposition in the heart.

Of this kind are all malevolent Thoughts against those that have injured us: which only serve to foment a vindictive temper, and prompt us to retort the Injury: than which, nothing can be more repugnant to the meek, forgiving spirit of the Gospel.

Of the same kind also are all impure and lascivious Thoughts; which deeply taint and pollute the mind, and are often followed by very shameful and pernicious consequences (c).

Such

(c) The mind is passive in receiving its notices of things, & whether pure or impure, but it is active in its Determination whether to harbour or discard them. As far as it is Passive,

Such also are all vain and extravagant conceits of our own worth and importance, and the deference we conceive due to our Rank and Character : which only inflate the mind, and blow up that Pride which naturally swells the human heart.

Now these and such like Imaginations, tho' they bring with them a degree of pleasure for the present, yet appear in their nature and consequences to be evidently sinful, and therefore ought to be immediately suppress'd.

But there are other kind of Thoughts no less unlawful, that bring with them as much pain as those I have just mention'd do pleasure : which, nevertheless, by a strange obliquity of heart, we are equally prone to cherish. — Such are all angry and resentful Thoughts, which fret and chafe the mind; envious Thoughts, which canker and corrode the heart; anxious and fearful

K 4

Thoughts,

‘ it is entirely innocent ; as far as it is active, it is accountable : and it certainly is active when we dwell upon impure thoughts with complacency ; when we strengthen our selves in wickedness, by cherishing the remembrance of past guilty Joys, and laying scenes in our imaginations for the entertainment of future pleasures.’

Seed's Discourses, Vol. I. p. 238.

SERM.
IV.

Thoughts, which perplex and terrify the spirit; melancholy and desponding Thoughts, which darken and deject the soul; and peevish, discontented Thoughts, which vex and harrass the inner man. — All such imaginations are to be forthwith expell'd on a double account: not only because they are painful, but absolutely sinful; and equally pernicious both to Body and Mind. But

2. Not only all wicked but all impertinent, trifling and chimerical Thoughts are to be kept out of the heart as much as possible. For these two reasons,

Because they keep out better; and are unworthy a rational creature. For such wild reveries differ nothing from waking dreams: and shew that *Reason*, the (*ηγημονικη* as the Antients call'd it, the) President or ruling Power, is absent or dormant; whose office it is to eject all such impertinent Intruders. And

Because if the mind once gets such a Habit of trifling, it will be apt to indulge it at the most improper times; I mean the seasons of Devotion, when it ought to be the most seriously and intently engaged.

Vain Thoughts are too apt to steal into the best minds (God knows) when they ought to be better employ'd; but they will only lodge in the hearts of fools. The wise and pious will chase them away, as soon as they enter. And the more we accustom our selves to exercise this authority over them whenever they intrude, with the more ease shall we be able to repel them when they are most unseasonable and sinful.

Well, these are the Thoughts we should carefully guard against and reject. But

2. There are others which we should endeavour with equal care to retain, cherish and improve. Which are the reverse of those before mention'd. *e. g.*

1. Any pleasing and agreeable sentiment may be admitted, provided it be pure, just, innocent and seasonable. For if there be no just reason why it should be discarded, this single consideration, that it gives us an innocent pleasure, is a sufficient reason why it ought to be retain'd. Because it keeps the mind in good humour; and gives it a sociable, friendly and benevolent disposition. But

2. We

SERM.

VI.

2. We should take more especial care to retain our best Thoughts; such as relate to GOD, to our Souls, to Heaven, and the way to Happiness upon the Gospel Scheme. To which we may add moral Reflections, and the most useful rules of life. These kind of sentiments, I say, we should take more especial care to cherish and improve; because they directly tend to mend our spirits and make the heart better. And by the concurrent influences of the holy Spirit (of whose gracious motions these holy Thoughts are the genuine effects) they often become of more real use to us than a Sermon. And to furnish the mind with a good store of such useful Thoughts, as subjects of future meditation, it would be proper to lay up in our memories, the most striking and important sentiments that occur to us in reading the sacred scriptures, or any other good book; and keep them by us, as Food for the Soul, or matter for the mind to ruminate upon at leisure.

Lastly. Every useful and instructive Thought should not only be recollected, but retain'd, revolv'd and improv'd. That is, when they are seasonable: for some useful Thoughts,

Thoughts, when they are unseasonable, are impertinent and disallowable.

SERM.
VI.

I shall conclude this branch of the subject with two reflections.

1. This part of Self-government is of greater importance, because it has a greater effect upon the temper of our spirits, than is generally imagin'd. We commonly say, that *Thoughts are free*. By which we are only to understand that they are free from human cognizance. For if we mean, that we are free to entertain what Thoughts we will, and that we are not accountable for them at the Bar of G O D, 'tis a great mistake; for the word of G O D expressly tells us that the very *thought of foolishness is sin* (a); and that our secret Thoughts shall be brought into Judgment (b). And even a pagan Writer observes, that *whoever indulgeth the thought of any secret wickedness in his heart, is in a degree actually guilty of it* (c).

2. How usefully may a person, who has learn'd this happy art of commanding his own

(a) Prov. xxiv. 9. (b) Eccl. xii. 14.

(c) Nam seclus intra se tacitum qui cogitat ullum
Facti crimen habet. JUVENAL.

SERM.
VI.

own Thoughts, fill up all his leisure time! and enrich himself by gathering up these precious sands which so often run to waste! He will then not only never want Company or Business (for he may say with that great Roman General, *Scipio Africanus*, that *he is never less alone than when alone*) but he will never want the best Company. For we attain to true Wisdom much sooner by recollecting and digesting our old notions by Meditation, than by acquiring new ones by Conversation. And besides, by thus revolving and improving our most serious Thoughts, we invite God himself to be of our company; who never denies his presence to those who are thus prepar'd for it. But to proceed

II. Self-government not only implies a right Command of our Thoughts, but also a just regulation of our Appetites and Inclinations.

There are no Appetites or Desires in the human nature but what are subservient to some good end. This is certain, because the wise Author of it does nothing in vain.

We

Of Self-Government.

141

SERM.

VI.

We have no appetites then, purely natural, but what may be indulg'd at certain times, and to a certain degree. But as such gratifications are always attended with a sensible pleasure, mankind are apt to indulge to that pleasure too far, or to suffer their passion for it to rise too high. And here lies their danger.

And let it be observ'd, that this is true not only with respect to sensitive entertainments, but also those of Imagination, Speculation and Science: and any pleasure whatever, to which the mind is carried by a strong and prevalent propensity (excepting that which arises from Religion and Virtue) may become a snare to us, and lead us into folly and transgression: that is, if those appetites or inclinations are suffer'd to rise too high, or are indulg'd unseasonably, or to excess.—Let us attend to these particulars with a little more precision. And

1. Our natural Appetites (whatever they be, or however lawful in themselves) are in danger of leading us into temptation, when they become too *violent* and ungovernable. Because our Desires when they once become disproportionable to their Object, not only exceed

SERM.
VI.

exceed the Bounds of reason, (which is in itself unlawful) but hurry us on to an unreasonable or excessive gratification of them; which is much more so.

Beside, this intemperate appetite or inordinate love for any earthly object, when unrestrain'd, powerfully draws off the heart from GOD: and permits it to usurp that place there which ought to be sacred to him. And therefore 'tis properly called Idolatry. Whatever we love more than GOD, that is our Idol. And the guilt of this Idolatry is in proportion to the tendency of its object to sensualize the mind, and alienate it from spiritual, divine and heavenly things.

It is of vast consequence therefore to the life of Religion, to be frequently looking into our Hearts; to see what it is that bears the chief sway there; what appetites and inclinations most predominate; what are our habitual and strongest attachments; and in what manner they operate: for if these be not vigilantly guarded, they will soon deceive and seduce us before we are aware. And to correct these violent and irregular propensions in their first motions, is the best way to prevent those hurtful effects which they

they will in time, if not check'd, never fail to produce. This is laying the Axe at the Root of the tree; before it produce those bitter fruits, which, like sweet poison, are not more palatable than pernicious. But

2. Our Appetites and Inclinations may become criminal, not only when they are in themselves too strong and impetuous, but when they are improperly or *unseasonably* gratified. And this may sometimes happen through the surprize of a Temptation, even when they are not of themselves over vehement. Tho' it must be own'd that in general the stronger they are, the more apt they are to be thus abused.

The improper or unseasonable indulgence of any appetite, tho' in itself ever so innocent, I say, is sinful. Take an instance of this in one of the most laudable inclinations of the mind; a Love of Literature: or a desire to furnish the mind with the knowledge of Books and Facts, and the Characters of men and times, antient and modern; to search into the secret springs and laws, in order to explain the operations, of nature; and the like. If we have leisure, ability, health and opportunity to pursue these
Studies

SERM.
VI.

Studies with success, 'tis commendable; and will add an ornament to our character. But if we prosecute them to the neglect of our proper and necessary Business, or to the detriment of our Health and Circumstances; or at those seasons that are sacred to more serious and important Employments, then the indulgence of that Inclination (laudable as it is in itself) becomes criminal.

And not only that which is innocent and commendable; but that which is in itself a Duty, by being unseasonable, becomes unlawful. So necessary is it to lay a restriction upon some of our better inclinations, at certain times, and in some circumstances: which is a very considerable branch of Self-government. But

3. Our greatest danger commonly arises from the *excessive* Indulgence of our appetites. Be they ever so innocent, or the gratification of them ever so seasonable, yet if this be carried to an immoderate degree, it becomes sinful. And hence some are more prone to offend in those things which are lawful, than others are in those which are not so.

This

This branch of Self-government comprehends the virtues of Temperance, Sobriety and Moderation. For an inordinate or excessive gratification of animal appetites, is a transgression of those Bounds which these virtues prescribe. Those Bounds indeed 'tis no easy matter precisely to ascertain: because the constitutions and capacities of men are so different, that *that* may be an excess in one man which is not so in another. But for a general Rule perhaps this may be as good as any; that whatever gratification of our animal appetites is carried beyond its proper end, and especially if it subvert or defeat the end for which 'tis allow'd, that gratification exceeds the Bounds of Temperance, and therefore, in proportion as it does so, is unlawful. And of this nature itself gives us a fair warning, by taking away from the pleasure of the gratification, in proportion to the approach we make to Excess; in which there is no pleasure at all.

I shall conclude my Thoughts on this branch of Self-government with one observation of no less importance than any thing that hath been said upon it: and that is, that the same care is requisite to regulate

SERM.
VI.

our Aversions, as to rectify our Propensions; because the former are no less apt to seduce us than the latter: and in the same way too; that is, by being unreasonable, unseasonable, or immoderate. And therefore a constant vigilance to guard, examine and discipline these, is equally necessary to the right regulation of the Heart.

III. The last great branch of Self-government consists in the due discipline of the Passions.

The Passions are the most blind and servile, and yet the most imperious and impetuous of all our Powers. They are of excellent service when kept under the Command of Reason, but extremely mischievous when they refuse its Reins. They are in the human mind, what the sails are in a Ship; which carry it with greater speed the right or wrong way, according to the direction it is under. This shews how requisite it is, that they who have strong passions should have a solid Judgment to direct them: which, however, is what we seldom see go together. And hence it is that Zeal
(which



{which is nothing but a warm and passionate attachment to certain points and practices relative to Religion) has often such pernicious effects; and does just so much harm under a wrong direction, as it would do good under a right one.

The Passions are usually divided into Pairs, and join'd with their Opposites. As Love and Hatred, Joy and Sorrow, Hope and Fear, Contempt and Esteem, and the like: and every Passion when it grows violent, is best subdued by playing its opposite against it.

In every constitution there is one passion that bears the chief sway; commonly called the *ruling passion*; which exciting some prevailing appetite or inclination, distinguishes every one's particular character and temper: and being natural, is extremely hard to be regulated, when it becomes excessive. And from this source arises every man's constitutional Iniquity, or *the sin that most easily besets him*.

In some, the passions rise too high; in others, they sink too low. Both have their Inconveniencies; but the former the greatest. *That* is the happiest temper in which the

SERM.
VI.

passions are well mixt and equally poised: because they are then most easily manag'd.

As there is no Appetite, so there is no Passion, planted in our nature, but what has it's Use; is in itself lawful, and may be made subservient to excellent purposes. If it were not so, the all-wise author of our Being would never have suffer'd them to have had any place in our composition; who at first made and pronounced all things *good*. However, the unhappy effects of our original Apostacy, perhaps, are no where more visible than in the wild disorder it has introduced into these inflammable Powers of our mind.

The due Government of the passions consists in two things.

1. In fixing them on right Objects. 2. In keeping them within proper Bounds: or adjusting their degree to the Importance of those Objects. Persons of a passionate complexion are prone to offend in both these respects: and 'tis no less sinful and dangerous to set the affections inordinately on a right Object, than to let them fix upon a wrong one. I know but of one exception to this Rule. Our Esteem for the supreme Good,

Good, and our Fear of the greatest Evil, are capable of no excess. That is, we cannot love God or hate Sin too much.

SERM.

VI.

Of all the Passions perhaps the least manageable is Wrath, or intemperate Anger: especially when seated in a mind naturally cholerick, and inflam'd by a constitutional Pride. Hence it has by way of eminence obtain'd the name of *Passion*: a conquest over which, *Solomon* tells us is a mark of the truest Heroism; *he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city (i)*. And the dreadful effects of the predominance of this passion are elsewhere describ'd by an image similar to this; *he that hath no Rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls (k)*: that is, weak, defenceless, and expos'd to every Insult and Injury. And thus the very thing a proud and passionate man is most afraid of, he lays himself most liable to.

To keep these turbulent powers of our nature in due order, the best way that I know of is — first, to find out our ruling passion, and put a double Guard on that:

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because

(i) Prov. xvi. 32.

(k) Prov. 25. 21,

SERM.

VI.



because all the other follow its Lead. And when we have thus taken the fore Horse by the Head, the rest will of course be quiet.—The next Rule is to keep clear of that Company and those Occasions, that we have found by experience are apt to excite our most dangerous passions. This is *Solomon's* Advice, *make no Friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul* (1). A fiery-temper'd man, both for his own sake and that of others, should keep but little company.—To this we must add, a constant guard upon our spirit; and a frequent inspection into our Hearts.—Summon one Passion to curb the violence of another: for being thus mixt and counterpois'd, they become more temperate.—Converse chiefly with those persons who excell in that temper in which you are most defective.—Keep in view the best Examples for your Guide and Pattern: and especially that of our great Lord and Master; who of this as well as every other instance of Self-government, hath left us a perfect example, and an express Command *to walk in his steps*.

(1) Prov. xxii. 24, 25.

Of Self-Government.

151

SERM.

VI.

Steps. — And to all we must add humble, fervent, frequent Prayer to the father of our spirits, that by his Grace we may be enabled to govern them, to the peace of our minds, the honour of Religion, and the Glory of his Name.

So much for *Self-government*: the last and most extensive of all the Human Virtues.

I have now gone through the several Graces which form the first part of the Christian Temper: or those Dispositions we ought to preserve and cultivate with regard to our selves; commonly call'd the *Human Virtues*. Which I have compris'd under these six; *Humility, Contentment, Patience, Prudence, Fortitude, and Self-government*. The next I propose to explain are those which refer to GOD as their Object; and are therefore commonly call'd the *Divine Virtues*. Which are the Subjects of the six next Discourses.

Of Self-Government.

The H Y M N.

I.

O, thou whose scales the mountains weigh,
 Whose Will the raging seas obey,
 Whose word can turn those floods to flame,
 That flame to storm, that storm can tame ;

II.

Let all my passions ebb and flow
 At thy command, Great GOD, and know
 No other motive but thy praise,
 Whate'er those fiery ferments raise.

III.

Thou who canst raging winds controul,
 Subdue the rebel in my soul :
 Thou who canst calm the furious flood,
 Repress the tumults of my blood.

IV.

With equal mind may I sustain,
 My lot of pleasure, or of pain ;
 My joys and sorrows gently flow,
 Nor rise too high, nor sink too low.

V. Let

V.

Let but thy grace my powers controul,
And reign unrival'd in my soul,
Then, with whatever storms oppress,
Center'd in thee she is at rest.

VI.

O, when shall my unwavering mind
This sweetest self-possession find!
Fountain of Love, I long to see
In thee my peace, my Heaven in thee!





S E R M O N VII.

The Knowledge of GOD the first principle of Piety.



J O H N xvii. 3.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true GOD, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

SERM.
VII.

WE are now entering upon the second branch of the Christian temper; which consists in the lively exercise of all those graces which have an immediate respect to GOD as their Object: and are therefore commonly called the *Divine Virtues*.

And here the first thing required of us is, *to know* the great Author of our existence. The Knowledge of GOD is the first principle

ple of Piety. — The Human Virtues have their foundation in our own nature; and arise from the consideration of our Make and Frame, as creatures of a complex substance, composed of body and mind; and from our circumstances in the present world, where we are surrounded with wants and pains, temptations, difficulties, and innumerable imperfections: the Divine Virtues are founded in, and result from, our relation to God, as the Author of our Being and Happiness; and from our dependance upon him for both.

Man is naturally an inquisitive creature, and loves to be prying and exploring into the reason and nature of things; even of those that do but little or not at all concern him: yet how rarely do we hear him express any desire to be acquainted with the most noble and interesting objects of his curiosity, *viz.* God and his own soul!

It is often mentioned in Scripture as the distinguishing character of the wicked, that they *know not* God; and *desire not the knowledge of his ways*; but *forget him*, and *live without him in the world*: that he is *not in all their thoughts*, seldom in any of them.

And

SERM.

VII.

And *Job* observes, that while they suffer under his hand, they enquire not after him; *they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty, yet none saith where is GOD my maker (a)?*

That I may treat this subject with as much clearness and brevity as the sublimity and importance of it will admit, I shall

I. Shew you wherein this saving knowledge of GOD and of Christ, mentioned in the text, doth consist.

II. Consider the happy effects of it; denoted by those words, *this is life eternal.*

I. I am to shew you wherein this saving Knowledge of GOD and Christ, mention'd in the text doth consist.

Now the Knowledge of GOD may be taken in three different views.

1. Absolutely; to signify an *adequate* and *perfect* knowledge of his nature and attributes: which is what no created Being is capable of. For *who can by searching find out GOD, who can find out the almighty unto*
per-

(a) *Job xxxv. 9, 10.*

the first principle of Piety.

157

SERM.

VII.

perfection? it is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the seas (b). We are so far from comprehending his Essence, that we do not so much as apprehend the manner of his Existence; which, as represented in his word, is a mystery too deep to be fathom'd by the line of any finite understanding. How can finite comprehend what is infinite? in this sense G O D only knows himself. And *his only begotten Son*, being eternally in the bosom of his Father, he hath declared him whom no man hath seen at any time (c).

2. There is a *just* and *right* Knowledge of G O D; which even we frail, imperfect creatures may, with proper helps and capacities, be enabled to acquire: which consists in decent and suitable conceptions of the glorious perfections of his nature, as discovered and represented to us in his word and works. And such a knowledge of G O D, even a wicked man of good parts and diligent application may attain, under the advantage of the Gospel Revelation; and be able

(b) Job xi. 7—9.

(c) John i. 18.

able to talk and write, with great propriety, truth and justice, on the Attributes of the Divine Being. But

3. Very different from and superior to this, there is an *inward influential* Knowledge of G O D ; or an intimate spiritual acquaintance with him, which unites the heart to him, and is the means of receiving the sweetest communications from him. Something like that friendly connexion and attachment, that is contracted by a similitude of taste and temper among men, and cemented by mutual intercourse and benefits ; which is the source of some of our most delightful entertainments on earth. For every one that thus knows GOD is a *Friend of GOD*. And this inward and spiritual acquaintance with him consists in, and is manifested by, a daily delight in him, a holy communion with him, living under a constant sense of him, and referring all our governing views to him.

1. One that hath this saving Knowledge of G O D *delights* in him. Delights to think of him, to contemplate his name in his works, in his ways, in his word, and in his Son : loves to draw nigh to him ; and deems

an absence from him (as *David* did) an insupportable burden. He rejoices at the return of those seasons when he is invited to meet his G O D, as the heart of a stranger does at the sight of a long absent Friend; saying with the pious *Psalmist*, *I will go unto the altar of GOD, unto GOD my exceeding joy. As the Hart panteth after the water brook, so panteth my soul after thee O GOD (d).*

And this delight in G O D is not like his earthly Delights, that still leave the heart unsatisfied and craving; but it sets the Soul at perfect rest. It derives from it the most substantial benefit, and real lasting good. It strengthens, as well as gladdens the heart; and gives it at once the firmest establishment, and the most exquisite consolation. All which is comprehended in those words of *Eliphaz*; *acquaint now thy self with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee (e).*

2. This saving Knowledge of G O D results from, and is improved by, a sensible and frequent *communion* with him. This communion with G O D, or the enjoyment of his special Presence (though the profane part of
the

(d) Psalm xlii. 1, 2.

(e) Job xxii. 21.

SERM.
VII.

the world know nothing of it, and therefore are disposed to deride it) is what all pious people feel to be the most comfortable reality. And indeed it is much better known by experience than description. We may form some Idea of it, by comparing it with that which nearly resembles it, tho' it falls infinitely short of it in the effects it produces; and that is, the free, mutual, open, and endearing intercourse there is between two intimate Friends; who have one heart, the same views, interests, designs and satisfactions; who cannot give themselves a greater pleasure than in pleasing each other. It is by such reciprocal good offices, and these mutual expressions and tokens of affection, that human Friendships are cultivated and maintained: and when they are founded in real esteem and similarity of temper, they are then most solid and inviolable. This communion with God then is kept up by a frequent holy converse with him in his word and ordinances, and by sensible communications of strength and comfort from him: which is one of the directest means to improve that spiritual acquaintance

acquaintance with him to which our text refers.

SERM.
VII.

3. This saving Knowledge of G O D implies that we live under a *constant sense* of him ; or a devout and serious acknowledgment of his Providence in every thing : that powerful Providence that sustains the material, and that wise Providence that governs the moral world. One that knows G O D takes delight to trace the footsteps of his Providence and Wisdom, in the operations of nature, and the occurrences of life ; which to a vain and thoughtless mind pass by unnoticed and disregarded : and learns many a pious instruction from those events, whether publick, private, domestick, or personal, which the generality of mankind pay no attention to, because they carry their views no further than the ordinary course of things. And here indeed lies the great difference between the man that knows G O D, and him that knows him not : the one views and adores him in every thing, the other sees and owns him in nothing ; the one lives as under his eye, the other imagines that G O D sees him not ; or acts as if he thought so : the language of his

SERM.
VII.

heart is, *how doth GOD know, is there know-
ledge in the most high (f).*

Lastly. He that hath a true Knowledge of GOD directs all his chief and governing regards to him. He will endeavour to keep well with his fellow Christians, as far as conscience and duty will admit; but of all things he is most concern'd to please and honour GOD. He not only speaks well of his name and ways, and pays him an external worship; but he readily obeys his will, and bows his soul in humble subjection to the authority of his word and government; and makes it his first and principal care, *to do the will of his Father which is in heaven.*

And as this steady, uniform, conscientious obedience to the Will and Commands of GOD, is what Hypocrites and formal Christians cannot endure, who are cheating themselves with the hopes of a nearer way to heaven, so they are very apt to join with the profane part of mankind in despising it; and, in opposition to the whole tenor of Scripture, disclaiming the necessity of it. But they who know GOD, have *better learn-
ed*

(f) Pſal. lxxiii. vi.

ed Christ: are better principled in the doctrines of the Gospel; and judge of their Knowledge of G O D by their readiness to obey him.

SERM.
VII.

I shall conclude this branch of the subject with observing, that all that hath here been said concerning the Knowledge of G O D, is equally applicable to the Knowledge of Christ, which is connected with it in the Text. A perfect and adequate Knowledge of his Divine nature, as the eternal Logos, ineffably united with, and proceeding from the Father; of his Incarnation, and the union of the divine and human nature in the complex Person of the God-man mediator, is incompatible to any finite Understanding. But there is a just and right Knowledge of him, as a divine Prophet sent of G O D to teach mankind his will; as a Mediator between G O D and man to introduce a new Covenant, better adapted to the state and circumstances of fallen creatures; and as a surety who offered himself as a propitiation for their sins; a knowledge of the several Characters he sustained, and offices he executed as our Redeemer which are represented and described in Scripture; such a

Knowledge of Christ, I say, is attainable; and may be attained under proper advantages even by wicked men. But that Knowledge of him which leads to eternal life, is something more inward, spiritual and practical: and, like the Knowledge of G O D, consists in a supreme Love to him, in delightful Communion with him, and Communications from him, an habitual impression of his authority over us, and of our dependance upon him; for strength and salvation; and an absolute devotedness of our Souls, and all we have, unto him. As all this is comprehended in that saving Faith in him which the Gospel requires, and is the very Soul and Spirit that makes that Faith vital, so it is the essence of that Knowledge of him which leads to Life eternal.

II. Let us now consider what are the effects of this Knowledge; or what we are to understand by that expression, *this is Life eternal.*

Now this inward and efficacious Knowledge of God and *Christ*, which I have endeavour'd to represent to you, is called *Life eternal,*



eternal, because it is the Principle and Earnest of it, it fits us for it, and conducts us to it; and is the source of all the Happiness which that Expression denotes.

I. This spiritual and influential Knowledge of God and *Christ* is called *Life eternal*, because it is the Principle and Earnest of it. It is heaven begun in the Soul. This heart-felt communion and acquaintance with our Maker and Redeemer, is a sure mark of the most gracious and holy Disposition of mind. And Grace is Glory in its first Principle: as sure a pledge of the heavenly Bliss, as the living seed or springing corn is, of the ensuing crop. And when it rises to any considerable degree, it is the very temper of heaven; and a foretaste of that Joy which felicitates the inhabitants of that blessed world. For, O, what rapture results from a clear, unclouded contemplation of the divine excellence! from a free influx and communication of Light and Love and Joy from him! from a constant sense and uninterrupted impress of his Perfections! and from an unrestrained, absolute, and entire devotedness of our hearts to him, as our only end; undistracted by any other

SERM.
VII.

objects! This is what we can never expect to enjoy in this world; where we meet with so many things that are competitors with him for our hearts; and while these hearts are unhappily so much inclined to those his Rivals. But so far as this Rivalship is conquer'd, and our purified understanding discerns the beauty of Divine excellence, and our affections are directed by its dictates, so far are we proficient in this saving Knowledge of GOD, and have an inward Earnest and Pledge of *eternal Life*. But

2. The Knowledge of GOD and of *Christ* is called *Life eternal*, because it fits us for it; and is our proper qualification for all that happiness that is denoted by this expression. *Eternal Life* is the word by which all the felicity of the heavenly world is usually express'd in Scripture. Now wherein does that felicity consist, but in the vision and fruition of the ever blessed GOD? i. e. in seeing and enjoying him. And what do those terms import? but the full satisfaction and joy the blessed Soul feels in the immediate presence of GOD; and in receiving the most plentiful communications of light, and strength, and comfort from him. And how
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can that Person be capable of this, who has lived all his days ignorant of him, and at last dies with a heart alienated from him? But one who finds his chief delight in thinking and meditating on the attributes, ways, and word of GOD, and in communion with him; who lives under an habitual sense of him, devotes himself, and refers all his governing views to him, (such a one, I say,) hath a Soul already attempered to the business and bliss of Heaven. And when he goes out of this world he carries these holy dispositions with him as his passport for the regions of Glory. He hath placed all his happiness in GOD here, and therefore may be sure that GOD will be his happiness for ever. And this conscious assimilation to GOD, and habitual aptitude and congruity of temper to the Employments and Enjoyments of heaven, give the pious soul as full an assurance of it, as if he saw his own name written in the *Book of life*.

Which, by the way, shews how necessary this experimental knowledge of GOD, which consists in a daily communion with him, is, to establish the Christian's Hope at Death.

SERM.
VII.

And a better Hope he cannot have, than that which is thus established.

3. This Knowledge of GOD and *Christ* is called *Life eternal*, because it conducts to it. That is, not only directs and points out the right way to it, but guides, strengthens, and comforts us in that way. The right way to eternal Life, according to the tenor of the Christian Dispensation, may possibly be discerned by those who have no heart in good earnest to enter upon, and persevere in it: but that inward influential Knowledge of GOD and *Christ*, I have before described, not only shews us the true way to Life, but leads and guides us in it. And the same holy Spirit, who implanted this heavenly principle in the Soul, when we are at any time going astray (as we are too apt to do) recalls our wandering steps, by the outward means of his word and providence, and the inward operations of his grace, saying, *this is the way, walk ye in it.*

O, how great a satisfaction is it, to be assured that we are in the right way to heaven! that every day brings us nearer to everlasting rest! A comfort this, which none can enjoy but they who *know GOD.* And

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in proportion as this knowledge, so that comfort, increases. Whereas they who are unconcerned about this important point, and can produce no proof of this divine acquaintance with their Maker, must often feel a painful anxiety of heart when they reflect, that they are every day drawing nearer to Eternity, but know not whether it be to eternal happiness or eternal misery. And they whose hearts are totally estranged from God, and set against him, may be assured that their way leads, and that every day brings them nearer, to *eternal Death*.

4. This Knowledge of G O D and *Christ* is called *Life eternal*, because it is the source of all the happiness which that expression denotes. Thus we say, the presence of God is heaven. By which we mean, it is the fountain from whence flows all the happiness of the heavenly world. Could we conceive G O D to be absent from Heaven, Heaven itself would then be no longer a happy state. So were it possible for one who is a stranger to God to enter into heaven, he could not be happy there. He would pine away in the midst of Bliss: he would be uneasy in eternal rest: he would be
weary

SERM.
VII.

wearry of Paradiſe; and the pleaſure of it would give him pain. The reaſon is, becauſe the taſte and temper of his ſoul is not ſuited to the entertainments of the place. He hath no faculties to take in pleaſures ſo exquisite and refined: they are what he was always unuſed to, unfit for, and incapable of. They are all as unſuitable to his capacity and taſte, and therefore as far from contributing to his happineſs, as the delicacies of a royal Banquet are to that of a ſwine: and as inſipid and tedious, as the charms of ſcience are to the underſtanding of an Ideot.

Having thus particularly ſhewn you, what that Knowledge of God is that is intended in the Text, and in what reſpects it may be called *eternal Life*, I ſhall take up the remainder of your time in making ſome Reflections on this ſubject.

The Knowledge of God and *Chriſt* is the firſt principle of Piety; and the foundation of all the Virtues that flow from it. Hence we learn

1. That an Ignorance of God is the firſt principle of Impiety; and the foundation of all the wickedneſs that ſprings from thence.

This

the first principle of Piety.

171

SERM.

VII.

This is undeniable ; for he that knows not G O D, who is unmindful of his Maker and Redeemer, or *lives without G O D in the world*, is neither solicitous to please him, nor afraid to offend him. Having no inward principle of Gratitude to excite him to obedience, nor of holy Fear to restrain him from disobedience, he is not only exposed, but disposed to all manner of iniquity. Has nothing to counterballance his vicious propensions, or to be his guard and defence against the temptations he is daily beset with ; and is therefore an easy and willing Captive to the great enemy of Souls. This is the true source and original of that abounding wickedness, and of all those enormous deviations from the ways of Righteousness and Religion, which we see so common among the profane part of mankind. They never think of G O D, and therefore are unconcerned about their conduct, and the consequences of it : and foolishly imagine that he is as unmindful of them, as they are of him ; that he takes no more care of the honour of his Laws, than they do to conform their conduct to them. Had men but a right sense of G O D, and were they but
seriously

SERM.
VII.

seriously to think how pure and holy a Being he is, they would soon see what *an evil and bitter thing* it is to offend him; and tremble at the prospect of that danger they expose themselves to, by those sins which they now make a boast of. And as GOD and sin are the two greatest opposites in the Universe, men can never attain to a right sense of the one, till they come to a true knowledge of the other.

2. I observe, that a wilful and continued Ignorance of GOD is eternal Death; in the same sense in which a practical knowledge of him is eternal Life. That is, it is the principle and earnest of it; it fits men for, and leads them to it; and will be the source of all that misery which they suffer in the future world.

For how can it be otherwise? GOD is the sole Fountain of Bliss to the universe: from whence flow all those little streams of happiness, which, in various degrees and measures, refresh and felicitate the several parts of the moral world. Now to be cut off from all communication with this fountain of Bliss, what must be the consequence but barrenness, misery, and inevitable destruction?

tion? this must therefore necessarily be the case of those who, through the ignorance and wickedness of their hearts, are alienated from God. And what will be the dreadful Doom of such impious and refractory men, the Apostle tells us, in those words which contain the most terrible commination that is to be found in the whole Book of GOD, *2 Theff. i. 7, &c. The Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not GOD, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.* This dreadful threatning is denounced against them *who know not GOD, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:* which stand here as similar characters; or a description of the same sort of men. For as the Knowledge of God implies a willing obedience to the Gospel of Christ, so a practical and obstinate ignorance of him infers a wilful violation of all its holy Laws.

SERM.
VII.

3. We may learn, from what hath been said upon this Subject, what is the first spring or foundation of this fatal ignorance of G O D. It arises from a forgetfulness of him : and therefore they that *forget G O D* are in Scripture placed in the same rank with them that *know him not*. If a man seldom or never seriously thinks of G O D ; if the most awful Providences, and the most awakening Warnings excite no pious reflections in his mind ; if he avoids all opportunities and occasions of conversing with him in his works, and word, and ordinances ; he must of course live a stranger to his Maker all his days. Thus in their hearts the wicked say unto him, *depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*. To whom he will in his turn another day say, *depart from me I know you not*.

And how is it possible for a man to come to the Knowledge of that which he desires not to think of ; and avoids all opportunities of being acquainted with ? And this, we see, is actually the case and character of those *who live without G O D in the world*.—Poor creatures ! how will they live without him in the other world !—But

4. We



4. We hence also see what is the first spring of that saving Knowledge of G O D which we have now been describing. We must often think of him.—And can we turn our thoughts to a sublimer Subject?—think what he is in himself, what he is to us; what he is in *Jesus Christ*.

We should often contemplate him in his works and in his providences. And whatever we see, whatever we hear in the world (if the mind be piously disposed) may properly turn our thoughts to G O D; without whose power, this world had never been; without whose wisdom it had been a *Chaos* of confusion and darkness; and without whose providence, it would still be a scene of universal anarchy and desolation.

We should often converse with him in his Word, where we read the express characters and most lively descriptions of those attributes of unbounded Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, that are so perfectly exemplified in his Ways and Works. And we should often view and review the glories of his nature, as they shine amiably upon us in the face and person of *Jesus Christ* his Son;

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who is the brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his person.

And above all we must direct our daily and fervent Prayers to GOD, that he would teach us the true Knowledge of himself, and *Jesus Christ* his Son: that he who caused primæval light to shine out of darkness, would illuminate our dark minds with the rays of heavenly wisdom; *and shine into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD, in the face of Jesus Christ.* And thus shall we attain that saving Knowledge of GOD now, which will fit us for the everlasting enjoyment of him hereafter.

And now, is there any knowledge in the world comparable to this (a)? Is not all the knowledge in the world without this mere folly? miserable ignorance! Can we be content to live any longer destitute of this
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(a) How vast a difference is there between the Wisdom of a mortified pious man, enlighten'd from above; and the pompous Learning of a profound and studious Divine! That knowledge which is from above speaks its heavenly original by marvellous and noble effects; and works a greater Change in the man, a greater Improvement in profitable Knowledge, than all that comprehension which the best capacities and most indefatigable Industry can ever attain.

Tho. a Kemp. Book iii. ch. 36.

most necessary and important Knowledge? this first principle of Wisdom and Happiness? If we know not G O D, what will all our other knowledge avail us? If we know him, in that effectual saving manner now described, it matters not what we are ignorant of. They that thus know GOD will be found the wisest men at last. And let us always remember that it is only by this serious; humble, reverend, constant, practical regard to him, that we can ascertain to ourselves this true Knowledge of him. *Hereby do we KNOW that we know him, if we keep his Commandments.*

The H Y M N.

I.

Shine forth eternal source of light,
And make thy glories known;
Fill our enlarg'd adoring sight
With lustre all thine own.

II.

Vain are the charms, and faint the rays
The brightest creatures boast;
And all their grandeur and their praise
Are in thy presence lost.

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III. To

To know the author of our frame
Is our sublimest skill:
True science is to read thy name,
True life t' obey thy will.

IV.

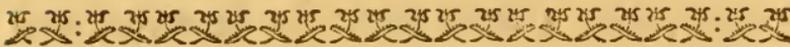
For this I long, for this I pray,
And following on pursue,
'Till visions of eternal day
Fix and compleat the view.





S E R M O N VIII.

Our Love to GOD.



M A T. xxii. 37.

----- *Thou shalt love the LORD thy
GOD with all thy heart, and with
all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

THE *Divine* Virtues, or those several
holy dispositions which we should
carefully cultivate towards GOD, are found-
ed in the perfections of his nature, and flow
from the relation we bear to him as his ra-
tional and dependent creatures.

SERM.
VIII.



If we know GOD, we know that he is a
most merciful, most righteous, and most
wise Being. Those dispositions in us which
correspond to these perfections in him, are

SERM.
VIII.

Love, and Fear, and Trust. And as reasonable creatures, for ever dependent on our Maker, we are bound to adore and serve him with all our rational capacities, and seek to him for all we want.

So that the *Divine* virtues, or the several leading Duties of piety, are these *fix*: to *know*, to *love*, to *fear* GOD; to *trust* in him, to *obey* him, and to keep up a constant communion with him by *Prayer*.

The first of these, the *Knowledge* of GOD, as the foundation of all the rest, was the subject of the preceding Discourse. And considered as a principle of piety, it consists not only in forming right sentiments of the perfections of GOD (which persons not animated with pious affections towards him may be able to do) but chiefly in the genuine effects of those sentiments; or an inward, influential, practical acquaintance with him: which alone will fit us for, and conduct us to, *eternal Life*.

Now when we set ourselves seriously to contemplate the nature, and review the perfections of the Divine Being, the first idea that offers itself to our minds, is that of his infinite *Goodness*. A perfection which shines
with

with super-eminent lustre in all his Works, and is distinguish'd with peculiar marks of glory in his Word. Answerable to this perfection in him, is that pious disposition of *Love* and *Gratitude* which it demands of us. SERM.
VIII.

A supreme *Love* to GOD then, as the second main branch of *Piety*, is the subject of the present Discourse. The words I have chosen for the foundation of it are an Answer to the question that was put to our Saviour by a certain Lawyer or jewish Doctor, who ask'd him, *which was the great or principal Commandment in the Law?* This was a subject much debated among the Rab- bies: some affirming it was the Law of Sa- crifice, others that of Circumcision, others that of the Sabbath. But our Lord, not willing to intermeddle in that Controversy, refers them to a Law which they had all forgot; and to the spirit of which they were utter strangers; namely, that of a pure, supreme, unrival'd Love to GOD their Maker.

This Law to which he refers them is found in *Deut. vi. 5. Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.* These

SERM.
VIII.

words vary from those of the text only in this; *viz.* that clause in the Law, *with all thy MIGHT*, is in the Gospel render'd, *with all thy MIND*. St. *Luke* retains both the expressions (*Luke x. 27.*) *thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind*. St. *Mark* has it just as it stands in *Deuteronomy*, (*Mark xii. 30.*) The proper force of each of these expressions I shall particularly enquire into by and by: and shall only further observe here, that our Saviour, in fixing upon this as the chief point in the Law, hath at the same time recommended it as the great command of the Gospel.

In treating this Subject, I propose

I. To make some brief observations on this affection of Love in general.

II. Consider what it more particularly denotes, when GOD is the immediate Object of it.

III. How

III. How we are to express our Love to him : or how we may know that we do indeed love him in the manner he requires.

I. I am to make some brief observations on this affection of Love in general.

Love is the most delightful, and at the same time the most complicated passion in the human nature. It may be divided into these *four* kinds.

1. A Love of Benevolence and Compassion. So we are to love all mankind : even the most unworthy and the most miserable. This in us, is call'd *Humanity* ; in G O D, *Philanthropy*. In this sense the G O D of mercy loves all his creatures ; and requires us to love our Enemies.

2. There is a love of Tendernefs and Instinct. So we love those in whom we see any thing agreeable and attractive, though much inferior to us in age and understanding. Thus Parents love their infant offspring : this is commonly call'd *natural affection*.

SERM.
VIII.



3. There is a love of Complacency or rational Delight : founded not only on what is in itself excellent and agreeable, but on a certain similarity and agreement of taste, temper and disposition. Thus we love our Friends : and so G O D loves all good men ; who bear his holy image, and whose will is entirely conform'd to his.

Lastly. There is a love of Reverence, Gratitude and Esteem, such as children bear to their parents ; or an ingenuous person to his superior friend and benefactor. This love in the highest degree we owe to G O D, and is that virtue which the text so emphatically recommends.

These, you may easily perceive, are different sensations of the mind, tho' in our language are all comprehended under the common appellation of Love. But

II. Let us now more particularly consider, what we are to understand by this affection, when the great G O D is the immediate object of it.

It consists, as I have just observ'd, in the highest Reverence, Gratitude, and Esteem.—

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The highest *Reverence*, as he is our Father; the former of our body, and the parent of our immortal mind: and continues and preserves *both* in being, by his power and at his pleasure.— We owe him likewise our highest *Gratitude*; because he is a most indulgent parent to us; our constant, kind and ever-present friend.— And he is finally the object of our superlative *Esteem*; as the source and centre of all possible excellence: the source from whence all goodness flows, and the centre in whom all perfections meet.

And this supreme Reverence, Gratitude, and Esteem, which are due to the ever-blessed God, and in which our Love to him doth consist, must be exercis'd and express'd by all the faculties and powers of our minds, and every capacity of our rational nature: or as it is in the text, *with all our heart, and with all our Soul, and with all our mind.*

1. We are required to love the Lord our God *with all our heart.* The Heart is put for the seat of the affections, and as such it denotes the intenseness and ardor of our Love to God; as also the sincerity and supremacy of it. Other things we are allow'd to love,

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SERM.
VIII.

in a subordinate degree, with the same kind of Love which we owe to God in the highest. That is, we may and ought to reverence our earthly parents, and superiors, shew our selves grateful to our friends and benefactors, and esteem whatsoever is excellent and praiseworthy: but though he permit us to pay them these honourable regards, he will not admit them to be his Rivals in our heart. Our *supreme* Reverence, Gratitude, and Esteem, are due to him alone: and the Love we bear to our dearest friends on earth, should bear no comparison with that which we owe to our almighty Father and dear Redeemer in heaven: because there is no comparison between the Objects. To this purpose, see our Lord's own express words, *Mat. x. 37*; and more strongly, *Luke xiv. 26*.

2. We are commanded to love the Lord our God, not only with all our Heart, but *with all our Soul*. The original word ($\psiυχη$) properly signifies the principle of animal Life; and figuratively the seat of Appetite or Desire. This expression therefore, being added to the former, shews, that our reverence and gratitude for the ever-blessed God, must not only be sincere, supreme and unrivall'd,

rivall'd, but attended with the most earnest Desire to please and enjoy him. It is an essential property of Love, to wish to please and enjoy it's object; but when GOD is the Object, that Desire must be, like himself, supreme and unparallel'd.

3. We are required to love the Lord our GOD, not only with all our heart and soul, but *with all our Mind*. What we are to understand by this expression, we learn from *St. Mark* in the parallel passage (*Mark xii. 30*); where, when our Saviour had told the Lawyer (who is there called one of the Scribes) that the first and great Command was, *thou shalt love the Lord thy GOD, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*, the Scribe replied; *Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one GOD, and none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the UNDERSTANDING, is more than all whole Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices*. So that by that expression *with all thy Mind*, this Scribe took our Saviour's meaning to be, *with all thy UNDERSTANDING*. And so indeed the original word properly signifies. This implies then, that our reason

SERM.
VIII.



son and judgment should lead the affection: or that we should employ all our rational, inquisitive and intellectual powers in the study and contemplation of the Divine perfections, in order to attain a better Knowledge of GOD: and the more we know him, the more we shall love him.

Lastly, St. Mark adds, in the place just now cited, *with all thy might*, or with all *thy strength*. And so it is in the Law, (*Lev. vi. 5.*) from whence this passage is taken. By which we are to understand in general, that all our active powers, both of body and mind, are to be employed in his service; as a proper testimony of this our supreme and undiffembled Love to him.

Such are the reverential, grateful, and honourable regards, that are due from us and every rational creature in the universe, to our common Lord and Maker.—

III. The next and principal thing I propos'd was, to consider how we are to express our Love to GOD; or how we may know that we do indeed love him in the manner he requires.

As this is a matter of very great and serious concern, I shall endeavour to proceed in it with all the caution and perspicuity the importance of it requires.

SERM.
VIII.

And as some may doubt whether they love GOD at all; and others who have some good hope they do, yet doubt whether they love him in that superlative manner the text requires; I shall therefore speak to each of these cases distinctly.

I. How must we know that our love to GOD is real?

I answer, the same way by which we know our Love to our Friends is so.—We shew our Love to *them*, by endeavouring to render ourselves agreeable to them; by delighting to do what we know will please them; and avoiding what we apprehend to be offensive to them; by serving their Interest; entering into their Views; and by keeping up a free and intimate Intercourse with them. If in the same manner we shew our Love to GOD, we may be sure it is sincere.

Do we desire to render our selves agreeable to him? This can only be done by endeavouring to be like him; by imitating his moral perfections. It is natural for every thing



thing to love its likeness. If therefore we bear the impression of the Divine Image, we may be sure that we are the objects of the Divine Love; and if our great concern be, to be more like to God, we may be sure that he is the chief object of ours.

Again, do we delight to do his Will?—With what readiness do we execute the Orders of one we love! not only because they proceed from his regard to us, but give us an opportunity of testifying ours to him.

And the same Love that prompts to a ready compliance with every thing that is pleasing to its object, will equally restrain from whatever is offensive to it. And therefore, a constant and conscientious care to avoid all Sin, because we know it is displeasing to God, is a no less certain testimony of our Love to him, than a ready obedience to his positive Commands. We may safely judge then of our Love to God, by our Hatred of, and care to avoid, whatever offends him.

Again, intimate friends have not only the same heart, but the same views, aims, interest and ends. Truth and Righteousness are the great ends which we see God is carrying

rying on in the world, by his spiritual ministrations and providential government; as most subservient to his Glory and the Happiness of his creatures: if then we heartily concur with him in this grand Design, we shew our selves the Friends of GOD, and prove the sincerity of our Love to him.

SERM.
VIII.

Finally, Friends delight to converse together; to keep up a free and intimate intercourse with each other. A long absence gives them pain; which they endeavour to alleviate by a punctual Correspondence.—Let us try our Love to GOD by this Test. Do we long to enjoy his presence? love to wait upon him in his ordinances? and earnestly desire (as *David* did) to see the out-goings of GOD in his sanctuary? to converse with him by faith and prayer; and hear him speak to our souls by his word and Spirit? Is this our chief joy, and most delightful entertainment, as it was that of the pious *Psalmist*? And do we love to meditate the Divine perfections, not only at the stated seasons of worship, but at other times; whenever we meet with any particular objects, events or occurrences that are suited to excite a pious reflection and raise the heart to GOD? — if,

SERM.
VIII.

I say, we find it thus with us, it is a certain sign that the prevailing disposition or desire of our heart is towards GOD.

But now 'tis very possible that many good Christians may find something of this in them; from whence they draw this comfortable conclusion, that they hope their Love to GOD and Christ is sincere. ' But
' this does not come up to all that the text
' requires. In this manner they love their
' friends, and by this means they know they
' do. But we are requir'd to love the blessed
' GOD infinitely more than them; *with all*
' *our hearts, and with all our souls, and with*
' *all our mind, and with all our might.* And
' he deserves that we should. Nay our Lord
' himself hath told us, that if we love
' the dearest friend or nearest relation in life
' more than him, *we are not worthy of him.*
' But he hath so many Rivals in our heart!
' there are so many things in the world
' which we feel we love, and which we can-
' not help loving. How can we, after all,
' be sure that our Love to him is so far su-
' perior to that which we bear to any earthly
' object, as he requires it; and as in all rea-
' son

‘son it ought, to be?’ — This now is our second enquiry; *viz.* SERM. VIII.

2. How must we know that our Love to GOD is superlative, or far greater than that we bear to any created object?

Now in this case, the following single consideration, I think, is sufficient to give us all the satisfaction we want, *viz.*

That it is possible we may love GOD with a more solid and rational esteem and reverence, than any earthly object, tho’ it be not with so warm and sensible affection. For, as I before observ’d, a real love to GOD hath something in its own nature different from, and superior to that love which we bear to earthly objects.

It is a great mistake to think that our love to GOD is always to be measur’d by that ardor and fervency of spirit with which some are affected when they think or speak of him. A good deal of this may be constitutional, owing to a natural complexion. Fervent affections are no more ^a certain ^a criterion of a superior Love to GOD, than a warm Zeal is of superior attainments in true Piety. Young persons and new Converts commonly discover the greatest warmth of



affection: but we ought not to think that therefore they love GOD more than an aged experienced Saint, who hath spent his whole life in his Service; tho' he does not find his heart so much warm'd, or his passions so sensibly mov'd in his pious and devotional exercises, as the other does. His Love to GOD may be more solid, rational, deep and durable, tho' not so ardent and flaming. A steady fire, tho' it burns not so bright, yet gives a better heat than a sudden transient flame.

The Religion of an experienc'd and advanced Christian (and consequently his Love to GOD, which is the very soul and spirit of Religion) does not consist so much in rapturous affection, as in the uniform and regular exercise of the more noble powers of the mind, the reason and understanding, in his devotional employments. In a word, if he cannot so sensibly find that he loves GOD *with all his heart, and with all his soul*, yet he knows he loves him *with all his Mind, and with all his Might*.

This consideration I wou'd recommend as a very material one; not only, because I apprehend it goes to the very foundation of
the

the Scruple before-mentioned, but for want of a due attention to it many have fallen into mistakes on both sides: I mean, some have been ready to doubt, whether they love GOD supremely and sincerely for want of these fervent emotions of mind; whilst others, who feel them, have built too much upon them.

But if this be not thought sufficient of itself to remove the Doubt objected, I would propose two things more.

1. If you doubt whether you love GOD more than your dearest earthly friend or comfort, ask your self, whether you can be content to part with your interest in GOD, for the sake of that earthly comfort you are afraid you prefer before him. If you cannot bear that Thought, but find that you would with all your heart give up your dearest enjoyment in life, at the call of GOD, and as a testimony of your superior love to him; this is a certain sign, that tho' your regard to that dear object may most sensibly affect you, yet your regard to GOD is much greater. He that is willing to give up all for GOD, certainly shews that he loves GOD above all.

SERM.
VIII.

2. Do you rejoice in God, not only when the light of his countenance shines upon you, but when darkness and distress overwhelm you; and find in him more than you lose in the want of all your worldly blessings? He is without doubt the supreme object of your Love, when you can say with the prophet, *Though the fig-tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vine; though the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat; though the flocks should be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stall; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the G O D of my salvation (a).*

These are the Thoughts I had to offer upon the second main principle of Piety; the Love of G O D: the spring of all acceptable religion, as well as the source of all our future Blifs.

And now, how much concern'd should we all be to have this Love of God *dwelling in us!* as a fixt permanent principle, to warm and animate our devotions! to direct our thoughts and contemplations more frequently to that most excellent and best of Beings; whose favour is the *fountain of Life!*—To this end
let

(a) Hab. iii. 17, 18.

let us frequently and more intently turn our thoughts unto him : and consider

SERM.
VIII.

1. How infinitely and every way worthy he is of our supreme regard. How good he is in himself : how much goodness he has diffused throughout our world : with how lavish a hand he scatters his bounties among all his creatures : loading even the unthankful and evil with the fruits of his beneficence : whose name is Love, whose nature is goodness, and whose *tender mercies are over all his works.*

2. Let us often think how good he hath been to us ; how well he hath provided for our eternal interest ; in giving his Son to die for us, his Spirit to sanctify us, his Word to direct us, his Ordinances to comfort and instruct us ; and who is continually calling us by his Word, his Spirit and his Providences, to love and trust and honour him, by giving our hearts to him. It is the only thing he expects from us in return for all the kind things he hath done for us. — And where can we dispose of them to more advantage ? Can we withhold our hearts from him, who withheld not his Son, his own dear Son, from us ! in whom he hath promis'd to



give us all things that are necessary to make us happy both for time and eternity!

Moreover, is he not our Father? the kind indulgent Parent of our spirit! who is continually doing us good; and desires only our consent (that is, our Love) to make us happy for ever.

‘ O my labouring soul, strive then to conceive (for ’tis impossible to express) what an immense Debt of Gratitude thou owest to him, who by his creating Goodness call’d thee out of nothing, to make thee a partaker of Reason; and even a sharer of Immortality with himself: who, by his preserving Goodness, designs to conduct thee safe through the various stages of thine eternal existence: and who, by his redeeming Goodness, hath prepared for thee a Happiness too big for the comprehension of a human understanding!’

But after all, his Grace alone can draw our hearts to, and centre our souls in him. And therefore

Lastly. Let this be the subject of our frequent, humble and earnest prayer to G O D; to teach us to know him more, that we may love him better; enjoy some assured token
of

of his Love to us, and finally be made to drink of the *river of his pleasures*, which flow from the *fountain of Life*; and possess that *fulness of Joy which is at his right hand for evermore.*

SERM.
VIII.

The H Y M N.

I.

Great God of love!—that charming name
Should all my powers controul;
Should make my best affections flame
And kindle all my soul.

II.

Nor I, nor Angels round the throne
Can love to what's thy due:
Beauties divine to them unknown,
Pass all they have in view.

III.

When they have stretch'd their wings for flight,
The steep ascent to try;
Struck with the vast and boundless height,
In wonder lost they lie.

O 4

IV. Yet

SERM.

VIII.



IV.

Yet they for ever wonder on
 And gaze with high delight :
 And love the Infinite unknown,
 With all their mind and might.

V.

I too would lift mine eyes to see
 What Angels can't explore ;
 With fixt attention gaze at thee,
 And wonder and adore.

VI.

O, draw mine eyes, my heart inflame,
 With love fill up my soul :
 Let this affection reign supreme,
 And all my powers controul.





S E R M O N IX.

The Fear of G O D.



G E N. xlii. 18.

----- *I fear* G O D.

THE first thing necessary to make a SERM.
real Christian is, to know what it is - IX.
to be one; wherein the true christian tem-
per consists; or what are the genuine cha-
racteristics of *Christ's* true Disciples. These
we are particularly tracing out from the
sacred Scriptures; that we may not be, what
the greatest part of the Christian world are
(and I am afraid I may say the Protestant
world too) ignorant of the very character
we profess to bear; and what is essential to
the happiness we hope to enjoy.

The true Christian character I proposed
to consider in *four* views: as it hath respect
to

SERM.

IX.

to ourselves, to G O D, to *Christ*, and to our fellow Creatures. The first comprehending, what are commonly called, the *human*; the second, the *divine*; the third, the *christian*; and the fourth, the *social* Virtues.

The christian temper or character, as it hath respect unto ourselves, or the *human* Virtues, are these six; Humility, Contentment, Prudence, Patience, Fortitude, and Self-government: all which I have distinctly consider'd.

The christian temper or character, as it hath respect unto G O D, or the *divine* Virtues, may likewise be comprehended under *six* heads, *viz.* to know, to love, to fear, and trust him, to obey him, and keep up a constant intercourse and communion with him by meditation and prayer.

The two first of these, *viz.* the *Knowledge* and *Love* of G O D, I have already particularly considered. The next *divine* Grace which comes in order to be treated of, is the *Fear* of G O D.

And since all the Divine virtues, or the duties we owe to G O D, are nothing more than the conformity of our Temper and Behaviour to the essential perfections of his
Nature

Nature and his relation to us, therefore as that supreme Love to him, which I treated of in the preceding Discourse, arises from the contemplation of his infinite Goodness and Mercy, so that holy Fear of GOD, which is our present subject, springs from another view of him ; as a Being of Almighty Power and Majesty : before whom we are but as dust and ashes : atoms of vital earth : nothing : *less than nothing, and vanity.*

The words I have read were spoken by *Joseph* to his Brethren ; to assure them of the certainty of what he then declared ; that if they would not go and bring back with them their younger Brother *Benjamin*, and in the mean time leave one of themselves as a Hostage, or security for their return, they should be deemed and treated as Spies. He had before insisted that only one should go and fetch their younger Brother, and that all the rest should be left as Hostages ; as the only proof he would accept of their veracity : confirming what he said by swearing twice by the life of *Pharaoh*. In this second proposal he mitigates the rigour of the first ; and confirms his words by (what he thought would strike them more than his

his

SERM.
IX.

his former oath, which was the profane language then in fashion at Court) assuring them that (whatever they might think of him) though a Courtier in *Egypt*, he knew, adored, and feared the same G O D as they did. And calls him to witness to the truth and sincerity of his Intentions: this do, and live (says he) *for I fear G O D.*

That I may give you a more distinct and comprehensive view of this branch of Piety, I shall

I. Shew you what we are to understand by it.

II. Whence it arises.

III. In what instances it more especially discovers itself. And then conclude

IV. With a few practical Reflections.

I. I am to shew you what we are to understand by *the Fear of G O D.*

It may seem at first view to be incompatible with that pious Disposition I have before been treating of, *viz.* the *Love of GOD*: and especially as the Apostle *John* sets these

two

two things in opposition, and as inconsistent with one another, 1 *John* iv.18. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

Here then we must distinguish (and the distinction is very easy and obvious) between a filial and a servile Fear: such a fear as a child hath of a kind and tender Father; and such a fear as a slave hath of a cruel and tyrannical Master. The first is Reverence, or Fear sweetned with Love: the other is Dread, or Fear attended with Terror. In the former sense, the Saints fear and rejoice; in the latter the Devils *fear and tremble*. The one is attended with joy, the other with torment: the first is the great principle of Religion, the last is the effect of Impiety. It is the *last* of these the Apostle *John* means, when he says *there is no fear in Love*: that is, no servile fear; or no such fear as *hath torment*. But it is the *former* that we are now speaking of, *viz.* a filial or reverential fear: which is not only consistent with Love, but inseparable from it. This appears from hence, because we are required to fear the Lord on that very account for which we ought

SERM.
IX.

ought to love him. *There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be fear'd (r); fear the Lord and his goodness (s).* He is not only great and greatly to be feared; but he is good, and therefore greatly to be feared. And the more kind and gracious he is to us, the more should we fear him: that is, the more afraid should we be of offending him: because the greater will be our ingratitude therein. And that very Love which his goodness excites in us, will increase that fear of sin, and be our guard against it. So that this filial Fear of G O D, arises out of a filial Love to him; and grows up with it.

That *Fear of G O D*, which we are now treating of, is such a constant reverend regard to G O D, as our Father and Friend, deeply impress'd upon our Spirits, as will produce the most dutiful Disposition and Behaviour towards him. And by reason of this its great and extensive influence, it is more frequently put to comprehend the whole of Religion than any other branch of Piety whatsoever. Which you cannot fail to observe in reading the holy Scriptures; and

(r) Psal. cxxx. 4.

(s) Hof. iii. 5.

The Fear of GOD.

207

and especially the books of *Psalms* and *Proverbs*.

SERM.

IX.

II. Let us now consider whence this habitual Reverence of GOD arises.

That it is the effect of the holy Spirit's grace and operation in the heart, we cannot doubt. For as he is the *giver of every good Gift*, so he is the Author of all that is spiritually good within us. And therefore they that fear the Lord, are always most ready to ascribe to him the honour of thus turning their hearts unto him.

But under his gracious influence and conduct this pious Disposition arises more particularly.

1. From right, regular, just, and honourable sentiments of the Divine Attributes and Perfections; as they are represented, and clearly discover'd, to us in his Word and Works. For, as I before observed, all the duties and dispositions of Piety spring from, and are founded in, a right Knowledge of GOD. He that is grossly ignorant of GOD, or entertains false and injurious conceptions of his Attributes, cannot be uniformly influenced

SERM.
IX.



fluenced by that Fear of him which I have now described, and which he requires. For instance, if we represent him to our selves as a hard Master ; exacting more of us, and expecting more from us, than he hath given us power to perform ; if we conceive of him as a capricious, partial, cruel, and tyrannical Being ; and explain his Sovereignty, or any particular doctrine of Scripture, in such a manner as naturally leads to such sentiments of him ; we shall fear him indeed, but it will be with a painful and slavish fear : with a fear that hath in it more of dread, than delight : very far from that filial and reverential complacency, which his paternal condescension and goodness invite ; and which his word expressly requires.

And this divine grace of holy Fear arises, not so much from the contemplation of one or two of his perfections separately considered, as from all of them connected and conjoin'd. Filial Reverence is composed of Fear and Love. And therefore to excite our Fear, we should often turn our thoughts to his awful Majesty, and incomprehensible Glories : before whom the Ocean is but as a *drop in the Bucket*, and the Earth but as a *small*

small dust in the Ballance; and all things as *nothing and vanity*. We should often contemplate his almighty Power, his inflexible Justice, his unblemish'd Purity, his perfect Holiness, his invariable Truth, and eternal Righteousness. But then, to temper this Fear (which such thoughts of G O D are apt to raise in our minds) with Love, we should represent him, at the same time, to ourselves as the Father of mercies, who glories most of all in his goodness; remember his great compassion to the infirmities of his children (which his word sets forth in the most endearing terms) his paternal tenderness and readiness to relieve all our wants: and especially that mysterious and unparalleled act of Love, in sending his own Son into our world, incarnate, to redeem us by his Death. And the Love and Gratitude which these sentiments of G O D are adapted to excite, will so soften and temper that Fear of him which the contemplation of his power and justice creates, as to turn it into a filial and complacential Reverence; which is the grace I am now describing.

But let it be observ'd, that it is not a few superficial or transient thoughts of these di-

SERM.
IX.



vine Perfections, that will produce this happy effect; but our meditations on them must be frequent, serious, fixt, intent, and earnest. This should be the daily employment of our minds; and attended with humble Prayer, that these divine contemplations may be so directed, assisted and enliven'd by the holy Spirit, as to beget, quicken, and establish this pious disposition in us.

2. To inspire our minds with a holy reverence of the great God, let us turn our eyes to the multitude and magnificence of his Works. Even those that fall under our view, raise our astonishment beyond measure. But, alas, how small a portion of their infinitude can our contracted ken take in; even when our sight is absorbed, in a starry evening, amidst the numberless shining Worlds above us! But our imagination is much more lost, when we reflect (as we often should when we view the works of nature) ' that of all these things there must
' be one *first* cause. For nothing could
' make itself. This first Cause then must
' be unmade: or *necessarily* existent. That is,
' He must have existed by a necessity of na-
' ture, from all Eternity. This Power must
' have

‘ have been eternal ; and eternally *active*. SERM.
‘ That is, from all eternity his Power hath IX.
‘ been employed in producing different
‘ systems of Worlds, and different species of
‘ Creatures, to the honour of his Wisdom
‘ and Goodness ; and to eternity will be thus
‘ employed.’ — How do all the powers of
imagination sink under the weight of this
sentiment ! How are we lost in the immen-
sity of the Creator’s Works ! in which this
whole Earth appears but as a single Atom,
floating in a ray of light emitted from Him-
self.

*How great and marvellous are thy Works,
O LORD GOD Almighty ! who should not
fear thee, and magnify thy great name ? all
thy works of wonder praise thee ; and declare
that thou art great and greatly to be feared.*
But

3. To beget in us a holy reverence of
GOD, let us often represent him to our-
selves as the Omnipresent God. If we would
have *the fear of GOD before our Eyes*, we
must have GOD himself so. That is, before
the Eye of our mind. For he is always, and
in all places, as really and as certainly pre-
sent with us, as if he were always and in all

SERM.
IX.



places visible to us. And not only most certainly, but most intimately present: not only with, but *in* us. And not only acquainted with our most secret thoughts, and viewing all that passes in the inmost rooms of our Hearts, but often exciting pious reflections and holy motions there, when we little attend to the divine agency that gave the first rise to those serious Dispositions.

The Divine Omnipresence, and the universal Agency of G O D's grace and providence, are no less adapted to inspire our Souls with a reverential Fear of him, than his Omnipotence, or that Almighty Power which made, sustains, and governs the universal Creation. But then, they must both be seriously considered and attended to: frequently recollected, and carefully impress'd upon the mind, 'till it feels the affecting influence of those Thoughts; and that impression retained, 'till it produce and improve a correspondent serious disposition towards G O D.

And thus to contemplate G O D's essential and universal Presence, is the best way to procure the happiness of his *gracious* and
special

Special Presence. — Pious minds know what I mean by that expression. SERM.
IX.

If we desire to have the *fear of GOD* prevailing in our Hearts, as an habitual and abiding Principle, we should often recall them to this pious employment. And when we are apt to forget GOD, and grow vain in our imaginations, let us recollect ourselves with *Jacob*, and say, *behold GOD is in this place; and I knew it not (a)*. The Parent's eye, though it lays no servile constraint on a dutiful Child, yet is a constant guard to restrain him from every thing that is displeasing to his parent, however pleasing it may be to himself. The same effect will a fixt persuasion of GOD's presence have upon us.

Having thus considered a few of those things that are most proper to produce this divine Virtue in our Hearts (through the grace and operations of the holy Spirit for which we should be daily and most earnestly solicitous.) It is time now

III. To consider the happy influence of it; or the good effects it will produce, when

P 3

it

(a) Gen. xxviii. 16.

SERM.
IX.

it exerts itself in a proper manner; or is in lively act and exercise. That, as by attending to what hath been said under the former head, we may know how to attain it, so by considering what will be delivered under this, we may be able to judge whether we have it or no. And

I. The first and most genuine effect of the Fear of G O D, when it becomes a fixt principle in the heart, is an effectual guard against all known sin. *Job by fearing GOD eschewed evil (b)*, that is, declin'd and avoid-ed every sinful practice. *By the fear of the LORD (says Solomon) men depart from evil (c)*. *A wise man fears, and departs from evil*. And what influence this principle had upon the heart and conduct of good *Nebemiah* in this respect, that is to deter him from sin, you may see *Nebem. v. 15*. where, after he had recited, many corruptions and abuses which the Governors of the People had been guilty of, added, *so did not I, because of the fear of G O D*.

And indeed nothing can well be conceived, to have a greater force or power to curb

(b) Job i. 1. (c) Prov. xvi. 6.

curb a licentious inclination, than what I have just mention'd as one principal source from whence this holy fear arises, *viz.* the remembrance that we are under the immediate eye of the Almighty and most Holy G O D, *who hateth all workers of iniquity.* Under the impression of which thought, the pious Soul repels a bold Temptation with *Joseph's* words, *how can I do this evil, and sin against G O D?*

SERM.

IX.



2. This Fear of G O D in the heart, is a motive no less proper and powerful to excite us to a chearful and ready obedience. A servile fear indeed is not so. *That* produceth not a willing, but a forced obedience. The proper principle of a chearful obedience is Love; which always prompts us to do whatever is pleasing to its object. And this filial Reverence I am speaking of, is Fear temper'd with Love: and therefore is equally proper to restrain us from Sin, and induce us to Duty. Thus the obedience of *Abraham*, in offering up his Son at the command of G O D, proceeded not only from his Faith, but his Fear of G O D. *Now* (says G O D) *I know that thou fearest me, seeing thou hast not*

SERM.
IX.

withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me (d). So it is said of *Noah*, that *he being warned of GOD, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, he prepared an Ark to the saving of his house (e).* It was not so much the fear of the Deluge as the fear of GOD, that produced in him this ready obedience.

But let one thing here be remark'd by the way, *viz.* that *that* fear of GOD which arises from the consideration of his infinite Majesty and Justice, or from a dread of punishment, if it lays an effectual restraint upon the mind to keep it from sin, is not that *slavish fear* which the Apostle *John* says is inconsistent with *love*. Though it be a less liberal principle than that filial Reverence I am treating of, yet it is a motive of no small use at sometimes; and more apt to operate upon some minds than others; especially when thrown into the scale against a fear of men, and the punishment they threaten us with for our firm adherence to the ways of GOD and Duty. And in this case, and with this view, it is especially recommended by our Saviour himself, *Luke xii. 4, 5. And I say unto you, my Friends, be not afraid of them that*

{ *d* } Gen. xxii. 12. { *e* } Heb. xi. 7.

that kill the Body, and after that have no more
that they can do : but I will forewarn you
whom you shall fear ; fear him, who, after he
hath killed, hath power to cast into hell : yea,
I say unto you, fear him.

SERM.

IX.

3. This Fear of GOD will be a great motive and help to Self-government. I mean here principally the government of the mind ; and of all that passeth within us : our thoughts, desires and passions ; which, as they are as well known to GOD as our outward actions are to men, every one whose heart is right with GOD will take care to keep under strict discipline and government.

It is the characteristick of a Hypocrite, that his only care is to keep well with men, by external forms of Godliness ; without any regard to his heart or the motions and dispositions of the inner man, which lie conceal'd from the eye of the world. On the contrary, it is a sure mark of sincerity to be as careful of our inward thoughts and affections, as of our outward conduct and actions ; from this consideration, ' that GOD ' knows our hearts.' Because this is an argument that we are universally and uniformly

SERM.

IX.



formly govern'd by the genuine Fear of GOD: which equally excites us to do every thing that pleases, and to avoid every thing that offends him. And we know that the sins of the heart are no less offensive to him, than those of the life.

This reverend sense of GOD, his power and presence, deeply impressed on the heart, will have a very happy effect upon us in all our religious Duties: and be a good means to bring the mind into that serious and pious frame, which will best dispose us to wait upon GOD and offer him *an acceptable Service*. This is what we often find we want. When we come to worship GOD, our minds are sometimes so cold and carnal, so vain and worldly, and our thoughts so unfixed, desultory, and vagrant, that we can hardly get our hearts suitably engaged 'till the service is near at an end: and thus we lose almost all the pleasure and benefit we expected from it. But when we come with our minds deeply tinctured with these pious Affections, and strongly impress'd with the justest Sentiments of the perfections of GOD; and especially of his Almighty power and immediate presence; the heart then soon be-

becomes serious, soft and pliant: and best disposed to receive the most gracious communications.

SERM.

IX.

And this Fear is a no less happy means to keep the mind suitably engaged in Duty, than to bring it into a fit frame for it: and to prevent that wandering of the heart in the Service of GOD which so often interrupts and spoils our Devotions.

5. This reverential fear of GOD will raise us above a servile fear of men. If *GOD be for us, we need not fear what man can do against us.* It will also free the mind from anxious solicitude under the apprehensions of future evil. For this filial fear of GOD is always attended with a confidence in his paternal care. Therefore says the *Psalmist, O fear the Lord ye his Saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them (a). Like as the Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him: he considereth their frame, and remembereth that they are dust (b) For the Lord*

(a) Psal. xxxiv. 7, 9.

(b) Psal. ciii. 13.

SERM. *Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him. (c)*
 IX. and the wise man says, *in the fear of the*
 Lord is strong confidence (d).

I shall only observe

Lastly, That this pious temper is that which immediately fits us for Heaven. For as it is essential to Love, and comprehended in it; it is the very temper of the blessed World. In which, as well as in the Knowledge and Love of God, (if we are so happy as to arrive there) we shall be eternally improving.

I shall now conclude all with two or three Reflections upon this subject. And

1. From the happy effects and extensive influence of this Grace, we see how properly it is put for the whole of Religion. This indeed is observable of all the graces of Piety: because they are in the nature of things so link'd and connected together, that where there is one of them in sincerity, there are all the rest in reality: though in most religious Characters, one of them is observ'd to shine brighter than the rest. Thus all Religion is sometimes comprehend-

(c) Psal. cxlviii. 2.

(d) Prov. xiv. 26.

hended under the Knowledge of GOD; sometimes in the Love of GOD; but never more frequently than under this phrase *the Fear of the Lord*: which usually begins with an awful sense of GOD, and terminates in a supreme delight and trust in him. And therefore is not only the *beginning*, but the *perfection* of Wisdom.

SERM:
IX.

2. By these characteristick marks and effects of this holy Fear let us examine ourselves, and see whether we have, and what progress we have made in this divine Virtue: Does it restrain us from sin? from all, even our most beloved Sin?—Does it instigate and excite us to Duty? to all, even the most difficult, and to a carnal mind the most disagreeable Duties? and conquer all reluctance to them?—Does it make us watchful over our thoughts, desires, and passions? because we know that all that passeth in our Hearts is known to GOD.—Does it make our minds serious, composed, and reverend, in all our religious approaches to GOD? and keep them devoutly engaged in holy Duties?—Does it produce in us such a placid and fiducial Trust in GOD at all times, as lifts us above an anxious fear

SERM.
IX.

fear of any thing that can befall us under the government of his all-ruling Providence?—Then may we be assured that the *fear of GOD is before our Eyes*; and is a fixt, habitual, permanent principle in the heart: that we are safe under his care and protection here, and shall be happy in his love and presence for ever. And *how great is his mercy to them who thus fear him!* how unspeakable that Happiness which he hath laid up for them who thus *put their trust in Him before the Children of men!*

The H Y M N.

I.

Celestial King, our spirits lie
Trembling 'beneath thy feet;
And wish, and cast a longing eye,
To reach thy lofty seat.

II.

In thee what endless wonders meet!
What various glory shines!
The crossing rays too fiercely beat
Upon our fainting minds.

III.

III.

Destruction waits upon thy frown,
 And heaven attends thy smile:
 A wreath of Light'ning arms thy crown,
 But love adorns it still.

IV.

Angels are lost in sweet surprisè,
 If thou unvail thy grace;
 And humble Awe runs through the skies,
 When wrath arrays thy face.

V.

Created powers, how weak they be!
 How short our praises fall!
 So much a-kin to nothing we,
 And thou th' eternal all.

VI.

Lord here we bend our humble souls,
 And awfully adore!
 For the weak pinions of our minds
 Can stretch a thought no more.



S E R M O N X.

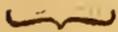
Of Trust in G O D.



P R O V. iii. 5.

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

S E R M. X.



OF all the Divine virtues, or those pious dispositions towards G O D which his Word requires us to preserve and cultivate, there is none of a more happy and extensive influence than that which I am this day to recommend to your attention and practice; *viz.* a serene and sovereign Trust in and Dependance upon G O D, his providential care and paternal goodness, under all the possible variations of our inward temper and outward circumstances.

What-

Whatever we pursue or shun, or hope or fear; whatever be our condition, afflictive or prosperous, we should always remember that every thing depends on the Will of G O D, and is at the disposal of his all-presiding Providence. And this Thought should be so constantly and familiarly present with us, and so effectually wrought into our minds, as to produce an habitual, calm reliance upon him in every condition, and a chearful hope in him at all times.

To *know* G O D is the first principle of piety; to *love* him, the second; to *fear* him, the third. From all which results this filial and fiducial *Trust* in him, as our almighty father and ever present friend; which sets the mind free from all anxious fears, and fills it with perfect composure and peace under all the varying scenes of human life.

In treating of this part of the Christian temper, I shall endeavour

I. To shew you more particularly what are the proper sources from whence it springs.

SERM.

X.

II. In what situation of affairs and circumstances of life the steady exercise of this grace is more especially requisite and important. And then

III. Represent to you the Happiness that results from the governing influence of it.

I. Let us consider what are the sources from whence this sovereign Trust in G O D doth principally flow. And

I. It is easy to perceive that this supreme and complacential Trust in G O D, chiefly arises from a firm and lively *faith* in him; his eternal Attributes, all-governing Providence, and Omnipresence.

This firm Hope and Trust in G O D, I say, springs from a lively faith in his eternal *Attributes*; particularly his almighty Power, his infinite Goodness, and unerring Wisdom: that his Power is omnipotent, and therefore that he is able to *save to the utmost*; that is, in the utmost Distress, and to the utmost extent of our Desire; that his Goodness is unbounded, and therefore that he is no less willing than he is able to save us; and that his

his Wisdom is infallible, and therefore he best knows by what means, in what manner, and at what time, to hand forth the desired salvation to us.

SERM.

X.

But 'tis not enough barely to believe, or give our ready assent to the truth of all this (for if we believe there is a G O D, an eternal, original, and all-wise Cause, this enters into the very nature of that Belief) but we must dwell upon the sentiment, render it familiar to our minds, and get it wrought as a fixt principle into the heart, so as to feel the power and efficacy of it (which is the definition of a living faith) 'ere it can beget in us that firm, filial, fiducial Trust in and Dependance upon G O D which the text requires.

So that a serious and believing contemplation of the Divine perfections, is a mighty Help to a steady and holy confidence in G O D. Therefore saith the *Psalmist*, *they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou L O R D hast not forsaken them that seek thee (a).*

This Trust in G O D flows also from a firm faith in his universal and particular *Providence.*

Q 2

dence.

(a) Psal. ix. 10.

SERM.

X.

dence That is, from a full perswasion and assurance, that the providence of G O D not only presides over all the affairs of the world in general, but superintends all our private concerns in particular : that whatever befalls us is order'd by him, and comes not only by his permission, but by his immediate Direction and Appointment, to answer some good and wise end. And this Providence, we are by the best authority assured, extends to the minutest Events of life. Now, I say, a constant, habitual, and impressive sense of such a providence, conversant in and over-ruling all our affairs, temporal and spiritual, even those that are most particular and interesting, is a powerful means to excite a steady Trust in G O D at all times. And this is what is comprehended in that precept, *in all thy ways acknowledge him (b)* : i. e. observe and acknowledge his Providence, and then quietly confide in and depend upon it. Again,

A constant sense of GOD's *Omnipresence* is another thing that conduces much to a firm and peaceful Trust in him : or a full assurance that not only his providence over-rules all things,

(b) Prov. iii. 6.

things, but that his presence fills all places; or that he is as certainly present with us at all times as if we saw him with our bodily eyes.

SERM.

X.



A steady Trust in G O D then, I say, naturally flows from a lively Faith in him, his eternal Attributes, his all-ruling Providence, and universal Presence.

2. Another thing that greatly encourages and confirms a peaceful Trust in G O D is, the frequent experience we have had of his seasonable help and deliverance in former times of distress and danger. This is a consideration, you know, which the Psalmist *David* often recall'd for the support of his faith and hope in his greatest tribulations. *Thou hast been my Help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O G O D of my Salvation (c). Remember, O L O R D, thy loving kindness and thy tender mercies; for they have been ever of old (d).* Such a recollection is a great encouragement to our humble confidence in G O D, because we have now our own experience to assure us that G O D can save us; and therefore if we wait upon him with faith, patience and prayer, he will again extend the same salvation to us: according

Q 3

ording

(c) Psal. xxvii. 9.

(d) Psal. xxv. 6.

SERM.
X.

According to the Apostle's conclusion in the like case, the GOD *that hath deliver'd and doth deliver, in him I trust that he will yet deliver me* (e). But then

3. There is one thing farther necessary, and that is, that we continue faithful to GOD and his cause; that we keep in the way of our Duty, and use all the proper means in our power to help our selves. For to pretend to rely upon the protection and help of almighty GOD when we are acting against him, or are engaged in a bad cause, is most daring presumption; and to depend upon him to help us, when we refuse to do what we can to help our selves, or to make use of those means which he hath given us for that purpose, is not to trust him, but to tempt him: and betrays either gross Ignorance or great Hypocrisy.

When we are commanded in the text to *trust in the LORD with all our might*, we are not forbid to *use* our own understanding; but not to *lean* to it: that is, not to trust to it, or depend upon it; or place that confidence in our own wisdom and prudence,

(e) 2 Cor. i. 10.

dence, which we ought to place only in the Divine providence.

SERM.
X.

But when we are engaged in a good cause, are in the way of our duty, and diligently use the best means and the most prudent measures to effect any right end, and humbly seek to GOD for direction, we may then warrantably hope for and depend upon it. And the very consciousness of this will greatly excite and support that Dependence. In this way we may safely trust him *with all our hearts*: that is, in full confidence that under the Conduct of his Providence, all things shall issue well; whatever be the present appearance; and, with the *Psalmist's* pious exultation, may say, *the LORD is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer; my GOD, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. The LORD is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid (f)?*

Q 4

II. Let

(f) Psalm xviii. 2, 3.

II. Let us now consider in what situation of affairs and circumstances of Life the vigorous efforts of this virtue will be more especially needful and important.

We are indeed to *trust in the LORD at all times*; because we have always a constant and necessary Dependance upon him: but at some seasons we are more especially call'd by providence to the exercise of this Grace than at others. Particularly

1. In a time of Prosperity. Because we are then most apt to forget God.

It is a weakness in our nature, than which none is more apparent or more deplorable, that we know not how to bear prosperity: that when we receive the greatest Blessings from G O D, we are least sensible of our Dependance upon him: and that the Bounties of his hand, which were design'd to engage our hearts to him, have commonly a quite contrary effect, and withdraw our regards from him. We are, without doubt, equally dependant on the great Author of our Being at all times. How is it then that we are so much more sensible of this in adversity, than

we are in prosperity? This can be resolved into nothing else but the native weakness of our minds, the dangerous impressions which an affluence of earthly comforts makes upon them, and the numerous snares and temptations into which it betrays us: to which if men did but seriously attend, they would not so deeply regret the want, or so passionately desire a redundance, of those outward blessings as they commonly do.

Even *David* himself, than whom no man was ever more distinguish'd for a spirit of exalted piety, was not free from this frailty: but was apt to grow secure and vain in a day of uninterrupted peace. When his *mountain stood strong* he fondly imagin'd that *he should never be moved* (g). And therefore to bring him to a better disposition, that pleasing scene was often revers'd.—It is just the same with us: if we know any thing of our selves, we know it, we feel it; and in our best frames are griev'd and humbled for it. But how unreasonable, how ungrateful is this! are we not as much dependant on GOD for the continuance of our Blessings; as we are for the removal of our Afflictions?

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(g) Psalm xxx. 6, 7.

SERM.
X.

Cannot the same hand that bestow'd these mercies upon us, as easily take them from us? and by thus forgetting our dependance on G O D for the continuance of them, do we not provoke him so to do? Every new mercy we receive then, and especially every extraordinary mercy, should excite in us a more lively sense of our dependance upon G O D, and quicken our chearful Trust in him.

2. Another season when the exercise of this grace will be of peculiar advantage to us, is a time of Adversity and Distress.

Under which we may possibly, at some times, have no other refuge left. But this is a sure resource that never fails. For *the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD, he is their strength in a time of trouble* (b). But to be more particular.

In a day of Danger; when we apprehend and dread some fore evil approaching, we are then more especially call'd to put our trust in the LORD. Let us here take the pious Psalmist for our pattern. *I have heard the slanders of many, fear was on every side; whilst they took counsel together against me; they*

(b) Psalm xxxvii. 39.

they devised to take away my Life. But I trusted in thee, O LORD, I said thou art my GOD. My times are in thine hands, deliver me from the hand of the enemy, and from them that persecute me (i). SERM. X.

Is it a publick calamity we fear, from the Invasion or Persecution of a powerful, proud, perfidious enemy? Nothing becomes us better than the calmness, piety and composure of David's spirit; O my G O D, I trust in thee, let me not be ashamed; let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that trust in thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed who deal perversely without a cause (k). The L O R D is the strength of my life, of whom should I be afraid? though an Host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about (l).

If it be a private trouble, some personal or domestick affliction that we fear, our refuge is the same: and therefore the language of our heart should be still the same:

O my

(i) Psalm xxxi. 13—15. (k) Psalm xxv. 1, 2.

(l) Psalm iii. 6.

SERM.
X.

O my GOD, I trust in thee. This filial hope and trust in G O D will greatly ease and disburden the mind, compose and calm the spirit, and bring us into the best frame to meet the coming evil whatever it be. *Thou wilt keep him* (saith the prophet) *in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on the LORD.* Therefore (he adds) *trust ye in the LORD for ever; for in the LORD Jehovah is everlasting strength* (m). But

The lively exercise of this Grace will be of no less comfort and service to us in a day of deep distress: when *the Evil we fear'd shall come upon us*, as it did upon Job. Like him then let us retain our Integrity: and Hope in GOD; saying, *though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: he also shall be my salvation* (n).

This peaceful, stedfast, undismay'd trust in G O D in a time of sore affliction, it must be own'd, is no ordinary acquisition: and argues an improved state of Grace, and avanc'd degree of piety. But what should powerfully induce us to labour after it, are these three mighty advantages that accrue from

(m) Isaiah xxvi. 4, 5.

(n) Job xiii. 15, 16.

from it: which I shall just mention, but must not stay to dilate upon.

SERM.

X.



1. It softens every sorrow, and lightens every Load. It takes off more than half the weight of every affliction, and helps us to bear the remainder better.

2. It is the best way to hasten Deliverance. For the sooner the end of any afflicting Dispensation be answer'd, the sooner will it be removed: and this stedfast Hope and Trust in G O D is a sure sign that afflictions are sanctified, or the Design of them accomplished.

3. This is the best way to receive the most lasting Benefit by afflictions: to extract Honey from the Sting; and turn the worm-wood and gall into the most reviving Cordials; and the forest Evils into the greatest Good.—But to proceed.

The exercise of this Grace will be of great use and benefit, when the providence of God calls us to any extraordinary Service, wherein we may apprehend either difficulty or danger. These apprehensions, instead of tempting us to decline it (as they are too apt to do) should only quicken our trust in God, for that wisdom, fortitude and faith, that are

SERM.
X.

are requisite to a right and regular performance of it. A diffidence in our own strength should excite our humble confidence in G O D : and when this is attended with prayer, and a diligent use of all proper means, we shall always find *his grace sufficient for us.*

4. There is another situation which many christians are in, that calls for the constant exercise of this habitual dependance and fiducial Trust in G O D ; and that is, a state of extreme penury. But as G O D has been pleased in a special manner to declare himself the Patron and Protector of the poor and helpless, so for the encouragement of their faith and hope, his word abounds in promises peculiarly adapted to their relief and comfort ; as the motives and supports of that intire Trust in him to which they are so immediately call'd. *Trust in the LORD and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land ; and verily thou shalt be fed (c). O, taste and see that the LORD is good ; blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O, fear the LORD ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. That is, he will take care to supply all their necessary wants :*
and

(c) Psalm xxxvii. 3.

and in lieu of those conveniences which they think they want, he will bestow upon them something much better. *The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that fear the LORD shall not want any good thing (p).*

Lastly. That season wherein this stedfast Trust in G O D will be put to its severest proof, and when we shall stand in need of all its influence to fortify and compose the mind, is a time of Death: or when we are brought to a near prospect of it, and stand on the very brink of Eternity. Because then our All is at stake: and that for ever. And none can enjoy this sweet support of a calm and undisturbed Trust in G O D at Death, who have not accusom'd themselves to exercise this filial and fiducial dependance upon him all their Lives. And without a well grounded faith and hope and trust in G O D in that hour, the soul, if sensible, must necessarily be cover'd with Dismay and Horror.

But the faithful Christian, who hath *walked with GOD* in a firm habitual dependance upon him all his days, can trust him in Death. And committing his soul to G O D,

as

SERM.

X.



as *into the hands of a faithful Creator, he closes his eyes in peace, and sleeps in Jesus; with unwavering hope that he shall rise in the resurrection of the just; and be satisfied when he awakes in his likeness.*

Such now is the extent and such the importance of the christian's Hope: and these the seasons when it sheds the sweetest influence on the soul. And now—which was the last thing I propos'd,

III. Let us briefly reflect on the Happiness of those who live under the governing influence of this Divine virtue.

They are of all men the most happy in this world. And this holy temper, which makes them so, is at the same time a sure pledge and security to them, of a much greater happiness in the future. *Happy is he that hath the GOD of Jacob for his Help; whose Hope is in the LORD his GOD (q). Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. O, how great is thy Goodness (saith the Psalmist) which thou hast laid up for them that fear*

(q) Psalm cxlvi. 5.

fear thee! which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men (r)!

1. They are happy in this world: as far as Happiness is compatible with Mortality. Because they possess peace and self-enjoyment in those circumstances in which others think themselves most miserable. *At what time I am afraid (says the Psalmist) I will trust in thee (s).* This was his never-failing Refuge, and impregnable Fortrefs: in which he rejoiced and triumph'd; and called upon others to do the same. *Blessed is the man that maketh the LORD his Trust. Let all those that put their trust in him rejoice: let them ever shout for Joy because thou defendest them (t).*

Their peace of mind is so well establish'd that it is not in the power of any earthly Incidents to disturb, much less to destroy it. *For they that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be moved (u).*

This unshaken tranquility of mind arising from an habitual confidence in God, is not only a Defence to them against all the evils of the world, but gives them the best relish

VOL. I.

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and

(r) Psalm xxxi. 19. (s) Psalm lvi. 3. (t) Psalm xl. 4, 5, 11. (u) Psalm cxxv. 1.

SERM.

X.

and truest enjoyment of its comforts, in whatever proportion they have them; and consequently renders them the happiest persons in it.

2. They are happy when they are going out of the world. For that filial trust in, and fiducial dependance upon God, which they have accustom'd themselves to all their life, will not fail them at death. When every earthly Prop sinks under them, this still sustains them: *I know that my Redeemer liveth. I know in whom I have believed; and am sure that he is able to keep that which I commit unto him against that day.* But

(*Lastly*) Their Happiness in the other world will be unspeakable and eternal. For which they will, with never-ceasing gratitude and joy, be for ever acknowledging their dependance on God. Where their Faith and Hope shall cease; but their Trust in God never will: tho' it shall be greatly exalted and much alter'd from what it now is. They shall no longer trust him in the dark, or pray to him with tears, or rely upon him for delivering mercy; for all shall be light about them, every tear shall be wip'd away from the eye, and there shall be

no more pain. But raptur'd with the beatific vision, and the joys that flow incessant from the Throne of God, they shall in a sublimer sense adopt the words of the Jewish church; *Lo, this is our GOD, we have waited for him, and he hath saved us: this is the LORD, we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation* (w).

And now what shall we say to these things? Happy, thrice happy, are they who are in such a case; whose stedfast Hope is fixt on the Lord their GOD! — And shall we not put in now for a share in this vast Fund of Happiness? It arises chiefly, we see, from Faith and the testimony of a good Conscience: that is, a consciousness of our Integrity, and that we are in the way of our Duty; and whilst we continue so, all the Attributes of GOD are engaged for our protection, help, and safety.

Let me only add, that as this, and every other Grace is the gift of G O D, so it is not only obtain'd by Prayer, but is greatly strengthened and improv'd by an ardent exercise of it in that religious Duty; and is the best means to secure the Blessing we pray for.

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(w) Isaiah xxv. 9.

SERM.

X.



As an instance of this, let us take the Prayer which *David* put up to G O D in the xxvth Psalm. And as no man was more frequently call'd to this pious Trust in G O D, so no man was ever more eminent for it. So much is it strengthen'd by constant exercise. With this, you see, he begins his prayer, ver. 2. *O my G O D I trust in thee; let me not be ashamed:* and with this he concludes it, ver. 20. *O, keep my soul and deliver me: let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee. Let Integrity and Uprightness preserve me, for I wait on thee.*

And from the happy effects of this pious exercise of the mind, which he had so long experienc'd, he earnestly exhorts all to the same. Which exhortation I shall leave with you in his own words, and so conclude: *O Israel, trust thou in the L O R D, he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron trust in the L O R D, he is their help and their shield. Ye that fear the L O R D, trust in the L O R D, he is their help and their shield. Therefore, wait on the L O R D, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart. Wait, I say, on the L O R D (x).*

The

(x) Psalm cxv. 9, 10, 11.

The H Y M N.

I.

Great source of boundless power and grace
Attend my mournful cry ;
In the dark hour of deep distress,
To thee, to thee I fly.

II.

Thou art my strength, my life, my stay,
Assist my feeble trust ;
Drive these distressing fears away,
And raise me from the dust.

III.

O, let me call thy grace to mind,
And trust thy glorious name :
Jehovah, powerful, wise and kind,
For ever is the same.

IV.

Thy presence, LORD, can cheer my heart,
When earthly comforts die ;
Thy smile can bid my pains depart
And raise my pleasures high.

Here let me rest, on thee depend,
My GOD, my Hope, my All;
Be thou my everlasting friend,
And I can never fall.





S E R M O N XI.

Of living to the Will of G O D.



I P E T E R I V. 2.

That he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of GOD.

L E T us read the whole period.—*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffer'd for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffer'd in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of GOD.*

SERM.
XI.

The next great branch of Piety that falls under our consideration is an *absolute compliance with the whole will of GOD*; resulting from his relation to us as our Creator:

R 4

which

which includes in it something much more than the united authority of a King and Father.

But before I enter upon this subject, it will be proper to remove a difficulty that appears in the words I have chosen for the foundation of it.

Towards the close of the foregoing chapter, (*ver.* 18.) the Apostle had been speaking of the sufferings of Christ, who was *put to death in the flesh*. The practical inference he draws from thence, is in the first verse of this chapter; *forasmuch then as Christ hath suffer'd for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffer'd in the flesh hath ceased from sin.*—These words are obscure. But all the obscurity (I apprehend) arises from an inattention to the Idiom or peculiarity of the original language: wherein elliptical forms of speech are very common. Of which we have an instance in the words before us; where there is certainly something wanting to compleat the sense; which when restor'd, the sense is plain.* Let us see then if we cannot restore it. *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffer'd for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise*

wife with the same mind ; that is, to suffer in the flesh too : for he that hath suffer'd in the flesh, by mortifying the lusts of it (this seems to be the proper supplement of the ellipsis) hath ceased from sin.—But how? totally and absolutely? No—only from the prevailing habit, and allowed course of it, so AS (a) no longer to live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of GOD. With this small supplement, and alteration of the version (which the original not only admits but requires) the Apostle's meaning stands in a full and beautiful light. And that this was his true meaning appears from the words immediately following, ver. 3. for the time past of our Life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine,

(a) So the greek particles (εἰς το) often signify : not (to the end that) but (so that) : not denoting the intention, but the effect. In which sense it is used Heb. xi. 3. *Thro' faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of GOD, so THAT (εἰς το) things that are seen were not made of things that do appear.* And again, 2 Cor. iv. 4. *In whom the GOD of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light (we render it, but it should be render'd) so THAT the light (εἰς το μὴ) of the glorious Gospel of Christ doth not shine unto them.*

wine, revellings, banquettings and abominable idolatries.

But to come now more immediately to the subject.

In the words we have two very different ends or rules of life, by one or other of which all men direct their conduct: *viz. the Lusts of men, and the Will of GOD.* By the *former* we are to understand those carnal lusts or worldly pleasures, by which the greatest part of mankind are captivated and govern'd: called by the Apostle *John, the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (b).* And by the *latter* we are to understand the manifest Command of our Maker.—Now as these two principles are opposite, they form the different characters of men; and from the prevalence of the one or the other, a man is said to be *carnally or spiritually minded*. The one lives to himself, or the *lusts of men*; the other lives to GOD, or to the *will of GOD.* For to live to GOD, and to live to the *will of GOD,* is the same thing: and signifies no more than this, that we make it our great Aim

(b) 1 John xi. 16.

Of living to the Will of GOD.

251

Aim and Business in life to serve and please him. Which is a branch of Piety that naturally results from those I have before insisted upon: for he that *knows, fears, loves* and *trusts* GOD with all his heart, will make it his great desire and care to order and conduct his whole life according to *his Will*.

SERM.

XI.



In treating this subject let us consider

I. What this Will of GOD is.

II. How it may be known.

III. In what manner we are to live to it.

Lastly. What should principally induce us hereunto.

I. Let us consider what this Will of GOD is.

The Will of GOD is twofold: (*viz.*) his *preceptive* or commanding, and his *providential* or disposing Will. Now *to live to the Will of GOD*, is to live in a stedfast Obedience to the *former*, and a ready Subjection

to



to the *latter*: or to do whatever he requires of us, and submit to whatever he lays upon us. This is to *stand compleat in the whole will of G O D.*

But 'tis the former of these that falls principally under our present consideration: because the latter is comprehended in it. For it is the Will, the express Precept and Command of G O D, that we meekly acquiesce in all his providential disposals: and therefore if we make the will of G O D at all times the measure of ours, we shall make no difficulty of *submitting* to it. — But

II. How must we know what the Will of G O D is?

The first and most necessary point of Enquiry with every reasonable creature is this: What doth my Maker expect from me? what must I do to please him? that I may shew my gratitude to him for all his bounty to me? And when such an Enquiry is made with sincerity, 'tis a sure sign that the heart is rightly turn'd to G O D. The first breathing of the new creature is, *Lord, what wilt thou*

thou have me to do (b). And blessed be G O D, who hath furnish'd us with sufficient means of attaining full satisfaction in this important Enquiry. For

SERM.
XI.

1. In the original frame and constitution of our minds he hath impress'd a strong sense of good and evil, right and wrong: which is innate, or born with us; is common to, and inherent in every man; and inseparable from human nature.

This is what some call the *moral sense*: being that by which we judge of moral Objects as clearly, as by our bodily senses we do of corporeal. Tho' it be something different from reason itself (*c*), yet 'tis improved with it; is peculiar to reasonable Beings; and what the irrational part of the world discover not the least trace or tincture of. And as it commonly grows up with uncorrupted reason, so it sinks with it. Industry and Education brighten, strengthen and exalt them both: and both are weaken'd, obscur'd, and sometimes almost totally obliterated, by ignorance, sloth and sensual excesses.

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(b) *Acts ix. 6.*

(c) I call it something *different from reason itself*, because our approbation of a very good action, or detestation of a very

SERM.

XI.

It is by others call'd a *natural conscience*: and by the Apostle *Paul*, *the law of GOD written in the heart*. By which the mind as clearly perceives an essential difference between right and wrong, as the Eye does between light and darkness; or the Ear between discord and harmony. By this the Apostle tells us, that *the Gentiles, who had not the Law, were a Law unto themselves; did by nature* (or by the help of this natural light) *the things contained in the law: and shew'd the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another* (d).

2. Analogous to this, but distinct from it, we consider human reason, or the natural deductions of our own minds, as another means of knowing the will of GOD: or the intellectual power within us, contemplating all the visible Objects around us, tracing out the original Cause from the effects it has produced.

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very bad one, is so sudden and irresistible, that the mind is not conscious of any previous act of judgment conducing to such a determination. For which cause, instead of the *moral act of reason*, some have chose to call it the *moral sense*.

(d) Rom. xi. 14, 15.

This is commonly call'd the *light of nature*: which, when diligently attended to, discovers much of the nature and perfections of the Divine Being; as the first, intelligent, good, most wise and all-powerful Cause of all things; as also our Duty to him, and dependance upon him. For the Apostle assures us, that *the invisible things of GOD from the beginning of the world are clearly seen, being understood by those things that do appear; even his eternal power and godhead (e)*. So that they are *without excuse who, when they know him to be GOD, do not glorify him as GOD.*

As that moral Instinct before mention'd is much improved by reason, so this natural light is much improv'd by learning, or a larger acquaintance with the works of nature.

These two were all the advantages which the heathen world had, to attain the Knowledge of GOD, and his Will. But as the human understanding has, since their time, been better cultivated and improv'd, and we have carried our researches further into the laws of nature, we enjoy those two advantages

(e) *Rom. i. 20.*

SERM.

XI.



tages of knowing the Divine will in a much greater perfection than they did.

But as there remain'd still an obscurity in the light of nature; and the passions and prejudices of the mind, and the corruptions of the heart, often defeated those innate notices of *Deity*, and in some cases, through the power of inveterate habits, well nigh extinguish'd those natural impressions of good and evil; therefore, as a more effectual and supplemental Aid, G O D was pleas'd to superadd

3. A written Revelation; to give us a more enlarg'd and distinct knowledge of himself, and a more explicit and particular discovery of his Will, or what he requires of us: and that confirm'd by numerous Miracles and Prophecies, and every other credential whereby a Divine Revelation can be authenticated. Which not only ratifies and enforces all the obligations of natural Religion, but exalts them, and carries them higher than the mere unenlighten'd and unassisted reason of man ever did or could.

And not only so, but by opening a larger prospect to the human mind, and discovering certain grand and sublime truths which
the

the light of nature could never teach us, it enforces the Duties of natural religion by stronger motives and more striking considerations than were ever known before. So that the meanest Christian is now no longer at a loss to know what the will of GOD is: and has no more to do than to open his Bible, and he is immediately and expressly told by GOD himself, how he is *to walk so as to please him*. I might add

4. The Providence of GOD sometimes gives us a plain indication of his Will. I mean, in some particular instances wherein the former rules are not so fitly applicable for our direction. For instance, suppose two different methods of conduct are propos'd to our choice, and we know not well which to prefer, but foresee important consequences to depend on our Determination; if several accidental difficulties or discouragements do suddenly arise, that almost block up our way to the one, and many encouraging and inviting circumstances appear, which seem to open our way to the other; in this case, I say, we may reasonably conclude, it is the direction of providence that we should pursue this rather than that. And

SERM.

XI.



hence arises the necessity, and appears the great use and advantage of Prayer for the interposition of a providential Direction in all affairs of difficulty and importance.

There is another thing on which some Christians lay a mighty stress, as an indication of the Divine Will, *viz.* a sudden strong Impulse upon the mind, which they consider as a divine Monition, or the immediate Call of GOD. But I would by no means recommend this as a sure *criterion* of a Divine Direction, or as a proper rule whereby to know the Will of God. Because these secret suggestions or extraordinary impressions are, in this case, uncertain, dangerous, and unnecessary.

They are *uncertain*. For how do we know but that they come from a very different hand? the great Enemy of our souls has a near access to the lower powers of our mind; and covers his Designs with the utmost art, and under every appearance that is most delusive and tempting. At best those impressions may be only the mere workings of a warm Imagination.—In either case 'tis *dangerous* to trust them. And some who have given themselves up blindly to their lead,

lead, instead of following the Call of GOD, have been *led captive by Satan at his will.*— Besides they are altogether *unnecessary.* For either these sudden strong Impressions on the mind are agreeable to the directions of scripture and right reason, or they are not. If they are, we have no need of them; we have a surer and plainer Guide without them: if they are not, we should immediately repel them as deceitful and insnaring.

And having thus seen how we are to come at the Knowledge of the Divine Will in all cases, I proceed now to the next thing I propos'd; which was

III. To consider in what manner we are to comply with it.

We are *to live to it.* This is to be the measure of our conduct; our rule of life, at all times, and in every possible situation of our affairs. And this Rule we are to follow.

I. *Constantly and steadily.* There are many circumstances wherein a faithful adherence to the will of GOD and the dictates of Conscience will require much resolution



and self-command. But in all such cases, wherein sensual inclination draws one way, and the dictates of Conscience another, the latter is to be immediately and resolutely prefer'd.

2. To *live* to the will of GOD, is to comply with it *impartially and universally*: to have *respect to all his Commands*. Some of the Divine laws are more easy or more agreeable to our disposition than others; for which reason we are ready to extol and magnify them, as the most essential and indispensable Points of true Religion. Whilst others that are more difficult in their own nature, or more disagreeable to ours, though perhaps far more important, are neglected or disesteem'd. This is not to do the will of GOD impartially: and looks ill.

But 'tis much worse to take upon us to compound with our Maker; by substituting something of our own in the room of what he requires: as human ceremonies for divine institutions, outward forms for inward Piety, orthodoxy for charity, zeal for humility, and a right faith instead of a holy life. This always shews a weak head, and I am afraid sometimes a bad heart.

3. We

3. We should perform the Will of GOD with *alacrity and chearfulness*: and be thankful that he gives us opportunity and ability of doing what we know will be pleasing to him. We are commanded to do the will of GOD *from the heart (f)*. That is, not only with sincerity but with pleasure. *I delight to do thy will my GOD; yea thy law is within my heart (g)*.

And we have all the reason in the world chearfully to serve so bountiful a Master; whose service is perfect freedom, and whose rewards are unspeakably glorious: and equally (that is infinitely) surpass all our Deserts, and all our Thoughts.

Lastly. We must do the will of GOD in a *humble dependance* on his Grace to help us to do it as he requires; and on his Providence to remove difficulties out of the way of our Duty, or enable us to surmount them. GOD knows we too often find a strange reluctance to some parts of duty, which Conscience dictates as indispensable: and are ready to make every little difficulty an excuse for the neglect of it. Which shews the necessity of frequent and earnest Prayer that

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that

(f) Eph. vi. 6.

(g) Psalm xl. 8.

SERM.
XI.

that GOD would make us *both willing and obedient, in the day of his power.* And thus in dependance on his grace should we endeavor to *stand perfect and compleat in the whole will of GOD (b).*

I proceed now to the last thing I proposed, *viz.*

IV. To leave with you a few plain considerations very proper and powerful to induce us to make the Will of GOD the only Rule of life. And

I. The first Motive I shall mention is the greatest that can be urg'd, *viz.* that this is the only way to secure the favour of GOD; which is the fountain of all our happiness. And how can any one ever hope for his favour who takes no care to obey him? How would any wise parent on earth treat such a son? GOD's conduct towards his children is always directed by their Behaviour towards him.

There were always a sort of men in the world, who have imagin'd there is some nearer and smoother way to heaven than
that

(b) Col. iv. 12.

that of Holiness ; or keeping the Commandments of G O D. There is a certain church in the world (by far the most erroneous and corrupt in all the christian world) which has invented a way whereby men may become mighty religious without one grain of virtue ; yea, though destitute of common honesty. Who pay a much greater regard to the Decretals of Popes, and the Decisions of Councils, than the laws of G O D and the precepts of Christ.



And if we look among the profane Part of mankind in every Protestant country, who, in a total neglect of *the Will of G O D*, form their way of life according to the *lusts of men*, we shall find this principle universally prevail among them ; ‘ that they doubt ‘ not they shall be safe enough hereafter, ‘ without troubling their heads about Reli- ‘ gion so much as some precise christians ‘ do.’ That is, in plain terms, they doubt not but that G O D (the all-wise and most righteous G O D) is very well pleas’d with them, though they take no care at all to please him. And though all their lives are spent in offending and affronting him, yet they make no question but that they are in



favour with him, and shall be happy at last; notwithstanding he does in his own word most solemnly declare to the contrary.

And I am sorry to say it, that among regular and professing Christians, there are some weak enough to imagine that obedience to the laws of GOD (which they call *Works*) is not necessary to salvation: expecting to be justified by faith only, tho' they are told by GOD himself; that without *Works that Faith is dead*. This is *strong delusion*, and would be more fatal did not many of them, by a happy self-contradiction, live down their own principles, and practise that obedience the necessity whereof they deny.

This notion (which originally sprang from *Cerintbus* and was propagated by the *Gnostics*) was creeping into the church so early as the Apostle *John's* days; against which he gave the uncorrupted christians a solemn caution in these words (1 *Job.* iii. 7.) *Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doeth righteousness is righteous.* So saith our Saviour, *not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father*



Father which is in heaven (k). For without holiness (that is, without a life of practical piety directed and conducted by the will of GOD) no man shall see the LORD (l).

2. To form our lives and tempers by the will of GOD is the only thing that prepares us for the happiness of heaven. It is not only the condition of it, but our requisite qualification for it : 'tis our only Disposition to enjoy it : than which nothing can set the necessity of practical piety, or a life of habitual Holiness, in a stronger light. It is our essential happiness : the true felicity and perfection of our nature, and 'tis not only *our* perfection and happiness, but 'tis the perfection and happiness of Angels : it is the perfection and happiness of every rational and intelligent Being in the whole creation of GOD. There neither is, nor can be any other measure of a creatures happiness but this. And this unreserv'd obedience and absolute conformity to the will of GOD, not only now is, but ever will be equally necessary to our perfection and happiness, in all the never-ending ages of our future existence in the unseen world.

There

(k) Mat. vii. 21.

(l) Heb. xii. 14.

SERM.

XI.

There indeed we shall perform it with a Joy and Alacrity unknown to us *here*. But this which will be our Business and Blessedness in heaven, we must begin on earth. And thanks be to GOD, who under all the disadvantages of a corrupt and mortal nature, hath given us the fullest light to direct us, and all sufficient grace, to enable us, to comply with that which is not only necessary to, but the very pledge and principle of all our future Blifs.

3. A consistency of character as the disciples and followers of CHRIST, should powerfully induce us to comply with what has now been urged upon us. For herein *hath he set us an example that we should walk in his steps*. This was the only rule and measure whereby he conducted himself thro' life, *I seek not mine own will, but the will of my Father who sent me (k). Not as I will, but as thou wilt (l). My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work (m). I delight to do thy will my GOD : Yea thy law is in my heart (n)* Would we approve ourselves consistent Christians then, the real disciples

(k) Joh. v. 30. (l) Mat. xxvi. 39. (m) Joh. iv. 34.
(n) Psa. xl. 8.

disciples of *Jesus Christ*, our temper and life should be the same. SERM.
XI.

4. Thus to direct and determine our Conduct uniformly and universally, is the best way to pass safely and comfortably thro' the world. Here we have a certain clue to guide us thro' the labyrinth of Life: which will infallibly lead us to a happy end. If we follow those other rules by which the generality suffer themselves to be conducted, *the Lusts of Men*, the direction of Fancy, the call of Appetite, the impulse of Passion, or the bent of sensual Inclinations, they will not only betray us into inextricable difficulties, but finally plunge us into remediless ruin.

In every critical circumstance of life then, we have only to ask ourselves this one plain Question — 'What is most agreeable now to the Will of God? what wou'd he have me to do in this case? which course of action is most pleasing to him? *that* shall absolutely determine my choice, tho' it may lie most transverse to the inclinations of the flesh,' — And here a careful application of the foremention'd rules whereby to know the Will of God (together with humble prayer for Direction) will

SERM.
XI.

will never fail to lead us right: for that which is the plain dictate of conscience, and is most agreeable to right reason and the holy scriptures, is certainly the Will of GOD; and what we may as safely depend upon as if we heard it pronounc'd by a voice from heaven.

Lastly. A conscioufness of this, that we have thus uniformly and sincerely made the *will of GOD* the Rule of our life in opposition to *the lusts of men*, will afford us the most solid comfort on a dying bed. Not indeed as the foundation on which we can rely for our Justification before the Bar of GOD (for after all, we shall see many gross and shameful defects in our obedience which will mortify and humble us; and make us thankfully repair to the Atonement of Christ, as our only Refuge) but as an evidence of our Sincerity and Uprightness before GOD; and that we have a warrant to fly to that Refuge.

A conscioufness of this will disarm the last enemy of his sting and terror. To die *then* is to *sleep in Jesus*: to cease from labour, and go to rest. Like *David*, who *after he had served his own generation by the will*
of

of GOD (or, as it may rather be render'd, after he had served the will of GOD in his own generation) fell asleep (r).

SERM.
XI.

To conclude: *if ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them. And let me beseech you Brethren (in the words of the Apostle Paul) and exhort you by the LORD JESUS, that as ye have now received of us how you ought to walk and to please GOD, so you would abound more and more (s). And happy, thrice happy are they who, in the forest distrefs of life, and in the near views of death can with him say, our rejoicing is this, the Testimony of conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom (or by the lusts of men) but by the grace of GOD (and according to the will of GOD) we have had our conversation in the world.*

The H Y M N.

I.

Thee, dearest Lord, my soul adores,
I would be only thine;
To thee my heart and all its powers
I willingly resign.

II. Give

(r). Acts xiii. 36.—*ἰδία γενεά ὑπηρετήσας τῇ τῷ Θεῷ βουλῇ.*---
Blackwall's sacred Classics, p. 184. (s) 1 Thess. iv. 1.

SERM.
XI.

II.

Give me a calm and thankful heart,
From every murmur free ;
The blessings of thy grace impart,
That I may live to thee.

III.

Whate'er thy sacred will ordains,
O, give me strength to bear ;
And let me know my Father reigns,
And trust his tender Care.

IV.

Whate'er thy providence denies,
I calmly would resign :
For thou art just, and good, and wise :
Lord, bend my will to thine.

V.

Be this the purpose of my soul,
And my determin'd choice,
To yield to thy supreme controul,
And in thy will rejoice.

VI.

O, may I never faint nor tire,
Nor wander from thy ways ;
But (which is all my soul's desire)
Help me to live thy praise.

S E R-



S E R M O N XII.

Of Communion with G O D.



I JOHN i. 3.

-----our fellowship is with the Father,
and with his Son JESUS CHRIST.

LET us read the whole verse. *That* which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you; that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son

SERM.
XII.

JESUS CHRIST. The original word, which is here render'd *fellowship*, more properly signifies *communion*: and, I think, had better been translated so in this place, *Our communion is with the Father, and with his Son* JESUS CHRIST.

The

SERM.
XII.

The last branch of Piety I shall take particular notice of, is what we commonly call *Communion with GOD*: which (like the other Divine virtues before explain'd) whilst it is our indispenfible Duty, is at the same time our unfpeakable Privilege.

I shall take up no part of your time in explaining the context to which these words belong; as the sense of them, doth by no means depend upon their connexion with it: but proceed immediately to treat the subject propos'd, by shewing you

I. What we are to understand by Communion in general.

II. What by Communion with God.

III. How this Divine Communion is to be maintain'd.

Lastly. I shall conclude with some proper Reflections on the Subject.

I. What we are to understand by Communion in general.

I. The

1. The original word (a) in its strict and proper sense signifies, holding something *in common* with another; whether it be a matter of property, privilege or honour: and what is thus held in common is the subject and bond of Communion. Hence 'tis sometimes, as in the text, call'd *Fellowship*: and in commercial life, *Copartnership*. In this sense it is used, *Acts xi. 42. and they continued stedfast in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking bread, and in prayers.* That is, they faithfully adher'd to the Apostles and to the Doctrine they taught; join'd with them in the stated celebration of the Lord's Supper, and in their Prayers, and in Fellowship; or in having all things common among them.

2. In a more general sense the word *Communion* signifies *Conformity* or *Agreement*. As 2 Cor. vi. 14. *what fellowship (i. e. conformity) hath righteousness with unrighteousness? what communion (or agreement) hath light with darkness?* So Eph. v. 11. *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but reprove them rather.* That is, instead of conforming to them, rebuke them; have

VOL. I.

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nothing

(a) κοινωνία.

nothing to do with them, but to censure and discountenance them.

And hence the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is by some eminently call'd *the Communion*; because herein we make a publick profession of our Conformity to *Christ* and his laws, and of our Agreement with other christians in the spirit and faith of his Gospel.

3. There is yet another sense in which the word *Communion* is often used, *viz.* to signify *Converse* or friendly *Intercourse*; wherein men *contrive* or *consult* together about matters of common concern. So *the Jews communed* (i. e. confer'd) *together what they should do with JESUS* (b). And so the *Psalmist* directs us *to commune with our own hearts* (c).

Now these several particulars duly attended to will shew us

II. What we are to understand by *Communion with G O D*.

Communion with G O D is that free and delightful Intercourse which the pious man
keeps

(b) Luke vi. 11.

(c) Psalm iv. 4.

keeps up with his Maker, resembling a mutual converse or correspondence between two friends.



So that this communion with G O D is a privilege peculiar to good men ; and can be enjoy'd by none but those that love him, and are like him. Likeness begets Love ; and Love begets Communion ; and Communion, Pleasure ; which is always in proportion to the excellence and value of the Object, or its capacity to make us happy.

Communion implies a Union of hearts and interest : and in this view, it is the same thing as a close and cordial Friendship. And therefore a Communion with the blessed G O D must be the source of the highest happiness : as it is an intimate union and friendship with the best of Beings, who is most able to bestow it.

As Communion is mutual Intercourse, founded on mutual Friendship, it infers the communication of mutual Benefits and good Offices, in proportion to the respective capacities of those who are thus connected ; and a mutual Benevolence, or a desire to oblige by serving the interest of each other : and therefore they who enjoy communion with

SERM.
XII.

G O D, while they make it their constant care to serve and please him, receive the most gracious communications from him.

But I proceed now to the principal thing I intended, *viz.*

III. To consider by what means this Communion between G O D and the pious Soul is mutually maintain'd.

On the part of the Christian it is maintain'd by *contemplation, faith, and prayer*: and on the part of G O D, by his *word, his ordinances, and his holy Spirit*.—Let us attend to each of these particulars distinctly. And

1. One way whereby the pious Christian keeps up a holy Communion with G O D, is *Contemplation, or Meditation*. Wherein he frequently turns his thoughts to G O D, and takes every occasion to entertain himself with a view of his glorious perfections. A serious, contemplative mind eyes G O D in every thing; the dissolute and profane man acknowledges him in nothing. Thus one is continually improving his acquaintance with his

his Maker ; and the other contracts an habitual estrangement from him.

And these devout Contemplations whereby the pious christian keeps up a communion with his Maker, are not only stated (for they make a constant part of his secret devotion) but occasional. And the more the mind is accustom'd to them, the more freely does it engage in them. Every uncommon Event or extraordinary Providence (especially if it be solemn and striking) readily excites them ; and the impressions it makes are carefully retain'd, and often recall'd, till they have a religious effect, and are improv'd to the purposes of growing Piety. And then, and not till then, are those Providences properly sanctified.—‘ This Event, saith the wise and serious christian, is
‘ of the Lord : and comes to answer some
‘ good end. O, let me not turn aside mine
‘ ear from the voice of this Providence, that
‘ speaks so loudly to me ; nor disappoint my
‘ heavenly Father’s kind design therein.’

But it is not only in the ways of Providence, but in the works of Nature, that the pious Christian contemplates his Maker ;

SERM.
XII.

and adores the Divine Power, Wisdom and Goodness, which are every where display'd.

In the Infant season of the year, when we see all nature reviving around us, and the vegetable kingdom arising into Bloom and verdure, what a scope is here for inquisitive Thought, and what a call to the most pious and pleasing Contemplation! — For instance, when we see the growing Plant put forth its tender leaves, let us say to our selves — what is it that causes the fibrous or bulbous roots of these Plants to extract and suck in those juices of the earth, and only those, that are proper for their growth and nourishment? by what *plastic* power does that juice ascend and turn into sap? Through what Pipes and Tubes of different sizes does it pass, which refine, concoct and meliorate it for its proper purpose? Where are those fine and exquisite Glands which separate the ascending sap, thus prepared; distributing the grosser part of it for the production of shoots and leaves, and preserving the finer and more precious part to form and nourish the flowers and fruits? What is it that keeps up this chymical process all the while the flowers or fruits are forming?

forming? and when they arrive at their full perfection or maturity, causes it to cease? the remaining Juice descending into the root, excepting so much of it left in the Body of the tree or shrub, as is necessary to keep it alive, or preserve the Vessels in a right state, for the same operation the next season. — In a word, the powers of Vegetation do no less confound our physical researches than those of Gravitation: where all Philosophy terminates in Divinity; ascribing that to the immediate hand of God, or the Impulse of a Divine power, which cannot be solv'd by any known principles of nature.

And here by the way, it may be observ'd; that as in the natural world there is one grand principle that prevails through out the whole, and into which all the capital operations of nature are to be resolv'd, *viz*, Attraction; the Attraction of *cohesion*, whereby all the particles of matter in Bodies closely adhere together; and the Attraction of *gravitation*, by which all Bodies tend toward their proper Center; so, analogous to this, there is one grand principle diffus'd through out the moral World, *viz*, that of Love; Love to our fellow-creatures,

SERM.
XII.

whereby our hearts are united or knit together in strong affection; and Love to GOD, by which our Souls tend to him as their Center of eternal Rest.

Thus as all things came from GOD, all things lead us to him: all things declare him; all things teach him; and in every thing we see him. And thus by means of serious Reflection and pious Contemplation, we may keep up a daily Communion with him.

2. *Faith* is another instrument whereby this heavenly intercourse or converse with our Maker is maintain'd on our part. From the Works of nature, reason and contemplation discover and demonstrate the reality of the Divine Being and Perfections. But Faith goes further; and not only demonstrates, but exhibits them; and represents them, not only as real but visible; as far as it is possible for them to be so, to creatures in our situation: This is remark'd as the effect of *Moses' Faith*, that *he endured, as seeing him who is invisible, whom no Man hath seen or can see.* (a)

This

(a) Heb. xi. 27.

This Faith, when regularly exercis'd on the ways and works and word of God, supplies the place of all Miracles. And without it indeed all Miracles wou'd have no convictive influence. For Miracles themselves reach only the senses: and if they stop there, they are fruitless. It is Faith, excited by them, that carries the Impression to the Heart, and forms the conviction intended by them on the mind. And are not the wonders of creation, and the regular operations and course of nature, as proper to excite that Faith in a thinking mind, as the Interruption of it?

Faith not only realizes to the mind the glory and excellence of the Divine perfections, and impresses it with a lively conception of them, and excites in it sentiments of piety corresponding to them; but as a principal means and instrument of Communion with God, it extends its effects farther, and considers him as always with us; an ever-present friend; attentive to our thoughts, words, ways, complaints and conduct; more conscious to all our feelings, dispositions, and desires, than we are ourselves. And this assurance of the
Divine



SERM.
XII.

Divine Omnipresence, Faith imprints upon the mind with the deepest conviction; compared to which, a bare feeble Assent, not accompanied with a suitable influence on the life and temper, is but like a midnight Dream, scarce sooner recollected than forgot. Were it firmly believ'd, what can fill the mind with a more awful reverence than the presence of its Creator? and were it suitably improved, where can we meet with a more powerful motive to the practice of universal virtue?

3. Another thing necessary to keep up this spiritual Intercourse and Communion with GOD, is Prayer: constant, serious, humble, fervent Prayer. For 'tis this kind of Prayer only that (the Apostle *James* tells us) is effectual, or *availeth much* (b). That Prayer wherein the heart is warmly and devoutly engaged, an exercise as different from a mere formal, lifeless, unattentive discharge of this Duty, as the manner in which the Apostle *Paul* perform'd it before and after his Conversion. Whilst he was a *Pharisee* he did not pray; he only said his long Prayers: but as soon as he became a Christian, *Behold, he prayeth* (c).

And

(b) Jam. v. 19. (c) Act. ix. 11.

And these Prayers must not only be stated, but occasional. The pious christian that desires Communion with GOD will be often lifting up his heart to heaven in secret Ejaculations; when his faith gives him a strong view of GOD in any extraordinary or affecting dispensation of his providence, or when he is struck with a deep sense of his wisdom, power or goodness in the contemplation of his works; and earnestly, tho' secretly, begs that those incidental Impressions may be improv'd to a better acquaintance with GOD, and a more habitual Converse with him.

Prayer in the language of the *Psalmist*, is a *lifting up the Soul to GOD* (*d*): and in the stile of one of the antient fathers (*Clement of Alexandria*) it is a *Converse with GOD* (*e*). Put these two Ideas together, and you have a perfect definition of Prayer; and

(*d*) Psa. xxv. 1.

(*e*) Ἐστὶν ἔν ὡς εἰπεῖν πολυμῆστοτερον, ἀμιλία πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἢ εὐχή. Therefore Prayer, if I may be so bold to say so, is a conversation with GOD.—Again, ὁ γνωστικὸς παρὰ ὅλον εὐχεται τὸν βίον, δι' εὐχης συνεῖναι μὲν σπεύδων Θεῷ. A good man (or one who truly knows GOD) prays to him all his life; and by this means endeavours to keep up a constant intercourse with him. Clem. Alex. Strom. l. 7. p. 854. Ed. Ox.

SERM.

XII.



and at the same time see how indispenfible a means it is to keep up a communion with the father of our Spirits. It is to abftract our heart and thoughts from the world, and raife them up to God, in a humble adoration of his infinite excellence and glory, in grateful praifes for all his Benefits, with expreffions of our moft earneft defire of his continued Favour and Prefence; and thus to hold a conftant intercourfe and converse with our Maker.

2. Let us now confider how this communion between G O D and good men is maintain'd on his part.

As they hold communion with him in all thofe ways whereby they acquire a greater Acquaintance with him and Love to him, *viz*, by Contemplation, Faith and Prayer; fo he holds communion with them in all thofe ways whereby he communicates the Knowledge of himfelf to them, and confers the richeft fpiritual Bleffings upon them, *viz*, by his Word, by his Ordinances, and by his holy Spirit. By thefe he fpeaks to them, and converfes with them intimately and freely, as one friend with another.—I fhall briefly fpeak to each of thefe, and then conclude

conclude with a few reflections on the Subject.

SERM.
XII.

I. One principal means whereby G O D communes with and communicates himself to good men, is his holy Word: which he formerly inspired the Prophets and Apostles to indite, and hath taken care by his Providence to preserve, and transmit thro' every age of the church down to our own time. And that compleat and explicite Revelation which he hath given us by his Son, containing a clear accomplishment of preceding prophecies, is instead of, and far superior to the evidence of all Miracles, by which some of the former periods of the church were distinguish'd.

The Word of G O D may be consider'd as the Epistle of his Love; whereby he in Heaven holds correspondence with us on Earth; and therein expresses the greatest good will towards us, and the fullest assurance of his remembrance of us, and readiness to help us: enrich'd with the most suitable Promises; the wisest Counsels, the surest and plainest Directions, answerable to (and effectual to convey the most sovereign relief under) all the emergencies, difficulties and
distresses

SERM. XII.
 } distresses we can be in, during our absence from him in this strange land: disperses the clouds that obscured the light of nature, pours a flood of day on the expanded mind, and opens all the ravishing prospects of future Immortality and eternal Bliss.

2. To give this token of his love a greater effect, he hath instituted his holy Ordinances, and a standing Ministry in his Church; to make the gracious Contents of his word the more easily intelligible and familiar to us, and adapted to the lowest understanding. That in case this Epistle of his Love should fall into the hands of any of his children who cannot read (if I may so express it) others may read it for them, and explain it to them; that so none may be deprived of the grace and comfort it was design'd to convey; since the contents of it are directed, and are of equal concern, to all.—And moreover

3. That we may not only understand the true sense, but feel the genuine power, light and impression of those Divine truths, and experience the pious affections they were intended to excite, he hath given us his holy Spirit to speak them to our hearts: to remove

move our carnal prejudices, enlighten and dilate our understandings to take in a larger scope of Divine knowledge, and make us wise unto eternal life.

SERM.

XII.

This Doctrine of the converting, enlightening, quickening, sanctifying, comforting, and confirming grace and operation of the holy Spirit of G O D, is, when rightly understood and judiciously applied, of the highest importance in the christian life. But thro' the extravagant mistakes which some weak but well-meaning minds have run into concerning it, it begins to grow into neglect with some and contempt with others. Which I can look upon in no other light than as a device and stratagem of the great enemy of all Truth and Goodness, in working on the weakness of some to countenance those mistakes, and on the prejudice of others, for that reason, to ridicule and reject one of the most important Doctrines of christianity: and thereby deprive many a pious and serious Christian of that steady light, consolation and support they might receive from it.

This consideration should be a strong Inducement to us, on the one hand, to beware
how

SERM.
XII.

how we entertain any wrong or ungrounded sentiments of this Doctrine of christianity; and on the other, that we do not receive any prejudices against it from the mistakes which others have unwarily imbib'd concerning it. Both which are of dangerous consequence.

The same may be said of other Doctrines of the Gospel; which being perverted and misrepresented by the Ignorance or blind zeal of some, are therefore disbeliev'd and rejected by the precipitate Préjudice of others. Which shews the necessity of Candor, Caution and Judgment; and the need we all have of the influence and conduct of that good Spirit, who is sent to *lead us into all truth.*

To conclude now with a few proper Reflections upon this Subject.

1. What infinite condescension and goodness is it in the GOD of Heaven, to establish such a method of Correspondence, and hold such intimate Communion with his sinful creatures here on Earth! An honour to which the ambition of the highest Angel durst not aspire. And will that GOD whom the *heaven of heavens cannot contain, in very deed*

deed dwell with man? — This is a discovery of grace peculiar to the Christian revelation. Of which the Pagan world had not the least notice; and the Jews but a very obscure one, compar'd with the clear manifestation of it in the Gospel. Here 'tis set forth in a great variety of views and expression.— Sometimes, by the *Spirit of G O D dwelling in us.* *Ye are not in the flesh* (saith the Apostle) *but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of G O D dwelleth in you.* Now if any man have not the *Spirit of CHRIST*, he is none of his. And if *CHRIST* be in you, the *Body* is dead because of sin; but the *Spirit* is life because of righteousness. But if the *Spirit of him who raised up JESUS CHRIST from the dead dwell in you*, he that raised up *CHRIST from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you* (f). — Sometimes 'tis expressed by the phrase of *G O D dwelling in us, and we in him.* If we love one another, *G O D dwelleth in us, and his Love is perfected in us.* Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. Whoso shall confess that *JESUS is the Son of G O D,*

VOL. I.

U

G O D

(f) Rom. viii. 9—11.

SERM.
XII.

G O D dwelleth in him; and he in G O D. GOD is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in GOD, and GOD in him (g).—

Sometimes it is denoted by the emblem of a Feast or Banquet, which one friend maketh for another: not only to intimate the perfect freedom of Converse (so usual at Feasts) which the pious Soul at such seasons enjoys with his Maker, but the sensible strength and refreshment he derives from thence. *Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me (b).*

So that this privilege may be consider'd as in a manner peculiar to the Gospel Dispensation: and as one special fruit of CHRIST'S mediation; through whom we are now permitted to approach to G O D as our Father and Friend, and to hold the most free and delightful Communion with him, by his Word and Spirit.--O, what astonishing condescension is this in the great G O D, to us the meanest and most unworthy of all his reasonable creatures!

2. Our

(g) 1 John iv. 12, 13, 15, 16.

(b) Rev. iii. 20.



2. Our communion with JESUS CHRIST, which is mention'd in the text together with our communion with G O D, is maintain'd in the same manner, *viz.* on our part by Meditation, Faith and Prayer; and on his, by his Word, and Ordinances, and holy Spirit: whom he expressly promis'd to send to be with all his faithful disciples to the end of the world; to supply the want of his personal presence among them.

3. How great is the Honour and Happiness of all true Christian Believers!—How great their Honour! to have the King of Heaven (tho' invisible to them) always present, and kindly conversing with them! And this communion which the Father of their spirits holds with them by the communications of grace, light and comfort, is what pious men commonly call the *special presence of G O D*: which is better known by experience than description.—And how great their Happiness! to have G O D always present with them to direct, support and help them in every time of need! who is always *a friend at hand, and never afar off.* but let it be remember'd

SERM.
XII.

4. That this is a privilege peculiar to real Christians: and confer'd especially on those that are most humble and devout. A pleasure which the wicked are not capable of enjoying; nor indeed of conceiving. And to guard against the delusions of imagination in this matter (for it must be own'd that this doctrine has sometimes been abused to enthusiastical purposes) let it be always remember'd, that unless this communion be kept up on our part, by serious Contemplation, lively Faith, and fervent Prayer (which imply growing holiness and humility) we can expect no comfortable communications on G O D's part, from his Word, his Ordinances, and his holy Spirit. For all pretensions made to these by persons of an unchristian Life and Temper, proceed from the most deplorable and fatal Deception.

Lastly. As a pure heart and holy life are necessary to fit us for this intercourse and communion with the most pure and holy G O D (for *how can two walk together unless they are agreed?*) so this daily communion with G O D is the best means to promote the most exquisite spirit of piety and heavenly Devotion. It is observed that our tempers
always

always take a tincture from the Taste and Manners of those with whom we most intimately converse. This Divine communion then gradually and greatly promotes a Divine temper. And thus by walking with G O D on earth, we become more fit to dwell with him in heaven: *in whose presence is fullness of Joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for ever more.*

Thus have I particularly gone over the most important of all the *Divine Virtues*: or those Duties which we more immediately owe to G O D. The next I shall enter upon are the *Christian Virtues*, properly so called: or those Duties which we more immediately owe to CHRIST. Which will be consider'd in several Discourses immediately following.

The H Y M N.

I.

Our heavenly father calls,
And CHRIST invites us near;
With both our friendship shall be sweet
And our communion dear.

II. G O D

SERM.
XII.

II.

G O D pities all our griefs ;
He pardons every day ;
Almighty to protect my soul,
And wise to guide my way.

III.

How large his bounties are !
What various stores of good
Diffus'd through my Redeemer's hand,
And purchas'd with his blood !

IV.

JESUS, my living head,
I blefs thy faithful care,
Mine advocate before the throne ;
And my forerunner there.

V.

Here fix, my roving heart ;
Here wait, my warmest love,
Till the communion be complet
In nobler scenes above.

The END of the First Volume.



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